

Here we have a band who, with the right exposure, are all set, having served a two year apprenticeship, to become one of the heavyweights of the new wave of British reggae.

Talisman hail from the Saint Paul's district of Bristol and it is this ghetto environment of unemployment and social deprivation that spawned the inspiration for their music. Although the roots of their style are necessarily Jamaican there are no esoteric references to Jah and Babylon; the message is for the youth of Britain suffering today.

The band are a six piece: Des (lead vocals and rydim), Leroy (lead guitar), Dennison (bass), Donald (drums), Bill (keyboards) and Brendan (sax).

Down at Dingwalls they turned in an enthusiastic set loaded with potential chart material. Comparisons with another successful sax-orientated reggae band are inevitable. Live, however, Talisman wipe the floor rendering a richer, blacker sound, with a powerful tight rhythm section around which revolve various organ melodies and haunting sax breaks.

Their first double-A sided single (7"/12") Dole Age/ Free Speech is available now on the Recreational label. The single has deservedly climbed the higher reaches of the Indies charts already, and provides an irresistible taster of their brand of socially aware lyrics coupled with two very memorable tunes.

On the 12 incher Living in the Dole Age is given the full treatment, leading into a masterly dub mix with Des laying down a superb toast venting the feelings of bitter youth: *'Maggie Thatcher is a criminal/handing out policies like a tin star general/Who vote for Thatcher in '79?/Who vote her in, better vote her out.'*

As yet unsigned to a major, another single should soon be out on Recreational – and possibly a live album.

At the moment the band are busy gigging around the country, and are about to record a 'Something Else' session with The Beat. A session for John Peel follows that.

'The future' claims Leroy (the king) 'will see the band becoming more space-age in their musical style.'

A message to the people: Talisman is coming. Check it out at:

27 August 100 Club
30 August Notting Hill Carnival
06 Sept New Merlins Cave

Mort Mignon.



DONALD



BRENDAN



DES

Although Des described their music as awareness/listeners' reggae rather than dancers', the audience were blissfully unaware of this distinction and not only listened intently but skanked along with a vengeance.

Regarding influences, they cite the late great Bob Marley and, interestingly, their contemporaries Black Uhuru.



DENNISON



LEROY



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NEW RELEASE - NOV 23RD 1981

TALISMAN-Run Come Girl Wicked Dem

7" VERSION - CAT NO. SPORT 2

12" EXTENDED VERSIONS - CAT NO. SPORT 22

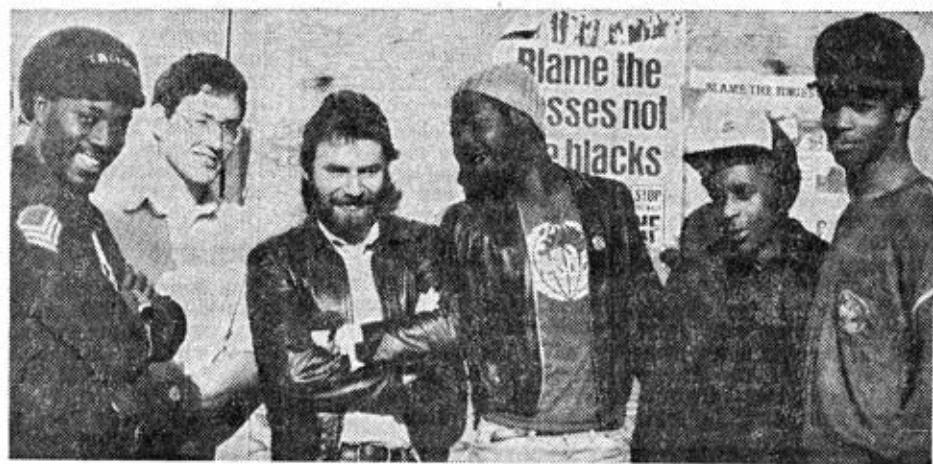
Talisman are a six piece band from Bristol who are fast gaining a reputation for their style of reggae music. Most of the music papers have done features on the band and critical acclaim has led to supporting gigs with The Clash, Bauhaus, Bow Wow Wow, The Polecats and The Thompson Twins amongst others, as well as headlining gigs from Durham to Exeter. After Christmas the band go to Holland for a series of dates. They will be appearing on a BBC 2 special "best of Something Else" provisionally due for transmission on December 28th. The band are also recording a contribution for an ITV programme "Jangles" due to be networked early next year.

