Reggae's influence, its vibe, culture and Rasta spirituality have long found a natural home in the lands of the blue Pacific. The music’s been bubbling hot for years in the Hawaiian Islands and across the ocean in Japan and China. As you may know, there is also a hearty nation of reggae lovers and ambassadors in Guam. Here are some reggae reports from those islands...

Reggae Pulse inna Japan and China
By Emiko “JAH Dawta” Noda

“Thunder Ghost” means “reggae” in Chinese. Incisively a fitting term for this peculiar music, with Marley’s Legend only available since 2007 in China. Now youth like Jiang Liang stand firmly competent to set reggae rising in China with his Chinese Dub Sound, which includes collaboration with Sly and Robbie (myspace.com/reggaechina). Otherwise, reggae bars, like Together, or the French reggae playing out of Upsetter’s, unlock the vibes on capital Beijing.

In 1979, Bob Marley and the Wailers’ Survival Tour broadened the roots rock reggae vibration in Japan with a stop at Nanako Sun Plaza. Even earlier in 1975, Japan Phonogram (today’s Recording Industry Association of Japan) aimed to advance reggae music in the country with the first Japanese reggae album published. This original Japanese drop was Kagami No Naka No Ore, a 10-track album released as a collaboration album featuring Japanese rock singer Toshikatsu Uchiumi of ex-Carol (a legendary

Aichi Reggae Breeze by Nishiki Communications

Blue Moon Dance by Kads Miida

Japanese rock band) and the Cimarrons, later released with the English title, Gemini Part I (1997 UP/Universal J), consisting of the same four tracks by the Cimarrons and six by Uchiumi.

Mighty Crown Sound System is a Japanese household name, calibrated big business successes through their 15+ years throwing the Yokohama Reggae Festival (www.www.yokohamareggaeasai.com). Mighty Crown’s Life Style Records produce the artists Fire Ball, Papa B, Guan Chai and more. Mighty Crown also opened Nine Rulaz Line apparel shop and also publishes the dancehall-reggae magazine Strive. (www.mightycrown.com)

Rising out of Japan’s northern island Hokkaido, Oki Dub Ainu Band (www.tonkori.com) produce a most distinguishable roots dub reggae, blending native indigenous Ainu language and dub-poetry with reggae dub and ethnic resonance. Lead singer Oki Kanou plays his own electric tonkori. Usually a traditional Ainu five-string instrument, Oki pioneers on the electric tonkori, encompassing the spheres of dub and Japanese native traditional music. Oki Dub Ainu Band has awed audiences at DC’s Lincoln Center, at
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WOMAD Festival from Singapore to Australia and UK and Singapore, and major genre-breaking Japanese summer music festivals like Fuji Rock Festival in Naeba (www.smash-uk.com), Rising Sun Festival in Ezo (rsr.wess.co.jp) and Magical Camp (All Night Music and Art Camp) in Sapporo (www.magicalcamp.com). Among the many diverse artists that have played at Magic Camp, is the roots reggae singer Iyahkie. (www.myspace.com/iyahkie)

Back in 1994, the twin DJs Ackee and Saltfish (spinning for over 20 years) created the Aichi Reggae Breeze Festival, which features top name international reggae acts and draws over 12,000 to the oceanfront beach venue near Nagoya mid-August. (www.nishikicomunications.com)

The Japanese music festival season kicks off in early May with the annual One Love Jamaica Festival in Yoyogi Park, Tokyo. This two-day event exhibits Marley songs sung by contestants in competition on stage. One of Tokyo’s favorite outdoor festivals, it’s enjoyed free by over 40,000 people as jerk-flavored smoky air fills Yoyogi Park. (www.onelove-jamaica-fes.org)

Kads Miida (www.kads.net) is the front runner of the live painting art culture in Japan, if you ask anyone! The visual communicator is known for lively reggae album covers and eclectic live paintings. His style is artfully conveyed in the story book Go to Jamaica, which includes a bonus CD featuring the title song “Let’s Go” by Papa U-Gee and Zion High Playaz (www.papaugee.com). Miida will be exploring the U.S. from this year on, so look out for him doing paintings at festivals and elsewhere.

