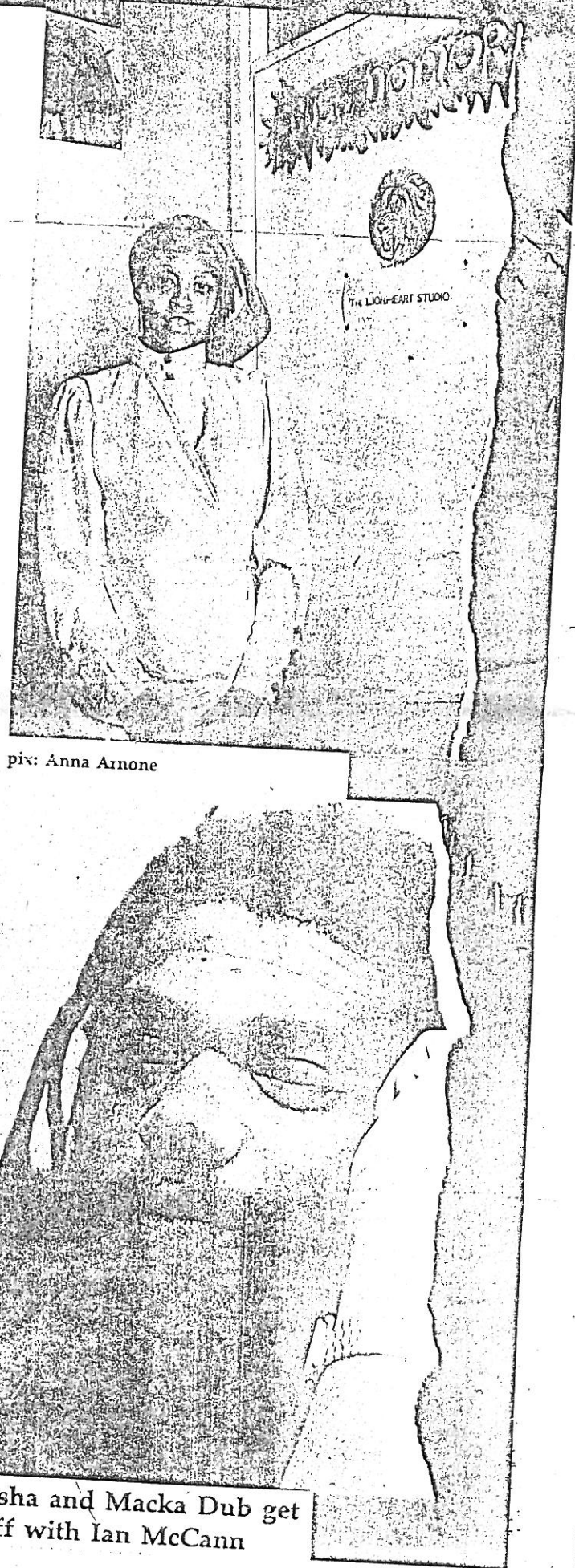


# MIDLANDS MASSIVE

# CONQUERING LIONS



pix: Anna Arnone

**A**ISHA and Macka Dub are two musical souls inextricably linked. They live in a house in Wolverhampton, a small cosy place; upstairs is a demo studio, known as Lionheart. It was there that the original demos for much of Macka B's material are worked on, as well as Aisha's own music of truths and rights.

**A**ISHA is best known thus far for her version of Fabian Miranda's Jack Ruby/Lloyd Coxsone's roots classic 'Prophecy', and her winning performances at Ariwa gigs. 'Prophecy' was her third release, the first being 'Dancing Time', and the second a cover of 'That's How Heartaches Are Made'. Her LP 'The High Priestess' has been on and off the schedules for more than a year now, but it's now definitely coming at the end of January, together with a single, 'Guide And Protect'.

"There must be a beginning," she says. "The beginning of Aisha really was singing over my father's sound at an early age. It wasn't really no big sound, it was just party sessions we used to have at home, weddings, things like that. That's how I was encouraged really, he more or less just give me my first mike so I just sang. After that it was leaving school and singing over a sound, Locks City. All I used to do was sing over records, but I had encouragement all around. After that I joined Capital Letters, not really anything solo, it was just backing. After that, I just branched out..."

