

Mp3 Big Mountain - Cool Breeze



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Remember Baby, I Love Your Way? Check out some new tunes from Big Mountain.. Feel Good Reggae. Postive vibes 12 MP3 Songs WORLD: Reggae, POP: 90's Pop Details: The BIG MOUNTAIN Story I can remember being in China, New Years Eve 2001. At midnight the fireworks went off and as I gazed up into the sky, I realized that I was in the land that invented fireworks. These things that are such a part of my culture, being someone that grew up in the United States that lived through 35 - 4th of Julys and New Years Eves. Big Mountain was the first reggae band to perform in China. The whole previous year I had been struggling going back and forth whether or not to keep Big Mountain going. We had big dreams to start our own label and take control of our careers and as soon as we tried to break free - dark figures in our past came back to haunt us. We found ourselves embroiled in a mountain of lawsuits and debt. Our only saving grace was that we had a label in Japan that insisted on giving us money to record records for them. We seemed to be spinning our wheels in the rest of the world. But now, I was in China and I was in charge of bringing the Chinese people reggae musics message of one love and world unity. Tears began to well up in my eyes as I watched flowers of light explode in the sky. I reflected back to just a few days earlier when I was boarding the plane to come to China. My heart was just not into it, the trip to China had been an opportunity to make some easy money. I had pretty much made up my mind that Big Mountain was nearing the end. But my time here had been so special and everyone had gone out of their way to make us feel comfortable and welcome. China was indeed a great country. And the people reflected this. I was beginning to feel something I had not felt in a long time; a sense of purpose that had gotten lost in all the confusion. I know our story is a common one in the music industry. I felt like another VH-1 Behind The Music rerun. Our first attempt to run our own record label was a dismal failure. The only positive thing was that we produced a record that we owned all the rights to outside of Japan. Things to Come became

a learning experience. It was Big Mountains 6th full-length album and I made sure that we were not gonna get any puny 12 points out of that. We were going to believe in ourselves and our product and trust that this album was going to sell over the course of time. Weve always made good music that was never an issue. Our records sold and we had a loyal fan base out there. Big Mountain evolved out of a band named Shiloh. Shiloh got together sometime around 1988 and immediately we stumbled upon an opportunity to go into the studio and record a real album. The fianc of a co-worker of mine had dreams of starting his own label. It was to be called Hippodrome Records. He was pretty crafty at raising, what I thought at the time, were huge amounts of money. Shiloh was made up of a talented core of musicians from California that was attempting to record reggae music in a traditional Jamaican form. With a few exceptions Big Mountain has always maintained that same format. Weve always wanted to split the difference between having mainstream acceptance without alienating the roots reggae crowd. All the members of Shiloh with the exception of the bass player went on to record Big Mountains first album Wake Up in 1992. By that time our manager Bruce Caplin had been with us for two years. Bruce had been hired on as a radio promoter for the Shilohs only album entitled California Reggae. The album actually had some moderate success in radio especially in the West Coast of the US and the Hawaiian Islands. We had stumbled upon a sound. Our attempt at sounding Jamaican resulted in a sound that was fresh. No matter how hard we tried the influence from growing up in the United States was evident in the music. It resulted in a sound that could be easily digested by unadventurous American ears. Bruce was a big part of the reason for California Reggaes success at radio and he got to see first hand how eager radio DJs were to play this new brand of reggae. He waited around for Hippodrome Records to fall apart, which didnt take too long - they went under almost before it began. Bruce eventually convinced us to give him a 6 month window to show us what he could do. He had some experience managing bands but his specialty was radio promotion. I got to see that first hand when we began the promotional campaign for our album Wake Up. He encouraged me to spend time on the phone talking to DJs. Radio was very receptive to Wake Up. Straight out of the gates we captured the ..1 spot on the CMJ World Music charts and we held it for three consecutive months. Good things just started to happen every day. A little radio station in El Centro caught on to our song Touch My Light it was the only song on the album with a chance at mainstream radio. We had put two versions of the song on the album, one in English and one in Spanish. The radio station in El Centro spliced together their own Spanglish version of the song. It was

