

# Reggae Endz



## *A Reggae Endz Exclusive*

Interview With International Reggae Music Recording Artist, “**TWIGGI.**”

Never has there an artist so talented and so well accomplished, yet remain quite as anonymous, as Marie Gitten, more recognizable on the music scene, as Twiggi.

Reggae Endz was fortunate to catch up with the busy song-stress, recently and was able to ascertain an interview which details the petite mezzo soprano’s journey through the often “*cannibalistic*” industry that is the Reggae Music business.

**Reggae Endz:** Greetings Empress... Good night, it has really been a long time coming-

**Twiggi:** Oh, yes!

**Reggae Endz:** ...The lady that does so much beautiful music, yet, not getting the necessary props- Why don’t we start with your name. What’s the story behind the moniker Twiggi?

**Twiggi:** Well, the name Twiggi was given to me by some KC (Kingston College) boys. I am a Saint Hughes girl-(clearing throat). They called me Twiggi... at first they called me “Tweeie” because they said that I sound like a bird, and I was like a “tomboy,” then- Back in the days they use to call out the name Tweeie; but it sounded like Twiggi, so I just change the name to Twiggi, eventually. But, you know, because I am petite and have hair that look like twigs, people think that is the reason, so I just allow them to think that- you know (chuckle).

**Reggae Endz:** Well you know, for me, someone who has had the good fortune of meeting and dialoguing with you on several occasions, and I am sure that it goes for those who are sure to meet you sometime in the future...there can be no underestimating what is packed in your diminutive stature...there is no underestimating the size of the talent that is packed in the personage of Twiggi, the artist or twiggi the person. So the name is quite fitting! How long have you been in the music business?

**Twiggi:** Going on twenty one years!

**Reggae Endz:** That’s a long time- How did you get started... And what moved you to towards music as a profession?

**Twiggi:** Well, I use to love singing, since I was young. I was in church- I was singing since age five... But, then how I got into singing ...My sister was a very good friend with Tinga Stewart, she told him that her sister (me) could sing. So he said , okay, “I am going audition her , in the studio with a new song. So, I went into the studio, did background vocal for him- I did all three tracks, by myself, arrangement and everything. They were impressed the producers and Tinga ran with it. -And that’s how I got started.

**Reggae Endz:** Through s little research, I found out that your producers, and they are numerous, included such Reggae Music luminaries, as Boris Gardner and Rudy Thomas...

**Twiggi:** Yeah-

**Reggae Endz:** These were and are powerful individuals! Now, after that experience, where did the path take you? I know that you were with Penthouse Records Label, could you tell me about that?

**Twiggi:** After tinga- well, I did an audition for Toots daughters (Toots and The Maytals); they had a group, Fifty-four Forty-six (5446). They invited me to be a part of their group, which led me to be a part of this Japanese project that took me back and forth to Japan, for many years. After that project, Penthouse, Germain met me in Japan and signed me to join Penthouse, and I was a 'stable mate' for many years.

**Reggae Endz:** I see that you had an earlier project that became a chart topper, "It's Too Late," on the Champion Riddim-

**Twiggi:** Yes, it was-

**Reggae Endz:** And I see that it continue to be one of the biggest hits in Uganda (Africa).

**Twiggi:** Yes!

**Reggae Endz:** ...Since the Beatles hit, "Michelle!" - A tremendous feat.

**Twiggi:** (laughing) Thank you!

**Reggae Endz:** A tremendous feast, indeed, yet so many are not fortunate to partake of the talent you exudes through that beautiful voice of yours...I know that you have sing on some of the most powerful and enduring rhythms back in the days...That even today, they have been revised, rearranged- So when I listen to your tracks...how do you feel that you are still so current?

**Twiggi:** Well, I have been fortunate to be associated with producers, such as Bobby Digital who bring tracks that can go on for a long time- It help me to keep current, even when I am not doing anything. They can play with the music that are going on now- I am thankful for that.

**Reggae Endz:** You mentioned the Japan situation, earlier, where you met Donovan Germain...A little known fact, at least it was for me, and for a lot of Reggae Music aficionados, that SONY, Japan, that's S.O.N.Y- had signed you -mm, to do a cover album of Mariah Carey's hits, Lorraine- That was in ninety-five. May people are unfamiliar with that project-

**Twiggi:** That, mm, project was only limited to the Japanese market- I did several other project with a lot of different artists. Mariah Carey was married to Tony Matola, Sony's CEO, and she gave order that no one person should do the cover, so that was why Lorraine was included. The project was a big seller, then- Sold over several hundred thousands.

**Reggae Endz:** In Jamaica, it takes selling only about four to five thousand copies to be considered a certified hit maker, as most artists this is the gateway to the lucrative live performance market, stage shows and traveling abroad- For you to be a part of a project, over ten years ago, that sold over 200, 000 copies, that his quite a feat. For Reggae music then, and even now. Yet, many people who are reggae enthusiast are unfamiliar with you...How do you reconcile that reality?

