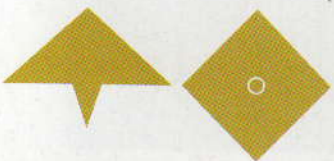
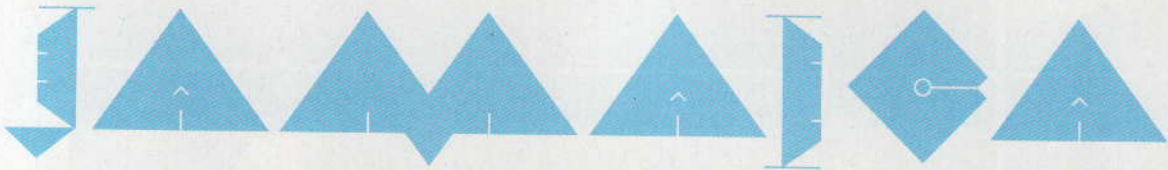
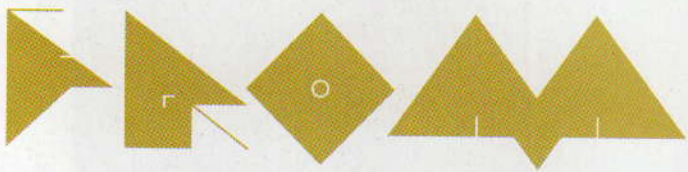


AN INTERVIEW  
WITH MISS PAT,  
MATRIARCH OF VP RECORDS,  
REGGAE AND DANCEHALL DYNASTY.





---

Three generations of the Chin family are now represented at VP Records, the New York City-based reggae powerhouse founded by Patricia Chin and her late husband Vincent (a.k.a. "Randy") in 1979. While her sons Christopher and Randy took over most operations from their parents some years ago, Ms. Chin—known affectionately by VP staff and artists as Miss Pat—is still a daily, grandmotherly presence at the company's headquarters, overseeing aspects like the Riddim Driven clothing line.

2008 marks Chin's 50th year in the record industry. It's also been three decades since she and Vincent left Jamaica, West Indies (where they had run Kingston record shop Randy's and the famed Studio 17) for the similarly named (but less tumultuous) Jamaica, Queens. In that time, VP has grown from a distributor and record store to an artist-friendly label responsible for launching Sean Paul, Beenie Man, and Mavado onto the world stage. And now, with its acquisition of Greensleeves Records (formerly VP's largest competitor), the label that touts itself as "miles ahead in reggae music" may actually be the only game in town when it comes to giving reggae, dancehall, and soca artists a worldwide platform. *XLR8R* recently visited Miss Pat at VP headquarters for a discussion about her family, reggae's place in the new digital marketplace, and whether the label's new monopoly-like dominance is a good thing.

***XLR8R*: How many people from the family are now involved in VP?**

Patricia Chin: My three kids are involved, which is my two sons and my daughter [Angela Chung] and also my stepson [Clive Chin], and maybe about five grandkids. My sister had a branch in Florida but she's closed it about a year now.

**Clive's career as a producer predates VP, but how did everyone else find his or her niche within the company?**

Joel, Clive's son, is on the production side, and my daughter does retail and distribution [in Florida]. My granddaughter Stephanie is helping me with Riddim Driven, our clothing line. The rest are just seeing what they like best. My 15-year-old grandson is into fashion, and he's the

one I bounce things off of regarding clothes. He knows all about what's going on, what colors people are wearing. Sometimes he comes in to [VP's retail store in Queens] on the weekend and arranges the clothing displays for me.

**I see a lot of vinyl downstairs. Reggae has been slower to embrace the digital revolution than other genres, but it finally seems to be happening. How is that changing the way you do things?**

It's definitely changing things at [a] rapid speed but the core still doesn't like CDs. Digital is good because you can input a lot of music—it's easier to carry to the dances. But the real people who love it from their hearts still go [with] vinyl. It's the image. It's more exciting when the DJ comes in with a big box of records. The glamour of having a DJ is being lost because of digital. Like everything else, it will come back eventually.

**You've certainly seen a drop in sales, though...**

Yes, because the young people are more into downloading. It definitely has dropped.

**How do your sales break down, percentage-wise?**

I'd say 70% of sales are still on CDs. LP sales are maybe 7-10%, and digital is really going up. It's 10-15% now but it's rising.

**As a distributor, VP has historically sold a lot of 45s. Do you see 45s being phased out entirely?**

I think it's going to come around. I can see LPs [coming back]. Little by little, people are trying to catch back the ones they didn't have. It's the nostalgia of having the product in their hand... People want to go back 50 years to see how

the cover looked, what people were wearing. That's why we're bringing back older titles now. It won't sell as much as it did before but people who are reggae lovers who maybe were not born then want to see what they missed.

**Tell me about the idea behind your new archival label, 17 North Parade.**

Back home in Jamaica, there was a lot of recordings my husband did with Clive and my brother-in-law, Keith Chin. They used to run the studios and there was so many records made. At that time, maybe you only focused on one record, but there were 20 or 50 songs made at the same time. Even with Bob Marley, you see new records coming out because at the time they weren't rated, but people are going backward to see what we missed. A lot of old, re-released stuff is going to come out [through 17 North Parade]. And we've acquired a lot of catalog from other producers and labels, like Joe Gibbs, Channel One, Penthouse, Jammys.

**It's been suggested that your acquisition of Greensleeves isn't a good thing for reggae/dancehall—all the music shouldn't come from one place. Will Greensleeves still be an independent label even though you own it?**

We've taken the best employees from Greensleeves and given them reign to do what they do. So they're separate but not separate. Some people might say [it's] negative but a lot of people have said they are happy we're keeping the label alive. We were competitors but they contributed a lot to reggae. We respect what they represent.





**Will Greensleeves still be an independent label with its own artists or will it be strictly a catalog label under VP?**

I think it will eventually be folded into one [label, with VP]. For now, we have to keep it as it is. I'm going to make my son Randy answer that question [calls Randy in from a nearby room].

Randy Chin: It will still be a standalone label. Greensleeves is also a publishing company—that's the biggest part—and that will stay the same. There's some merging of the two companies going on, but it's more on the back-end side and marketing, not the A&R side. It has a very distinct history and feel, so we want it to stay separate.

**If you now own Greensleeves, aren't you in effect signing the artists they sign?**

RC: The ownership is common but it's a separate corporate entity. The contracts [artists have] are with Greensleeves, not VP. There are artists that are sort of legacy with them and that will continue. Busy Signal had a previous album with them and he'll put his new album out through Greensleeves.

**Miss Pat, recently VP has signed mainly roots reggae artists like Etana and Jamelody as opposed to new dancehall artists, which is what you've been most successful at historically. Why is that?**

Deejays are usually successful for a very short span. But [roots artists] have fans that really support them. Dancehall is bought by a younger crowd and, as they get older, they shift to roots or

lovers rock. Sean Paul is an exception. He appeals not only to the younger crowd but the middle-aged group too, so he will last longer. The same people buying Sean Paul and Mavado today will go to the roots music when they become older.

[vprecs.com](http://vprecs.com)