

Savage Dance Music to Awaken the Ballroom Beast

Steel Band Clash

Direct from the Caribbean—three 16-man oil drum orchestras

BIG SHELL BRUTE FORCE HELL'S GATE

composed of 55-gallon drums, maracas, gourd and 15 kc cricket chorus

nocturnally lodged under the F. V. D. Griffith back porch in Antigua.

COOK

long play 1040

In Antigua . . .

Except for a few hundred acres cleared away by the Seabees, the island green is dotted with thousands of abandoned windmills, derelicts from the sugar cane grinding of a century ago. Down in St. Johns the crumbling remains of an old fort still occupy a vantage point overlooking the harbor, while out in the bay beyond, legend has it that on certain nights the ghost of Lord Nelson occasionally maneuvers a phantom man-o-war.

Antigua as well as many another less obscure island in the British West Indies is steeped in a very special tradition. But that does not prevent the BWIans from building new traditions as vital and exciting as the old ones. These lands and islands gave voice to calypso; here if one listens at the right place and time, the *Shango* or voodoo songs and ceremonies can still be heard, with gibberish and nonsense words handed down from Caribbe Indian and island Indian languages that no living man knows or remembers.

Hard times and conflict contain the seeds of tradition-building, and from the 55 gallon oil drums empty of World War II lend-lease, from the admixture of Indian, African, French, Spanish, Dutch and British come now whole oil drum orchestras¹ playing meringues, sambas, mambos, marches, waltzes—and even jazz.

¹For fuller details concerning the origin and nature of steel band see Juliane 1955 Audio Bucket, Vol. 1 No. 5; also jacket notes Brute Force Steel Band record #1042.

Side A:

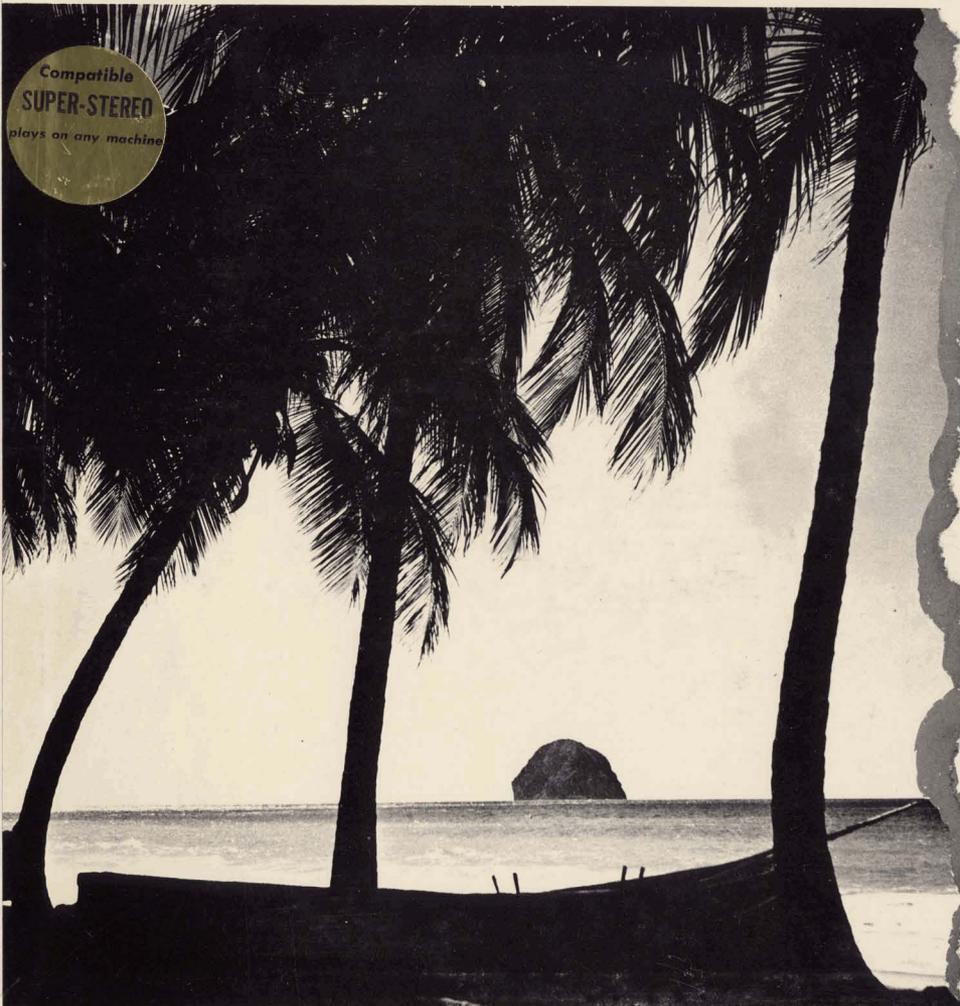
Brute Force Steel Band of Antigua, B.W.I.—
Brute Force Road March; Miss Jacob; Anna;
In the Mood; Loretta; Boncilla;
Steel Band Clash; Over the Waves.

