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An early picture of Portia Simpson Miller and then Prime Minister, Michael Manley.

FILE

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Prime Ministers both

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IT WAS another night at the Turntable Club on Red Hills Road, St. Andrew, the base of Merritone Music which was opened in 1973.

The 1970s were coming to a close and times of extreme change were just ahead, but politics and its attendant stresses were not on the mind of Prime Minister Michael Manley. And thoughts of being Prime Minister may or may not have been dancing around in Portia Simpson's head.

It was another night at the Turntable Club, as Michael Manley unknowingly headed into nine years as Opposition leader, dancing with the lady who would one day succeed the man who succeeded him. It certainly, then, was not just another picture.

"It was then coming up to the end of his second term in office. Michael used to come to the club; every time Cabinet

met he used to call and say they were coming by," Winston Blake of Merritone Music and the former Turntable Club said.

"It just shows how important music is."

HAPPY

"He would come with a few of the people he was happy being around," Blake said.

This is the first time the picture is being seen by the wider public. "We always took pictures of people inside the club," Blake said, saying that this one was of "a particular time and a particular place and it was all good."

"It shows his (Manley's) ability to blend in with the common people. Michael, more than any other Prime Minister, mixed with the common people. That is what I respected about him, his ability to socialise with the common person without fear," Blake said. Of course, Jamaicans lack of awe meant

that he was not bothered by people seeking to be in his aura.

Manley would be accompanied by a driver, who would remain unobtrusive.

"It made me feel we had a good brand, that the Prime Minister could come and keep on coming. It was not just the music, it was the atmosphere," he said.

Still, the music was there to be danced to and dance Manley did. In this picture with Portia Simpson his shirt is wet with sweat and Blake recalls that "one night he came there he had to send for a shirt."

"He understood more than anyone else the value of destressing after a hard day's work," he said.

The other larger than life 'M' of the '70s also spent time at Turntable. "I could say the same thing of Bob Marley. He spent a lot of the 70s there, doing the funk and all the dances," Winston Blake said.

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