

T.O.K



The four singers began T.O.K – the acronym originally stood for Touch of Klass. In the early '90s, when Motown's glee club foursome was sweeping everything before them with their harmonies, T.O.K began by performing R&B covers, but that inevitably changed. As Davidson explained, "We're Jamaican. That has to come out in the music, and that's what happened, gradually."

The quartet trained with Jamaican vocal coach Georgia Guerra, played a lot of high school parties, then graduated to the hotel circuit on Jamaica's expensive North Coast, where they'd inject a little spice into the shows by covering a Bob Marley song or Ini Kamoze's Hot Stepper.

In 1993, they placed second in the annual Tastee Talent Contest. Though they didn't win, their appearance helped bring them to Nuff Records, where they recorded a few tracks for the label, although nothing hit the charts.

By 1996, they were on Sly & Robbie's Taxi label, where the single, Hit Them High appeared, again making no real impact. From there it was on to Main Street, where they encountered engineer Richard Browne, who was about to start his own label.

T.O.K opted to go with the engineer, who was just a couple of years older than they were. Their first effort for his new High Profile label went nowhere, but the follow-up, Hardcore Lover, which teamed them with dancehall queen Lady Saw, rose to number four. Although High Profile didn't last, the pairing of Browne and T.O.K did. He became their manager

King Stone

and often produced their records. And it seemed as if they could do no wrong, releasing a series of singles like Whoa and Ill Nana that kept crashing into the charts. But by now, their style was far from where it had begun. They could still harmonize and occasionally would on tracks, but dancehall had become a much bigger influence and their sound had turned harder – hardcore dancehall, in fact – influenced equally by Jamaican sounds and the U.S. hip-hop on MTV, and it was well-received. This was apparent in 1998, when Eagles Cry (a nod to Prince’s “When Doves Cry”) gave the band their first number one.

In 2001, T.O.K released My Crew, My Dawgs on their own XCAR label, with many of their hits included. Their 2005 effort, ‘Unknown Language’, would feature the hit ballad Footprints along with a guest appearance from Miami rapper Pitbull on the single She’s Hot. This was the sole collaboration on the album and was a major hit for the group, crossing over into the international market, reaping major commercial success for the group.

‘Unknown Language’ also produced a number of other hits, among them, Gyal Yuh A Lead, Hey Ladies, Solid As A Rock, Fire Fire, She’s Hot and Gigi Winer.

“The music videos for Footprints and Gyal You A Lead (which were also cross-over hits) were played on all the major music stations both locally and abroad and even entered the Hot 100 Billboard Charts, and all of this was done without the support of a major record label, and that spoke volumes about the power of our brand,” Flexx highlighted.

For the past seven years, T.O.K has been breaking into new markets: in 2010, they performed in Russia and Zimbabwe for the first time, Nicaragua in 2011, and in 2012 they did shows in Sicily an Israel. There were also performances in other new markets like the Czech Republic, Hungary, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda.

“These are places that dancehall is not that established, so when you go into Eastern Europe you don’t usually find that much dancehall activity,” Bay-C said.

In 2009, T.O.K released the album ‘Our World’ which featured songs like Couple Up, Guardian Angel, the latter becoming the number 1 downloaded ringtone in Japan, outselling imports from other genres as well. “This again shows the power of the brand of dancehall,” Bay-C said.

However, in 2011, fans worldwide were hit hard with news that the journey of the legendary reggae/dancehall group could possibly come to a sudden halt by a potential break up. However, the group dispelled all suspicions with a renewed energy in 2012 embodied in their Yardie single done for their country’s 50th anniversary celebration of independence.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "King Stone". The word "King" is written in a cursive style, and "Stone" is written in a more blocky, slightly cursive style. Above the letter "i" in "King", there is a small, stylized crown or tiara symbol.

The group performed the single at the National Grand Galla, held at the National Arena, which was part of the 'Jamaica 50' celebrations.. But the celebrations did not stop there, as T.O.K later embarked on a tour of Europe, using their Yardie single as the platform for many of their shows.

"At the time, Yardie was the single that we were promoting and so we went all out every night wearing the Jamaican colours, we even went as far as having special masks made in Jamaican colours, which was a hit with fans across Europe. That year was Olympics as well, so we had a lot to talk about during our performances, as we promoted brand Jamaica alongside brand T.O.K," Craigy T explained.

In 2012, however, it was time for T.O.K to close a longstanding chapter in their musical journey, and as Bay-C rightly put it, "we severed a 10-year tenure with VP Records, as the group felt it was time to embark on a new chapter."

Immediately, T.O.K made a trek to Israel for a reggae concert, the group being the headliner for a show called 'Reggae in the Dessert'. During their stint there, the group also seized the opportunity to shoot a video for their first single post VP, entitled The Voice. This is the first single off the group's upcoming fourth studio album entitled '4Ever', which is set to be released in April of this year.

The album which is executively produced by XCAR Records, (the group's label) also features work from other producers like Washroom Entertainment, Bombrush Records, Chimney Records, Romeich Records, Stephen Mcgregor, Stainless Records, Star Player and Code Red Records. Only two artistes featured on this album, Busy Signal and Serani.

"This album is really to establish that the group is solid as a rock and no matter which direction the business takes, the group will always be a force to be reckoned with. The album is a perfect mix between 'feel-good' music and music with a purpose or message," Craigy T explained.

Currently, the group is also promoting other new singles for 2013 like Bubble Up, Get Mad and Good to Stay.

"We have already started more new recordings for 2013 like Dutty Heart for Seanizzle Records, and we have been working with producers like Stephen McGregor, Donovan Germaine plus some new producers like Frass Twins, Music Factory and Mad Syantis," Flexx said.

For T.O.K, its all about a new image, new attitude and a new sound for 2015 and beyond.

