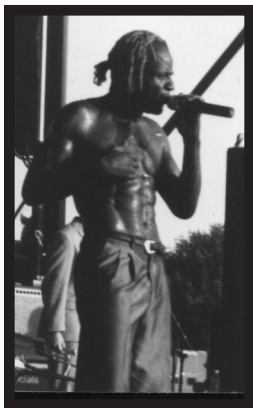


# SPECIALS

Windy conditions on The LaSalle Park Pier 7.28.98 in Buffalo, NY. Here's a Hoi Polloi! Exclusive



**Interview with The Specials take one. For record please state your name.**

My name is Neville, Neville Staples lead singer.

**I'm John. I want to start off the session by asking do you find generally most interviewers ask you about the early formative days of The Specials, do you think it's 50/50, or are more people interested in the new stuff, today? As**

**you are one of 4 remaining original members.**

Well, when we first started out [Skavoozee Tour 1993] they used to, the interviews would ask about the old stuff. But like we've been on this Warped Tour now, all they seem to be concerned about is the new stuff and where we're going from here. Not many people ask about the old Specials 'cos most people, they get it. You know? They know where we're coming from, they know who we are and in most interviews, if they're asking us about the old days and things like that, then they just don't get it yet.

**You're still playing shows to kids like me. I was two years old when The Specials came together back in 1979. I understand that an audience is an audience, but does that kind of amaze and continue to inspire you? I mean what do you think of that?**

Well for me, it's kind of good really because that means the music that we'd been playing then still stands up now. It's not a throwaway music. We still had something to say then, which still relates to now. Seeing all the younger kids now, singing the old songs as well as the new ones, gives me a good feeling to know that what we were and are trying to say, even the younger kids are getting into it. Oh its very, very good.

**When performing now, do you play more new material as opposed to the classic Specials' standbys, like a greatest hits set?**

We always will have to do some of the old stuff, the old classics...

**As you are The Specials.**

Yeahs because even now, on this tour we do alot of new material, but we still have to throw in a few old hits, like Message to You, Gangsters, Rat Race, you know.

**Too Much Too Young.**

(Nods) Too much Too Young, all that. We're gonna, we'll still throw those in.

**What do you think of today's diverse crop of ska music in America?**

Well it's a different format then when we used to do it in England, because right now, all the new ska kids now, they're mixing it with their heavy, fast punk, but really fast: that's the American thing. To me, they're just putting a different slant on the music, it's an American ska, where if we played in England, you knew by listening

that it came from England. Now cause Americans have taken it on board and put their own stuff...

**Adapted it..**

Correct, adapted their own types of music, their influences to it, that gives it a different slant.

**Do you enjoy being on the Warped Tour?**

I could do it again, it's brilliant with all the bands, it's like one big family. All the bands really friendly, no body like getting big'eaded or any'ting, its really... a great tour, it's like one big family, but I'm the miserable one...

**Is there any traveling festival like this in UK? Today I learned there's also Warped Tour Europe, which I hadn't known.**

Yes, we're doing Europe. This is going to Europe, we're doing one show in England in Reading, and the rest of the time will be Europe. You're not calling England Europe, I still not call England Europe.

**There are many European ska festivals over there. (Madstock UK, etc.), but how does the response to your band compare in this continent of North America to European & British audiences?**

The audience is around the same right, they're into the music but I personally haven't played in England for 2, 3 years or Europe for about the same. The audience here, once they know you and are into the music, they're brilliant. England nowadays, say about 2 years when we played there to me was the same thing but with newer people as well, so the energy is there.

**How is the new Specials record, Guilty Til Proved Innocent being received so far?**

The people out there should.. The fans will let me know. (laughter) It's doing okay, still selling stuff. I don't.. There's too more to do on that album, then there's one more after that.

**As in future record plans? You mentioned earlier that you were writing...**

Yeah we're always writing because there's more than one writer in the band, and we've got material that we really didn't record it, we half recorded it. We have to go back and rehearse it before we do it, but we've got stuff ready to go.

**Is it more originals or just covers?**

(jokingly) Nah, no no all covers. They're all covers like this album it's all covers. No, no they're all original stuff, new material.

