

TOOTS AND THE MAYTALS

Toots and the Maytals, considered legends of Ska and Reggae music have established their place at the head table of Jamaican music with classic hits over the past 43 years.

The innovative music of Frederick "Toots" Hibbert, leader of the group, fuses Gospel, Ska, Reggae, R&B and Rock and has earned him a place on Rolling Stones Top 100 vocalists of all time list published in 2009.

Born in May Pen in the Parish of Clarendon, Jamaica, Toots is the youngest of seven children and grew up singing Gospel music in a church choir until he moved to Kingston in 1961 at 16 years old.

In Kingston, Hibbert met future group members Henry "Raleigh" Gordon and Nathaniel "Jerry" McCarthy and together they formed a group whose early recordings were attributed to "The Flames" and "The Vikings". Fixing on the name Maytals for the group, the vocal trio then recorded their first album, "Never Grow Old - presenting the Maytals", for premiere producer Clement "Sir Coxsone" Dodd at Studio One in 1962-63. The legendary Skatalites provided musical backing as Dodd's house band and the Maytals' close-harmony Gospel singing ensured instant success for the 1964 release which rivaled the success of Dodd's other up-and-coming Gospel trio, The Wailers. The original album augmented by studio out-takes from the Studio One sessions was re-released by Heartbeat/Rounder Records in 1997, and is essential listening for Maytals and Skatalites fans. After staying at Studio One for about two years, the group moved on to do sessions for Prince Buster before recording their second album for Byron Lee in 1965. The band's musical career was however interrupted in late 1966 when Hibbert was framed, arrested and wrongfully imprisoned on marijuana possession charges. Hibbert's record has since been expunged.

Following Hibbert's release from jail towards the end of 1967, the band officially changed their name to Toots and the Maytals and began working with Beverly's producer Leslie Kong. The group produced three classic albums and a string of hits throughout the late sixties and early seventies including *Do the Reggae*, the 1968 single widely credited with coining the word Reggae on wax, *Pressure Drop*, *54-46 Was My Number* and *Monkey*

Man, the group's first international hit in 1970. Two of the group's classic hits *Pressure Drop* and *Sweet and Dandy* were featured on the soundtrack for the 1972 Perry Henzel cult classic *The Harder They Come*, starring Jimmy Cliff which marked a major breakthrough for Reggae in the US market. Released by Island Records, the album was named as one of Vanity Fair's Top 10 Best Soundtracks of all time.

Following Kong's death in 1971, the group began to record with Chris Blackwell of Island Records along with Kong's former sound engineer Warwick Lyn, releasing three best-selling albums, and enjoying international hits with *Funky Kingston* in 1973 and *Reggae Got Soul* in 1976. Toots and the Maytals' received a second boost in the UK in 1978-80 during the reggae-punk and Ska revival period when their classics *Monkey Man* and *Pressure Drop* were covered by punk rock groups The Specials on their 1979 debut album and The Clash respectively. After touring internationally for a few years, the original Toots and the Maytals disbanded in the early 1980s. Toots reformed the group with additional musicians in the early 90s and has continued touring and recording successfully since.

Toots & the Maytals won the 2005 Grammy award for best Reggae album with *True Love* which consists of new versions of classic hits as duets with contemporary and legendary artistes including Bonnie Raitt, Willie Nelson, Eric Clapton, Keith Richards, No Doubt, Shaggy, Ben Harper, The Roots and Marcia Griffiths.

Toots and the Maytals remains a relevant influence on today's global music scene with artistes from Amy Winehouse to Sublime re-recording classic tracks. Toots received another Grammy nomination for his 2008 Concord Records release *Light Your Light*.

Always recording when not touring, *Flip and Twist*, the 2010 album is planned for February release on the artiste's own label D&F Music.