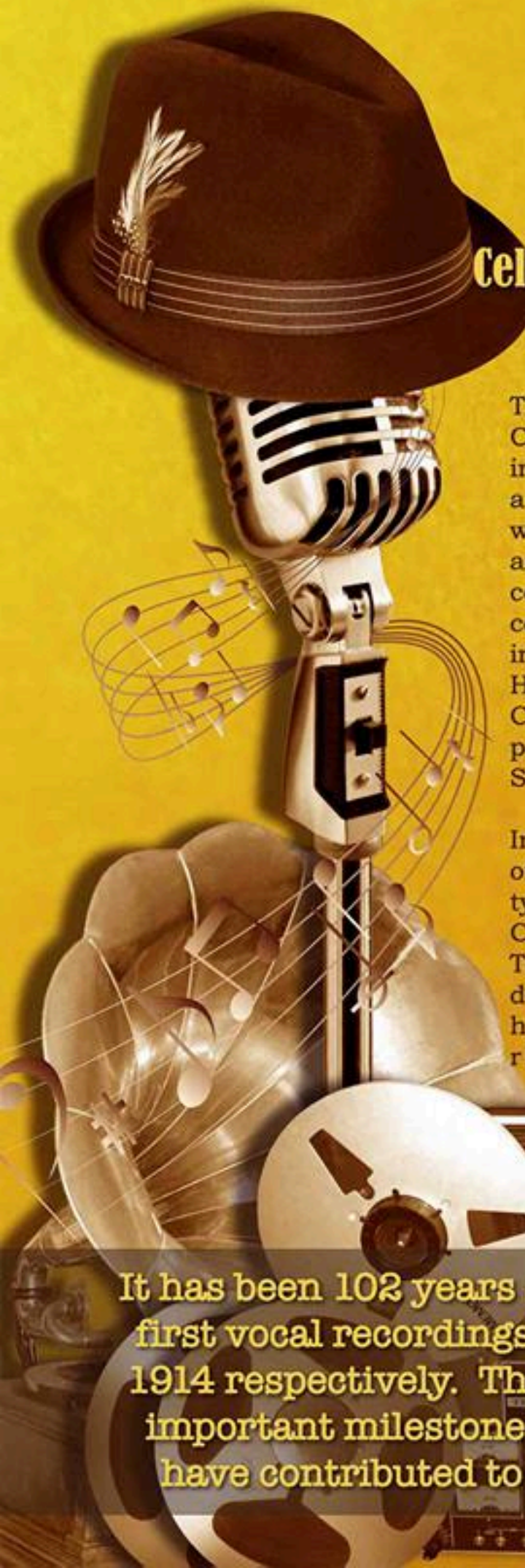


Vocal Recording

in Trinidad and Tobago

Celebrating the first instrumental and vocal Calypsos, Kalenda and East-Indian recordings



The Music industry in Trinidad and Tobago is largely a product of its Carnival. Music from Trinidad and Tobago has been commercialized and internationalized since the 1910s. It was one of the first art forms from a Third World area to be recorded. Between 1912 and 1945, 650 records were issued. From the 1910s artistes like Lovey's String Band, Houdini and Sam Manning were recorded in the United States by recording companies such as Columbia and Victor. A few years later those companies made field expeditions to record calypsos, folk songs, instruments and East Indian music. In the 1930s, artists like Atilla the Hun and Roaring Lion recorded at the Decca and the American Record Company. These recordings were targeted at the immigrant West Indian population, middle class Trinidadians and the markets of the United States, England and West Africa.

In the Post World War II years and especially since the 1960s, the export of music from Trinidad has been facilitated by the spread of Trinidad type carnival celebrations throughout the region and among the Caribbean diaspora in the metropolitan cities of New York, London and Toronto. The 1970s saw the emergence of soca, which became the dominant genre by the 1980s. Since then the industry has seen a whole host of innovations in sounds. Artists were integrating Orisha or Shango rhythms, local genres like rapso, chutney and parang, experimentations with international genres like jazz, funk, rock and house, and Caribbean sounds like dancehall, zouk and salsa.

Keith Nurse -
The Caribbean Music Industry

It has been 102 years since the first Instrumental recording and the first vocal recordings were done in New York 1912 and Trinidad in 1914 respectively. This exhibition recognizes these and some other important milestones, performers, engineers and producers, who have contributed to the recording aspect of our Calypso history.

1912-1929

1912 – The First Recording of Calypso (Instrumental) - LOVEY'S BAND (TYPICAL ORCHESTRA OF TRINIDAD)

Vocal Recording
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The only known photo of Lovey's Band

Members	Instruments
Cleto Chacha	Braga
W. Edwards	Clarinet
F.A. Harte	Cuartro or
C. Eugene Bernier	Quatro
Patrick L. Johnson	Double Bass
P. Branche	Flute
D. Black	Guitar
L. Demille	
E. B. Buther	Piano
Louis Schneider	Triplet(also listed as mandolin)
George R. L. Bailey(Lovey)	Leader and first violin
L. Betancourt	Second Violin

The first identifiably calypso genre song was recorded in 1912. At the end of April 1912, the *Port of Spain Gazette* announced enthusiastically that **Lovey's Band** also known as the **Typical Orchestra of Trinidad**— one of the island's foremost string bands – would be embarking on a tour of the United States. The visit was a result of the positive responses that the band had received in their performances from visiting tourists, mainly Americans, who were so delighted that they had advised the band to make the trip. They originally formed somewhere in the 1890's and continued performing until the early 1920s. They were founded during the same period that calypso began to be sung in English. Creole dance music – 'Spanish Valses and Paseos' – was Lovey's (**George R. Baillie**) speciality. The majority of Lovey's band had no technical knowledge of music and played mostly by ear.

The band was described as the 'Trinidad Dance Orchestra' for their American tour, the twelve members were fitted out with uniforms for the first time. The band was scheduled to depart Trinidad on the Royal Dutch Mail Steam Ship 'Saramacca' on the 7th May. Before the band left for America a farewell concert was organized and held at the Princess Building under the patronage of the Governor of the colony, Sir George R. Le Hunte. Funds were raised to help with local expenses during the trip abroad. The band which appeared in their new uniforms played a Spanish Waltz, Two step, Waltz and Paseo from their latest repertoire. On the morning of 7th May the band was given a grand send off at Queen's wharf in Port -of- Spain.

The band arrived in New York on the 13th of May. While in the United States, the band made commercial recordings for the two principal competitors; the Victor Talking Machine Company, and the Columbia Phonograph. On the 20th June 192, eight titles were recorded for Victor. They comprised five Trinidad Paseos, two Spanish Valses and a Tango Argentino. Some of the composer designations were to members of the band. The recordings were released in four consecutive couplings in Victor's Spanish American Series. Credited to 'Lovey's String band' on record labels, in the Trinidad and Venezuela sections of a 1922 catalogue they were described respectively as '**Lovey's Mixed Band**' or '**Banda Mixta Lovely**'. This may be a reference to the mixed-creole ancestry of the bands.