"Run Come Girl" is one of their newest stage numbers which currently closes their stage-act (usually to rapturous applause!) Kid Jensen when playing the 7" recently said he thought it "a top 40 record", an opinion with which we're in complete agreement. "Wicked Dem" is also a stage favourite and we hope the record will be treated as a double 'A' side. The 12" version of the single features full 8½ minute versions of each track.

Their last single "Dole Age" stayed 9 weeks in R.B's Indie Chart reaching No. 17 and reached No. 10 in N.M.E's Indie Chart.

Now you've read the blurb, give the record a listen and we hope you like it.

1, Berkeley Crescent, The Triangle, BRISTOL, BS8 1HA. ☎ 0272 299105.



Talisman: planning to put Bristol on the map.

Talisman hope their charm will rub off

TALISMAN is a charm supposed by capable of working wonders.

Though they're prepared to settle for something less than a miracle, Talisman, the Bristol reggae band are hoping for a fair amount of luck after they make their TV debut next Tuesday.

High among their aspirations is to give the outside world a better impression of the St Paul's district with which all six are associated.

They also want to put Bristol on the music map.

They point out that when a city becomes well known for producing good bands, like Liverpool in the days of Mersey sound and more recently Coventry and Birmingham, then lots of groups from the area get a chance of sharing in the success.

They have been together for two years, but were originally known as Revelation Rockers. They changed names when they landed their most prestigious London gigs.

The following week a Lon-

don band, Revelation were at the same place and to avoid confusion the Bristol lads decided they'd become Talisman.

The band's made up by Leroy Forbes, Desmond Taylor, Donald de Cordova, Dennison Josephs and Bill Bartlett.

Desmond who writes their material told me: "My songs challenge society; we don't play that lolipop reggae where everything's just fine and happy. We want to make people think."

City rocks to the reggae beat

ST PAUL'S is famous for all the wrong reasons, but now six men from the area aim to put it — and Bristol — on the musical map.

They are members of the city's best known and most popular reggae group Talisman.

Talisman, who have been together for two years, are well aware of the pitfalls of any group trying to crack the big time.

"Bristol has never produced a band that has made it on the na-



tional level," says alto sax player Brendan Whitmore.

"The city's music circuit is closed and sometimes the audiences are apathetic towards anything old, new or different.

"But as soon as a city becomes known for producing top bands, like Coventry and Birmingham, or Liverpool in the 60's, then anyone from the area has a chance of making it," he said.

Responsible for the

earthy lyrics is rhythm guitarist and lead vocalist Desmond Taylor.

"My songs challenge society, we don't play lollipop reggae where everything's just fine and happy.

"We want the music to make people think about what going on around them," Desmond said.

One of Talisman's finest performances was at Romeos and Juliets last year when they outshone national

reggae group Black Slate.

Their ambition at the moment is to become an accepted band and get established music gigs.

And tonight (Friday) fans can see them in action at the Trinity Hall.

The band from left to right is: Donald DeCordova, drums; Bill Bartlett, keyboards; DJ Josephs, bass guitarist; Leroy Forbes, lead guitar; Desmond and Brendan.

Circus launch

A NEW record company was launched in Bristol on Wednesday night.

And already the Circus label in Whitehall Road has signed up several bands and artists to release singles in the next month.

The man in charge of the operation is talented Bristol musician Ric Yerbury.

NEW YEAR SEASON ON BBCtv

RPM

Tuesday 6.45 BBC1

Bristol reggae band Talisman make their television debut in the second programme of this new seven-part series aimed at youth. JAN WINTERBOURNE was told how the city could benefit from their success

West to be won

THE St Paul's area of Bristol exploded on to the front pages of Britain's national newspapers last May when its local black youth reacted violently to a police raid on a popular club. After the anxious editorial columns had been digested and the outraged parliamentary questions answered, the rest of the country quietly filed St Paul's in the historical library of urban deprivation + unemployed black youth = community tension. Six young people who live and work in St Paul's and who were there on the night of the 'rebellion' - or 'riot' (depending on which newspaper you read) - are now devoting a lot of energy to giving people another image of their community. They are members of the band Talisman, and they intend to put Bristol on the musical map.

'The city has never had a band that has made it at national level,' says baritone sax player Brendan, 'and that makes it doubly difficult for us to get the big break we need.'

Bass guitarist D.J. explains: 'As soon as a city becomes well known for producing top bands - like Coventry and Birmingham or Liverpool in the 60s - then anyone from that area has a chance of making it.'

