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# TWIST

MAGAZINE

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*TWIST EXCLUSIVE!*

## Roger & the Clash Toast the Casbah!







## ROGER AND THE CLASH: TOASTING THE CASBAH

BY DAVID LUMIAN

**R**anking Roger of the English Beat was sitting in the corner of a Sunset Strip hotel with a pair of earphones on his head, oblivious to the room full of people.

He turned to me and said hesitantly, "Hey, you should take a listen to this." He said he hadn't played the tape for anyone yet out of shyness.

On the tape was Roger Toasting to the Clash's hit, "Rock the Casbah." The Clash and Roger had just recorded a new version of the song and the single is about to hit the record stands.

"It was like a dream come true," Roger told me in a transatlantic interview two months after I listened

to the tape. "I've always wanted to record with the Clash. They've been one of my favorite groups since I was 16!"

The single, tentatively titled "Rocking the Casbah" or "Special Request," features Roger Toasting over the rhythm tracks of "Rock the Casbah."

Toasting is a sort of Jamaican rapping, where a DJ off the top of his head talks over a recording.

Reggae/Ska oriented groups like the Beat have acknowledged the role early Punk bands like the Clash played in helping them develop their own sound. In particular, the Clash mixed Punk and Reggae on their first LP on cuts like Junior Murvin's classic

"Police and Thieves" and "White Man in Hammersmith Palais." In the late '70s Rock Against Racism rallies in England featured alternating sets of Punk and Reggae bands. Soon musicians from racially integrated areas like Coventry and Birmingham resurrected a Reggae precursor called Ska, speeding it up with Punk's intensity and energy. Now the circle is complete as Roger, a Reggae Toaster, takes a rock song and performs it Toasting-style.

Roger joined the Clash at the end of their set throughout the Clash/Beat West Coast tour last year, Toasting to "Armageddon Time."

"The idea of Toasting to "Rock the

### PATO AGO TOAST

**R**eggae artists in the islands would make little noises over the tracks—like 'skat, skat, skat'—soon they were making little rhymes like 'Humpty Dumpty'—that's how Toasting started," explains Pato, one of Birmingham, England's top Toasters. Pato, who appears on the English Beat's "Pato and Roger Ago Talk" (on *Special Beat Service*), credits mid-seventies Jamaican musicians like Big Youth, Dillinger, I-Roy, Trinity and U-Roy as the founders of Toasting.

"In Birmingham, most people who go out know each other," explains Pato, "so if you see something happen to somebody the DJs automatically talk about it on the mike. You toast it. Everybody enjoys hearing something about people they know. Like the other day I met this DJ who had a black eye. He's the nastiest Toaster in Birmingham—he only talks about girls. So I made up a little Toast about his black eye and everybody was talking about it for ages!"

Since most of Birmingham's clubs have been closed, house parties are held almost every night of the week in large, empty houses. Turntables, microphones and sound systems are set-up for all night parties.

Pato estimates that there are eighty Toasting DJs in Birmingham today. "The top DJs are Paul Judah, Peter Ranking and General CP," says Pato. And what about Ranking Roger? "Roger's got to be there. He likes to experiment with different kinds of music. And he's always travelling—getting out in front of the people."

Roger, by the way, places Pato at the top of the Toasting honors list.

—David Lumian

Casbah" didn't come to me until I got home after that tour," Roger says. "I put on the B side to the 12-inch single, picked up a microphone and started Toasting to it. I thought 'Wow! This works!'"

"I liked Toasting over a rock-disco record. I thought that was an original idea. Whatever I do I want it to be different. I don't want it to sound like anything else. I thought Toasting and a bit of 'rocky disco,' if you want to call it that, would be kind of different."

Roger gave the Clash a copy of the tape 10 months ago.

"I gave them the tape and said, 'Take this and let me know what you think of it,'" Roger says.

"Mick Jones gave me his telephone number and he rung me later and said they were going to play Birmingham and wanted me to come to the gig. So I came down to the gig and they kept raving over the tape. They told me the news that they wanted me to record my version of 'Rock the Casbah.'"

The day before Roger left for the United States on the Beat's spring tour, he and Mick rented a Notting Hill Gate studio in a riot-torn section of London and recorded the single. Interspersed throughout the recording are vocal refrains of the Clash from the original single.