Much less is known of the session the band undertook for Columbia. It is believed this also took place in June 1912. As with the Victor releases some composer credits were to members of the Orchestra. The group was described as '**Lovey's Band, Trinidad, British W I**' or '**Orquesta Tipica de Trinidad reconocido por Banda de Lovey**' on record labels. These records seem to have been issued in a special series for the Trinidad market and, in some instances, Columbia's popular Spanish-American catalogue.

Vocal Recording In Trinidad and Tobago

The 1912 recordings by Lovey's band present a useful cross-section of popular dance music in Trinidad. They also gave some indication of the way in which this music had evolved from a complexity of influences both inside and outside the island. The 'Spanish' element in the Orchestra's repertoire allowed record companies to market their music in several countries. The bands recording sessions in New York City in 1912 marked an important milestone in recording as they were done five years before the first jazz recordings, and these instrumental recordings document a style of "hot" music in fashion in the Caribbean around that time. The recording was selected for preservation in 2002 by the National Recording Preservation Board of the Library of Congress.

Lovey's Recordings for Victor, 1912

First recording date	Title	Primary Performer	Description
6/20/1912	Trinidad Paseo	Lovey's Trinidad String Band	Instrumental ensemble
"	Mari-Juana	"	"
"	'666'	"	"
"	Manuelita	"	"
"	La Libre	"	"
"	¿Y cómo le va?	"	"
"	Campos petrolíferos	"	"
"	Sarah	"	"

Lovey's Columbia recordings, 1912

Mango Vert – Paseo

1. Pauline – Paseo
2. Manuelito – Vals
3. Cavel Blanco – Vals
4. Grande Fando – Tango

1914 - The First Commercial Recording of Calypso (Vocal), Kalenda and Indian Music

Early on the 20th Century, recording companies realized that the business was good. Their biggest markets were Europe and the US but the World War I made them look around for new lands to conquer. The Victor Talking Machine Company began to send scouts to travel around the world to record local artists wherever they arrived. The success of the first Cuban recordings (as early as 1907) opened the door to less known Latin American styles like calypso, tangos and even venezuelan joropos.

It is believed that the Columbia Graphophone Company visited Trinidad around August 1914, to make further recordings of **Lovey's Band**. Details are few of this 1914 trip. Here is what they recorded for Columbia as the **Typical Orchestra of Trinidad**:

Lovey's Columbia Recordings, 1914

c. August 1914

1. *La Impresión*
2. *Petrol*

Encouraged by their successful recording of the Lovey's String Band in New York 1912, the Victor Talking Machine Company sent Theodore Terry to Trinidad to organize recording sessions in August 1914. On August 27, the S.S. *Matura* brought Charles Althouse and George K. Cheney, two Victor

Vocal Recording In Trinidad and Tobago

engineers, to Trinidad for the purpose of doing the recordings. The local newspapers were abuzz with the news. *The Port-of-Spain Gazette* described this historical event as a 'special trip to Trinidad for the purpose of recording a complete repertoire of Trinidadian music including the Pasillos Spanish Waltz and Two steps by well-known Bands, also Carnival and Patois songs and East Indian selections by local talent'. *The Mirror* gave similar details and spoke of Julian Whiterose's feverish preparations for the upcoming recording sessions as well as the fact that other bands and performers had been engaged.

With the exception of September 6, the recording sessions were held every day between the 3rd and 16th of the month. The performers recorded at these sessions were Lionel Belasco, Julian Whiterose, Jules Sims, S. M. Akberali and Gellum Hossein. It would appear that the engineers did not take down the titles of the vocal performances. They merely noted the kinds of music and this is what appears on the record labels or in the company catalogues. There were five **Single Tone Calipsos**, one **Double Tone Calipso**, and two **Native Trinidad Kalendas**. The initial batch of Victor releases from those recording sessions was distributed in time for the 1915 Carnival. With the exception of S.M. Akberali's recordings which were 'sacred Mohammedan chants' all the others were of secular music.

The Talking Machine Men



Photo of George K. Cheney

George Kenny Cheney was born New York, U.S.A. in 1871. After moving to New York City he joined the fledgling recording industry and was soon respected as a cutting-edge engineer. He directed a studio for the Universal Talking Machine which later became part of the Victor Talking Machine Company. Cheney's wide knowledge made him the right man for the company to send around the world recording the music of other nations. These priceless pioneer recordings preserved history and provided the company with a wider range of commercial

He recorded in such places as China, Hawaii, Japan, the Philippines, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Peru, Cuba, Uruguay and Venezuela. For two decades, he pursued the music and vocal offerings of many cultures. In 1914 he and Charles Althouse made their historic field trip to Port of Spain, Trinidad under the directions of the Victor Talking Machine Company. It was through the efforts of pioneers like Cheney and Althouse that the voices of some of our local artists have been preserved for posterity.

Vocal Recording In Trinidad and Tobago



Photo of Charles Stanley Althouse

Charles Stanley Althouse was born in Philadelphia, U.S.A. on the 20th November, 1894. He was only 20 years old when he and fellow sound engineer George Kenny Cheney of the Victor Talking Machine made the trip to Trinidad to record local artists.

Henry Julian (Julian Whiterose/Iron Duke/J. Resigna)

Iron Duke in the land, Fire Brigade
Iron Duke in the land, Fire Brigade
Bring the locomotive, just because it is a fire federation
Bring the locomotive, just because it is a fire federation,
Sans humanite

Julian Whiterose - *Iron Duke In the Land*

In 1914 Henry Julian, a chantuelle, recorded the song *Iron Duke in the Land* for the Victor Talking Machine Company. *Iron Duke in the Land* is viewed as the first vocal Calypso to be recorded. This title is the only existing recording of Whiterose. In the song Julian narrates his rise in the White Rose Band detailing some of the positions he held before becoming Lord of Resigna, the Iron Duke.

Jules Sims

Jules Sims recorded the first Kalenda (a type of song that accompanies stick fighting) for the Victor Talking Machine Company. **His was the first live recording.** The recording **Bagai Sala Que Pocheray Moin** features Sims singing in French Creole and accompanied by a tamboo bamboo band, bottle and spoon and a female chorus. It is the only song of the recording session that survives today.

