

Lord Tanamo of The Skatalites- Biography
For immediate release; March 2004

Joseph “Lord Tanamo” Gordon of The Skatalites is a veteran entertainer who made his earliest recordings in 1954 for Jamaica’s first music producer, Stanley Motta. Born in Kingston in 1934, Tanamo’s initial hit song was “Crinoline Incident”, a 1955 Mento style release on an MRS label 78. He also enjoyed many hits during the Ska era, such as “In The Mood For Ska”, both before and after he helped found The Skatalites in May 1964.

As the Skatalites MC and lead vocalist, Tanamo recorded for producers Linden Pottinger, Ken Khouri , Duke Reid and Clement Dodd , all backed by Jamaica’s greatest band. His first LP was released by Pottinger on the SEP label in 1965 and featured several of his hit singles, such as the topical, “Television”.

After The Skatalites breakup, Tanamo was employed by The Jamaica Tourist Board and traveled to Canada where he played Mento and Reggae at cultural events. Eventually he emigrated to Canada where his Tanamo Mento Group became the Toronto based Jackie Mittoo quartet, led by the keyboardist and composer.

During a return trip in 1970, he recorded a cover of Brook Benton’s “Rainy Night In Georgia”, which was a number one hit in Jamaica for seven weeks. During another trip home he recorded the LP Calypso Reggae, for producer Bunny Lee.

In June 1983, The Skatalites reformed for the first time. Under the auspices of a reunion performance they played The Blue Monk Club in Kingston and, led by Lord Tanamo, the performances were a sensation.

In May 1989 Tanamo was the MC and lead vocalist for The Skatalites first concerts in Japan. He returned to Japan with the band in April 1992, and during that trip a video was filmed during a concert billed as The Tokyo Ska Explosion.

Tanamo released a self-produced CD in 1994, Skamento Movement, which compiled 15 of his Ska and Reggae recordings.

In 2000 he toured Europe with the German act, Dr. Ring Ding & Senior All Stars, and recorded the LP/CD, Best Place in The World.

At the Legends of Ska Concerts on July 12 and 13, 2002, in Toronto, Lord Tanamo led a Mento quartet that performed between the Ska sets. Those shows were filmed and are currently being shopped as a documentary akin to a Jamaican Buena Vista Social Club.

In 2003, Lord Tanamo led The Skatalites on tours of Europe and Japan.

For 2004, he’s looking forward to his South American debut in April and a homecoming show in Jamaica later in the year. He’s also working on a CD that will feature remastered music from his catalog, much of which is out of print and highly collectible on 78 and 45.

**For more information on Lord Tanamo check www.tallawah.com
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