



(LAS 7314)

**LYRICHORD ARCHIVE SERIES**  
**ROOTS OF REGGAE**  
**The Jolly Boys**

**JOY BELLS: Basic Jamaican Rhythms, Played by the Jolly Boys.**

Having a good time, living it up: "Jollification" is what they call it in Jamaica. And that's what the Jolly Boys (*aka Jah-lly*) are about. Theirs is a light, lilting, good-time music inspired in large part by the rich folk musical resources of the Jamaican countryside. Their distinctive sound is the result of a creative synthesis of Jamaican roots. Perhaps it is best described as "acoustic reggae," electrifying without being electrified.

What we have here is a happy blend of the older and newer. The Jolly Boys' repertoire ranges from revamped versions of old digging songs -- by means of which cooperative gangs of rural workers used to rhythmically coordinate their movements -- to delightfully sassy modern *mentos* which rival the best of Trinidadian calypso in their dramatic innuendo. Musically, the Jolly Boys weave a texture based most strongly on *mento*, a close stylistic relative of calypso, while calypso originated in Trinidad, and spread from that island to other parts of the Caribbean, *mento* is indigenous to Jamaica. Though it has undergone various transformations over the years, it remains wholly Jamaican. Add to this base a touch of traditional Rastafarian rhythms, a liberal shot of offbeat reggae, perhaps a slight tinge of calypso a la Trinidad, and you have Jolly music indeed -- a compelling Caribbean pepperpot which pleases the ears, and lifts the spirits. *Music irie.*

But the Jolly Boys offer more than just good-time music. Within their ranks are two budding songwriters, Donald Davidson and Fitz Ramus, who have much to say. Fitz excels in the genre of the topical song, so dear to West Indians, as exemplified by the witty *Sarah*, or the admonitory *Fat Wife*. On the other hand, Donald writes in a socially and politically conscious vein much akin to the bulk of reggae produced these days. Witness the political commentary of *Thousands of Children*, the implied protest in *Crackdown*, the spiritual message of the Rastafarian-inspired paean, *Joy Bells*.

So although the Jolly Boys are first and foremost entertainers (they have delighted many a North American tourist while playing engagements at northcoast clubs), it is obvious that they are acutely sensitive to the unique social and political currents which have been shaping post-independence Jamaica. Listeners should therefore give their attention to more than the catchy beat -- for the Jolly Boys speak their minds.

Enough said. Give this disc a spin, and appreciate this special blend of acoustic roots music pioneered by the Jolly Boys. As they say in *JA*, *mek we have some jollification!*

-- Ken Bilby

#### THE JOLLY BOYS ARE:

Donald Davidson: guitar, vocals

Fitz Ramus: maracas, vocals

Leon Morrison (alias Shorty): repeater (traditional Rastafarian drum), vocals

Sterling Thomson: rumba-box (bass sanza)

Luther Summerville: four-string banjo\*

\*Special thanks to George Dillon of Lime Hall for banjo on *Linstead Market*, *Water for Garden*, *Pomp and Pride*, and *Joy Bells*

1. *Linstead Market*

The Jolly Boys' instrumental version of a very old and very famous Jamaican folk song.

2. *Oh Carolina* (Folkes Bros.)

The Jolly Boys' rendition of an old ska hit.

3. *Crackdown* (Donald Davidson)

A topical song about that most sacred variety of herb known variously as kali, callie, or cally; and why a possessor of it had to beg.

4. *Sarah* (Fitz Ramus)

Buckingham Palace and Princess Alice don't seem to measure up to sweet Jamaica.

5. *Fat Wife* (Fitz Ramus)

A confidential warning from one who is experienced: "Every time I lie down in the bed, she cover me right through and leave out me head."

6. *Water the Garden* (Count Lasher)

As he wheels out his hose, the symbolism is hard to miss. Delightful rudeness.

7. *Pomp and Pride* (F. Hibbert)

The Jolly Boys' version of a song written for the annual national festival of Jamaica.

8. *Joy Bells* (Donald Davidson)  
A song of dread rapture: "Over the river, over  
the sea, Negus my saviour, pilot me."
9. *Build on the Rock* (Donald Davidson)  
Some perennially sound advice: "Build upon the  
rock, my friend, and not upon the sinking sand."
10. *Thousands of Children* (Donald Davidson)  
A ruler has come to Jamaica with an iron rod to  
set the captives free, and to help the weak that  
they may be strong. (Could his name be Michael?)  
Says Mr. Davidson: "This is the new Law that  
rules Jamaica."
11. *Beautiful Garden* (Donald Davidson)  
A goodwill message to visitors.

Recorded at Salem, Jamaica by Ken Bilby (except *Thousands of Children* and *Build on the Rock*,  
which were recorded at Dynamite Studios in Kingston)

Cover designed by Jefferson Miller



## The Lyrichord Archive Series

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