

Winston McAnuff – Biography

(Long version – 771 words)

Winston McAnuff, aka **Electric Dread**, is a Jamaican singer, songwriter, and performer whose voice and presence have left a lasting mark on reggae history while constantly reaching beyond its borders.

Born in 1957 in Christiana, in the hills of Manchester parish, Jamaica, Winston grew up between church harmonies and rural life. His father, a preacher who sometimes played the accordion, introduced him early to music through worship. After his father's death in 1971, the young Rasta moved to Kingston, where he immersed himself in the vibrant reggae scene and crossed paths with **Hugh Mundell**, **Earl Sixteen**, and **Wayne Wade**. From the outset, he built strong connections with legendary producers such as **Joe Gibbs**, **Derrick Harriott**, and **Yabby You**.

In the mid-1970s, Winston recorded his first tracks, leading to his debut album *Pick Hits to Click* released in 1977. Around that time, a journalist coined the nickname **Electric Dread**, struck by Winston's raw, electrifying stage presence — a name that would follow him ever since. In 1979, he released *What The Man A Deal Wid* with the **Inner Circle** crew and wrote the powerful track *Malcolm X* for **Dennis Brown**'s iconic album *Visions of Dennis Brown*. His collaboration with Inner Circle later resulted in the album *Electric Dread*, produced by **Skengdon**. Alongside his brother Tony "Makaruffin" McAnuff, he founded **The Black Kush Band**, with whom he recorded, appeared in BBC's *Deep Roots Music* documentary series, and toured France for the first time in 1986.

After years as a cult figure, Winston's work was rediscovered in the early 2000s by a new generation in Europe. This revival was sparked by French journalists Nicolas Maslowski and Romain Germa, who later founded the label **Makasound**. In 2002, they released *Diary of the Silent Years (1977–2000)*, bringing Winston's early recordings back into the spotlight. That same year, a legendary concert at the New Morning in Paris reunited Winston and Derrick Harriott — a turning point that opened a new chapter in his career.

Following that show, French singer and organist **Camille Bazbaz**, captivated by Winston's charisma, invited him into the studio. Their collaboration led to the critically acclaimed album *A Drop* (2005), co-produced with **Yarol Poupaud**. Widely broadcast on French radio, the album propelled Winston onto major stages and festivals across France, including Les Transmusicales, Les Vieilles Charrues, and Paris Plage.

In 2006, Winston expanded his musical territory with *Paris Rockin'*, alongside the band **Java** and accordionist **Fixi**. Blending reggae, soul, rock, rap, and musette, the project featured guests such as **Matthieu Chedid** and **Cyril Atef** and was followed by sold-out tours throughout France and beyond. Ever restless, Winston returned to Jamaica in 2008 to record *Nostradamus* with **Clive Hunt**, reconnecting with his roots and touring again with The Black Kush Band, joined on stage by legendary guitarist **Earl "Chinna" Smith**.

The creative partnership with Camille Bazbaz resumed with *A Bang* (2011), another widely celebrated album and tour. Despite being deeply shaken by the tragic loss of his son Matthew in 2012, Winston continued to create. Together with Fixi, he recorded *A New Day* (2013), a bold and

emotional album crossing reggae, maloya, afrobeat, and soul, featuring guests such as **Tony Allen**, - **M-**, and **Oliver Araste**. The project became one of the year's standout releases in France, leading to over 200 concerts worldwide.

In 2014, Winston McAnuff and Fixi were nominated at **Les Victoires de la Musique** for Best World Music Album — making Winston the only Jamaican artist ever nominated for this prestigious French award.

Alongside his prolific solo work, Winston became a key figure of the collective **Inna de Yard**, invited by the Philharmonie de Paris to take part in its landmark exhibition dedicated to Jamaica. The collective released *The Soul of Jamaica* (2017), followed by a sold-out tour. Their acoustic sessions in the hills overlooking the Blue Mountains inspired the album *Inna de Yard* and the documentary film *Inna de Yard: The Soul of Jamaica* (2019), which toured festivals worldwide. In 2019, with reggae officially recognized as UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage, Winston and Inna de Yard were invited to **UNESCO** headquarters in Paris, sharing their music and message of peace and unity.

In 2018, Winston and Fixi released *Big Brothers*, born from a powerful New Year's Eve celebration organized with migrants in Calais — a humanist, collective moment turned into a vibrant hymn to hospitality. Inna de Yard continued its journey with the album *Family Affair*, released in 2023.

On stage, Winston McAnuff does more than perform — he ignites. From intimate clubs to major festivals, Electric Dread delivers shows charged with emotion, groove, and spirit, carrying messages of resilience, unity, and peace across generations and borders.