'If we can do it for Bristol, we open up the avenue for all that creative talent that's just hanging around in the city. The youth in Bristol have got a

lot to offer and we want to be the pioneers for them.'

Talisman have been on the road for two years and have now arrived at a major crossroads - do they gamble and devote all their time to playing music, or continue to accept whatever gigs they can while they hold down full-time jobs?

It's not an easy decision. Lead vocalist and rhythm guitarist Desmond leads a Jekyll and

spiced with the distinctive sound of Brendan's sax and the unusual addition of keyboards from Bill, an ex-jazz musician. The words are political with a small 'p', thought-provoking and subtle. The message is not to follow leaders,

THE DJ

sensible gesture of political commercialism... if the students' grants are cut, there will be less work for bands like Talisman).

Like the successful UB40 band, Talisman are breaking down prejudice, playing what used to be exclusively black music with a mixed band. 'Race trouble only comes through the ignorance of black and white people not knowing each other,' says Desmond. 'When you get together on stage, you either



Hyde existence: 'I work for the Inland Revenue. I wear a suit and deal with income tax problems. Man, it's difficult to keep remembering how to speak properly! Now I've got myself into a mortgage and other commitments. But I don't forget the hardships outside, I'm not just looking out for myself.'

Desmond writes all the material that Talisman perform onstage. 'My songs challenge society; we don't play that "lollipop" reggae, where everything's just fine and happy. We want to make the people think.'

The sound of Talisman is that of good, professional reggae,

Talisman (from the left): Brendan, Leroy, Desmond, Donald (seated), D.J., Bill

but it makes no claims as to who the kids should follow.

'We're not sloganising,' says D.J., who backs Desmond on vocals. 'We call it "message music", but you have to listen out for it. We don't call ourselves a political band, but if the cap fits, we'll wear it.'

Talisman's political gigs have been limited to an anti-nuclear date in Bournemouth and a show they did in support of the National Union of Students' fight against cuts in grants (a

get on musically or you don't... colours don't matter.'

Lead guitarist Leroy and Donald, on drums, agreed: 'Your music has credibility or it doesn't,' said Leroy and Donald added: 'Bad reggae is bad reggae - whoever plays it!'

What Talisman need is a bit of luck - and the courage to stick with it. As they packed up their gear at 2 am to drive 150 miles back to Bristol in time for work, D.J. had no doubts: 'I've been working on the British Aerospace assembly line in Bristol, building Concorde for ten years. Leave it now? Man, you just watch me!' ●

Talístour

TALISMAN, the Bristol rockers gaining popularity every day and who entered the ECHOES reggae chart last week with their debut single for Recreation Records 'Dole Age'/'Free Speech', have a packed month of live work ahead of them.

Kicking off this Thursday (July 23) at London's 100 Club Talisman will be visiting most parts of the country.

Catch them at: London Lyceam (supporting Killing Joke) (26); Bath Pavillion

(supporting Killing Joke) (28); Woking Cricketers Pub (28); Bournemouth Moat House Hotel (30); Cheddar Cliff Hotel (31); London Heaven Discotheque (supporting Thompson Twins) (August 3); Farrington Met pub (rock Rock Against Racism) (8); Weymouth Portland Playhouse (11); Bath Moles (14); Cirencester Hill Festival and in the evening Glastonbury Children's Work Festival (15); recording for BBC2's 'Something Else' programme (20) and Exeter Tiffanys (21).



LONDON'S INSTITUTE OF Contemporary Arts (ICA) recently staged its 'Rock Week', an attempt to throw light upon a handful of little known bands covering a wide spectrum of contemporary music.

Varying reports concerning the success of 'Rock Week' all agree that Talisman was the most enjoyable band of the lot. The young reggae sextet that hails from the St

Pauls district of Bristol presented well groomed strident rhythms within a lyrical framework perfect for a generation living on the dole at the whipping end of the police.

They openly confess to having little bearing upon the Rastafarian struggle of their Jamaican brothers and their commitment to a working class struggle in Britain underlines this.



Doing the Bristol skank

Jon Futrell glimpses Talisman rising in the west

Indeed their first single which has just been issued on Bristol's Recreational Records reveals much about their politics. It is a double A side coupling 'Free Speech' with 'Dole Age' both of which capture the needs and desires not merely of the group but of all young people who find poignancy in the lyrics of UB40 (with whom comparisons have been drawn) and Steel Pulse.