Jules Sims Victor recordings-1914

Date	Primary Title	Alternate Title	Primary Performer
9/11/1914	Ou Belle Philomène	Native Trinidad Kalenda I	Jules Sims
"	Bagai Sala Que Pocheray Moin	Native Trinidad Kalenda II	"

Julian Whiterose's Victor Recordings 1914

Date	Primary Title	Alternate Title	Primary Performer
9/11/1914	Single Tone Calipso	Iron Duke in the Land	J. Resigna/Julian Whiterose
"	Single Tone Calipso	Hooray Jubal Jay	"
"	Double Tone Calipso	Bayonet Charge by the laws of Iron Duke	"
"	Single Tone Calipso	"	"
9/12/1914	Single Tone Calipso	"	"
"	Single Tone Calipso	Either Belle Marie Coolie or Ringing a Bell	"

S. M. Akberali and Gellum Hossein

Little is known of these performers except that they were of East Indian descent and recorded "sacred Mohammedan chants". The recordings seemed to have reached the stage of having masters made but the songs were never released. **These were the first recordings done of East Indian music in Trinidad and Tobago.**

S. M. Akberali and Gellum Hossein Victor Recordings, 1914

Date	Primary Title	Alternate Title	Primary Performer
9/9/1914	Moulood-Sharief I	East Indian Chant; Mohammedan	S. M. Akberali
"	Moulood-Sharief II	"	"
"	Moulood-Sharief III	"	"
"	Moulood-Sharief IV	"	"
"	Moulood-Sharief V	"	"
"	Moulood-Sharief VI	"	"
"	Moulood-Sharief VII	"	"
"	Moulood-Sharief VII	"	"

Orquesta De Venezolana De Chargo

The Orquesta Venezolana de "Chargo" recorded 9 instrumental compositions, all were Venezuelan waltzes.

Orquesta De Venezolana De Chargo Victor Recordings 1914

Date	Primary Title	Alternate Title	Primary Performer
9/12/1914	Copai	-	Orquesta Venezolana de "Chargo"
"	Niña de Puerto España	-	"
"	La adriana	-	"
9/15/1914	San Jose	-	"
"	Adios Opata	-	"
"	Rey de los oros	-	"
"	El obsequio	-	"
"	Caracas alegre	-	"
"	La perla	-	"

Vocal Recording In Trinidad and Tobago

Lionel Belasco - 1881-1967



Photo of Lionel Belasco

Also being recorded during this visit from the Victor Talking Machine Company was the well-known pianist and string band leader Lionel Belasco. Belasco was known to have travelled widely in the Caribbean and South America in his youth. During his travels he would have absorbed a wide variety of musical influences which would be later reflected in his music. He was leading his own band by 1902. He made his first recordings in Trinidad in 1914 and soon after travelled to New York, where he made more recordings and set up a publishing business. He would continue to travel back and forth between New York and Trinidad for the rest of his life.

By the late 1930s, Belasco had learned the Tin Pan Alley music publishing business in Manhattan. Until after World War II, there was no tradition of copyrighting music in Trinidad. Belasco took advantage of this situation and copyrighted many songs in New York, either in his own name or with a partner. He also composed songs and wrote adaptations of traditional material. In 1943 he published a songbook that included a piece called "L'Année Passée." The melody of the song (from a Martiniquean folksong) was the tune used by Lord Invader for his calypso "Rum and Coca Cola." Following the publication of "Rum and Coca-Cola" by Leo Fiest, Inc. and the hit record by The Andrews Sisters, Belasco sued for the copyright to the melody, while Lord Invader sued for the copyright to the words. Both won their cases.

He was the first person to popularize calypso outside of Trinidad and he recorded more West Indian songs before World War II than any other performer. Some time ago Rounder records released a compilation of some of Belasco's recordings from 1914 - 1933 including some later private recordings from early 1960s.

Date	Title	Primary Performer	Description
9/3/1914	Te vi primero	Lionel Belasco Orchestra	Instrumental ensemble
"	Eugenio	"	"
"	El gallo	"	"
"	Slow brakes	"	"
"	Ponche crema	"	"
9/5/1914	La fiesta	"	"
"	My little man gone down the Maine	"	"
"	Sylphie	"	"
"	Club Victoria	"	"
"	Soudanesa	"	"
"	Bajan Girl	"	"
"	La guayara	"	"
9/7/1914	Mr. Driver, blow your horn	"	"
"	Papa Gorrie	"	"
"	Little brown boy	"	"
"	Buddy Abraham	"	"
9/7/1914	Licores de Borges	Lionel Belasco Orchestra	Instrumental ensemble
"	Nicolas Rolando	"	"
"	Margarita	"	"
"	Meet me roun' de corner	"	"
"	Not a cent, not a cent!	"	"
"	Santa Anna	"	"
9/8/1914	Flor de Paria	"	"
"	I love him a'ready	"	"
"	Madre silva	"	"
9/9/1914	Ne m'abandonne pas	Lionel Belasco;	"

Vocal Recording In Trinidad and Tobago

Wilmoth Houdini (Frederick Wilmoth Hendricks) 1895-1977

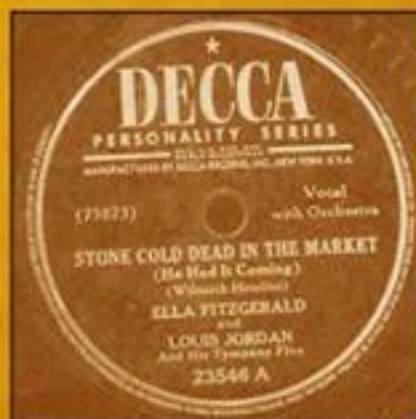


Photo of Wilmoth Houdini

Wilmoth Houdini started out as a chantuelle. In 1916 his career began in earnest when he began working with the African Millionaires, a large carnival group consisting of about 25 members. He arrived in New York sometime around 1927, after working on cargo ships and travelling extensively. Not long after his arrival there, he began cutting records with local bands for Decca Records, notably Gerald Clark's Night Owls. He released well over a hundred different 78's between 1928 and 1940, also under the names of Fredrick Wilmoth Hendricks (his given name), Edgar Leon Sinclair (the name on his US passport), and King Houdini. His 1939 composition "*He Had It Coming*" was a hit for Louis Jordan and Ella Fitzgerald under the new title "*Stone Cold Dead in the Market*". The song stayed on the top of the R&B charts for five weeks, and reached no. 7 on the pop charts. Gaining a good deal of recognition, Houdini wasted no time in organizing high-profile calypso festivals and concerts around New York,

quickly becoming a respected member of the Caribbean communities there.

After moving to New York (as one of the earliest Trinidadian émigrés), he was often the object of derision by the calypsonians still in Trinidad, who claimed that he was stealing their ideas and capitalizing on them in the USA. Houdini had a good voice, an excellent sense of rhythm, and had by 1930 begun to establish a reputation in New York. But such achievement was meaningless if one did not continuously prove one's quality through encounter with "the Heroes" – that is, **Senior Inventor, Mentor, Executor, Atila, Alban, Normandy** and others. This Houdini could not do in New York. In compensation for this situation of exile he would boast of contests where he had defeated the home-based singers; contests which no one else could remember. Towards the beginning of the 1950s he played regularly at the Caribbean Club on Seventh Avenue, New York, with his only real rival, The Duke of Iron, also a native of Trinidad.



