

## Memories by Gregory Isaacs Junior

### EARLIEST MEMORY

I must have been no older than three years old. I remember sitting on his shoulders outside his record shop in downtown Kingston. He would carry me everywhere like that when I was a child. I remember lots of people gathered round, lots of voices, laughs and music.

### PERSONALITY

Our home growing up was always a hive of activity with people coming and going, friends, fans and fellow musicians. Dad literally couldn't walk fifty yards without someone shouting 'Supe', 'Toot', or one of his many nicknames. He had a magnetism. His popularity was always evident to me. I meet people all the time who tell me how much they love him and his music or where they saw him in concert.

I've even met a few that told me their babies were conceived to Dad's songs, which I find a little weird yet touching! I guess you could call Dad's songs as baby making music. I think Dad would love that description. He really loved the children he had and was a big kid at heart.

He had ten of his own and many, many let's say adopted children. I remember he would buy ice cream for all the kids in the neighbourhood or wake us up early Saturday morning for a football game versus all of us kids, obviously none of us remember who won, there was so much laughter and jokes, just to see his skinny legs in football shorts!

He was the funniest person I've ever met; one liners, put downs, witty comebacks and sarcasm, his comedic timing was impeccable just sitting under the mango tree in the front yard playing ludo or dominoes he would have us in fits of laughter he was so competitive, he would cheat and trash talk. So funny he would often say 'mi play dis game fi bread an meat if mi no win mi nuh eat'.

### MUSICALITY

It's funny for someone who loved being the centre of attention and came alive whenever he was on stage he also loved being on his own, he would sit

quite happily in his office or his studio on his own all day, tune on his lips, melody in his head, working out the kinks for some new song.

I often was in awe of his creative process. I may seem biased but to say he was a musical genius isn't too far a stretch.

Honestly I've never seen him write down more than four lines for a song, he worked out lyrics, chords and arrangements all in his head. Often I remember he would take me to the studio with him.

We would be in the car and he would adlib a melody and maybe mumbling a few words and by the time we got to the studio he had a complete song and when we turned up everyone would usher him in like royalty even if they all were waiting they would let him lay his vocals first, maybe out of respect maybe cause they knew how proficient he was. He entered the booth and in one take he laid his vocals perfectly. Like I said musical genius.

## ON TOUR

Yes, I have been on tour with my father not an entire tour, not every date but enough to witness the goings on behind the scenes. Tour life was a lot of travelling and hotel rooms. My favourite part of it was the performance. Standing just off to the side of the stage so I could watch him perform he would come alive on stage. He took all of us kids on tour at one time or another as long as it didn't interfere with school. I was nineteen when I went on a tour of Europe with him, there were a few dates in Britain and we stayed in Harrow.

## HARROW

I remember how much it reminded me of home and how familiar dad was with the area. He was at home, he said. He never passed up the opportunity to remind me how long he had been coming to the U.K. He would say 'mi a come a England from when if you nuh have 50p to put in the meter you freeze pon di toilet'. Then he would laugh.

I soon became just as familiar with the street or Harrow at least with the bookies on the High Street. On dad's down days there was nothing he loved more than a flutter on the horses. He would sit in bed with the paper, pick his races and I would be the one making a hundred trips to put his bets on.

I remember whenever he lost and surprisingly it wasn't often but whenever he did he would put his arms around me, look me straight in the eyes and say 'you know you learn more when you lose than when you win'.

### **FAVOURITE SONG**

'All I have is love'. I have those words tattooed on my arm. I use them as a mantra so for me that song is special.