Several times in the recording Roger makes up nonsense rhyming words, like "bing bong diddly diddly bong." The technique is called "bubbling." (Reggae artists Musical Youth featured bubbling on their hit single, "Pass the Dutchie.")

On the B side Roger Toasts to another song off the *Combat Rock* LP, "Red Angel Dragnet."

"It's about this guy who got shot in London by the police, who thought he had escaped from jail in a minibus. They shot the wrong man," Roger says. "Another verse talks about how America and Russia are both stupid for the nuclear arms race. The song deals with many of the problems of the world."

Roger expects the single to be released either by late summer or early fall. In the United States the



single probably will be released by CBS, the Clash's label, or IRS, the Beat's label.

Meanwhile the Beat are enjoying the success of a top 10 single in England—a remix of the old Andy Williams tune, "Can't Get Used to Losing You," which appeared on the Beat's first LP, *I Just Can't Stop It*.

Roger told *Twist* he enjoyed the freedom of being a solo artist.

"When you're in a group you're only allowed to do so much because you have to think of the other people. They've got their bits to put in and they might want to change some of your lyrics and you might want to change some of theirs. When you're doing a solo thing with a different group or another person it's a lot better because you do what you want when you want to do it."

And Roger couldn't be happier that his first solo recording effort was with the Clash.

"Of all the bands that came out in 1977 I found the Clash to be the most original," he says. "Everyone else was trying to sound like the Sex Pistols. The Clash was willing to mash it all up—Reggae, Punk, even Funk and Rap."

"I respect the Clash now more than ever because they've stuck together for six years. That's hard to do and keep changing like they have."

Lyrics on pages 10 and 11.

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## SPECIAL REQUEST: ROCKING THE CASBAH

By Ranking Roger—"the Electric Toaster"

Tell you 'bout the sounds that lead de way,  
Tell you 'bout the sounds that lead de way,  
Introducing our man, de man called Ranking Roger  
At the microphone to keep you rocking and swing as I  
would seh,  
Come on everybody, mek we Do the Casbah, Rock the Casbah,  
Mek we Do the Casbah, Rock the Casbah

I went downtown just to check a little gal  
And when me teker started me took her as a pal.  
Me go later she joined the Ku Klux Klan,  
She want to lick me with a frying pan.  
We go de Rock up the Casbah, We go de Rock up the Casbah  
Tell you 'bout the song I keep them moving on the top to the  
very last drop  
Come down with me as I would tell you down there, yeah!

Ranking Roger of the English Beat joins the Clash's Joe Strummer on stage at the San Francisco Civic Auditorium last June.

RICHARD McCaffrey PHOTO

Musical disc by the Clash,  
So don't come to me 'cuz I give you to bash!  
And if your not careful me bound to use you and throw you in  
the trash  
Why? Do it!

Come on everybody, mek we Do the Casbah, Rock the Casbah  
Mek we Do the Casbah, Rock the Casbah

'Cuz this here little one said it deh pon top  
'Cuz this here little one said it could never, never drop  
'Cuz this here little one it come fe stand and never flop  
But I tell you that the musical show that keep you in the snow  
I see you on the road no matter call me sambo

Come on everybody, mek we Rock the Casbah, Do the Casbah  
Mek we Rock the Casbah, Do the Casbah  
'Cuz special request to the Clash drummer,  
And special request to Joe Strummer.

Me come from Rome and me check Mick Jones,  
Me check Marty Bibbons, and me check Paul Simonon.  
Feh se come along, mek we Do the Casbah,  
Come along 'cuz we getting faster and faster  
Yeah, you know,

But I'll tell you that de musical disc a keep you  
rocking and swing as I would say, WOW!

Come on everybody, mek we Rock the Casbah, Do the Casbah  
Mek we Rock the Casbah, Do the Casbah

'Cuz special request, every come down with me  
I tell you 'bout de sound and lead the way all day  
So move your little shoes, come a rock to the news  
'Cuz this here little rhythm bound fe bring good reviews  
I tell you 'bout de musical disc dat keep you rocking and swing  
as I would  
Ra-Da-Da-Da AAAAH-RD!

So go de Mick, so go de Joe  
So go de all de people dem  
Keep a rocking and a swing as I would tell you 'bout the sound  
I said a special request to the Clash drummer  
And a special request to Joe Strummer  
YEAH!

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