Recording of He Had It Coming by Wilmoth Houdini (L) and Stone Cold Dead in the Market by Ella Fitzgerald and Louis Jordan inspired by Houdini's original composition

The majority of these calypsos of the World War I era were instrumentals by Lovey and Lionel Belasco. Perhaps due to the constraints of the wartime economy, no recordings of note were produced until

the late 1920s and early 1930s. During the 1910s and 1920s, American companies continued to record calypso in New York for distribution to Caribbean and Latin American markets. It was during the 1930s, however, that the recording and international dissemination of calypso intensified. The "*Golden*

Era" of calypso would cement the style, form, and phrasing of the music. This was the time of big name Calypso stars like **Atila the Hun, Lord Invader** and **The Roaring Lion**.

1930's

The Golden Era of Calypso

Vocal Recording
in Trinidad and Tobago

In 1930, only Sam Manning and Lionel Belasco made recordings, respectively for the Columbia export and Brunswick "Race" Series. This smaller output mirrors the highly depressed economic circumstances following the U.S. stock market crash of October. In the mid- 1930's calypsonians from Trinidad began making annual visits to New York City where they recorded their latest calypso hits. **Decca** was dominant in issuing calypso 78rpm records for decades following the mid-1930's, but **RCA Victor** also issued calypsos on their **Bluebird** Label. Calypsonians were also performing in night clubs.

At that time, interest in calypso was confined to Manhattan and a few East and West Coast cities. Records in these areas sold briskly to both West Indian and white Americans, the people who ventured into the *Village Vanguard* or the *Cordon Bleu* to hear the songs of the Roaring Lion, Atilla the Hun, King Radio, the Growling Tiger, or in the 1940's, the Lord Invader. These calypsonians had made their names in the calypso tents in Trinidad and were now taking their singing talents "to the world," as Tiger once expressed it. Club goers and record buyers also liked songs performed by Trinidadians who although they had not made a reputation back home, would have developed singing styles and stage presence that would appeal to Americans not familiar with Trinidadians culture. In this group were the **Duke of Iron**, **Macbeth the Great**, and **Sir Lancelot**.

Calypso takes New York

Eduardo Sa Gomes 1893-1955



From Left to Right Lord Carriacou, Atilla the Hun, The Roaring Lion, Lord Executor and Eduardo Sa Gomes before the calypsonians trip to New York, 1937

Eduardo Sa Gomes was an entrepreneur of Portuguese stock who founded the **Sa Gomes Radio Emporium**, in Duke Street, Port-of-Spain. Born in Madeira, he settled in Trinidad in 1916. He assisted in the spreading Calypso in its early days. He also established himself as an important distributor of imported records. In March 1934, Eduardo Sa Gomes the Trinidad agent for **Brunswick Records** sent **The Roaring Lion** and **Atilla the Hun** to New York City to record; they became the first calypsonians to record abroad, bringing the genre out of the West Indies and into pop culture. This event was one of the defining moments in calypso history.

While Belasco and Houdini and others had recorded calypsos before, this was the first trip of calypsonians based in Trinidad to New York for the purpose of recording. This proved to be the start of a series of annual trips by select calypsonians. **Lord Invader** was quick to follow. He stayed in New York City after a protracted legal case involving the theft of his song "*Rum and Coca-Cola*".

Vocal Recording In Trinidad and Tobago



A Sa Gomes Album by Hubert Raphael De Leon (The Roaring Lion)

In 1935, Sa Gomes switched his allegiance to the newly formed **Decca Company**, and through it, in each of the following years until 1937; he co-sponsored recording trips to New York by the major calypsonians of the season. They made recordings that sold in his shops a couple of months later. In response to competition by **RCA Bluebird** and **General Supplies**, their Trinidad distributors in 1938, Sa Gomes and **Decca** arranged for Calypso recordings to be made in Trinidad installing a recording studio and recruiting performers locally, a pattern that continued annually until 1940. There was the organization of sessions of the recordings by Decca's visiting repertoire and production representatives, and also clearance by the colonial censors of the recorded songs before they could be commercially

released.

After 1941 when Sa Gomes again sent singers to New York, his arrangements with the **American Decca Company** were altered irrevocably by the War. Calypsonians who travelled independently to New York in 1945 made one more series of sessions with **Decca**, who issued them in a special series. The company then ceased producing new Trinidad calypso recordings, content to re-issue older records in the United States and via their associated company in Great Britain.

Sa Gomes recorded in Trinidad again in August 1947 recording **Lion** and **Radio**. In 1948 Sa Gomes launched the **Kiskadee label**. Around 1950 he began to issue his Trinidad recordings on the **Sa Gomes label**. Pressed by **Decca** in England, this label achieved moderate success in Trinidad but he no longer had his British and American distributors. Times had changed and Sa Gomes no longer controlled the lion's share of calypso recordings and local sales as other players came on the scene cutting deals with calypsonians and record companies.

In 1955 Sa Gomes passed away and his business was taken on by his eldest son Eddie who eventually got out of the recording business, though the business still continued to sell musical instruments and records. In 1969 the Sa Gomes building at 44 Independence Square burned down and records, catalogues, and other papers concerning the Sa Gomes business were lost in the fire.

Eduardo Sa Gomes played a key part in promoting calypso music. He assisted in propelling calypso beyond the music of Trinidad's Carnival and Carnival tents. **Jack Kapp**, with his associates **Louis Sebok** and **Ralph Perez**, in New York, were instrumental in recording the calypsonians that Sa Gomes promoted. Kapp, and his company **Decca**, were largely responsible for moving calypso into an international setting.

1930's cont'd.

