



## Bands By The Sea

Photo by Christine Malcolm (Cheshire Productions)

Clockwise from left corner: Paul Roberts, Vito, Judy Joots, Jr. Smoots, Ken Douyotas, Kevin Emergency (center).

# Jr. Smoots and the Disturbers

By Chris Barry

"People are sick from the cover band syndrome", says Junior Smoots, lead singer/songwriter of the Shore-based Junior Smoots and The Disturbers. Smoots and his Disturbers play eerily authentic Reggae-Ska originals and classic Reggae standards that are rapidly rooting their way into ears and bodies at Shore bars and clubs from Sea Bright to Seaside Park.

On a typical night, The Disturbers play an adventurous mixture of originals like "The \$6,000,000,000 Man", "Send Me No Rockets" or "T-shirts and Buttons" that mix and mesh energetically with their own Smootsology-tinged versions of Jamaican classics like Junior Mervin's "Police and Thieves", a jumped-up Johnny Rivers' "Secret Agent Man" or a nasty, Disturbed version of Peter Tosh's "Steppin' Razor".

The Disturbers are Smoots (Alias ??), vocals and rhythm guitar, Kevin Emergency, lead guitar, Paul Roberts, bass guitar, Judy Joots, lead/backing vocals and percussion, Ken Douyotas, drums and Vito, Reggae soprano sax.

Within his music or in conversation, Smoots is quick to emphasize that a universal attitude runs through his music, believing that "Everything has a seed of good, everything has a seed of bad in it". This Jersoid Rastafarian sentiment runs true through Smoots' musical influences and lifestyle, and echoes a simple message that states "Man is not the Supreme Being".

Sitting in the Smoots house in Wall Township, Smoots (Junior) explains the origins of "Dub" music, which is the forerunner of "Ska" which begat Reggae. Dub is like the contemporary Black "Rap" music of the urban street, except that Dub is a style that started when Jamaican DJ's song-rapped along to a record of instrumental music.

Ska fits into Junior's style in the way Junior ardently gestures and sometimes "talks" the lyrics of his songs, at times seeming as if he were standing under a moonlit palm tree, driving his musical message home.

The consistently swaggering, tough-rudie image that Smoots projects onstage coupled with a touch of Ska angst and Reggae anger bring a snappily distinct island aura to originals like "Six Million \$ Man" and "When Ya' Movin' Out?", featuring the Dub rap at the songs' start, that quickly boogies its way into the band's blatantly puristic sound.

Other songs like "Send Me No Rockets" use the feedback of Emergency's guitar to gently slash and whistle alongside the fluid, primarily snaky sax runs that together display the chops of a band that would deceive most hard-core Reggae rockers blindfolded.

And the duet interaction between Judy Joots and Smoots is in a lyrical land of its own, one that unites Joots' rich, lulling sensual vocals with Smoots' warmly defined pokerfaced frontman in a stage presence that makes you wonder just where the man/woman persona leaves off and these two seemingly soul-connected White Rastas begin.

Junior's and The Disturbers' musically pointed message is perhaps best defined by this refrain from "T-Shirts and Buttons"

"Fight on  
Don't waste your time  
Cut them up  
with The Diamond  
that's in your mind"

### • 1982/Smootsology Music

This lyrical stance in the musical jungle of Junior's Reggae underworld is a grain of reality running true in Smoots roots-deep veins. Citing lifelong musical influences that run a credible if esoterically weird gamut, Smoots' tastes skirt the mainstream of Blues, Reggae, Jazz (He favors Coltrane) and Swing, while sometimes tempered with ethnically far-off stuff like Indian, Balinese and Japanese folk music presently anchored with a touch of his current obsession, Pygmy music of The Mbuti tribe from the Ituri rain forest in the African Congo.

As part of his ongoing crusade against "the plastic and impersonal" in music, Smoots declares that he and the band are working on new material constantly, and without any timetable, stress that they are specifically gearing toward eventually playing all original music in their sets.

"It's a new thing", Smoots shrugs, "People at the Jersey Shore aren't used to hearing this kind of music". Judging by the surprised yet danceified reaction of club crowds, Smoots is correct at the moment, in that they may not be used to it, but they are definitely ready for this Smootsology-gritty blend of soulful "roots" music.

This band's melodic hooks and characteristic mannerisms are not only hooking audiences' ears from The Fast Lane to the Life on the Good Side, but, in the words of WJLK-FM Disc Jockey and dedicated Smootsologist Cande, "When I first came to the shore, I was very unfamiliar with most of the bands that I heard playing around. At some point, this band's sound just infiltrated my ears. I think that this group has the potential and deserves to make it, as far as they want to go".

Junior Smoots is the seed of the Disturbance, and for a man of any color or persuasion, has some dynamically dues-paid notches on the neck of his axe that have made him quietly but stringently dedicated to this band and their collectively styled sound. This oddly accessible group has been attracting a steady mixed-age group that is spreading the word about Smoots right now.

At this very moment, there are undercover Rastamen and women, white-collar hippies, punkoid shop clerks and wageslaves, country music fanatics and college rockers buzzing away about a good reason to go "Back to The Bar Scene"; Indeed, the danceably disturbing reason is called Junior Smoots. I-Rie!!