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1999 The Portland Observer

'THE ROYAL FAMILY OF REGGAE'
Morgan
Heritage

In a time when computer-pro-grammed music and one-hit wonders clutter the reggae airwaves, an act like Morgan Heritage is a true rarity. Infusing their music with a sense of spirituality handed down to them by their father, reggae star Denroy Morgan (author of the 1981 gold-certified U.S. single "I'll Do Anything For you"), Morgan Heritage is the leading young roots reggae group in Jamaica today. "In order to become the musicians we are now, we had to play other kinds of music," says Morgan Heritage's 25 year old keyboard player and vocalist, who is known as 'Grandpa'. "We played R&B and Rock 'n' Roll to develop our musical chops. But we always knew that our base was reggae, and that's what we always come back to." In addition to roots reggae and dancehall, the members of Morgan Heritage profess to listening to a wide spectrum of other musical genres, and cite artists as divergent as The Cranberries, Stevie Wonder, and Eric Clapton as contemporary favorites.

Don't Haffi Dread (the title con-

veys the group's belief that isn't necessary to have dreadlocks to be a Rastafarian) finds Morgan Heritage joined in the studio by producer Bobby "Digital" Dixon, best known as the man behind dancehall kingpin Shabba Ranks' Grammy successes. The album's positive lyrics reflect Morgan Heritage's religious beliefs, and address a broad range of topics such as equality, family unity and the healing powers of music. On "Reggae Road Block," the group laments tight radio and video playlists that keep music fans from hearing reggae music: "So many great songs never heard on radio/ So many great songs never seen by video/ How many singers will your system defile/ And the players of instruments just last for a while, in this reggae road block."

Morgan Heritage's members Mr. Mojo (age 21), Lugu (age 23), Peter (age 24), Grandpa (age 25) and Una



(age 26) are actually just 5 of Denroy Morgan's 27 children. Before moving back to Jamaica, the Morgan Family was based in Brooklyn, New York. All of the children were educated in Springfield, Massachusetts, where they lived with their grandmother, and returned home on weekends to practice in their father's studio. "By growing up in America, we were always aware of

American culture," says lead singer Peter. "Springfield is close to the countryside, like Jamaica. At one point, we even had chickens running around our yard in Springfield." Veterans of both Reggae Sunsplash and Reggae Summerfest tours, Morgan Heritage look to bring their riveting line show to the United States in the late Spring for a series of dates.

PCC Calls on
Portland
Filmmakers

As part of its 1999 Art Beat celebration of the arts, Portland Community college is sponsoring its second Art Beat Independent Film and Video Festival and is seeking submissions from area film and video artists. A jury will select films for the festival. Each filmmaker whose work is selected will receive an honorarium of between \$100 and \$250. Each film or video must be limited to 30 minutes in length.

The film and video festival will be held on Tuesday, May 11 at 7:30 PM at the PCC-Cascade Campus, Terrell Hall, Room 122 (705 N. Killingsworth). Deadline for entry is May 1. Those interested in submitting work, or who want further information, can call Michael Dembrow, faculty member at Cascade Campus and organizer of the event, 503/978-5213 or e-mail mdembrow@pcc.edu.

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