Recording Our Folk Heritage

Vocal Recording
in Trinidad and Tobago

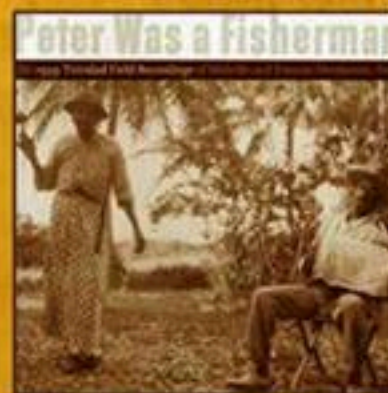
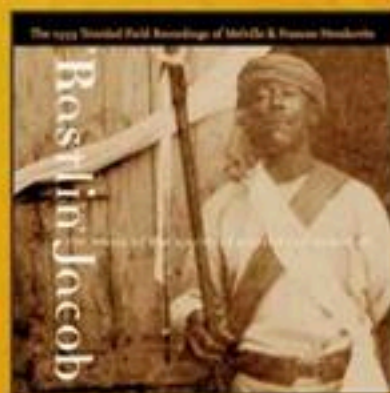
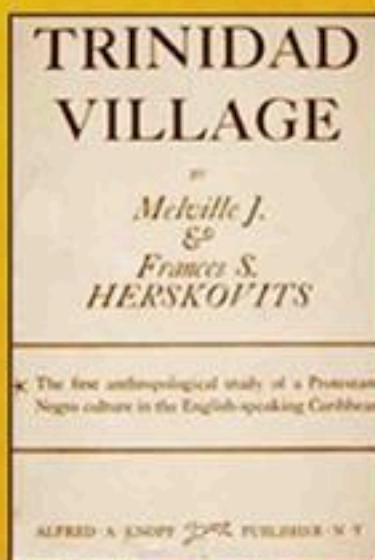
Melville Jean Herskovits (1895-1963) and Frances Herskovits (1898-1970):



Photo of Melville and Frances Herskovits

Melville J. Herskovits, the son of Jewish immigrants, was an American anthropologist who firmly established African and African-American studies in American academia. Herskovits' long career as an anthropologist was punctuated and advanced by a series of field trips to study various aspects of Negro civilization. The first of these came in 1928 when, accompanied by Frances Herskovits and Morton Kahn. He did ethnographic field work among the Bush Negroes of Suriname (Dutch Guiana). The expedition was repeated in 1929. This work resulted in two books authored jointly with Frances Herskovits, *Suriname Folk-lore* and *Rebel Destiny*, as well as a number of articles.

Herskovits' studies of the Negro in the New World continued with trips to Haiti (1934), **Trinidad (1939)**, and Brazil (1942). The most important works based on these experiences are *Life in a Haitian Valley* and *Trinidad Village*. Over the 30 years of their life together Melville and Francis Herskovits wrote many books and articles on African culture in the motherland and amongst the diaspora. *Trinidad Village* was published in 1947, and the research Herskovits conducted in Toco in 1939 as well as the songs he collected contributed greatly to his ground-breaking book *Myth of the Negro Past*. Those are the songs from which were drawn the 34 tracks on *Peter Was A Fisherman*.



Two albums based on the 1939 Trinidad Field Recordings of Melville and Frances Herskovits. These were the most comprehensive record of Trinidad folk music in the late 1930's.

They range from Carnival music (calypsoes, lavways, Wild Indian songs) to Baptist hymns (one of which provided the title of the collection). There are bongos, reels, quadrilles and sentimental songs, Yoruba songs and Orisha songs, making the collection perhaps the most comprehensive record of Trinidad folk music in the late 1930s. Herskovits used a two-turntable Soundscriber recorder, a Western Electric "salt-shaker" microphone and 201 12-inch acetate discs, one spare cutting head, three Sapphire cutters for the acetates and steel needles for the playback. It all was powered by a 300-watt belt driven generator. Arriving in Trinidad on June 14, 1939, the Herskovits was recommended to go to Toco, and on July 1 they made their first recording. Most of the recordings were done in the house as the equipment was too heavy to lug around. These precious recordings were done under trying circumstances with an untrained recordist, primitive field conditions. It was truly a labour of love. These recordings could only have been "recovered" with the use of modern digital technology.

Vocal Recording in Trinidad and Tobago

There was probably more calypsonians being recorded in the 1945-1955 than in the previous decade. The difference was that the initiative was divided between several small ventures, and the overall distribution of calypsos was substantially smaller than during the Decca years. This is why it is today easier to find the calypsos of the thirties than those of the late forties to mid-fifties; particularly those which were recorded and distributed in Trinidad. Spoiler and Small Island Pride were recorded by Cook, as were the prolific Melody and the phenomenal Sparrow. But one finds only the occasional Panther or Chiang-Kai-Shek or Wonder. Even in the late-forties to mid-fifties Invader, or Pretender, both of whom recorded locally in the period, are almost impossible to locate.

Aubrey 'Bolo' Christopher 1911 -2009

Aubrey 'Bolo' Christopher was of Chinese descent. He was the fourth of his parent's ten children and lived most of his life on Henry Street, Port-of-Spain. His family was well off and his father owned many businesses which included a bakery, an iron forge and a general shop. From very young he learned to work in his father's shop. By 11 he began taking part in Carnival, portraying characters like Henry VIII or Vasco da Gama or a Nubian slave in a small band, and sometimes playing a banjo for their music. He commented on mas in his time:

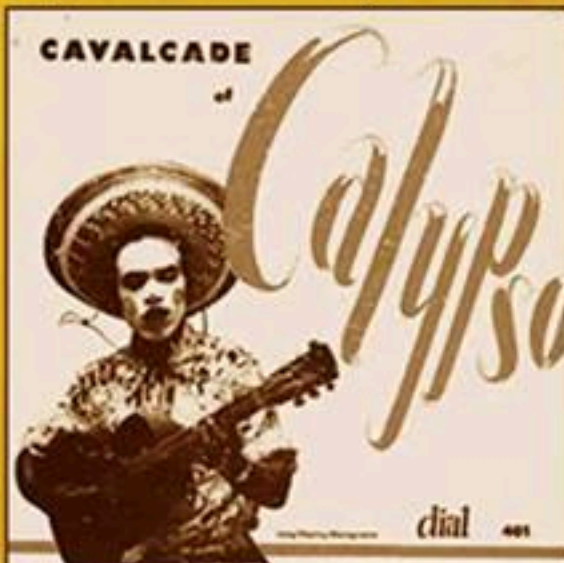


Photo of Aubrey Christopher

"Banjo was the lead instrument because it was loud, and it had cuatro and a fella from Basilon Street who used to walk with a big bass," he says. "They had women and men playing mas but you didn't know who is who: everybody was cloak up with mask and gloves and that was the enjoyment."

Christopher became interested in track and field sports and in 1928 he represented the colony in a cycling meet in British Guiana. In 1937 he introduced walking races to Trinidad and Tobago, but it was cycling which provided him briefly with a livelihood, from making his own racing bike Christopher also began to make bicycles in his

father's forge for sale and ended up exporting them under the brand name *Buick* to Barbados and Grenada for \$48 each. He opened *Christopher Brothers Cycle and Radio Services*. He was also interested in music. His father's shop imported and sold records which were mainly Latin American music. He imported a Webster amplifier to play the records in the shop, and every evening there'd be a crowd listening outside the Nelson Street store.



Dial records cover (L) and a record with the Key Label which Christopher named after his daughter.

