

Freddie hits right notes

October 07, 2021 By Richard Johnson

No performance by **Freddie McGregor** is complete without his 1986 hit song, [Just Don't Want to be Lonely](#). The popular single, which is one of his most successful — rising to the top 10 on the British National charts — was previously a hit for American soul group **Main Ingredient**. But **McGregor** points out that he was actually inspired by the original recording by singer **Ronnie Dyson**.

*“I was first drawn to the song when I was the front-man for the band **Generation Gap**. We were one of the leading show bands and I used to sing that song all the time. It was one wicked album by **Ronnie Dyson** along with another big tune, [Wednesday in Your Garden](#). A lot of people think it was a **Main Ingredient** original, but they really made it more popular. It was also covered by a group (**Blue Magic**) and a lot of other people,” **McGregor** told the Jamaica Observer.*

The song was co-written by **Bobby Eli**, **John Freeman**, and **Vinnie Barrett**, and recorded in 1973 by **Dyson**. **McGregor** shared that he had recorded the track previously for the famous **Studio One** label, but that record did not go anywhere. It was the rendition for **Penthouse Records' Donovan Germain** that hit the spot.

*“I was deep in the process of recording my [Yes I'm Ready](#) album for **Polydor Records** when **Germain** came to me and said I should cover [Just Don't Want to be Lonely](#). At first, I was a little hesitant since I was signed to **Polydor** and all my attention was on the album, but he persisted and explained that I could record it for him as a single and if it went well I could include it on the album. So, sometimes you don't fight things, you try it and so he booked studio time at **Tuff Gong**,” **McGregor** shared.*

Keyboard player **Robbie Lyn** was brought in on the project and created the chords. Saxophonist **Dean Frazer** also had a hand in the arrangement. However, after the track was laid, the key in which it was set gave **McGregor** trouble when it came time to record the vocals.

*“This is the song that has taken me the longest to record. I was in the booth for about five hours. I don't know what it was, but when **Robbie** and I worked out the key of the song it was fine, but when it came to recording the vocals I struggled to hit the notes,” he recalled. “I remember some other artistes being in the studio on that day making some remarks... I won't call any names... but they were telling **Germain** that clearly I was not the man for the song. **Dean** came in and I told him how I was struggling with the key and he said: 'Nuh worry, **Freddie Bop**, we gonna record this song!'”*

McGregor remembered a technique he had used when recording the song [Stop Loving You](#) for **Steely and Cleve**. They recorded it at a faster pace then slowed it down for playback. He suggested this to **Frazer** and **Germain**.

“Magic was created right there in the studio once we vary-speed the tape. We dropped it by a full tone and then it all just happened,” he said.

The song took off in Britain, following in the tracks created by **Boris Gardiner's** smash hit, [I Wanna Wake Up With You](#).

*“British radio, particularly the BBC, was looking for a follow-up to **Boris's** hit. That market has always been inclined to that smooth, cool style of reggae so they wanted something else from the Caribbean,” **McGregor** stated. “Must thank people like **David Rodigan**, who took the single to his programme manager and declared that it was the next hit. Radio stations in Britain then began to put it in rotation and it just began climbing the charts where it got to number nine. I remember being in England and it was playing everywhere. I would go into the shops owned by the Pakistanis and once they heard me speak, they would say, 'You are Jamaican, I love that song'. I would just take the love not letting them know I was the artiste. I'm thankful for England and what that country and its people have done for my career. They really love reggae and this all comes from that Windrush Generation who went there with the 45s, 33s and 72s... They took their records of our music with them and shared it not only with their family and friends, but succeeding generations and we have to give thanks,”* he added.

