



By Bobby Tanzilo - Sep 18, 2024

Milwaukee hits a reggae trifecta: Twiggi, Viceroy's & Black Uhuru

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First up is veteran Jamaican dancehall and lover's rock singer Twiggi – now based in Miami – who performs at 6 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 21 on the RushMor Records stage at Bay View Bash. Admission to the festival, which raises funds for the nonprofit Bay View Community Fund, is free.

Twiggi (aka Marie Elliot) got started in the business in 1989 and over the years has been part of the stables at top Jamaican labels like Penthouse and Shocking Vibes. She has also recorded inspirational music, including on the album, “Sun Shines Through.”

As a backing singer with Toots and the Maytals she won a Grammy award in 2020 and her own tune “It’s Too Late” has been hugely successful in Africa and Asia.

We caught up with Twiggi to ask about her career, his latest music and what you can expect when she performs at Bay View Bash this weekend.

OnMilwaukee: I know you are an established star in the reggae music world, but for folks who don't know, give us a quick refresher on your career.

Twiggi: I was dragged into the industry in 1989, when my sister introduced me to Tinga Stewart and asked him to give me an audition. He took her up on the offer and asked me to record some harmonies on a new song he was getting ready to release entitled “*Love Again*.”

He was pleased with the end result and ran with the project to the likes of Boris Gardner, Ruddy Thomas, Derrick Harriott, Dobby Dobson and they in turn took me under their wings and had me recording in studio and doing some onstage work with Boris also.

Around that time, I met Toots’ (Hibbert) son Hopeton, who introduced me to his sisters who needed a singer to complete their group 54-46, they also gave me an audition and accepted me as a part of the group.

We did several tours and shows together, even doing “Top of the Pops” (on television) in London. Eventually their dad invited us to become a part of his group Toots and the Maytals and I toured with them for about 30 years.

In the same vein, the Japanese came to Jamaica and chose me as one of the artists they wanted to do major recordings and tours with, so I teamed up with their main act Nahki in doing many recordings, some as background vocalist and others as a lead singer. In that process Sony Japan teamed up with them and recorded an album with myself and another vocalist of a Mariah Carey hit in reggae style and it was a massive hit.

It was in Japan during one of my tours that I met Donovan Germain backstage and he asked me to become a part of the Penthouse crew. I recorded and toured with Penthouse for about six years then I went on to Shocking Vibes Records and the rest is history.

Was it exciting to be part of the Penthouse crew in those days when Germain was making the best dancehall records, with Garnet Silk, Tony Rebel, Buju, Galaxy P, Mickey Simpson and all the rest?

Yes it was quite exciting being a part of Penthouse crew in the ‘90s. That stable was the hottest crew in dancehall at the time. I was constantly recording and touring with my stablemates, especially Buju Banton, Beres Hammond, Marcia Griffiths, Wayne Wonder, Garnet Silk.

It was at that time of my career that I had some of my biggest hits and Twiggi became a household name. One of my biggest hits out of Penthouse is the song “ *Want It* “ with Buju Banton and it is still popular to this date.

In addition to your own records, you've recorded with a lot of the top names in reggae, from Burning Spear to Luciano to Marcia Griffiths. Has that been rewarding work in its own way?

Yes I recorded with some of the biggest names in reggae. For some of them I was just a supporting vocalist like Burning Spear, Jimmy Cliff, Sizzla, Sting (The Police), Alpha Blondy, Steel Pulse just to name a few but for the most part , I recorded collaborations with the lines of Marcia Griffiths, Luciano, Buju Banton, Beenie Man, Wayne Wonder, amongst others .

I think doing works with the likes of those legends helped to pave the way for bigger moves in my career and kept me out there as one of Jamaica’s finest vocalists, which opened many doors for me locally and internationally.

Tell us a bit about your latest music. Do you have a new record out?

I have a few newer music released between 2021 to date, one of which was produced by Penthouse recordings, it’s entitled “*When I Think about You* “. Also there is “*Never Let Us Down* ” recorded for a young producer in the UK, “*Love Lost*” released 2022, and “*Do That*” in 2023.

There is a new song to be released soon and I’m excited about it, as it’s a fusion-style production that will shine a new light on my vocal flexibility.

You're touring now and coming to Milwaukee. What can fans expect in terms of the songs you'll perform and who is in your backing band?

I’ve been to Milwaukee on many occasions but as a Maytal, this will be my first time as Twiggi. I plan to showcase the genre right across the board, paying homage to the greats in reggae, introducing the audience to some of my hit songs – both dancehall and contemporary reggae.

I will not be using a band so I will be showcasing the sound system in a special light and I will also feature a special guest musician to play and sing with me. My set should be a very balanced one that introduces those who do not know me to a different aspect of the genre, I hope.