Heroes

The group has been playing selected dates in London and around the country. They have the support of Capital Radio's Charlie Gillet who was instrumental in securing them a live session for the network and apparently Radio One is keen to similarly record them.

In their home town they are fast approaching local hero status after a slot they filmed for BBC in the West Country. The group and Chris Parker who operates Recreational Records from his record store Revolver, are clearly pacing their entry into the reggae world with confident but restrained steps forward.

for them - there's him wanting to write and there's me, I dunno, just writing for the hell of it, just because I've got a few words which I say well yeah I can do something with that, but I don't pursue to write."

Desmond gets to the heart of the matter when he says the group consciously attempts to present a unified front.

"We've got so many different lifestyles and attitudes in the band that we must be able to put something together that will be the BAND as opposed to something that is myself or just the person who is writing, and we think we capitalise on the fact that no two of us live the same way, or think the same way. We all have opinions on many things. There aren't any opinions that we hold as a body."

And does this democracy extend to the arrangements? Desmond responds: "It's a non system." Laughter erupts and coffee is sipped.

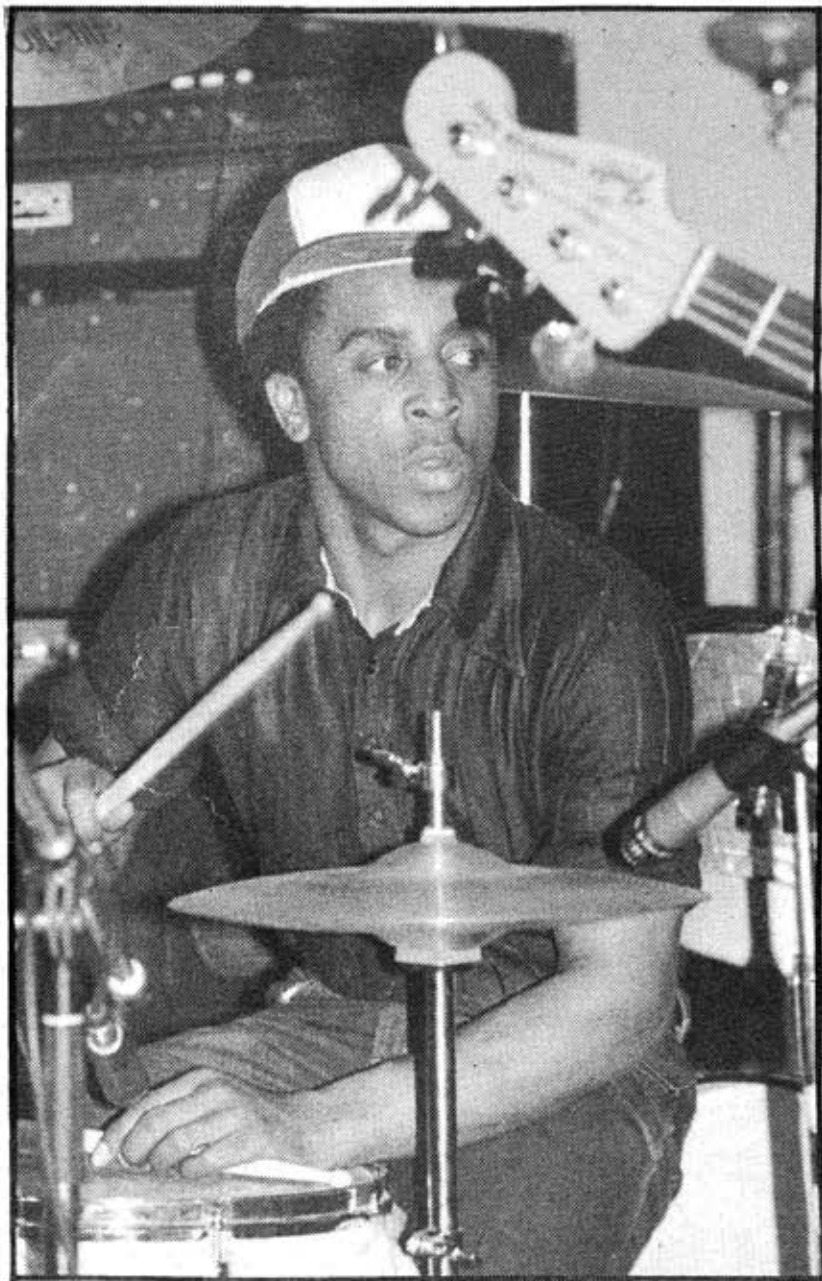
"We do have arguments," offers Dennis. "But they are all arguments to reach a happy medium. Before, with the other people, arguments were like personal and in these sort

allegation that they are merely imitators of their Jamaican mentors. This group is different.

