

BUJU BANTON " TIL SHILOH "



At the tender age of 21 **Mark Myrie** - better known as **Buju Banton** - delivered his inspirational masterpiece, the highly acclaimed "**Til Shiloh**", the follow up to his debut album "**Stamina Daddy**" and his sophomore "**Voice Of Jamaica**". Part of **Buju Banton**'s winning formula is his ability to combine the spirit of **Bob Marley**'s legacy with the heart and soul of dancehall music. This essential fusion enables **Buju**'s sound to cut across many cultural and social lines, conscious and spiritual minds as well as the hardcore dancehall crowd. Another element of this winning formula is the instantly recognisable and top-notch production work of **Donovan Germain** of **Penthouse Records**. All tracks on this new **Buju Banton** album are produced by **Donovan Germain** with the exception of two by **Sly & Robbie**. The "**Inna Heights**" album marks the long awaited and eagerly anticipated return of a master in session. It's certainly not easy to match or even outclass "**Til Shiloh**", however **Buju Banton** delivers a solid effort. The album contains some wicked reggae riddims dominated by the heavy rolling bass line, trademark of the **Penthouse** production work. On "**Til Shiloh**" **Buju** was stretching his style and he continues to do so on this one. Of course he's still toasting, but it's often done so melodically that it is easy to forget. **Buju**'s teaming up with unexpected reggae vets **King Stitt** (the first monarch crowned king of DJs) and **Toots "Maytal" Hibbert** catches the eye, however, the best combination cuts are done with **Beres Hammond** and **Red Rat**. Almost every song on this album is good but two that must be mentioned are "**Hills and valleys**" and "**Destiny**", on which **Buju** actually sings ! Next to music the album contains spoken words. In the segments labelled "**Inter lingua**" **Buju Banton** delivers his personal thoughts and insights on different subjects. With "**Inna Heights**" **Buju Banton** once again shows that he's able to step forward with a mature and expanded vision radiating flash and energy with fresh perspective.

"To whom much is given, much is required," says a thoughtful **Buju Banton**. Mature beyond his 21 years, Jamaica's top dancehall reggae star has completed '**Till Shiloh**, his **Loose Cannon Records** debut, and a powerful follow-up to 1993's **Voice Of Jamaica**. **Buju** is establishing new musical horizons by combining the spirit of **Bob Marley** with the soul of the dancehall.

With '**Till Shiloh**, which means forever, **Buju** debuts as the premier artist on **Loose Cannon**. On his label shift: "**Lisa Cortes** signed me to **Mercury**. She understood where I want to take my music. When she left to start **Loose Cannon**, it made perfect sense that I go to her label so that we could continue what we started," he says. Over the two years since his last release, **Buju**

has focused on artistic growth -- through touring, performing and producing for himself and other artists -- and exploring Rasta, the essence of which informs the spiritual and musical direction of this disc.

With its thirteen tracks that range from themes of love and to education and inspiration, *'Till Shiloh* is part of the evolution of a remarkable artist who continues to set the standards of excellence in contemporary reggae. In a genre where artist longevity is rare, **Buju** -- the artist who broke **Bob Marley's** record for the most #1 singles in one year on Jamaica's music charts - - remains the island's top concert draw. But beyond moving records or selling tickets, what sets him apart is the ability to bridge the gap between the reggae of the 70's and early '80's and the brash new sounds of dancehall. He demonstrates this fully on *'Till Shiloh* combining infectious, upbeat tracks like "*Only Man*", *Shiloh's* first single, with powerful commentary like "*Murderer*" which decries the senseless violence claiming the life of many Jamaican youths.

"*Murderer*", one of reggae's most influential songs, was originally released as a single in Jamaica in 1994, when dancehall was under considerable attack for 'slackness' (sexually explicit lyrics) and 'gun talk' (music that allegedly inspired violence). The song quickly became a classic, spawning a whole host of imitators. Its genesis is in a real life tragedy, the brutal murders of **Panhead** and **Dirtsman**, two promising musicians and childhood friends. After hearing the news, **Buju** immediately wrote the song that according to Billboard magazine, "*turned the lyrical tide for dancehall*" from "*lyrics about graphic sexuality, gangsterism, gunplay and violence*" to themes of Rastafarian spirituality and self-respect.