Nowadays Japanese folks experience reggae cultural realms with no Caribbean travel required. The Ja-Ja Patwa School in Osaka (www.jaja-patwa.com) offers classroom and online lessons. Also from Japan: study the must nifty gizmo Patwa Handbook by Yvonne Goldson, readily available for Patois beginners. To catch a beat of Jamaica while in Japan, head out to Harajuku to Yvonne Goldson’s JamRock Cafe (www.jamrockcafeonline.com) for authentic Jamaican home-cooked meals and sweets. Media outlets: plug-in vital reggae currents on NACK-5 79.5 FM, broadcasting exceptional Jamaican music on “Konishiki Lealea Sunday” with host, DJ Konishiki (www.konishiki.net). Since 1983, Riddim magazine’s been pioneering as a free publication/webzine spotlighting reggae, ska and hip hop (www.overheat.com/riddim). Rove magazine (www.rove.jp) keeps shelves fresh, toe-to-toe with reggae and hip hop; fashion plus street culture.

Wherever you may come from, you will be feeling irie when staying at island guesthouse, Shimauado Bob, opened in 2008 by Bob-san, located on Miyako Island in beautiful Okinawa at southernmost end of the Japanese Archipelago, where the peaceful strains of the Sanshin (the “three-string”) fills the air. (oceansfan.ti-da.net)

As I researched this for RFG, I often heard people saying, “Reggae - particularly dancehall - music is losing popularity in Japan, though still, the roots will never wilt.” Through the Word, Sound and Power, the real music holds the key to healing of the nations... Selah.

Ram-Jam a Guam!

by Dedric English and Todd Hall

When thinking about the Guam reggae scene, two things come to mind - ever changing and ever growing! There have been many different top-of-the-line reggae artists and bands which have made the long journey to perform on Guam. This surge in professional acts coming to Guam has helped educate and fuel a hungry reggae community. Guam is a beautiful, laid back tropical island, a U.S. Territory 5,803 miles west of San Francisco, 30 miles long and 8 miles wide with about 150,000 citizens. In other words, we are isolated in the middle of the Pacific Ocean about as far from another continent as anyone on the planet! Yet reggae is strong and influential throughout the community.
The people of Guam have spoken: the biggest outdoor crowd of about 5,000 showed up for a Rebelution concert last year. Reggae is so strong on Guam that the local promoters bring reggae artists here 10-to-1 over other genres of music. Recently we’ve been fortunate to have major acts performing on a regular basis, including: Ky-Mani Marley, Yellowman, Ooklah the Moc, Niyorah, Katchafire, Steel Pulse, Tuff Lion, Jimmy Cliff, Inner Circle, Psydecar, UB40 and many, many others. This is no small feat, considering the great distance and cost to pull off shows like this.

Guam’s local reggae music is also growing and developing. The opening bands for these ever growing reggae concerts are local reggae musicians! Most recently, the bands have converged into a band known as the Guam All Star Band. It consists of two guitars, bass, drums, keys, percussions, sax, trumpet, trombone, an island version of the I Threes and at least five different singers. You can find these members in the local venues, performing reggae on a regular basis. Although none have an album, some have live recordings available on the streets. One local musician tasted a little success by being featured on SOJA’s latest CD Born in Babylon. The exact number of reggae bands on Guam is hard to pinpoint, but there have been up to nine active reggae bands playing gigs in local venues.

Jah Reggae Shop (www.jahreggaeshop.com), the local reggae authority in the Western Pacific, provides an assortment of music, DVDs, clothing and accessories from the foundation days to the modern taste. Jah Reggae Shop’s mission is to promote reggae music on Guam by education and example. A mix of roots and mainstream reggae has got the Guam people
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by the heart and they love it.

While there are no radio stations dedicated strictly to reggae, there is an island music station. There are a couple of stations which have reggae shows. One reggae program, RAW Reggae, has been going 16 years strong! RAW Reggae showcases a multitude of musicians both foundational and the modern mix. Another show can be heard on Sundays from noon to six, the Island Style Reggae show. This one has more of an island feel than that of roots reggae, but is a Sunday standard around the island’s beaches and BBQ grills.

