



Nags (left) and Megavolt ... want to set the trend in quality music

Route 76

Producing quality that's different

Route 76 is attracting increasing attention to their unique musical blend, which they call "Reggae Alternative Dancehall".

What is that?

They explain it as a combination of sounds — "the heavy baseline of reggae", with "the electric guitar sounds of a latin song, seasoned with a Jamaican flavour".

Confused? You're not alone, says Bernard Wisdom, aka "Megavolt" or "Megs". "People listen to it and they can't place it in any category. It's not hip-hop, not rock, not dancehall — but has all of these elements in it."

But it's their plan to be different, while producing quality.

Their very name which reflects the year of their birth is their way of saying "We're pursuing an uncommon path".

According to Nahgeib Miller aka "Nags", Route 76 had its genesis on the Mona campus of the University of the West Indies, sometime around 1997. Then, it was a five-member band called Nu Scool, but Nags was not a part of the team then.

Says Megs, "I saw him (Nags) at a concert and told him about the group because he sang. One day when we were rehearsing, doing a tribute song for the Reggae Boyz, he fit perfectly into the group and we did the song and it became a campus hit."

As time went on, the other members migrated or got married and left the two who continued on. In 1999, they sought a new, unique sound that became distinctly theirs.

Says Megs, a software engineer, "Nearly 95% of people who heard our approach said it wasn't going to work. The usual thing is for musicians to 'lean' on a popular rhythm, hang out at the studio, sit down at the gate and wait for some producer and basically sing the same type of songs. The slack songs and gunman songs will buss de dance, that's what them say."

But the two chose to be discriminatory. Nags, a geologist who is now doing research that will earn him a masters degree in sedimentology, points out: "Our sound was not typical and I don't think any of the producers who worked with us at that time, captured our style. They were more interested in who you sound like."

This left the two with little choice but to do their own production — both sound and lyrics — and so far the feedback has been "excellent".

But rehearsing, promoting and recording are time consuming and demanded endless sacrifices from them.

It's a joke to them now each time they remember how many girlfriends they lost as a result. But as they explain, opportunities present themselves at the right place and time, and that's rarely at dinner dates, the movies or at birthday parties. "We can't leave the studio. Opportunities come up and if we miss them, we don't get them again," Nags says.

The two have just completed their second CD, called *Detour*. The first one, called *Route 76*, was a collector's item, they say. "It did well on campus. We sold all 300+ and no more was made."

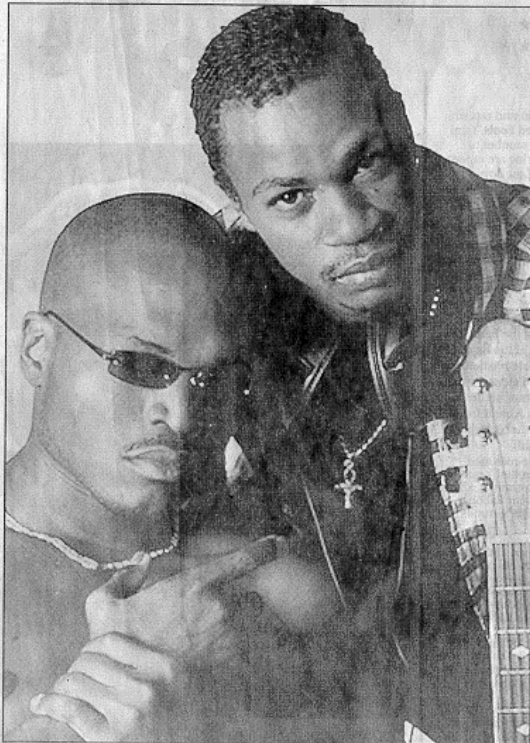
The quality in their music, reflects the care, time and effort they put into it. Each song is usually market tested before release. This gives them important feedback from the public and those in the music industry, that helps them refine the product.

According to Nags, "Whereas other producers we have worked with would take a week to produce a song, we would take a month and even after the month, we would listen to it for a while to see what else needs to be done."

He explains further, "Since we do our own production we have the leeway, we can take our time and do it well, it's not about money it's about the love of the music."

The key thing, they say is getting a certain standard to the music, says Megs. "You're supposed to associate Jamaica's music with high quality."

Route 76 on the marketing highway



—Contributed

ROUTE 76 IS PROBABLY THE BEST example of a group of young, Jamaican artists who have latched onto modern ideas in marketing and promotion to win approval for their music.

