



## Penthouse keeps unreleased Buju songs

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Unlike the slew of new **Vybz Kartel** songs since his 2011 arrest and eventual life sentence for murder in 2014, as well as the recordings singer **Jah Cure** made while serving eight years on firearm and rape charges, there has not been striking **Buju Banton** output while the deejay is behind bars.

**Banton** was arrested in Miami, USA, in 2009, on drug charges, and in 2013 was sentenced to 10 years in prison. His last full-length release before conviction, the *Before The Dawn* album, won the Reggae Grammy in 2011.

Among **Vybz Kartel's** prodigious output after being in police custody and subsequently sentenced are *Compass*, *Dancehall* and *Back to Life*, prompting speculation that he has been recording while behind bars. This has been denied by producers repeatedly.

Unlike **Kartel**, **Jah Cure** was allowed to record while in the Jamaican prison system between 1999 and 2007, *Prison Walls*, notably describing his situation and desire for change.

Before taking charge of his own affairs fully in 2008, **Buju Banton** had been with producer **Donovan Germain's** Penthouse label for nearly two decades, that period including his *Voice of Jamaica* (1993), *'Til Shiloh* (1995), *Inna Heights* (1997) and *Friends For Life* (2003) albums. In an interview with The Gleaner, primarily about the 20th anniversary of *'Til Shiloh*, **Germain** said he has a number of unreleased **Buju Banton** songs - which he is not planning to put out.

*"Every artist get to a point, a very creative point in them career, a zenith of creativity, where you have to just catch them and record, record, record. And then you pick out what you want to use"* **Germain** said, pointing out that some of the songs on *Inna Heights* came from the sessions for *'Til Shiloh*.

There is enough material for two or three or even four more **Buju Banton** albums. *"If I go in my computer right now, I can find at least 30, 40 Buju Banton songs no release yet"*, **Germain** said. The Gleaner asks if it is "raw dancehall", and Germain says *"raw dancehall and other things, too"*.

**Germain** ascribes not releasing the songs to a key factor of his role in the creative process. *"But because you see my job, which is the most important job, is the quality control,"* **Germain** said, stressing the last two words. *"What you (as in the consumer) going to hear."*

The Gleaner asks if it is a matter that he is not satisfied with the songs, and **Germain's** reply indicates that it is not a case of them being bad tracks. *"Me just figure, where he is at, for me to put*

out that kind of song, is like him regressing. It wouldn't be the same quality as the position where he is at," **Germain** said, one finger tapping repeatedly on a desk to reinforce the point.

"One of my priorities is to be true to the music industry. The music industry - I put it first, because without a music industry, I would be involved in a boring job somewhere. I have to be true and protect the music industry. Some people would have some Buju Banton song and say, them have some Buju song, him deh a prison now, and put them out," he said.

They do get an occasional listen, though, **Germain** saying that sometimes they are played in the studio, but "we wouldn't put them out for the general public to hear". There are no plans for that to be done, either. "It would be like you put a man up there so, and you same one lick weh the ladder and bring him back down. No, me nah go do that; me going to make sure the thing stay desso," **Germain** said.

It is not for **Buju's** sake only, as there is a healthy dose of self-interest. "His success is my success. I can't tell nobody say a no **Donovan Germain** produce them songs there. I am the architect of what you hear on the road. Him is the creative force with the vocals and the melodies and him writing. Me come with the music and technicality, so collectively, we make the whole," the producer said.

"So it would be remiss of me to be watering down the standard" **Germain** said. "I could put out an album right now if I wanted to, but it wouldn't represent the artist."