Aisha appeared on one release by the group, 'Bread And Water', an EP, and then she left to join another locally-based group, Sons Of David, where she formed part of a three-woman group Mystical Highs, singing backing.

It was a frustrating period for the young singer; the ideas were there, but not the outlet. The "inevitable" split happened in '84, and it was at this point that a legendary figure skanked onto Aisha's musical horizon.

"We were very fortunate really to meet Doctor Alimantado," says Aisha.

Macka Dub takes up the story: "I had a home recording thing y'know, he was in town, and a next man brought him down to my yard. We was recording at the time, and we come up with some nice vibes and everything, then he found out is a lot of music we've got, and he says 'There's a man in London by the name of the Mad Professor, check him out, he gives people a chance. It doesn't really make sense to just sit down here with it...' Alimantado call me to do a session for him at Ariwa studios, and it was there we meet... Even now we keep that connection there with Alimantado."

Aisha's LP contains both lovers and roots; when you talk to her and Macka Dub though, they're serious. She is one of the few female singers to sing roots and be recorded, and almost all of them have sang love songs along the way; isn't the love of Jah also the love for your people and the earth? There is also a connection with other musics in roots; the Lionheart household holds great fans of Tashan's 'Thank You Father' — a real roots record from an unusual source. It's a question of depth of commitment and involvement, and Aisha's commitment is what enables her to write.

"Pure inspiration and spirit," she says with a sincere smile. "What I'm doing now is teaching myself to play an instrument, which is the organ. That's the instrument that gives me the inspiration I seek. I don't know a single note, but I'll play it by ear and I'll find the chords. Most of my material has been written for a good while; they've just been written and put down, and Dub writes too, must give him the credit because he is a very positive songwriter."

Macka Dub's positive attitude comes from his faith, and his talent comes from years of practice too.

"Yes, I've been playing guitar now for about 14 years," he affirms. "My mum bought me an acoustic guitar for my birthday once, and that's where it start. I've still got that guitar now, I could never let it go, it means so much to me. I dunno where our music come from, but there's music in our family, because my elder brother Ace had a guitar, and I was kinda jealous of it, I want my own! And my sister now, she was learning the piano, and my two younger

brothers now are steel pan experts, they've played in Trinidad and everything. So it's around."

There's another generation coming up too, with a growing interest in music; Macka Dub has always been around music, and it's rubbing off on the children.

Dub played rhythm guitar in school bands, and he switched to bass, jamming on tunes like 'No Jesting' with a friend. He played bass in local outfit Prewax, and joined Capital Letters as rhythm guitarist.

"We did a lot of things, I tour and everything, I learnt a lot from being in that group still. Then we moved on to Sons Of David, I was playing bass and Aisha was harmony. It was an established band in Wolverhampton, but we didn't do any recording during that time. During them times, I was man that played bass, drums, keyboards, gits, and I have a bredren who use to have a little home recording studio called Far I Studio, and he run a sound called Marcus Sound, and what we did he could play on the sound. And I'm telling you something, we was the first people to use a drum machine, late Seventies, early Eighties..."

That experience stood him in good stead when he came to work on Macka B's 'We've Had Enough' LP. However, he didn't meet the MC through the music

"The very first time that I remember when I met Macka B was on a basketball court. That time we was in school, in the same year and everything. His school was playing my school in a Cup Final. I won't bother say who won, right! Then we deh pon the same scene really, and then he come voice couple tunes in Lionheart Studio. It come out nice y'know; we never really say nothing of it, we just did it. Then we just carry on with our own thing, on two different levels but we parallel still. Even with Ariwa we were coming from the same area, so we was coming more with a connection."

Guidance works in a mysterious way; the two arrived at Ariwa through different means, and yet they connected still. For that, give thanks. And when you hear Aisha's LP, chances are you'll give thanks for that too...

Aisha and Macka Dub get ruff with Ian McCann