

Japanese New Wave On Dub 1980-1985

Various

Miss You LP

In late 1970s Japan, a new form of music appeared. Unlike the prevailing mainstream Japanese musical trends – commercial, heavily advertised pop and MOR rock that set the tone for modern day J-Pop – the Tokyo Rockers movement had no financial goal. Here was a scene that started in live venues, rather than on primetime television or via advertising campaigns, peopled by bands like Lizard, MIRRORS and Friction, all influenced by the DIY punk movements in London and New York.

As happened when punk developed into new wave in the West, the Tokyo Rockers began experimenting with other musical influences, specifically Jamaican and UK born reggae and dub. This exciting era in Japanese music has been unearthed by Berlin based producer, DJ and crate digger Yuzo Iwata for *Japanese New Wave On Dub 1980-1985*. As the 80s took shape and UK bands like The Slits, Public Image Limited and Ruts DC brought dub elements into their work, a handful of post-Tokyo Rockers followed merrily in their wake.

Chinggis Chan Dread's track "Yattane Babylon" is a loping, largely instrumental workout that wouldn't have sounded out of place on an early On-U Sound collection. "Hot Steppers In A Dub" from The Air Music International is a pleasingly simple mix of distorted guitars and what sounds like a harmonica, woven around a jaunty bassline. So-Do's "Nothing" owes much to the angular jerks of Talking Heads or Gang Of Four, resulting in an irresistible mix of funk and dub. "Looks Like An Angel" from artistic polymath Masumi Hara is a bouncy roots stepper invigorated by wobbly flute breaks and a standard roots off-beat. EP-4's "dB" is the most experimental track here, a freaky, dubby twist of kooky keys, beats and a distant voice that switches from the conversational to the hysterical and back.

Yuzo Iwata worked in independent record shops while he was honing his production skills, and this album is a testament to the knowledge gathered by those individuals who live, breathe and celebrate the music they experience.

Simon Coates