

Spotted



Retired Aussie cricketer Adam Gilchrist and former England cricketer Michael Vaughan

enjoying the Dubai World Cup. British *Downton Abbey* star Laura Carmichael in one of the VIP lounges at the Dubai World Cup, while fellow Brit model Danielle O'Hara posed with chef Gary Rhodes at the same event.

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Regional cinema

Arabic success stories *Rock the Casbah* and *Factory Girl* on UAE screens, plus Gulf Film Festival on the horizon.

The Gypsy Swing Project

Kooky gypsy jazz quartet talk us through their new debut LP *Paris-Dubai*, track by track.

Most viewed this week

- 1 Kings of Leon to play Dubai
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- 3 Ten best brunches in Dubai revealed
- 4 Ten best new restaurants in Dubai
- 5 French film festival in Dubai

Hot seat

UB40

Founding members Ali Campbell (vocals), Mickey Virtue (keys) and Astro (sax) tell *Rob Garratt* the story behind their new UB40 ahead of *The Irish Village* gig



Left to right: Astro, Ali Campbell, Mickey Virtue

We're a little confused – we just had a different UB40 playing at Emirates Golf Club in February. Who are we talking to?

Ali: We are UB40 Reunited. That's what we're calling it because we've just been reunited, Michael and myself with Astro, because the old UB40 broke the camel's back by releasing a country album. That's when Astro decided to join our ranks [in early 2014]. And we've taken the name back to save the legacy of the band. **It was *Getting Over the Storm* that did it?**

Ali: Five years I've watched [brother] Duncan sing my songs badly, and fair enough I've put up with that. For them to put a country album out... As a founding member, the reason for starting the band was to promote reggae, and that was just a slap in the face to do a country album. And an absolutely awful album to boot.

We've not actually heard it...

Astro: You're the lucky ones. **Well in that case, how did you last so long Astro?**

Astro: Well to be truthful, I should have left earlier, I don't understand how they lost the plot so badly. I just couldn't force myself to stand on the stage and try and pretend it was where I wanted to be. I was left with no option,

'We are the hottest reggae band on the road'

I felt I had to stand up and leave – and it's the best move I made in my whole life.

So how did Ali's brother Duncan, who was never in the band before, end up the lead singer in the other band?

Astro: When Ali left [in 2008], everyone was in a quandary,

and then it became blatantly obvious – there's another Campbell lying round, isn't there? It was just a case of what seemed the obvious choice.

Ali: I don't know why Duncan would be an obvious choice – he was a folk singer.

What do the fans make of it all?

Ali: They're disappointed. How would you feel if you went to see the Rolling Stones and it was Patrick Jagger?

Now three months old, where is your version of the band at?

Ali: The new album's just about to come out, we're putting the finishing touches on and we're very happy with that. We're the only people doing [reggae] on a large scale. We are the hottest reggae band on the road at the moment.

Okay... So what can we expect from the IV gig?

Astro: Hit after hit after hit.

Ali: We're not self-indulgent, we know the fans who have paid to see us want to hear the songs that made us famous during 30 years of being a prolific reggae band.

And how has the industry changed over all those years?

Ali: There's not as much money in it now. We sold – the real figure is probably close to 100 million CDs. Nobody's going to do [that] again.

Mickey: When we started, reggae wasn't even played on the radio, it was unheard of. Everyone who heard we were a reggae band thought we were mad. If you wanted to make money you were a mainstream American pop band, a rock 'n' roll band – but not reggae.

UB40 (with Ali Campbell) at *The Irish Village* on Thursday April 3. Tickets Dhs175 from www.timeouttickets.com.

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