**I ask because the previous album from 1996, Today's Specials had mostly reggae covers. Your solo effort, 1994's Skanktastic was all reggae covers. Did the band get any shit for coming back**

**with that? Versus covers of obscure sixties ska & reggae back in 1979. Now do you face more strict copyright laws?**

No that's always good to sort it out. Who does what. You see to use it, somebody else's stuff. I mean just look Sublime used everybody.

**Yup. Even the Specials' Dandy Livingstone song.**

Every reggae people Sublime used, and they got a big hit with that. Most of the Sublime stuff, it was very many covers.

**Like you did then. Where's your girlfriend from? From Burlington**

**Vermont?**

I think that's what they call it

**I was there once.**

Oh was it that bad? I was there once he says.

**We drove through when we went to Maine in '90.**

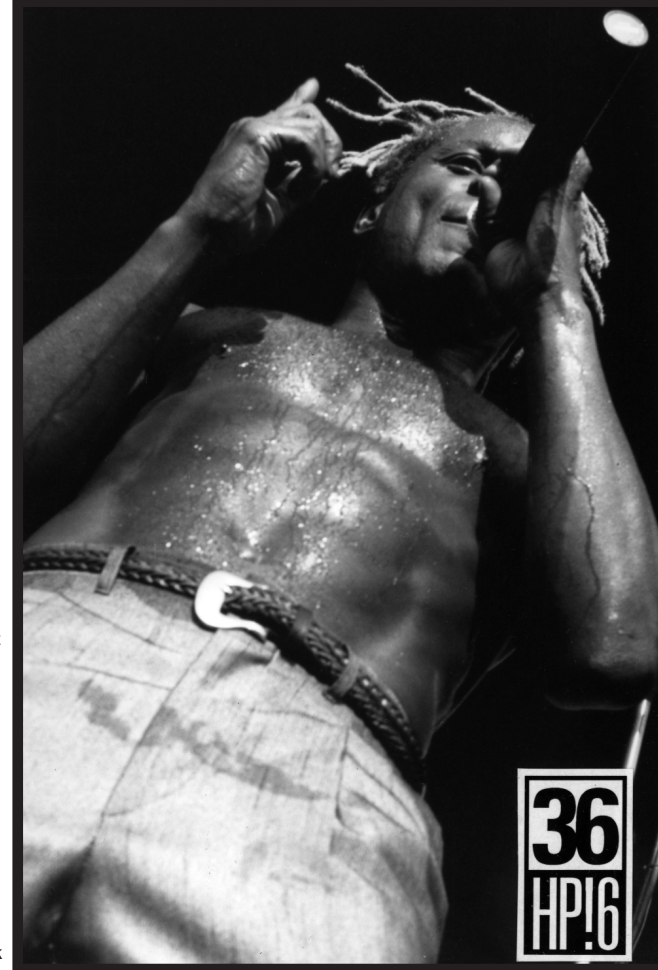
**And we had your exact model camera too! The Minolta Freedom Tele 38/80! Good for snapshots. Yeah?**

**Do you like New York? That's Canada over there..**

I like New York to visit, and to play, but I couldn't live in New York. It's a bit too... um, (pauses) how to say...

'Concrete Jungley' for me.

**JUDGE ROUGHNECK PRESIDIN' - NEVILLE STAPLES**



**Where are you based now?**

Santa Cruz and Los Angeles, California.

**Hmmm, but that isn't concrete? It's pure freeway! You can answer this having lived there in the old days. Compare what it was like to be in 2Tone Era England, to USA ska today. Was it like today with ska music in the TV ads so your grandmom knows what ska is, or was it confined to nite clubs involving primarily kids?**

NS: No, No, No. It was huge, it was radio, television, everywhere. Everybody knew. If you were to mention 2Tone, everybody knew what you meant. It was the dance craze. Everybody in England knew what 2Tone music was, mums & dads...

