



# **martinique**

Francisco

Ploum Ploum Tra-la-la

La Groupe Folklorique Martiniquais

recorded by Carter Harman

**Special**  
HIGH FIDELITY  
MONOPHONIC  
**Edition**

**COOK**

RECORDS

SOUNDS OF OUR TIMES

Bright biguines and sensuous tunes come from the French island of Martinique in the setting of Fort-de-France. Very real in stereo, very nostalgic for those who have been there, this album is almost as good as visiting.



**UN TI BO\****and other pleasures from* **MARTINIQUE**

The beautiful island of Martinique is three skips from Puerto Rico and only a sashay from Trinidad, but its heart lies with its mother country, France, 2,000 miles away. This is reflected in the Martiniquais' practical Gallic attitude towards their island. It is a kind of tropical suburb of Paris which, they observe, automatically arouses sighs among sightseers; they are delighted to lend an assist with their music. Thus, *UN TI BO* contains songs called *Martinique trop belle* (Martinique too beautiful) and *Femme Martinique doux* (sweet lady Martinique). The tunes are gentle as the thoughts that inspired them, but the rhythm, ah, that's the biguine (sic), Martinique's own contribution to the Caribbean's fantastic rhythmic variety. Biguines take off with a saucy flip of the hip and lend themselves to interpretations from sedate to sexy as they bound along in their lively, if slightly outmoded clip.

*Ba ma un ti bo*, from which this LP takes its title, is a patois phrase which means give me a little kiss. In Martinique, the tune rivals even *La Marseillaise* in popularity, which illustrates the Martiniquan talent for placing things in proper perspective. It is played with typical enthusiasm by a monster orchestra — note the six trumpets in unison — called "Ploum Ploum Tra-la-la". This outfit was organized as part of an experiment in sponsored outdoor entertainment, resembling a giant radio audience-participation show without the broadcast (Martinique's radio is state-owned and carries no advertising). The musical style is distinctly ala Francaise, hot in the manner of Dixieland jazz and faintly aromatic with the essence of yesteryear.

A young man who calls himself simply Francisco is featured on several of the enclosed selections, and manages to keep himself squarely in the insular eye and ear. He runs a nightclub where he executes furiously athletic dances in the Latin manner, he composes much of the music he performs; he runs the "groupe mi-o" (me-You) which contains some of Martinique's prettiest girls, and in his spare time he is a professional judoist.

Martiniquais are pleased to find something to sing about in most things and a great deal in some. Take carnival, for instance. Martinique claims the longest and most strenuous carnival of all, starting right after Christmas and whooping it up right into Ash Wednesday. (Lent, which follows, gives the islanders a chance to catch their breaths, with no dancing or music-making in public.) Naturally, they remember such a drastic blowout with affection, and they celebrate it with such ditties as *Bravo vaval* ("vaval" is patois for carnival). We recorded it outdoors, on top of the ancient Fort-of-France itself, in the flickering light that filtered through the trees and accompanied by the rustle of leaves and an occasional Parisian-sounding car horn from far below. Unless he has a good high fidelity rig, the listener will hear little background noise, however. For the most part it is overpowered by the staccato blasts of trombone and clarinet and the violent thrumming from one of the world's few hot cellos. The performers, La Groupe Folklorique Martiniquais, find their way aboard every cruise ship that enters the harbor and serenade the happy tourists with some of the same music they play on this record. For seasonal visitors, the final tune on this LP will certainly induce a throat-lump. It is *Adieu Foulard*, *Adieu Madras*, in which the pretty island maid watches her sailor-lover sail away forever, much in the manner of Madame Butterfly. Its tune deserves to rank with *Aloha Oy* for sentiment and beauty.

**COOK***Laboratories*

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