They have never wanted to carbon-copy the work of Jamaican musicians and besides, says Dennis: "We found out that Jamaican reggae just caters for the black people (something of a generalisation although largely true) and what we're trying to do is cater for everybody 'cos we're living in England so we've always got to adapt ourselves to our surroundings and that, and try and play music that is acceptable to all your own people. The white people miss out a hell of a lot lyrically and they don't even understand the music most of the time. So what we've done is gone out on a limb of the reggae tree and we're blooming just to make the tree more attractive."

At the moment their Irish saxophonist Brendan Whitmore is doubling as manager and agent, securing them live engagements when ever possible. Several of them still have full-time jobs and are longing for the day when record sales and live work allow them to





I met them a fortnight ago when, prior to a show at the 100 club, they were attending a video screening of their performance of the ICA show. In between camera close ups of feet, backs of heads and the lighting rig the today essence of that moderately prestigious affair came over. Talismen play hard and tight reggae with a cunning deployment of harmonies and are fortunate to have in their ranks one of the crispest drummers on the UK scene, the diminutive and passive Donald de Cordova.

After a short bout of cat calls and ribbing each other we retired to the ICA cafeteria. With a mouth full of over-priced quiche lorraine, I am told that the band in its present format made its debut last July at the St Pauls Festival. They were formed two years ago by Desmond Taylor (lead vocals and guitar) and Dennis Joseph (bass guitar and vocals) to back visiting Jamaican singer Ronnie Davis. The group stayed together and after a number of keyboards players, found itself where it is today. Hungry for work.

The quiche devoured, we discuss the division of songwriting responsibility within Talisman.

Partnership

In a West Country accent Dennis explained: 'At first there was just one writing the songs and that was Desmond, then I started doin' a few but now we reckon that we can do it together and make a great reggae partnership. . . the Lennon and McCartney of reggae. He laughs. "Hmm definitely so."

"I think the urge to write was more prevelant in myself rather than the others," began Desmond having disposed of his doughnut. "I like words and then to write something and to see it made into a song and played on stage gives me a kick." Desmond was responsible for their entire repertoire of songs with the exception of 'Dole Age' which in fact contradicts the author credit on the record.

"That's what we found," says Dennis looking at my tape recorder as though the little blighter had just bitten him. "Where as he (Desmond) likes putting words together I believe I've got more of a knack. . . I shouldn't be really attempting to write music the way I do, because it's completely different from Desmond but we've got a good combination."

"He has good ideas but he waits

of times when people argue it's to find out the best sort of thing to do - some people take it personal ... anything that comes up, it gotta take an argument 'cos no six people are just gonna come out and say, yeah, I agree with you, and I agree with you. So it's always gotta take an argument before the truth comes out."

Talismen are acutely aware of the stigma that British reggae bands have carried with them for many years. Many similar bands have tried and failed in the face of the commit themselves totally to the

music. The commitment within Talisman is that strong.

Let Dennis have the final say: "People put you in categories anyway and there's nothing you can do about that. But UB40 have a style, we have a style, everybody got a style and it must come from the same reggae tree - and that's what reggae is all about. As long as people listen and react to what's going on that's good enough."

Along with Black Roots, Talisman lead a new wave of West Country reggae music and it's coming your way soon.



Fatal charmers

TALISMAN waft their dizzy potions under ROBBI MILLAR'S nose

IN THE grimy room above Ronnie Scott's Soho jazz club that passes for one of London's hallowed music venues, a band called Talisman are prancing through the arduous task of sound-checking with obvious enthusiasm.

Despite the less than encouraging aspect of their surroundings, they're bubbling with anticipation — they have good reason. Since its release, their debut single, 'Dole Age' has been firmly ensconced in the UK indies chart, they've been offered plenty in the way of radio exposure and, gig-wise, they're in demand.