all butter after that. I couldn't believe what was happening, Touch My Light was the first love song that I had ever written in my life and it was banging on heavy rotation on a 100,000 watt radio station in El Centro. The whole southwestern US started to fall like dominos. It would eventually leak into the LA basin and become a Top 5 song for radio airplay in the greater Los Angeles area for the year of 1992. San Diego seemed like the last city to catch on but when it did you could not escape the song Touch My Light - it was everywhere, on more stations that I knew existed in my home town. Everything crystallized one day when my mama called me up crying because she had heard the song driving home from work on her favorite radio station. Less than a year before she had pulled me aside and looked me dead in my eye and asked me with a cold and serious face Quino, what are you doing with your life? I had a two-year old son with my high-school sweetheart. We had been separated for almost a year and Big Mountain was still not in a position to support any of the band members financially. Here I was moving around from house to house sleeping on friends couches like a transient and my mama had decided that she had seen enough. I remember what she said word for word because at the time it stung like a cold blade. She said Mijo (my son in Spanish) I don't want you to feel bad about what I am going to say because I do believe that you are talented. You chose to become a musician and then you decide to play some obscure music. Nobody knows about reggae. You have to remember that you have a son to support now. I've always had a very strong optimistic streak in me. But I also know very well what doubt and depression feel like. At that time in my life reggae music was everything to me. I had first heard Bob Marley when I was 14 years old. I've always been into people saying it like it is. For some reason the valiant revolutionary figure fighting for the people against all odds had been a recurring theme in my life. The Che Guevaras and the Malcolm Xs in the world have always inspired me. One night in 1980, I was sitting in my living room watching 60 Minutes and they had a segment about the Rastafarian movement. Much of the story was centered on Bob Marley and reggae music. I was floored. I couldn't believe what I was seeing. This man was holding a guitar and singing with a conviction that I had never observed in any other human being. He looked like a monster to me, I had never seen dreadlocks but somehow I knew he was an angel sent from God here to give people hope through his words and music. Before that I never entertained the idea of being a singer, I didn't admit it to too many people, but from that day on, I knew exactly what I was going to do with my life. Music was always important to me. I had albums by Earth, Wind and Fire, The Commodores, Ohio Players on one end of my music collection and AC-DC, Van Halen and Led Zeppelin on the other. Bob

took my music appreciation to a new level. He was laying it on the line. He was liberating the minds of the world. Like so many people throughout the world, the spirit of Bob Marley lives in me and his guidance has been a huge part of Big Mountains musical direction. Growing up as a teenager in San Diego I absorbed everything I could about Rastafarism and Jamaican culture. This journey I suddenly found myself upon inspired me to ask questions and explore the world I was living in. Listening to reggae music and being dedicated to the power of the message gave me a unique set of lenses with which to view the world. I developed a set of principals that were rock hard and those principles that I was so proud of began to be seriously tested with my first taste of pop success. I quickly learned that the music business was a business of compromise. It was all about money. The contract from a major label that I had been seeking all my life and finally acquired in 1994 would erode any sense of foundation my young mind believed it had. When we signed an exclusive deal with Giant Records, which was a subsidiary of Warner, I was 28 years old. I had experienced nothing but steady success my entire musical career. The money was slow in coming but the progress we were making was enough to keep me believing destiny was in control. One day when a man named Ron Fair walked through our door and told us the he wanted us to make a demo of the song Baby, I Love Your Way to possibly be included on the soundtrack for a movie named Reality Bites, I took it all in stride. It seemed like just another piece of the puzzle leading to my coronation as the new king of reggae music. In 1976, I was given a copy of Peter Frampton Comes Alive for Christmas. Baby, I Love Your Way was not one of the songs that stuck out. I liked the album but I was more into the Earth, Wind and Fire album that I had been given the same year. Back in 1976, I had no idea how much my existence would become associated with this man named Peter Frampton. When I tell people that I am the lead singer for Big Mountain, I often get a puzzled look. All I have to do is sing a couple lyrics of Baby I Love Your Way and suddenly they know exactly who I am. My relationship with the song Baby, I Love Your Way is a perplexing one. It has taken me around the world a few times; singing in front of hundreds of thousands of people but the artist in me is always devilishly whispering in my ear You didnt write this song. These feelings of envy and jealousy are common in the music business. I am not sure if these feelings are innate in me or feelings I have acquired hanging out in LA during my years with a major label. Los Angeles and the music industry that it houses can be a very intimidating place. My idea of art when I first entered that environment was a sincere relationship with my abilities to express myself. I soon learned that these major label heavy weights that were wining and dining me throughout the town,