**So this so-called 'big explosion' as they call it in America, its kinda not...**

No, No... Well in a way yea, I suppose I know what you say. But remember too that when The Specials came over here in the early 1980s and we were just about to hit the charts, we split. So the people o'er here, maybe your mum & dad, they were into The Specials back then. And so you'd be listening to music you heard from them as you're growing up, and you'll be used to that, so you'll be playing it now. Ska music has always been underground in America, if England seemed to cease from playing it, or cease from mentioning it all those years, it was still popular in America. Now, 1998, because the newsmedia finds that "Oh this is kind of popular" that's why they've rapidly jumped and signed some of these bands. But even if it was huge for a few years in England, it has always been underground here.

**Do you think it will permanently reside there?**

No, after a while the media's gonna get fed up with it and like most music they'll kick it down, but because it is ska music, because it is that strong, it will still go back underground to resurface again.

**We talked earlier about punkier styles of American bands, but what are your thoughts on the more traditional roots Jamaican ska that American bands put out now. Do you see it all as variation on a theme, or just too retro?**

No. No there's one band here now in America, The Hepcats, they are the ones playing like the old standard ska. Now if we're gonna talk about the Mighty Mighty Bosstones, and groups like that they're playing their own adaptation of the ska music. Cause again, remember we ourselves in 2Tone adapted ska from bands like the Skatalites, and that was our adaptation of it. So now the Americans are putting their adaptation to it, which they play much faster than we do.

**Do you read many ska magazines?**

If I can get free ones, yeah.

**Ha. ha. You can get free ones but...**

No, no, I do. 'Ere I tell you how I get magazines to read. Like we do a show, afterwards ya get some guys who do a fanzine, they'll bring you one, so you read them and oftentimes they'll tell you about more. Because you got to remember that we travel from state to state, so I can't regularly get say your fanzine, unless ya send it to me.

**What do you do on your day off?**

On my day off I have to rest, write songs. I've just got a guitar from Ernie Ball, so I'll have to write more songs with that. That's all. I do, I don't... After I've been doing all this running around for 2,3 months at a time. By the time I get home..So I just rest. I just really, just all I do is rest. Then after I guess 3,4 days I get bored and then I want to come back and then when I come back out after about 2,3 months on tour I need a good week, 2 weeks off. Some of us just take 4 days and want to come back again. It's like that all the time.

**Is touring like this beneficial, gruelling, or is it the same-shit-different-day thing?**

It's great to do but it is the same shit every other day. It's great to do, but I don't know... It's great to be on this tour but to do our set half-hour, sometimes it's you feel like you want to do an hour, so that's the difference with it you know what I mean? Cause you feel like you want to do an hour and a half.

CAROL: *(interrupts with laughter)*

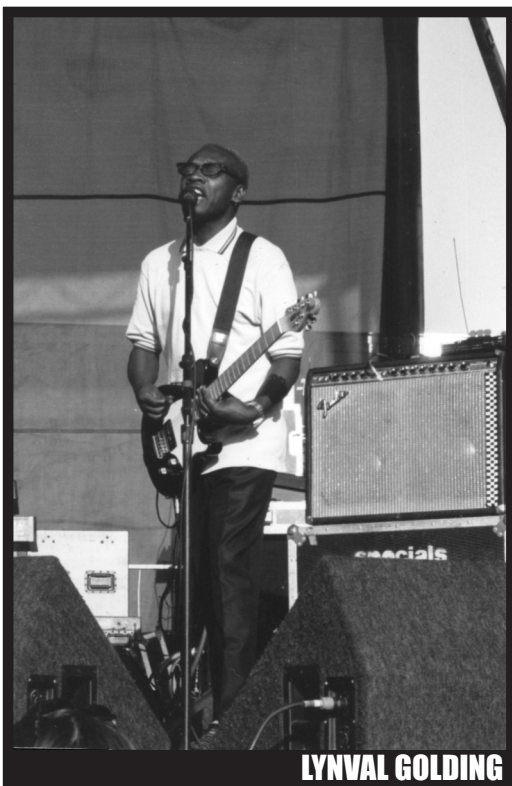
Oh she wants me to wrap this interview up.

**Any closing statements, comments, words?**

We've got things to do. Ah, just keep on listening, buy the new album & wait for the second one. But keep on listening, really listen to the album that's all I can say.

**Best wishes til the year 2000 and beyond.**

THE END.



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