Vocal Recording In Trinidad and Tobago

Christopher also wrote calypsos. In the 40's he gave songs to calypsonians such as Growler, Christo, Hawk and Young Killer. Christopher wasn't a singer, but in addition to the banjo he played cuatro, guitar and piano, and composed instrumental music too, such as "Tan Tan", which he wrote for Fitzvaugh Bryan. Sa Gomes was recording calypso by sending the artistes to the US, but early on Christopher had seen an RCA team record King Radio in Rialto Cinema, St. James, and around 1947 Christopher decided he could do that too. In 1953 he met Ross Russell, owner of Dial Records and a promoter of bop records; he became interested in West Indian music, thinking that the records would sell well in the United States. They decided to record calypsos, steelband music, and other Carnival and religious music in late February and early March 1953. He imported a machine to cut the records, set up his own recording system and thus was launched the Dial Recording Company, the first Trinidadian recording company. The Dial 10" long-playing albums that resulted were the first LP's in Trinidad. Regrettably, their sales were marginal. In the 1950s he changed the name of the company to Kay, after his daughter, who had won countless Carnival Queen titles. He recorded steelbands too, putting the Trinidad All Stars playing Comma's "I Never Love" on disc in 1953.

Christopher was also recording calypsos by Blakie and Cristo. One day his bandmaster Cyril Diaz asked him to give a certain young man a break. The tune he recorded for the young man was "Yankees Gone", later known as "Jean and Dinah", the singer was the Mighty Sparrow, a newcomer, and Christopher paid for the record to be played every morning on the radio. He offered a prize for whoever could name the singer and the band.

He continued through the years composing songs for other people. Christopher's creativity also found expression in the technical side of cultural production and he even went so far as to build his own radio, a design which was adopted by the American manufacturers of Ambassador Radios. Although he was acknowledged as the designer, he didn't receive a cent. For his livelihood he relied on his ability to repair radios and televisions, a trade which he taught himself and which he abandoned at 88 due to fading eyesight and brain cancer. Aubrey 'Bolo' Christopher died on April 16th, 2009.

Calypso goes to court: The Rum and Coca-Cola story

Lord Invader (Rupert Westmore Grant) 1914-1961



Photo of Lord Invader

Lord Invader's hit song *Rum and Coca-Cola* of 1943 is undoubtedly the most famous calypso describing the impact of the American presence on Trinidad. The song described the increase in prostitution that resulted from the presence of so many soldiers in the island. During a visit to Trinidad Morey Amsterdam, an American comedian and master of ceremonies of a visiting troupe of performers sent out in 1943 to provide entertainment for marines and soldiers stationed at number of Caribbean bases heard Invader's song and on his return to America, composed several stanzas of his own. He collaborated with Jeri Sullivan, a nightclub singer who sang it as a "novelty song" in 1944. Amsterdam then copyrighted the song in his own name and published copyrighted broadsheets with the music of the song.

Vocal Recording In Trinidad and Tobago



Photos of the Andrew Sisters (L) and Morey Amsterdam (R)

The Andrew sisters recorded their version of the song in 1944 for Decca. It was a success for Decca Records, whose ten-year adventure in the recording of Trinidad's music had at last been rewarded. However, the record was banned by the four major networks for the following reasons

- It portrayed drinking as pleasurable and attractive and would be offensive to states where alcohol was still under prohibition.
- Free advertisement. It provided free advertisement for Coca-Cola, which was a breach of advertising codes.

- It was bad propaganda for the US armed forces whose serious role in Caribbean defence was completely ignored in the calypso.

Despite the ban, the song sold at least 2.5 million copies and was the most popular song in the country. On "Billboard" magazine's chart it was #1 for eight straight weeks and it topped "Variety's" chart for nine weeks.

Invader went to New York to take legal action against Amsterdam for this plagiarism. When interviewed Amsterdam claimed to have picked up the song in the West Indies, and to have "bought" the rights to the tune" while supplying his own lyrics. However the words to Invader's version had been published in a booklet by Mr, M. H. Khan, manager of the Victory Tent called Victory Calypsos. In addition to this, a strikingly similar melody had also been published in 1943 as L'Anné Passée by the Maurice Baron Co. for Lionel Belasco.

The case started on December 9, 1946, and ended on February 27, 1947 with Victory for Invader and Khan. Amsterdam lost because of the evidence that Invader's song had existed months before his arrival in Trinidad, and was well known by thousands of marines who Invader had entertained throughout 1943, five of whom had testified on Invader's behalf. The whole affair illustrated the crying need for calypsonians to develop a sense of professionalism, and to understand the legal financial and contractual aspects of their vocation.

Emory Cook 1913-2000



Photo of Emory Cook

Emory Cook was an audio engineer and inventor who used his **Sounds of our Times** and **Cook Laboratories** record labels to demonstrate his philosophy about sound, his recording equipment, and his manufacturing techniques. Cook was the first to come up with the idea of pressing records with powdered rather than solid vinyl, a technique he dubbed "microfusion." This technique not only saved money, but cut out many of the traditional crackles and pops associated with records.

He also developed the binaural system of recording and playing records, which he thought was superior to the more commonly used stereo method. Binaural was more precise than stereo, and it required placing two microphones six inches apart, approximately the space between two ears, during the recording. It was then played back with a special two-needle playing arm. Binaural recordings were thought by Cook to best duplicate the original sound.



A picture of Emory Cook (middle of photo with his back turned) walking down a street in Port-of-Spain

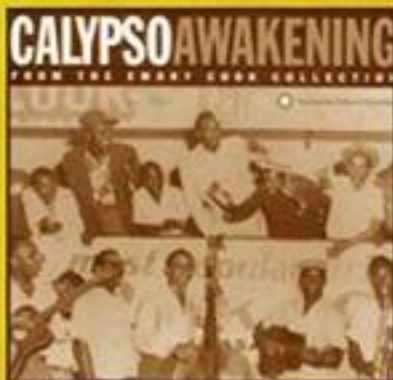
At some point it occurred to Emory Cook that it might make more sense for some record shops to press records themselves, as customers requested them, rather than to pay shipping and stocking costs. The result was that by 1958 there were record shops on Caribbean islands from Puerto Rico to Trinidad that had a Cook record-press in the back of the store. Some of the owners of these small shops, or their associates, began recording local music themselves. They shipped the master tape recording of an album up to Cook, and (for about \$100) he made a metal mold of it, which was shipped back to the record store, which, when asked for a copy of the record, would pull the mold for that record from the shelf, fill it with the powdered vinyl (which was sprayed from a device resembling an old-fashioned hair dryer which covered the mold exactly), and then popped it in the oven-cum-high-pressure press.

From 1952 to 1966 Cook recorded, manufactured, and distributed some of the highest quality audio recordings in the world. The 140 titles on Cook Records include European and American concert music, U.S. and Caribbean popular and traditional music, as well as mechanical and natural sounds.