Every now and then, an irie local tune can be heard on the “mainstream” waves. You are likely to hear reggae music while cruising the streets. The likes of Groundation, Lady Passion, Gregory Isaacs, Tanya Stephens, Bambu Station, Tuff Lion, Burning Spear, Alborosie, Ras Michael and Midnite are a sampling of what can be heard from fellow drivers. Cruising thru Tumon (the local tourist area), one can skank to Bob and Peter coming out of the merchant street speakers. A quick buzz by Jah Reggae Shop and often dub music will be playing, and sometimes there are impromptu performances by the locals passing thru the shop.

Guam’s original reggae ambassador Tom Pearson has been instrumental in the growth of the scene here. Tom is one of the formative members and longtime president of the international network, Reggae Ambassadors Worldwide. At home in Guam, Person started the radio program RAW Reggae more than 15 years ago. Guam is described by the touring reggae artists passing thru as one of the most hospitable and reggae friendly places on earth! The reggae lifestyle is alive and growing on this small tropical island.

**Aloha Stylee!**

by Anthony Postman

with special thanks to Diehard Matsushige

You know when you’ve made it to the Hawaiian Islands from the second you get into the car leaving the airport - reggae and Jahwaiian music bump easy from the radio, mixing with the warm and humid air and may move you from your shoes to sandals as easily. If you’re looking for more of the roots-reggae current in the Islands, here are some rootical places to check, some vibin’ people to watch for and some bands to give a listen to...

Good Vibez Production Company is consistently blessing up the Hawaiian Islands with such headliners as: Midnite, Barrington Levy, Israel Vibration, Dezarie, Bunny Wailer, Steel Pulse, Native Elements, SOJA, Rebelution and more. Oahu-grown Daniel Sheehan started Good Vibez after living across the waters in Guam, working as the music director for Guam’s I94FM. Dan caught the music bug there and has been spreading it from Guam to CA, and back to HI. Watch for Fat Freddy’s Drop and Alborosie later this year.
Maui is home to the long-time “Hawaii Reggae Ambassador,” Marty Dread, one of the Islands’ most prolific reggae singers with 13 albums to date, most issued on his own Five Corners label, and recently with Mad Professor on Ariwa. Marty’s collaborated with greats like Kris Kristofferson, Willie Nelson, Junior Reid, Anthony B., to name just a few, yielding heartfelt reggae tracks that have been picked up for film, television and compilation releases. Marty made his Jamaican debut in 2009 at Montego Bay’s Jamaica Jazz and Blues Festival. (www.martydread.com)

Singer Irie Love is one of the Hawaiian artists coming up strong. She’s been lighting up stages around the world, touring with Morgan Heritage, after singing support/backup for the likes of Pink and Chaka Khan. Irie Love was one of 12 finalists in Jamaica’s IRIE-FM/Red Stripe’s “Big Break” competition, and has since worked and produced music with some of Jamaica’s biggest producers, including Freddie and Stephen McGregor, Bobby Digital, Sly and Robbie, Mario Lawrence and Christopher Birch. (www.myspace.com/irielovemusic)

Long-time local favorite Paula Fuga has been issuing music worldwide via her own Pakipika Productions, earning notice on NPR, and receiving Hawaii’s highest musical honor, the Na Hoku Hano Hano Award. More recently Fuga’s been working and touring with Jack Johnson, who upon hearing her, brought Fuga to play his Kokua Festival. In 2007 Fuga started the Lillikoi Fair Festival. The proceeds benefit her charity, The Lillikoi Foundation, which provides outreach and support to women in transition. (www.paulafugamusic.com)

More bands that may have been on your radar for a while, perhaps due in part to their own decade-plus longevity, as well as steady touring and rising popularity on the mainland include: Ooklah the Moc (www.myspace.com/ooklahthemoc), Natural Vibrations (www.myspace.com/naturalvibrations), Humble Soul (www.myspace.com/humblesoul1) and Fiji (www.fijitheartist.com). These veteran bands give you the true taste of Hawaiian roots at its finest: be sure to check their links! Many more bands are at: www.reggaemusic.us/statess/hawaii.html.
Conscious Riddims is a full-fledged reggae shop, with diverse offerings ranging from inspirational reading on His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I and Rastafari culture, to original tees, CDs, vinyl, smoking accessories and more... Locations in Kailua-Kona and Kealakekua (both on the Big Island) and also online.