taking me to all these posh restaurants and clubs were not interested in what I had to say as an artist. What they wanted to know was how in the hell did Touch My Light have so much success in Los Angeles and how was this Irish-Mexican posing as a Jamaican able to write a hit song in a style of music that should have been foreign to him. My voice might have got us the opportunity to do Baby, I Love Your Way, but it was the impression that I could write a hit song that got us the deal with Giant Records. If I could do it once, I could do it again, maybe a bunch of times. In February 1994, as Baby I Love Your Way began to climb the charts all over the world, we were busy putting the finishing touches on the album Unity. It was obvious that Giant Records was not impressed with the original material that we had come up with. In the end, they strong-armed us into accepting some outside songwriters and producers to fix what they did not understand. This was the beginning of a very exciting year for Big Mountain. The success for Baby, I Love Your Way had us touring most of the year and what I had dreamed for all of my life was finally a reality. But the success also brought on a great deal of confusion. Bruce had done a real good job up until now. We had everything set up - accountants, lawyers, and a full-blown stage production team but there was something still missing. Once again, I realized that the music business was a business of compromise. Not only was I living out my dream but Bruce was living out his as well. And like me he had a real good idea of how he wanted to have his dream play out. We were all drunk on our success. As Bruce gained confidence I began losing mine. I was really questioning my songwriting at this point and some heavy things going on in my life kept me from focusing on Big Mountain. But Bruce was steamrolling through Hollywood and he stepped on many toes along the way. Giant Records were not investing the money that Bruce thought they should have been. Eventually a very touchy relationship evolved between Bruce and the upper mgmt of Giant Records. Unity ended up selling almost two million albums around the world. Our follow up album Resistance was due to be released in spring 1996. It was a tough recording project. Giant Records was not happy, we were not happy and things started to real weird. From the beginning Giant Records was not content with the musicianship of the band. I was under intense pressure to change some key members. As new hot shot members came in, the music was getting better but the purpose of the music was beginning to seem vague. The original members started to question the direction of the band. By 1996, I found myself the only remaining original member of Big Mountain. My brother, James had joined the band in 1994. He and Bruce were the only familiar faces besides my cousin Billy (keyboards) who would eventually leave the band a year later. James had

become a non-expendable ingredient in the flavor of Big Mountain. James unlike me was singing from day one. He used to drive me crazy singing songs from the commercials that would come on in between cartoons. He was a wild child, I am 7 years his senior so I should know. He started as a road tech for Big Mountain when we went on our first major U.S. tour in 1992 in the middle of the tour we ended up losing one of our key back up vocalists. By the end of that tour James was not only fulfilling the role of stage tech but was also playing percussion and singing background vocals. The audience reacted to him immediately. Seeing me on stage singing reggae music with my olive complexion and my big, brown dreadlocks was one thing. But when James would grab a microphone with his blonde locks all flapping in the air and start toasting with a Jamaican accent the audience knew they were seeing something unique and special. The first time we played Reggae Sunsplash in Jamaica, the local Jamaican crowd, which has a reputation for being very critical, started cheering when James came out to the front of the stage. They had never seen somebody who looked like they should be riding a surfboard in California rapping like that. During these times of transition I started to depend heavily on James for support and trust. The rift between Bruce and I was growing wider and it developed into being a political issue between the band members. Guys started to pick their sides and the fact that Bruce was in charge of Big Mountain's checkbook made a big difference to some of them. James and I both had no interest in staying with Giant Records. They had totally given up on the album *Resistance*. Two weeks into the first single release they ceased all radio promotion. We were starting to experience real failure in the music business for the first time. Our European tour in 1997 was to be our last with Bruce Caplin as our manager. I don't blame Bruce for a lot of the problems that Big Mountain was experiencing. And in some ways, I don't blame Giant Records either. It boiled down to a difference in philosophy. Reading my fan mail kept me going during tough times and the people that were writing to us believed in the messages that we were putting out, and I believed in what they saw in us. I believed Big Mountain to be a voice for the people not some pre-fab pop band. We recorded our last album with Giant Records in 1997, entitled *Free Up*. The only thing that we were interested in was finishing the record. We didn't put up a fight this time. We had been broken. Like a proud stallion finally accepting a role of subservience we basically did everything that Giant Records wanted us to and they repaid our complete cooperation by shelving the record. They didn't even release a single. Our success around the world kept us busy but the US started to seem like a foreign land when it came to touring and radio airplay. We had headlined the Reggae Sunsplash tour all across