Beginning in the middle 1950's, Cook visited Trinidad on a regular basis and made both field and studio recordings of calypso and other carnival music. During and after the Calypso Craze, Cook's label marketed calypso long-playing records. Some of the calypsonians who recorded with Cook were **Sparrow, Lord Melody, Cypher, Commander, Wrangler** and **Fighter**. In 1957 he did an important interview with Patrick Jones on the album *Calypso Lore and Legend*.

Vocal Recording in Trinidad and Tobago

Cook marketed his records in the West Indies and in the United States. The records were moderately successful in the islands and are still sold in Trinidad today. However, in the United States, Cook's records seemed to appeal only to a few hard-core fanatics. The 1957 issues of *Billboard* scarcely mention the Cook Label and none of his calypso recordings appear either in the top popular LP list nor in the various singles' lists. Emory and Martha Cook donated their record company, master tapes, patents, and papers to the Smithsonian Institution in 1990.



Calypso Awakening (L) and The Mighty Sparrow - First Flight (R) 2 CD's from the Emory Cook Collection

Two Cook Labels

Alan Lomax 1915-2002



Photo of Alan Lomax

Alan Lomax was a folklorist, ethnomusicologist, archivist, writer, scholar, political activist, oral historian, and film-maker. He began making field recordings with his father, a fellow folklorist, **John Lomax**, of American folk music for the Library of Congress' Archive of American Folk Song. Throughout his six decades of pivotal work, Lomax travelled all over the USA, as well as to the Caribbean, Ireland, Great Britain, Spain and Italy. Aside from turning the Archive of American Folk Song into one of the most important music resources in the world, Lomax wrote numerous books on music, hosted radio shows in the United States (CBS) and Britain (BBC), and even brought a concert series to New York called **The Midnight Special**.

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The *Midnight Special* at Town Hall, brought together 1940s New Yorkers blues, flamenco, calypso, and Southern ballad singing, all still relatively unknown genres. *The Calypso at Midnight* concert was sponsored by People's Songs and hosted by Alan Lomax, was performed in December 1946 at New York's Town Hall during the post-World War II calypso boom in the United States. Three of the greatest New York-based calypsonians, Lord Invader, the Duke of Iron and Macbeth the Great, are accompanied by Gerald Clark & his Invaders, performing a mix of well-known and, especially in Invader's case, original material.

Vocal Recording in Trinidad and Tobago



Alan Lomax (L) recording in the field



Calypso at Midnight Album

In 1962 he made an extensive survey of traditional music in the Eastern Caribbean, under the auspices of the University of the West Indies and had collaborated with local folklorist J. D. Elder. Lomax recorded calypsonian Growling Tiger in 1962. Together with his Haitian and Bahamian recordings

of the 1930s, and recordings made in Santo Domingo in 1967, Lomax's Caribbean corpus amounts to some 150 hours of music, interviews, and *konts* (story-songs).

In June 2012, the entire archive of Alan Lomax's collection of East Caribbean recordings was repatriated to The University of the West Indies, Trinidad and is being kept at the Alma Jordan Library.



Photo of Neville Marciano (Growling Tiger) with guitar, 1962 and the album *The Growling Tiger of Calypso* Alan Lomax Collection recorded on Aug. 17 in Trinidad, 1962.



Vocal Recording in Trinidad and Tobago

Leslie 'Lucky' Samaroo

*In 1966 when my small plant burnt down at Dundonald Street in Port of Spain (POS), I built the largest and most modern plant facilities in the Caribbean at Sea Lots in POS. This plant had automated pressing capability, record mastering and plating, printery, and the largest recording studio in the country. However, in 1969 I started a new Company, **Arawak Airlines**, but changed the name shortly afterwards to **Caribbean United Airlines**. I was encouraged to go into the Airline business when the National carrier **BWIA** could not carry on with the Domestic service to Tobago, because of financial constraints. In 1973-74 I was forced to put the airline in receivership, when the Government refused to grant me a fare increase of TT \$6.00 due to the fuel crisis at the time. Although the Government promised to refund me all moneys invested, I never received any refund. I had to sell the recording Company to repay my debts.*

Leslie 'Lucky' Samaroo interview Othersound.com



Tropico label

Leslie "Lucky" Samaroo is a Trinidadian entrepreneur who turned his passion for music into a business. He started up his own pressing plant, International Recording Co. Ltd, which was key to creating an independent record industry in Trinidad. His other ventures included a record label called **Tropico** and later an airline called Caribbean United Airlines. In the mid-70's he was forced to leave the music business when climbing oil prices threatened to ground his entire airline business.

Samaroo got involved in the record business in 1957 when he applied for a licensee agreement from **RCA (Records)** to establish a pressing plant in Trinidad. He then spent many weeks with RCA at their recording studios in NY, observing and learning sound recording techniques. His first recording in Trinidad was done sitting in a goat pen on the hills of Lavantille with his Ampex 601 Recorder, RCA four channel mixer and four RCA 77DX Microphones and recording Ebonites Steel Orchestra playing "Oh My Beloved Father". When he released his first 45 on the Trinidad and Tobago market it was an instant hit and best seller. Samaroo was aware that Emory Cook was the first to set up a pressing plant in Trinidad but he felt that the pressing process was his downfall. He also felt that Cook's recordings were and still are the best ever produced of steelbands.



Cover of Silver Stars Steel Orchestra's Carnival in Trinidad Vol. IV produced by Tropico Records.

Samaroo's plant was the traditional type using vinyl materials in hydraulic pressing moulds. International Recording Co. Ltd produced (and pressed), over 4000 local recordings including, Sparrow, Melody, Lord Kitchener, Mighty Duke, La Petite Musical, Joey Lewis and Orch., Ron Berrage and Orch., Pete De Vlucht and Orch., Cyril Diaz and Orch., Pan-Am North Stars Steel Orch., Silver Stars Steel Orch., Gay Desperados Steel Orch., Cavaliers Steel Orch., and many others too numerous to mention. One of his best sellers was a 45 called "Portrait of Trinidad" by Mighty Sniper from 1965.