Bernard "Mega-V" Wisdom and Nahgeib "Nags" Miller joined forces as students on the campus of the University of the West Indies, Mona in 1997. They have not only developed a unique music genre they want to unleash on the world, but also have developed the skills to use the most modern techniques in marketing and promotion to achieve their goal.

As Route 76, they have emerged as a relatively new group out of Jamaica, poised to join the list of accomplished performers. Their approach to the business is very uncommon — they write, produce and perform their own songs and their music is a fusion of blues, rock, R&B and hip-hop with a dancehall/reggae base.

"People find it difficult to place the music, but it's just a new thing, not hip-hop or just dancehall. It's for people who are looking for something fresh," said Mega-V.

They have support in producing their music from Queensbury-based musician Serami, from Daseca Productions. They do most of their work at the Katch-A-Korner studio in Cherry Gardens.

As co-owners of their own production and distribution company, Faculty Entertainment, they have absorbed all the new techniques available to independent companies and are using them to achieve their goal of creating music "that will transcend generations and impact on all cultures, irrespective of race or social status."

They see themselves in the future



INSIDE VIEW

Balford Henry

as the country's leading ambassadors of music, changing the way the world views our music, especially dancehall music.

Another interesting thing about the fellows is that they both hold down normal 9-5 jobs and work, at least, 20 hours per day juggling their dreams with their jobs. Mega-V works as a software engineer, while Nags is a geologist.

"We work 20 hours each day and sleep four hours. After work it is the studio, promotion, appearances or rehearsals," said Mega-V.

"If we were to have somebody to do the road work for us, we would want someone who would be able to be 100 per cent committed and not just work for a commission," Nags pointed out. "But, music is our main love, so all our spare time and our salaries go into preparing us for the future," said Mega-V.

Mini-album

They have co-produced a superb mini-album, *Detour*, with four songs, which they are using as their vehicle to a label contract. They have also developed their own website, www.route76music.com.

Recently they saved up enough money so that Nags could travel to London and Mega-V to New York to market their music to major foreign labels.

"We saved the money from our salaries and CD sales and bought the tickets. We got in touch with the record

companies, went to them, personally, and offered our demos to their A&R people. We pounded the streets for days doing all the dirty work," Nags explained.

"They told us that they have never heard anything like this out of Jamaica, but they think we need to create a buzz at home before they would be more willing to take a risk with us," said Nags. "It will really take a considerable amount of money to promote us and that's why they would prefer established people. But we were very encouraged when they telephoned us from the company."

"Everything we do, we do our research first. We did the demos to a certain international standard and we used the songs that were most popular among the people who heard our songs," said Mega-V.

The duo use the Internet as a key marketing tool. Their website carries three photo galleries, a chat room, a message board and games and their music, hosted by soundclick.com, is available to be downloaded for free.

Soundclick also hosts top acts like the Backstreet Boys and Janet Jackson and carries an international Internet chart, which allows viewers to vote on the top songs. All their songs, except one, made soundclick's top ten.

One unreleased soca song, *Lah Lay Lah*, went to number one ahead of Blu Cantrell's *Hit Em Up Style (Oops!)* on that chart. Their *It's a Party* was number six up to recently.

Please note that the rating is 3 out of 4 stars.

GEORGE HENRY

Title: **Detour**
Artist: **Route 76**

★ ★ ★

YOU WOULD HAVE TO SEE IT TO believe it. You would also have to hear it to believe it. But if you haven't seen or heard it, then you can take my word for it — the album *Detour* by Route 76 is well-packaged, easy to listen to and is filled with clear crisp and quality sounding lyrics.

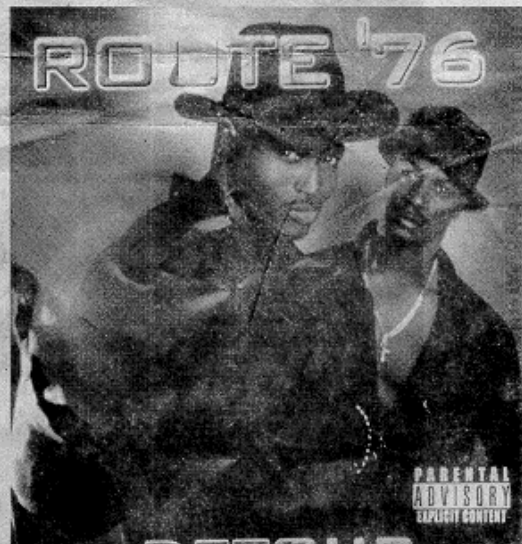
Route 76, which is made up of singer Nahgeib "Nags" Miller and Bernard "Mega-V" Wisdom has certainly put out a decent package to the public. Although the CD has only four songs, it is a worthwhile buy.

