

I SWEAR I HEARD THIS

Benjamin Torrens

So, I'm at this jam session, right? It happens every Thursday evening at this restaurant in Liguanea, kinda uptown. Not far from campus. I got to know the organisers a bit. Nice people; very good musicians.

Anyway, I'm there with some friends, other postgrads from the Caribbean, from the UK, and the US, all staying on campus for this summer school thing. I've told them all to come check out this jam, and we've got some beers, got some rum, the band sounds good. Everything's good.

So then this guy comes on stage, and I swear – the restaurant is open air, right? so you can kinda see what's going on outside – I swear this guy just drives in and parks up, gets out the car with his instrument, and walks right onto the stage, *midjam* mind you, and starts blowing this insane solo. Like, *insanely* good. He must've been circular breathing or whatever, because the sound just never stopped, and the engineer was dubbing the whole thing live. Sick. The guy just kept on playing and playing and all this reverb and mad delays are firing off, all sorts, this *huge* wall of sound. Phil Spector meets Lee Perry.

So for about three or four minutes the energy at the jam just changed completely. It was hilarious, man, like something out of a movie. Like, the bar staff just stopped what they were doing, the chicken was getting cold, all of that. Nobody could take their eyes off this guy – oh, and by the way, he was dressed all in white, and had on this big tam, so he *looked* amazing as well – and we all can't take our eyes off him. I dunno, man. It sounds dumb, and maybe it was all the ganja and the rum going around the place, but time just stood still for a minute.

And then, as quick as he walks on stage, he just walks off same way. I couldn't believe it. Like, he literally just drove up, walked on, blew everybody's minds, and dipped again. Hilarious.

Anyway, we all get on with the rest of our night and whatever, whatever. Cut to:

About two or three weeks later, and me and Lily and some friends we'd made are at Kingston Dub Club, which is this unreal venue halfway up this hill to the North of Kingston called Jack's Hill, so you get like this stunning view of city, especially night when the, like, sprawl, is just lit up before you. A friend of mine – a local but he'd never been before – said it was kinda stush. And to be honest he was kinda right. It's more of an uptown thing. But still, it's basically objectively dope to see that view while you're in this open air sound system party with the good food and the good weed and blah blah blah.

Only problem is that it's proper out in the sticks so you need to make sure you have your ride, like, *set in stone*. It's kicking-out time, and our ride home has cancelled on us last minute. Shit. Even worse, my plan B driver ain't picking up. What are we gonna do? We've only gotta walk like, less than a mile up the hill to the B&B where we're staying. No dramas, in theory. But the locals we've made friends with that night are making these faces that let us know that's a non-starter.

And now the panic's setting in. Marc – my mate from UWI, he'd gone by this point. So, it's just me and Lily, and this German couple we'd met at the B&B who were there because we'd told them to come, and we're sticking out like four sore white thumbs.

Luckily, a guy we'd been talking to hours ago, out of nowhere, comes and finds us and says he knows a guy who knows a guy who might be able to give us a lift up the road. 'Wait there a couple minutes and I'll see if he's still around.' 'Cool.'

We wait.

Then this beat-up old Range Rover, with like body missing, pulls up. The driver says, 'I hear you need a lift to town, and I need some petrol money. Maybe we can work something out?'

So obviously we can't believe our luck, right? We're gassed, we pile in. Lily and our mates get in the back and I jump up front. And as I'm getting in, right, I get a proper a look at the bloke who's sorting us out, and I go, 'holy shit! I know you!'

I *swear* down, the geezer behind the wheel is the *same* horn player, who blew the best damn solo I heaver heard in my life.

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