**Twiggi:** Well, mm, (clear throat). It all has to do with promotion. The Japan project was well promoted- And even though I have been away, over the years, if you mention my name, people still know me ...my face. My songs carried me. My other managers, use to promote the other artists that were really huge and some were left in the back. It was our music that took us where we are now, and give us the audience that we have. So it basically boils down to that- PROMOTIONS! People know the songs, though they don't know me as a face.

**Reggae Endz:** Would you say that kind of behavior is prototypical of the industry as a whole when it comes to female artists?

**Twiggi:** Well, I can't speak for anybody else, but from what I have seen, it seems like the typical... women tend to be pushed back- And, mm, the men get the upfront exposure. But you have now-a-day, I guess you have some women holding

their own with the men. I guess they have to do what they have to do to stay up front. But, back in the days, I wouldn't do anything out of the ordinary. I wasn't going to downgrade anyone or make me- You know, downgrade myself to be in the forefront. But, I think, it's changing now- Yet, I think it was typical.

**Reggae Endz:** I had a conversation with a gentleman, from "Jamaicans.Com," I think his name is Stan Smith; he also recognizes the sexist nature of the business. He offered that he will be featuring female artists, such as Tanya Stephenson, Alaine, Etana, to mention a few, on his next stint on the air. Artist such a lady Saw and Tanya Stephens had to step into the business of the business, and create a label for themselves...

**Twiggi:** Right!

**Reggae Endz:** It takes a lot of energy to do both... I would think?

**Twiggi:** Yes!

**Reggae Endz:** Right now, I really love what you are doing- I notice that some change is taking place with your music ... Not the choice of rhythms, but in terms of the lyrics...What brought you to this point in the journey?

**Twiggi:** Well, as I said before, I grew up in the church and I love performing in the church. I did my own songs and performed them in church. I have been writing poetry, since I was five years old. I had the foundation, from I knew myself as a little baby where GOD comes first and everything else is secondary. So after years of doing Reggae Music and touring I always had it in me to do certain thing. I never felt like the typical person out there...I never acted like the typical person; I always had to pray... I always so fearful of GOD. He had his hand on me; so, eventually I'd come back from where I'd started.

**Reggae Endz:** Right!

**Twiggi:** ...The original lifestyle that he wanted me to follow. So that's how the change in the direction of my music has come by. It started out first with me changing my life- Wanting to do GOD work, wanting to do things the way that he wants me to do it and that's how the music got involved. That's basically it!

**Reggae Endz:** I received one of your recent tracks from your forth coming album, entitled "Full Of Your Love," a beautiful track in deed. As this track been released yet...or is it still in the pre-release stage, still?

**Twiggi:** I have it playing on the radio as a single, along with two other songs from my debut album that I am still working on, call "The Sun Shine Through."

**Reggae Endz:** So the single is not available on the market yet?

**Twiggi:** No...Promotional stuff, right now.

**Reggae Endz:** Now with this journey that you have gone through, with almosy every major labels in Jamaica- You have been with "THE" major label in Jamaica- Penthouse, Sony Japan...At this point in your journey...You have move to Florida, USA- Where do you see yourself, musically, are you happy?

**Twiggi:** Well, as I've said before- I am trying to follow the direction that GOD has given me to follow and I cannot be anything but happy. Yes, it's a new transition and I to make a lot of changes- Things are not as fast pace as I would want it, right now; but I can say that I am thankful; because, I see where everything is going that GOD has a bigger plan for me. And I am happy that I am actually involve in my production...I have a big say in everything, promotion and such. So, yes I am happy. You know we are only human, you have obstacles and you get a little frustrated here and there- But, you know what, I am thankful, because you see things are flowing Yes I am happy, I don't regret making this move.

**Reggae Endz:** When you perform in the future, do you plan on doing any of the "old stuff?"

**Twiggi:** For the most part I never thought about doing any on the old tracks, because I have done enough of those. I have another message to give; but, it according to the kind of show, anyway. If it's a show that people want to hear some of the old me and the new me. I would go through some quickly...I wouldn't emphasize it. There are too many songs for me to do without going back to the old stuff.

**Reggae Endz:** You can't get rid of the old you, it still a part of the you!

**Twiggi:** I know, I still love my old song...I still listen to old Penthouse...I don't have a problem with them. I have to go as the spirit of GOD lead me.

**Reggae Endz:** I am truly please that we are able to get this opportunity to have you detail your musical journey and express your new conviction on a personal, as well as a spiritual level.

**Twiggi:** I want to say thank you. I really appreciate. Jus want to say to everyone- Make GOD first and foremost in your lives! And look out for my album! Due out the end of July, or August. Its call "The Sun Shines Through."

**Reggae Endz:** Thank you!

Interview on ReggaeEndz.com *[June 2008]*