The four songs on the CD cover four different topics. They deal with the virtues of the illegal commodity — ganja, social commentary, violence and of course experiences with ladies. But in all of these areas the group does not go overboard, so the more conservative among us won't be turned off from the CD.

The group talks about the business of cheating in relationships in *Jim Screechy*. They, like all other cheaters, get caught but they opt for hiding their paramour instead of lying.

The lyrics in this song are clear and crisp, the group's style is smooth and hence by the time the song is finished you may just be singing the chorus.

Things really take a twist in *Curfew*. Be warned, this song isn't for the mild hearted.



Written with an expletive or two, *Curfew* talks about a leakage of information to the police by informers. It is a bit violent so if you have "Christian ears" then you may find this one offensive.

After this, things get back to normal. *C.O.P.S.* (Corrupt Oppressive Persons) is the group's attempt at social commentary. It's a good attempt which questions the politician's motive for the country. The "weed tune" *Matterhome* is also

a good tune.

The album's cover is attractive. Just looking at the album cover you would think they have been around for a long time and have a recording contract with a big company. But that is not the case.

The only drawback to this album is the use of expletives. But aside from that Route 76's album, *Detour* is a good effort.

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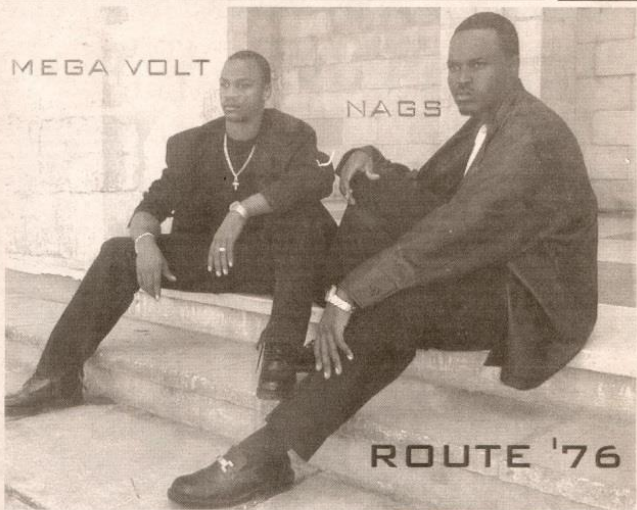
We'll get your message

• DENISE from St Elizabeth called on Monday, February 14 at 8:12 pm: "I read the paper every week and I want to commend you on the wonderful work you're doing. I've introduced the paper to a lot more women and they've become regular readers. I find it very interesting, so keep up the good work." Thank you, Denise.

• For RUTH, who called on Tuesday, February 15 at 12:44 pm: You can find out more about The Crystal Wand (featured in All Woman's February 14 issue) at this website: <http://doctorg.com/crystallwand.htm>. You can order straight from there as well. It's made by, you guessed it, a woman — Taylor Lambourne. The cost is US\$49 plus shipping, but you can call or fax or e-mail to get more information: Dr Gary Schubach, 65 Flicker Drive, Novato, CA, 94949-6677. Phone: (415) 459-2801 Fax: (415) 883-2588 E-mail: comments@Doctorg.com Or if you want to reach the maker directly: Taylor Lambourne, Nectar Products, P.O. Box 7301 San Diego, California 92167. Phone: (619) 226-6969 information: (619) 222-3031 FAX.

Because you loved last week's men so much...

Here are two more examples of the finery that Jamaica has to offer. Not only are Mega Volt and Nags beautiful, they're enormously talented music-makers as well. Look out for the Route '76 story in your All Woman next week...



Reader response

Why I love being

FreshACTS

STAR PROFILE ON NEW TALENT

Route 76 – aiming for the road to greatness

IT'S been a long, strange journey for Route 76, a duo comprising deejay Bernard 'Megavolt' Wisdom, and singer Nahgeib 'Nags' Miller.

"Route 76 is a metaphor for the road to musical greatness that we are on, that and both of us were born in 1976. On Route 76, every person you meet gives you a better understanding on how best to reach your goal. Every experience is a road marker, ticking off progress along this path," Megavolt said.

Wow! That's a mouthful. The duo recently released their dancehall single, *Cops*, which fires a fusillade of criticisms against the brutality of the local police force, to a mad chorus of jarring police sirens. The bouncy rap-influenced single, *Cops*, is well-produced and boasts an armada of discordant beats and drum flourishes – the soundtrack of the Jamaican streets.