the US two years in a row. When they asked us to do it a third time we should have said no. Reggae music was hitting some hard times. It was so hard to believe; 3 years ago we were ruling the world. Acts like Big Mountain, Inner Circle and Maxi Priest were running things, and now we were all quickly approaching box office poison. The last Reggae Sunsplash tour was a disappointing failure. It barely made across the country. We came limping back to California very humbled. When Bruce and I finally parted, unfortunately some of the members of Big Mountain followed suit. Not only had I lost my manager, I had also lost a big part of my band. It was now down to me, James, Kevin Batchelor and Jerry Johnson. James and I had always felt something special for Kevin and Jerry. We became friends long before we ever started playing in a band together. Two years prior we had been on tour in Japan with the band Steel Pulse. That was a dream come true for me. Steel Pulse's English brand of reggae and the singing style of their lead vocalist, David Hinds, had heavily influenced me. Kevin and Jerry were the horn section for Steel Pulse. Kevin had grown up in St. Louis and had played trumpet since Middle school. Coming up he was unable to escape stories of the great Miles Davis that also had grown up in St. Louis. Soon after high school he was accepted into Berkley school of music in Boston. He spent 2 years in Boston before he decided to move to New York City in 1981. While in Boston he started to play with some reggae bands that were doing the east coast circuit. Once he got to New York it wasn't long before he ran into Jerry. Jerry was born and raised in the Bronx to Jamaican immigrant parents. His father had owned a club in the 60s named Gipi Japa that catered to Jamaican immigrants in New York. Growing up Jerry had a front row seat to the greatest Jamaican touring artists of that day. Some of the names included, Dennis Brown, The Dragonaires, Marcia Griffiths, Alton Ellis and Roland Alphonso the legendary Jamaican saxophonist that would later on be giving Jerry sax lessons. Jerry once told me the story of how he became interested in the sax. His father would take Jerry down to the local barber shop for haircuts regularly. One of the barbers was named Lester Minott. He was the cousin of the Jamaican singer Sugar Minott. He was a trumpet player. His partner who also worked at the barber shop was a sax player named Coochi. They were regular performers at Jerry's dad's nightclub but they also would perform for Jerry and his dad right there in the barber shop. When Coochi pulled out his shiny brass saxophone with all these knobs and keys hanging all over it did something to Jerry. Tenor sax would become Jerry's trademark. Jerry and Kevin eventually would hook up and become one of reggae's premier horn sections. They began touring with acts like Judy Mowatt, Sugar Minott, Frankie Paul and Sister Carol to name a few.