Conscious Riddims has promoted excellent conscious roots shows, bringing Bambu Station, Midnite, Pressure, Iba, Xkaliba and Groundation, to name just a few. More recently Conscious Riddims incorporated a record label, perhaps the best vehicle of all for their greater mission of proclaiming from the highest mountaintop: JAH Rastafari! Check Gather the Remnant for a taste of roots from JA to the U.S.V.I.; roots from the mainland all the way back to the Hawaiian Islands, featuring many of the aforementioned artists, plus sounds from Luciano, Tuff Lion, Lutan Fyah, Sugar Minott and more. (www.consciousriddims.org)

Another huge resource for live reggae inna Hawaii is the Hawaiian Reggae Guild. Featuring shows mainly (but not limited to) Oahu in the Honolulu area, the site is maintained and kept current by Diehard Matsushige, who also wrote in, tipping us on who’s rocking Hawaii’s populace: “Rootikal Riddim is a fairly new band, but making big waves with their new release Inna Sufferah’s Style (www.myspace.com/rootikalriddim). The Green - a lover’s reggae group getting a lot of airplay on our local radio waves - is currently touring the U.S. West Coast. (www.myspace/thegreen808)

Bands are always up and coming and others have been playing for a while, and you may not get to see them anywhere else except in Hawaii. Our musician community is a tight-knit group of good people and I’m glad they have found ways to work and
learn from each other. Some of the groups that I been listening to around town would be Irie Souls, the lonz, Most High, All Natro, Pressure Drop, Lion Fiyah, DubKonscious, A’a Mele, Ka’ala Mt. Band, Guidance, Hot Rain, Humble Soul, Melodious Solutions, JahLivity and more.”

Link to all of the above bands, and many more, at Diehard M’s Hawaiian Reggae Guild (www.myspace.com/hawaiireggae). Go deh! Stay current with more shows than you can catch! Diehard also lists some of the regular weekly reggae radio shows coming from KTUH 90.3, with a lineup that includes the shows Rise and Dub with Old Man Klevansky, Dancehall Vibes with Hawaiian Lion, Afternoon Bashment with Loriel, and Internally Dread hosted by Irie-Sistable. Broadcasting from University of Hawaii, these shows and more can be streamed from www.KTUH.org. For reggae stores, Diehard directed us to Rasta Headquarters, with locations in Waipahu and Honolulu (both on Oahu) and online at www.rastahq.com.

Driving up and down the coasts, there are stations like Island 98.5 (streaming at www.island985.com) up and down the dial, bringing a mix of modern Hawaiian and reggae from all corners of the globe, with recent playlists featuring many of the above-mentioned artists.

Jack Miller (on the Big Island) is a true roots reggae pioneer. He was among the first Americans to record (in ‘77) in Jamaica with such luminaries as the Channel One stable of musicians, members of the Wailers, Soul Syndicate and others. His movie Dreadlock Rock chronicles Jack’s 30-year exploration to the heart of reggae music. He and Marty Dread co-wrote the song “Take No Part” featuring Willie Nelson. (www.dreadlockrock.com)

Just up the road from Jack on the Big Island is the Hawaiian home of the mostly California-based crew of new roots and conscious dancehall singers, Lion Camp. Singer Jah Works the Revolutionary blazes lyrics hot like lava. He has been mashing up dancehalls and sound systems from Hawaii to the western U.S. for many a season. Music and video at www.myspace.com/jahworks.

From the Big Island to Maui, Kauai to Oahu and across the ocean to Japan and Guam, reggae is bubbling everywhere. Hopefully you may find – through the lists and links provided here – a place to start with your own explorations of the reggae scene across the blue Pacific.