"When I sang 'Murderer', the whole record business came back home in terms of positiveness," he explains. *"That doesn't mean it didn't exist before, but I know that the song shed some light in that area. It opened my eyes even more to the philosophy of Rasta, as well, making me more sure that truth and righteousness must prevail".*

His repeated willingness to challenge society's ills is to be expected, given his childhood. Born outside Kingston as **Mark Myrie**, the youngest of fifteen children, **Buju** is a direct descendant of the Maroons, a fiercely independent clan of fugitive slaves who banded together and fended off attacks from British colonial regiments who wished to return them to slavery. His moniker is a remnant of his Maroon roots: a chubby child, he was nicknamed buju, the Maroon word for breadfruit, a starchy oval-shaped fruit eaten as a staple. **Banton** comes from one of his favorite Jamaican artists, **Burro Banton**. It is this historical perspective that also comes to bear in **Buju's** music and which makes him such a popular artist in Jamaica, especially among the youth there.

"I know the long suffering. I remember growing up in one room in a site on Salt Lane. We had no running water and had to get water from the public standpipe in the yard. That you can't forget", he explains. Acutely aware that it was his ability on the microphone that brought him out of the ghetto, he is determined to be a voice for those left behind and hopes to bring more talent to the fore through his own Jamaica based studio and label **Cell Block 123**, a venture whose tag line is "*Riddims in Custody Breaking Free*". He has produced *'Till Shiloh's* "*Not An Easy Road*" and through **Cell Block** has worked with **Brian & Tony Gold**, **Chevelle Franklin**, **Sanchez** and **Beenie Man**.

He's also guided his pet project, Operation Willy, which helps children with AIDS through Jamaica AIDS Support. Funded with proceeds from [Voice Of Jamaica's "Willy \(Don't Be Silly\)](#) -- Jamaica's first pro-condom song -- **Buju** has already raised in excess of J\$50,000. He and members of his fan club have also visited ill children, offering moral support as well. *"Our next step is to start the Operation Willy label, where other Jamaican artists can record songs, from which we can donate money to the Foundation and then to take it international"*, he explains.

While **Buju** is concerned with Jamaican youth and religious beliefs, ['Til Shiloh](#) focuses on what's important to **Buju** as an artist, the music: from the hip-hop fueled ["Champion"](#) powered by a classic **Evelyn Champagne King** sample, to the retro reggae of ["Hush Baby Hush"](#) to the joyous ["Wanna Be Loved"](#) to the introspective ["Til I'm Laid To Rest"](#), the album reflects his growing strength as a lyricist. Working solo or with other artists (the legendary **Marcia Griffiths** sings background on ["Hush Baby Hush"](#) and ["Wanna Be Loved"](#), reggae singer **Wayne Wonder** is featured on ["What Ya Gonna Do"](#) and the late **Garnett Silk** appears on ["Complaint"](#)), **Buju Banton's** expanding musical prowess is evident.

['Til Shiloh's](#) gem is ["Untold Stories"](#). With its simple two-chord progression performed on acoustic guitar, the song, reminiscent of **Marleys** ["Redemption Song"](#) is an ode to *"the low budget people"* who are *"spending a dime while earning a nickel"*. These are Jamaica's poor, for whom education is a privilege and not a right, and whose children often stay at home for want of bus fare to get them to school. *"So when Mama spend her last/To send you go class/Don't you ever play"* **Buju** wails. ["Untold Stories"](#), with its elliptical phrasing is the artist at his finest.

No longer the wide-eyed, 19-year old he was at the release of [Voice Of Jamaica](#), **Buju** has crossed many rivers -- socially, spiritually and artistically. A consummate veteran and recipient of international accolades for his albums and live concert performances, he remains humble: *"I feel that the things I speak about on this album are universal. I just want people to listen to this record with open hearts and minds"*.