When we ran into them, they had been with Steel Pulse for 7 or 8 years. For some reason we just clicked. We had fun partying together. I had always wanted horns to be an integral part of Big Mountains sound. We started using Kevin and Jerry with the recording of Resistance in 1996. Later on that year, they would do a few live dates with us. They juggled playing with Steel Pulse and Big Mountain for about a year and eventually became full time members in 1997 just in time to see most of the band defect with Bruce. Immediately after Bruce left I hired on a manager named Toby Ludwig. He was the sophisticated high power New York type. Right away he started to tell me things like we should get rid of Kevin and Jerry cause we can get a keyboardist to their parts for half the cost. He did his best to convince me that we had to make some tough decisions with the band or it was going to affect everyones pocket book. Somehow I got the impression the only pocket book he was worried about was his own. Toby lasted six months. After all we had gone through, I was not about to turn my back on my brother or the two guys that were ready to do what we had to do to resurrect Big Mountain. Instead of going with a high-powered LA-type manger, I decided to go with someone more down to earth, someone I could trust. Anjali Raval and I had been friends for a few years. She had been in charge of promotion for the Reggae Sunsplash tours during its heyday. In 1998, Anjali hooked us up with a drummer by the name of Paul Kastick. Kastick was playing with Shaggy at the time but had played with many of the top acts out of Jamaica. Paul was not only a dynamite drummer but also an up and coming producer. The idea of staying with Shaggy who played mostly Jamaican dancehall was not as appealing as going to Big Mountain where the music was more orchestrated. Paul wanted to play and produce music that had more complex arrangements and character. Not a bunch of two-chord dancehall standards. Paul came to San Diego in 1998 to help us put together a few demos for interested labels in Japan. He and I made an immediate connection. Paul surprised me with how diverse his appreciation of music was. He loved well produced contemporary pop music. He knew all about the studio musicians that played on different hit tunes. I could tell that he had really studied the top producers of the time and how they came up with their sound. Paul had an idea of doing a reggae version of a song by Lionel Richie named The Only One. He insisted on staying with the basic Big Mountain pop formula with the polished arrangements and the big stereo stacks of background vocals but instead of going with a Lovers Rock beat like we had done with Baby I Love Your Way and Touch My Light he went with the One Drop. While we were firing up the studio he already had his headphones on and was banging away on his MPC drum machine. By the time the speakers were up and

we plugged him in he had the drums for the whole song arranged complete with cymbal swells, and drum rolls. I decided to step back and let him take control. I prayed that he knew what he was doing. Although I was interested in making Big Mountains sound more organic I also knew that we would never get a record deal without some radio songs. I was tired of dealing with L.A. producers and their hokey brand of reggae production. I wanted to find someone that had that Jamaican touch but still knew how to make it sound polished and commercial. As the minutes rolled by in that studio I could tell that Paul was hearing everything in his head. There was no hesitation in his direction. In about six hours the backbone to the song The Only One was created and I knew then and there that we had something. Anjali was a sweetheart but she also had a great job at the House of Blues in L.A. that demanded much of her time. I have a pretty good head on my shoulders, but I was terribly ill equipped to manage Big Mountain and handle all of the paperwork it produced. My wife at the time, Nancy, had been handling the responsibilities of running the fan club. She brought on an enthusiastic supporter to help with the administration of the fan club. Donna Vader had some experience working with bands but she had never made the leap of leaving her real job to pursue a career in the music business. She proved to be exactly what the band needed and during the course of the next few years she would take on more and more responsibilities. We continued looking for a manager at this time but it soon became apparent that we wouldnt need one. Donna had a real grassroots spirit; the fans of Big Mountain appreciated her hardworking consistent approach. When I expressed to her my desire to start my own record label she didnt flinch. The demo of The Only One that Paul had helped us produce a year before caught somebodys ear in Japan. A company by the name of Pony Canyon expressed interest in entering into a multi-album-recording contract with Big Mountain. We reached an agreement that gave us enough money to record a quality album. They would maintain exclusive rights to distribute the record in Japan and we would be free to seek out licensing deals throughout rest of the world. We knew this was our chance. It wasnt a ticket to independence because we still had to give them some radio potential songs but we were finally in charge and we knew that we couldnt mess up this opportunity. As I said before, Things To Come was a learning experience. We did not understand the patience and planning necessary to run a record company effectively. All we knew for sure was that Pony Canyon had faith in us and they were going to give us the seed money to start our own label. Following the release of Things To Come we ran straight into some major obstacles. Bruce informed me that he owned the rights to the name Big Mountain and he