Talisman are a Bristol band who could be loosely described as members of a growing musical force, the New Wave Of British Multiracial Reggae. A combination of deep, nudging rhythm, refreshing keyboards, swinging guitar and soothing, soaring saxophone, their music pushes the realistic rather than the romantic or Rastafarian religious. Their sound is not dissimilar to that of UB40 although Talisman — Brendan Whitmore (sax), Des Taylor (rhythm and vocals), Dennison (bass), Leroy (lead guitar), Bill Bartlett (keyboards) and Donald De Cordova (drums) — are not keen on such

comparisons. Theirs, they reckon, is a blacker sound. Dennison explains: "Let's be fair, UB40 were the first to come up with this kind of thing. I think the black man was always frightened of having white musicians in his band but UB40 were the first guys to have black and white integration. We expect the criticism."

Brendan Whitmore expands: "People always need to put things into categories and this is probably the only category we fit into. I'd rather people said that we sound like Burning Spear or something!"

Ironically, this has happened — Dennison points out that a dj/toaster called Superfly mentioned "people like Bob Marley, Burning Spear and Steel Pulse all rolled into one" — but Talisman's success surely indicates a move away from Jamaican reggae, hinting at expansion for its British second-generation relative?

Brendan: "There's room for both, room for more than one type of reggae. Very few kids in this country can relate to the problems of living in Jamaica. Now that a lot of the English reggae bands are picking up on what is happening in this country and bringing it out in their music, it helps . . . the whole thing about people liking music is that something clicks in their mind, something that they can relate to and think about."



TALISMAN: l to r, Bill, Leroy, Dennison, Brendan, Des, Donald

HENCE 'DOLE Age', a very relevant subject although one that needs to be treated carefully in order to avoid cliché!

Brendan: "It's a strong song and relevant to the situation. At the same time we thought it was unusual enough not to fall into the trap . . . I mean, there are some songs around about unemployment that are done from a very obvious viewpoint. . ."

Dennison: "Besides, when we wrote the song there was only two million unemployed. It's much worse now!"

Talisman are a likeable

combination of cynicism and trust. On the one hand they describe life in their headquarters of Bristol's St Pauls as "all right, you can live in your own shit if you make the best of it"; on the other hand they tell me that their single deal with the Revolver off-shoot, Recreational Records is based on a verbal contract because "we ain't got no bread, we ain't got no choice".

However, Talisman are very happy with life at Recreational. Having been together in their present form since the spring of last year, previously performing under the name Revelation

Rockers, they admit to having harboured brief worries about finding a suitable record company to release their music.

Brendan: "We're not a roots reggae band as far as people categorise roots reggae and we were in a sort-of limbo because we were playing reggae which wasn't being particularly accepted by the reggae labels and, at the same time, if you're a reggae band everybody *expects* you to go the reggae labels. The other labels aren't particularly interested so usually you're stuck in between. But at Revolver, although the stuff they sell and the stuff they

distribute is reggae, the people there have a good understanding of what's happening."

"Another good thing is that we didn't have to go into a studio with an executive standing behind us. We were able to do the song in the way that we wanted and then Recreational did their bit."

The next bit will be a follow up 45 to 'Dole Age', probably the sensuous 'Slow Poison', along with an intensive live schedule and a possible live album. Time, I think, for Talisman to give up their day jobs. Their "modern day good luck charm" is working very well.

Let's hear it for the old values

Rico/Talisman Bristol

ANOTHER PALTRY turn out. Bristol's best reggae band, Talisman, were rounding off a particularly powerful and well received set with 'Slow Poison'. As Revelation Rockers they were getting nowhere but the change of name and a general tightening up of the sound has worked wonders. We are now watching a band playing like they mean it, positively oozing commitment. Listen to the man drive those drums! The dub-wise mix they're currently getting is never too heavy and judicious use of the echo gives it the taut edge it needs.

Talisman are also strong in the vocal department. Huge harmonies and strident, powerful voices together with the keyboards and sax, give the rhythms colour and excitement. Not claiming to be an expert in these matters but for my money, Talisman hold the attention and lift the spirit as well as any British reggae band. Catch them if you can.

It must feel strange to Rico, who not long ago was playing to house full notices all over the country with the Specials, to find such a meagre few gathered in his name alone. Still, the man's been at this game so long, he's probably beyond such consideration.

I first saw him about two years ago at the St Paul's Festival, playing that lush, warm trombone of his with sparse backup. This tended to be a little bland, like a bare instrumental track before a first class dub producer gets to work on it.

