

# David Rodigan

## *BIOGRAPHY*

Rodigan was born of Scott/Irish parentage having a Scottish father and an Irish mother. His birthplace, Germany, was to be his home for the first four years of his life. Being what is colloquially known as an 'army brat', Rodigan was raised in a few countries where his father was posted during his service with the British Forces.

At aged 4, his family relocated to North Africa where the ensuing four years found David living in Libya and also in Derna on the edge of the Sahara desert being as he recalls, "reared with the Arabs". His first glimpse of England came at the age of 8 when his family moved to the United Kingdom.

During his formative years and into his early teens, young Rodigan dwelt in a small village in Oxfordshire totally oblivious to anything outside of his own culture, least all black music and black people. He recalls that during this time he "wasn't near a black community per se" and his ambition in life was to be a teacher, but although he qualified in this field, the call of the stage was too hard to resist and he took up theatre due to his Love of Shakespeare. His aim was to become a member of the royal Shakespeare Society after 3 years of attendance at the Rose Branford College of Speech and Drama. On embarking into the theatrical forum, Rodigan began with some theatre work in Sheffield, South Yorkshire, and then moved onto television appearances in shows like 'Sherlock Holmes' and 'Dr Who'.

At the age of approximately 15, Rodigan began buying records leading up to his first playing out date at age 16 in 1967. The first arena for Rodigan's DJ skill was a youth club playing to teenagers like himself. It was at this point in his life in 1968 that he acquired his well-known nickname of 'Ram Jam'. This name stemmed from his signing on and signing off at events with his signature tune by Jackie Mittoo entitled 'Ram Jam'.

After college, Rodigan moved onto playing out occasionally in, the North of England until he got his break into radio in 1978 doing a weekly reggae show Sunday lunch-time on BBC Radio London. Up until this point, his love of reggae music prompted him to learn more about the people, the culture and the musical genre itself. His early influences included the legendary Ska beat as he recalls that "the music fascinated me because it was this driving beat" which was unlike anything he'd ever heard before. When Rock Steady made it's appearance. Rodigan reminisces. "I was a big fan of Delroy Wilson. One of the most significant records for me was a song called 'Dancing Mood' I first heard that in 1967".

As time progressed, Rodigan moved on from BBC Radio London in 1979 after being approached by Capital Radio. His Saturday night reggae show proved very popular and then during the early 80's, he began doing links with Jamaica, namely Barry Gordon of Irie FM, 1998 saw Rodigan move onto his current UK radio slot with Kiss 100 FM. More recently, he has been working on a New York radio station called Irie Jam every Saturday afternoon of which he's very enthusiastic saying it's a "half hour program and it's getting a very good response". Throughout his time on the aforementioned radio stations, one thing not widely known is that Rodigan has also been playing on British Forces radio for the past 15 years. He tours extensively with this and does shows all over Europe including Germany, France, Belgium, Holland, Italy and Sweden.

Rodigan's talents are not restricted to radio play as most people can attest to him playing out in various areas, specifically dancehalls and nightclubs. In 1970 alongside his oldest and dearest friend , Donald Facey aka Papa Face, Rodigan started a reggae club in London's West End called 'Gossips'. He recalls it as being "the longest running residency in the West End of any club" as they were a permanent fixture for 19 years leaving last year.

Constantly evolving, Rodigan continued juggling as a DJ, but in 1991 he entered the specialist area of clashing whereby a DJ must use his verbal and record selection skills to out-do his opponent in a dancehall forum. By using dubplates, some specially created for the event, and getting the crowd behind him, the DJ aims to come out the winner based on crowd response. Most people thought Rodigan had gone crazy when the first sound system he decided to challenge was the legendary clashing sound system, Bodyguard. In addition to him taking them on, he travelled to their turf of May Pen in Clarendon, Jamaica. He fondly remembers "everyone saying I was mad, but it was a dance no-one will ever forget. I surprised a lot of people, but I took it from a fun point of view".

Since then he has been up against some of the most notorious clashing sounds, not least Ricky Trooper of Killamanjaro. However, their clash in 1967 was not without its problems. The event was held in New York and as far as Rodigan was concerned, he came out the winner, but his opponent was not happy and he says "there were some racist remarks near the end that was unnecessary". After receiving an apology from Trooper over the telephone, Rodigan always the gentleman, accepted and put the issue behind him. Surprisingly, he harbors no malice and when asked who his hardest opponent in the clash arena, he pinpoints Trooper and elaborates "he's an inspiring selector and has tremendous energy and commitment. He's a very tough nut to crack".

All is not roses in the musical genre he loves so much and he admits to disliking the "negative aspects of some of it. Sometimes it seems obsessed with violence and I think it's negative". However, he also sees positive signs starting to come back into being and names some of his favorite influences of today as Luciano and Morgan Heritage.

One of his most memorable experiences as a DJ stems from a dance in Bermuda on Horse Shoe beach in 1995. A tranquil look comes over Rodigan as he describes the atmosphere of "a full moon and thousands and thousands of people on the beach". So many people were there that some had to get onto boats and moor them in the harbour of the bay. As Rodigan signed on with Bob Marley's "Natural Mystic" he saw "about 6 or 7 thousand people on the beach put lighters in the air" and sway from side to side. To Rodigan it was one of the most moving experiences he's ever had.

Rodigan has future projects lined up including a recently launched Wednesday reggae night at Club Subterania on Ackland Road in London's Ladbroke Grove area. Over the past few weeks, he has had many famous people pass through including the Wailing Souls, Freddie McGregor, Maxi Priest and Lennox Lewis. He also plans a syndication of the radio program in New York.

Constantly evolving and progressing, David Rodigan has had a significant input into the reggae DJ arena spanning over 20 years. He is an inspiration to up and coming DJ's regardless of creed or colour as he's a prime example that the color of your skin makes no difference when it comes to being a skilled DJ and having love for the music, the people and the culture. No doubt, he will continue playing music and fuelling his passion for reggae through various means, but his last words sum up his humility, "I would really love to say thank-you for the support. All I'm doing is sharing the music. It's a tremendous feeling to have people share that with you.

The message is thank-you, thank-you."

David Rodigan can be heard on Kiss 100 FM every Sunday evening between 8.00 and 10.00 pm and also on Irie Jam in New York every Saturday afternoon.