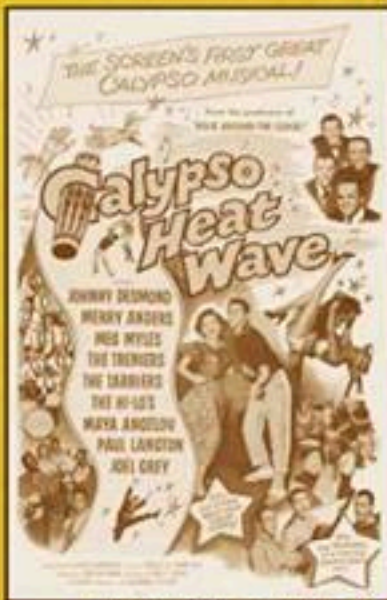
Vocal Recording
in Trinidad and Tobago

THE CALYPSO CRAZE



Blue Angel Night Club advertised Calypso as part of its entertainment during the 1950's

During the 1950's the USA managed to adopt the calypso with the limbo dance and created the Calypso Craze, which was extremely popular worldwide. During this time great American and other pop stars started to record "calypsos". These included Sarah Vaughn, Chubby Checker, Ivy Pete, Rusty Draper, the Andrew Sisters, Harry Belafonte, Robert Mitchum, Chet Atkins, Louis Armstrong, Maya Angelou, Josephine Premice and Louis Farrakhan to name a few.



Movie poster of Calypso Heat Wave, 1957

The Calypso Craze of 1957 Played out on two major fronts: on records and in nightclubs. Calypso over the radio, television, and on film was of lesser importance and Calypso shows in theatres were not particularly successful. Suddenly calypso was everywhere! Calypsonians had albums on major labels. RCA issued albums by the Duke of Iron and Zebra. Lord Christo came up from Trinidad to appear at the Blue Angel nightclub in Chicago and recorded an album for Mercury while he was there.

All kinds of obscure labels issued calypso singles and albums. Various anthologies of calypso material were issued, many featuring songs recorded earlier and released to take advantage of the projected sales boom. Columbia and Folkways even issued calypso albums for children. However, the sales never matched the industry's expectations. The *Calypso Craze* was largely a boom and bust phenomenon. The industry's hope that calypso would replace rock 'n' roll did not materialize. The river of calypso releases, which swelled to a torrent during the first half of 1957, proved to be barely a trickle by the end of the year.

Maya Angelou (Born Marguerite Johnson) 1928-2014



Photo of Maya Angelou

Maya Angelou born **Marguerite Johnson** was an author, poet, historian, songwriter, playwright, dancer, stage and screen producer, director, performer, singer and civil rights activist. She recorded a Calypso album in the 1950's called "*Miss Calypso*" in which she sang several popular calypsos such as "Run Joe, Donkey City, Shame and Scandal and Peas and Rice."



Maya Angelou's calypso album Miss Calypso

Vocal Recording in Trinidad and Tobago

Louis Farrakhan (Louis Eugene Wolcott) 1933 - Present



Photo of Louis Farrakhan

Controversial leader of the Nation of Islam **Louis Farrakhan** was in the 1950s a leading calypso singer in the United States. His first calypso sobriquet was 'Calypso Gene' or 'Calypso Louie'. He eventually changed his calypso title to 'The Charmer'. He was born and raised in the Caribbean community of Boston. His father was a Jamaican taxi driver and his mother was from St. Kitts.

Farrakhan is also an accomplished violinist and played with several orchestras in Boston. He was one of the better-known calypso ambassadors in the US during the era and recorded several calypso albums of popular calypsos. He was later appointed the leader of the Nation of Islam.

Harold George "Harry" Belafonte, Jr. 1927 - Present

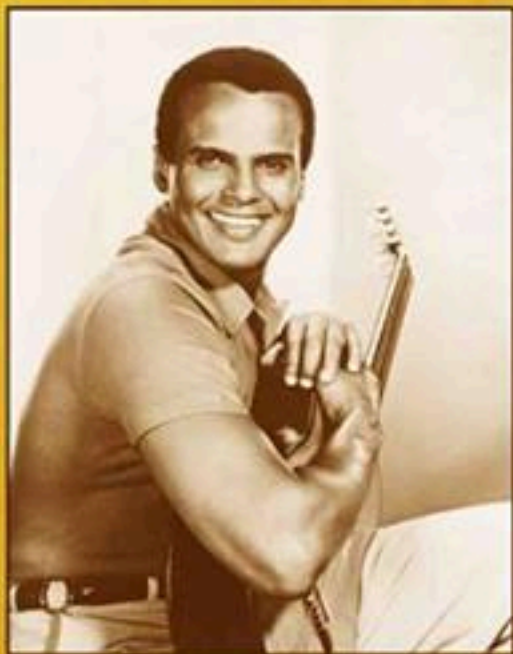


Photo of Harry Belafonte



Harry Belafonte in a recording session, 1957 and (R) cover of his album Calypso



Harry Belafonte is an American singer, songwriter, actor and social activist. He was dubbed the "King of Calypso" for popularizing Caribbean musical styles with an international audience in the 1950s. The Calypso

Craze of 1957 was a brief bubble that piggybacked on Harry Belafonte's career. His skills as an entertainer and his honest portrayal of himself as a stylist of music from various parts of the world, and not as a calypso singer, allowed his own career to last beyond the Craze. The *Calypso* Craze was launched and carried along by his million-selling album, *Calypso*. Belafonte's album was on the *Billboard's* charts for 31 weeks as number one, 58 weeks in top ten, and 99 weeks on the US charts. The album became the first million-selling, long-playing record.

1960's and beyond

Since the 1960s, the export of music from Trinidad has been facilitated by the spread of Trinidad-type carnival celebrations throughout the region and among the Caribbean diaspora in the metropolitan cities of New York, London and Toronto. The undoubted international stars that emerged in this period were the Mighty Sparrow and Lord Kitchener. In the mid-1970s, the advent of soca - an upbeat derivative of calypso - created new market potential and new stars such as Lord Shorty (its originator), Super Blue, Lord Nelson, Shadow, Crazy, Tambu and David Rudder. Arrow, a calypsonian from Monserrat, was able to capitalize on this wave and has achieved international success, especially with his hit 'Hot, Hot, Hot', soca's biggest selling record ever, with sales of over 4 million copies.

The mid-1980s saw the consolidation of soca the dominant musical artform. Since then the industry has seen a whole host of innovations: the Shango and Baptist rhythms of Superblue, the influence of David Rudder's jazz, funk and rock experimentations, the rapso of Brother Resistance, the Indian and chutney tempo of Rikki Jai and Drupatee, the dancehall-soca styling of General Grant. These influences helped to expand the dimensions of the calypso artform. The music bands took on new proportions as their lead singers moved from just doing cover versions of other artistes' calypsos to performing their own songs.

David Rudder, Tambu, Machel Montano, Ronnie Mc Intosh, Colin Lucan, Rikki Jai, Steeve Sealy and Nigel Lewis are a few of the key performers that have emerged from the music bands and have taken soca to new heights and new markets. Many of these bands and an increasingly large number of artistes are able to make a good living from performing around the world, especially in the approximately fifty to sixty Caribbean carnivals throughout the region, in North America and Europe. Earnings from overseas performances are several times larger than the export of recordings

Keith Nurse - *The Trinidad and Tobago Entertainment Industry: Structure and Export Capabilities*

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