was not about to give it up without compensation. He hired some patent attorneys in Japan that threatened a lawsuit against Pony Canyon that almost caused them to pull copies of Things To Come from store shelves. We had secured distribution with a small company in the US but once the lawsuits started all the promotion came to a halt. We were a mess business wise. We had turned Things To Come two months late and terribly over budget. Looking back I realize now that we never should have attempted a US release for Things To Come back in 1999 but I was too head strong to listen to anybody. We had some holes to dig out of before the dreams of our record company could be fully put into motion. As I began to sink into depression brought on by the failure of my marriage Donna Vader started to take full control of the situation. One by one Donna started to sift through the mountain of paperwork I had been ignoring the two years previous. My accountant had jumped ship the year before so my personal finances were in bad shape. Most of 1999 and 2000 were spent paying back money, settling our dispute with Bruce and putting Big Mountain back into order. It was much more work than we could ever had imagined. We received the recording budget for Cool Breeze in February 2001. Donna was meticulous with the numbers this time around. We were going to do this right. Paul wanted to bring in a keyboardist named Richard Campbell to round out the production team. Richards nickname is Goofy. I remember how hard it was to refer to him as Goofy but he insisted that was the way he wanted to be addressed. Goofy fit right in to the production team. He had incredible touch and a command of music theory. Paul and Goofy had grown up in the same town, Montego Bay, Jamaica. It was very interesting watching Paul and Goofy work together. Paul would be yelling all these obscenities saying no mon like this and Goofy with one hand on his keyboard, one hand holding the mouse staring into the computer with this big grin from ear to ear would just shake his head and say cool, ya mon, cool. Compared to Things to Come , the recording of Cool Breeze was, well, a breeze. We wanted to make up for all the mess that Bruce and his attorneys made on the last release so we packed Cool Breeze with all the commercial songs we could write not to mention a very bubble gum version of the Antonio Jobim song Girl from Ipanema. This time we turned in the project only one month late and on budget. It wasnt much to brag about but we were making progress as business people. We were learning how to plan and budget. Pony Canyon recouped their expenses for Cool Breeze in less than one month. Good things were starting to happen once again. We still did not have the necessary funds to release the record in the US and after paying back so much money we were not about to go borrow and get back into debt. We finally learned to take our time. Two

weeks after our trip to China we found ourselves touring in Brazil recording the demos to our album New Day. And although we still did not have the money to release New Day we knew that this was the album that we wanted to use to reintroduce big mountain to the US market. We tentatively set the release of New Day in the US for early 2003. After finishing the recording of New Day in April (two weeks ahead of schedule) Donna and I put the finishing touches on the artwork for our catalogue of CDs. When we finally had the money to manufacture product we decided to do a limited release of Cool Breeze. This album was still completely unknown outside of Japan besides some ardent fans that had bought it as a Japanese import on the web. The only problem was that we didnt have the money to go after commercial radio. Our plan was to get Big Mountain back on the airwaves by starting at college radio like we had done with Wake Up. But we also knew that Cool Breeze was too commercial for the college radio format. Hawaii had always been Big Mountains strongest market in the US. Hawaii had supported us loyally since the Shiloh album. In the end we decided to ease in to the whole role of being a record company again by releasing Cool Breeze to Hawaii alone. Fall has never been the right time to release a reggae album but we had nothing to lose at this point. We could get our groove back by pushing Cool Breeze to Hawaii and to our relief radio was very receptive. Rebel Ink was finally a reality. We were selling CDs again. We were in the stores with a new album after three discouraging years out of the market. In late November 2002 we received word that Select O-Hits decided to distribute the Big Mountain catalog. Donna had been courting Select-O-Hits for the previous 6 months. They had come highly recommended by some trusted industry friends as an aggressive independent distributor that would be perfect for Rebel Ink. Sometimes I wish I could just be an artist again. I worry about whether all the responsibilities that I have helping run Rebel Ink will get in the way of my expression. But I have found that the business I run will be interpreted as an extension of who I am. I want to have the vision to look beyond the box and come up with my own definition of what a career is supposed to mean to me. Getting back to the person I was; the artist I was before all the hype is now my definition of success. I hope that you have enjoyed this story. New Day is due to be released in the US, Europe and Brazil in early 2003. Ive never appreciated a record release this much. The title of the album explains exactly where we are today. If you listen closely you might be able to feel the melodies of our struggle; the soberness of our defeats and the elation of our accomplishments. Its all in there; its all Big Mountain.

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