The duo was formed in 1997 on the campus of the University of the West Indies where 'Nags' and 'Megavolt' were reading for degrees. Since then, they have been training, rehearsing and performing all in preparation for their inevitable international music debut.

"Our music is coloured by a number of influences: latin,



Nags (left) and Megavolt of the

hip-hop, R & B, we're doing our interpretation of whatever we like in the dancehall vein. We put keys, chords, and musical movements into our music so that it has a longer shelf life," Nags explained.

The duo has also released *Don't Fight It* as part of a double CD single with *Cops* is also working on a new single, *It's A Party* that is set for a Summer release. The single has generated interest from Tuff Gong.

"We've been through a lot to get this far. People on campus always used to diss us, and say we're never going to make it. One man even went as far as to say that if the Government made a law to shoot all deejays I would have nothing to worry about," Megavolt laughs. He is studying computer science at UWI and is a top notch computer programmer.

"The boundary of success is imagination. This is our philosophy. We have sacrificed, years of brown-bagging it, and cruising on low tanks of gas, but we believe in our dream, we are going to make it. It's not about the destination, it's about the journey," Nags' who is a geologist by profession, said.

The duo is now conceptualising a music video for the *Cops* single.

Loss of meaning of C

RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL (AP) CARNITIME for Brazilians to drink, dance and forget their problems. But the forgetfulness has some black rights defenders worried.

This year, the annual pre-Lenten blowout — which starts Friday and ends, at least theoretically, on Ash Wednesday — also commemorates the 500th anniversary of the Portuguese arrival in Brazil. And the carni-

val version of history has produced some pearls of revisionism.

The generally rosy depiction of blacks in society has disturbed Afro-Brazilian cultural groups. They say samba lyrics describing proud and happy blacks pander to the popular myth of Brazil as a "racial democracy" and do not reflect reality.

"This excessive nationalistic

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MAN...OH! MAN

Nahgeib Miller

— *Brawn and brains*

Tall dark and handsome, Nahgeib Miller is not just another 'pretty face' in the Pulse Male Face of the Millennium Contest. This 24-year-old UWI graduate with his BSc in geology is a geologist at the Ministry of Mining and Energy. Wearing many caps, he is also actively pursuing his dream of entertaining the world through his duo, Route 76.

Maintaining strong family values and having a high regard for women which may be because of the close relationship he has with his three sisters, Nahgeib is now single and celibate, seeking not just 'a good time' but companionship. Placing a high value on a committed relationship, Nahgeib refuses to 'jump' into anything prematurely.

Having dreams of performing worldwide from as early as 13, Nahgeib sang with the Champion Choir along with members from the popular group TOK. Defending his venture into this turf which is not occupied by many university graduates, he states that his duo completed by Bernard Wisdom, who by November would have completed his degree course in computer science, will certainly add a much needed international flavour with local appeal to the music industry.

Waxing eloquent, Nahgeib sees his mission as ensuring that music transcends space and time. To this end the duo has performed at the Miss Jones Town Coronation show which was organised by former Irvinites, 'Lexus' more commonly known outside of the UWI environs as Nichole Haughton; Reggae SuperJam, the Miss Jamaica World 2000 Elimination show and are slated to perform on international night at Jamaica's premiere reggae show, Sumfest.

This former Hall chairman for Preston Hall, has dabbled in politics and sports modeling but claims music as his first love to make a great impact worldwide as he travels on the road to greatness.

Ann Margaret Lim

TRY IT...



Online

- “Route '76 humanizes the next step in the evolution of the Reggae Dancehall music genre.” - RudeGal.com
www.rudegal.com/artists/bioroute7602.htm
- Route 76 new video for ER... “ good rawz video good video, nice concept, very professional, nice tune, still maintains the dancehall image...8 out of 10.....rate the facts about ganja and cigarette and

aids a all that...looking forward to more from Route 76 .."- DancehallReggae.com Forums
forum.dancehallreggae.com/showthread.../643-Route-76-new-video-for-E...

- “The video was for their current hit song on the Celebration Riddim by Arif Cooper, a local dj on Fame FM.” - www.dancehallareaz.com › ... › Passa Passa
- “....Route 76 got the hype” - The Jamaica Star :: Beenie Man is back! :: jamaica-star.com/thestar/20040302/ent/ent3.html
Mar 2, 2004 - Pickney got the hype with his antics, and so did Queen Paula, Polka Dot, Laser Matrix, Assassin, Bling Dawg, Route 76, and the Fifth Element ...

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