Side B:

Bila El Mambo*; Mambo No. 5*; Anna*;
Kamaquit*+; Sunny Side of the Street*+;
Quancito Meringue#; La Veda ni Meringue*.

*Hell's Gate Band recorded at sunset near the Lord Nelson Officers' Club on the north shore.
+Big Shell Steel Band playing under corrugated tin roof at the "Bucket of Blood" down on the beach. #Brute Force Steel Band recorded outdoors; and at night. Crickets incidental but indigenous.

Photo by B.W.I. Airways



Compatible
SUPER-STEREO
plays on any machine

Birth of the Oildrum Orchestra **JUNGLE DRUMS BANNED:**



Photo by B.W.I. Airways

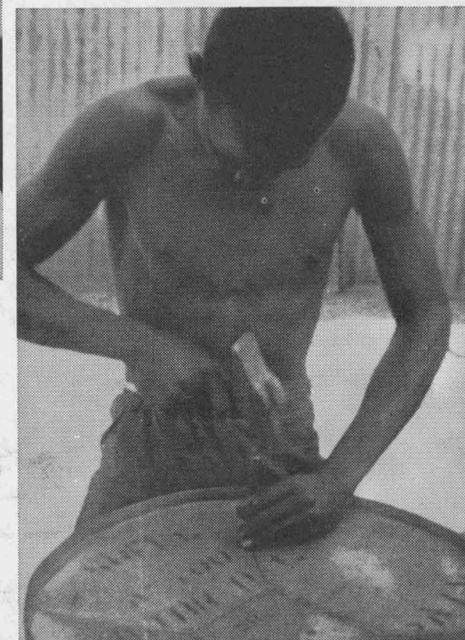
Many years ago the British and other European ruling powers banned the use of ritual drums on islands of the West Indies. They did so because they were gravely outnumbered by the Africans, and in the effort to maintain law and order some means was sought to inhibit the continuation of African tribal practices. Such practices were labeled as being backward, savage and primitive in an attempt to shame the natives into European patterns.

But in African life the main musical medium, the drum, played an important part in society. At rituals, ceremonies and gatherings of all sorts it was the chief medium of expression. A ban of drums therefore removed one of the pillars of native existence. Legal restraints on drumming merely resulted in subterfuge approaches to obtain the same emotional effects. Hand clapping, used in Negro Spirituals and "Sankeys" gave new life to the traditional Anglo-Saxon hymns, with its syncopation. In the process of "avoiding the letter of the ban", cultural traditions of African drumming were mixed intimately with the Spanish musical heritage of melody and line, the various special dance rhythms which we find on this currently released record.

In the early '20's garbage can covers were notably missing from the back porches of Trinidad homes, and even as late as 1928 the practice of "Bamboo-Tambo"; a means of making musical rhythms by striking together sticks of bamboo at the resonant joints (tamboo from the French *tambour* for drums) was still in active use. "Bamboo" was finally also banned by the police when it degenerated into a means of carrying on group conflicts.

In the late '30's a man by name of "Spree" Simon discovered that different musical pitches could be obtained by striking the head of a steel drum in different places. This was an exciting discovery in the West Indies and soon "steel drums" of various sizes and designs were put to work. The first pre-war and early post-war bands were primitive and discordant. The V-E Day celebrations were a fright for those who can bring themselves to remember. But gradually these crude instruments formed the nucleus of organized orchestras, vying with rival groups for notoriety and musical supremacy.

The evolution of steel band was fraught with violence. The memory of the garbage can days lingered on, and they very nearly went the way of Bamboo-Tambo by being banned by an awakened police. A new generation of steel drum beaters, raised in the poorest part of Port of Spain, had none of the ethical code of their fathers, took cues from Hollywood gang land cinemas. Inter-district fights, knifings and worse crimes were commonplace, and the name of *steelbandsman* carried connotations of terror for many of the citizens. Life was exciting and adventurous where all was fair in love and war.



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