Now all is variety. Rico's trombone is augmented by sax and trumpet, drums, tablas, guitars. A Big Band

sound! Now those words, for those keen on history at school, should conjure up the likes of Benny Goodman, Glen Miller, even Joe Loss, and weirdly enough that would be extremely fitting, for a lot of the material tonight was really old swing tunes with a reggae underpin. Lifted from the days when the tune was the real personality, Rico breathes life and freshness into grandly planned scores. He reminded me of stories my parents told me of dancing to Joe Loss or Harry Vardon. The object of the evening was to dance — to a good band naturally. There were stars of course, but in those days (apparently) people didn't stand round in gormless clumps gawking at them. They danced, chatted, bought drinks and enjoyed each other's company. In those days the band was a factor, but not the only factor in an evening out.

Which is what was uncomfortable about tonight. Here we all are staring at the stage when we should have been talking to each other. Rico doesn't make music for lecture halls, though he should make it for supermarkets and lifts. It's difficult to get fierce with a trombone and Rico knows this well. That's why he concentrates on seemingly effortless melodic flights, warm, generous, good natured and in its way, holy music. To me Rico is a graceful performer who is being consumed in the wrong way. Nothing is gained by coming to stare, for to participate is more important. You should let his music live around you, instead of boxing it in. Rico should be an ambient, not an obelisk. But before that happens we're going to have to look at things in quite a different way. Isn't it about time?

singles

1		BEING WITH YOU Smokey Robinson Motown
2		FUNERAL PYRE Jam Polydor
3		STAND AND DELIVER Adam and the Ants CBS
4		HOW 'BOUT US Champaign CBS
5		YOU DRIVE ME CRAZY Shakin' Stevens Epic

INDEPENDENT

- DOLE AGE - FREE SPEECH**
Talisman, Recreational
- TOO DRUNK TO FUCK**
Dead Kennedys, Cherry Red
- DON'T SLOW DOWN**
UB40, DEP International
- PAPA'S GOT A BRAND NEW PIGBAG**, Pigbag, Y
- RESURRECTION EP**
Vice Squad, Riot City
- COMPLETE DISORDER EP**
Disorder, Disorder
- BRISTOL ROCK**
Black Roots, Nubian
- CROAKED**
Essential Bop, Recreational
- FOUR HOURS**
Pop DVA, Fetish
- CANDYSKIN**
Fire Engines, Pop:Aural

Chart supplied by REVOLVER RECORDS, 1 Berkeley Crescent, The Triangle, Clifton, Bristol.

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SPRINKLER
STOP VALVE
INSIDE

FACT . . . stranger than fiction: a reggae band from *Bristol*? Unlikely but true.

Talisman may be fresh to our ears and seem new to the scene, but with two-and-a-half years building behind them, their West Country roots are fast proving a haven; time well spent on a chance to mature – like best, strong Cheddar – ready and waiting for the wave of exposure about to break all around them.

Accident, luck and a lot of hard work finds them trendily touted, fully experienced and implicitly trusted as one of the best live acts currently playing the small summer circuit.

But where to begin with a little-known outfit whose swift reputation promises more straightforward fun than any deep fascination? What gems

of wit and wisdom have these chaps to impart? Best just ask them, I guess.

"'Ello mum," chuckles cheeky bassist Den Joseph into the mike: one of the four black members that make up the sextet, he plays the rôle of major spokesman.

"Nah! We want you to print a retraction about that UB40 statement you made in our live review," he decides, feigning mock aggravation over what he seriously considers a lazy attempt on my behalf at catch-all categorisation.

"'UB40 should sue' you said. 'D'ya really think we stole their music? We don't sound nothin' like them – we gotta get it straight cos this keeps croppin' up."

Off your chest then lads – let's have it . . .

"We couldn't sound like UB40, cos number one: their lead singer is white, there's only two black guys in that band, and you need that gruff voice. Number two: the keyboards player . . ." he glances across at Bill Bartlett, the mild-mannered, bespectacled Talisman ivory-tickler who just happens to be even more weedy and pallid than me, and visibly checks: ". . . uh . . . can't . . . no way . . . uh . . .

. Look, I'd like to play with them really – if you wanna call it support, then as a support I suppose, but it would be worth it just to show the people it's not true . . ."

"Uh . . . they could always support us," offers lead guitarist Leroy Forbes.

TALISMAN, as you'll have gathered, are cocky and proud, anxious for success but on their own terms and not on the coat-tails of some other band, trend or style.

"It's the sax that's supposed to sound like UB40," sighs Den. "The sax!" He glares at founder member, bearded Irish saxophonist Brendan Whitmore. "We gotta put a rope round Brendan's choke an' make 'im play different."

All joking aside, Talisman mean it. Their debut single, "Dole Age", is a powerfully moving subjective indictment of Thatcher's repressive regime that astonishingly avoids clichés, while its sumptuous reggae dance beat is the unique first flowering of a second wave of native roots

rockers more concerned with pressing home truths than aping stylish echoes from some alien island in the sun.

Their goals are ambitious but realistic, their purpose resolute and uncompromising.

"We play the music we like to play," says singer/guitarist/songwriter Des Taylor.

"If it happens that it sells and they play it on the radio, that's fine but I don't think we consciously go out to achieve that. We just play in the style we like to play and if other people like it that's their business.

"We're doing this for money and for self-satisfaction so unless we're pleased and happy with what we're putting out – there's no point in doing it at all – perfection before profit."

Talisman's straightforward, honest approach results from many essential soul-searching discussions much akin to those revealed in recent interviews with the Specials, the Beat and any other bands preoccupied with the risky relationship between personal pride and belief and monstrous mass marketing: between pop and politics.

"Dole Age" is deliberately provocative, far too much so for day-time radio but, according to Brendan, it couldn't have turned out any other way.

"There's an awful lot wrong with the world at the moment so whatever sort of statement you make, there's very little that you can say good about anything so really, to put across something effectively, it's gotta be a criticism of some situation, regardless of what that situation is."

And if that seems strangely at odds with the furious footwork witnessed at many a Talisman gig, Des has the answer: "It's optimistic criticism. It works two ways because it's serious but, at the same time, you can't be serious all the time."

PATHS carefully planned, sights set high, Talisman will never be content with a purist pursuit just to satisfy a cliquey cult.

"We wanna get what the Police got," laughs Den. "If they can do it playin' their kinda reggae, it just goes to show 'ow the black man or the

black music 'as to play twice as 'ard. That's what we gotta do for we're the first British band who's tryin' to do that same sorta thing . . ."

So does the success of white saccharine reggae annoy him?

"It does! It does!" he cries. "Because you know what the answer is – suppressed music! If you're white it's all right, if you're black, you gotta work twice as 'ard at it. But that's cool . . ."

"Because they hedged their bets," chips in Brendan, glancing at Bill with a mile-wide grin, "they got us two in".

The multi-racial ideal, central to Talisman's unique hybrid sound, also causes a good few problems.

First, the band's black members – Den, Des, Leroy and the stoney-silent (shy?) drummer Donald DeCordora – all believe it alienates their potentially large coloured audience:

"If the point you're trying to get at is whether the music is attracting the black audience – no, in a word. But I think they'll come round to our sound when we finally make it because they'll be able to look up and say 'Yeah! Talisman ARE a black band and they've made it' and they'll be proud," says Des.

Secondly, there's the pressing problem of finance:

"We're lucky," says Brendan. "We've always been able to do things our way and we've come this far but, in the beginning, we tried all the obvious people – Virgin, Island, people like that – but the problem was we weren't a black reggae band so the black labels weren't interested and we weren't a white reggae band so the white labels weren't interested – we sort of fell in the middle. We just had to decide, 'if that's the way things are going, we'll just have to do it our way and show these people how wrong they are'."

PRESENTLY, recording for the Bristol independent Recreational Records distributed through Revolver (0272

299105), half of Talisman still depend on day jobs to pay the rent, a situation surely soon to be rectified by one of the many majors nosing around at their increasingly popular live London shows.

But what makes this band capable of performing miracles of Lazarus-like proportions such as seducing the hipster-cool Heaven liggers into a demented suit-sopping sweat?

"We're the best," says Leroy.

"We care about what we do," says Des, "And it shows."

"We're all out for the same thing," explains Den, "Just total communication. We're a unit instead of just people and that's strong, man, that's strength. We thrive on that and I think this kind of thing rips other bands apart. This is watertight, indestructible.

"When reggae music's accepted by all, mainly the white community, me an' 'im (he gestures towards Des) is gonna be the Paul McCartney and Lennon of reggae music, surely."

"It's possible," agrees Des.

"Of course it's possible," urges Den.

For a band who were originally inspired by Marley and fortuitously forced to change their name for copyright reasons from Revolution Rockers to the lucky Talisman; for a band who had 30,000 people stomping, screaming and flashing V signs at — of all places — Glastonbury this summer; for a band possessed of an uncompromising cross-over potential equal to any of our best reggae-based bands, I'd say anything was, is and will be possible.

Watch those charts and see them climb.