



## Jump Up CARNIVAL

In Trinidad, from atop the hill, the nocturnal conference of owls, dogs and roosters seemed uncommonly quiet.

Down in Port of Spain the whole town lay suspended, the air charged with incipient music and madness. Sunrise would see unending lines of steelbands springing up in the streets. Tomorrow on the Savanna 10,000 voices would cheer the crowning of some new Calypso King.

Trinidad was waiting for Carnival to commence, waiting for . . .



## ... the strike of six

At daybreak before the nearest Westminster chime could finish, roads were suddenly carpeted with people in costume dress. Bands were forming, huge bands of people sometimes including a steelband. They marched easily, jumping, dancing, from Maraval and Mucurapo, from Santa Cruz, St. Pierre and Curucaye, from miles away down the main roads into town, creoles, colored and whites. A hundred and fifty bands converged in Marine Square, and then the streets and sidewalks in Port of Spain melted together. This was Trinidad's Jump-Up Carnival.

## Everybody Jumps Up

Trinidad's Mardi Gras is not held for the tourists. Accommodations are limited, sometimes homespun.

*"We have so few beaches, so few luxury hotels, only great numbers of voluptuous, sensuous, beautiful women!" says Donald Bain, head of the Tourist Board, and his long laugh echoes along Frederick Street above the crowds.*

Trinidadians do the jump-up all for themselves in a sort of two-day Utopian atonement. At crossroads and in the hills, rashes of dancing, stick fighting and rituals erupt unpredictably. It was even rumored that a Bamboo-Tambo band from Grenada was somewhere around.

## Calypso and Carnival

Over in the Young Brigade tent the night before, a rising tide of new calypsonians panicked their audiences singing new songs with old twists, old songs with new twists, all hoping to compete in the finals next evening. Lord Melody sprung his new song *Booboo Man* and immediately endeared himself to every family man, woman and child in town (they knocked our microphone down).

**Chorus:** *Mama looka Booboo, they shout  
They mother told them shut up you mouth  
That is you' daddy,  
Oh no! My daddy can't be ugly so!*

**Chant:** *Shut you mouth, go away,  
Mama looka Booboo dey . . . . .*

The idea of comparing father's face with "making a booboo" can be hilarious to almost anyone who has ever had a father.

Safely ensconced behind his Radio Trinidad microphone, calypsonian Small Island Pride gave an unrestrained allegorical raspberry to Venezuela with his song, *Taxi Driver*. As he finished, in strode Bain to announce that he had just given up the job of enticing tourists to Trinidad, changed his allegiance to B.W.I. Airways. Immediately, calypsonian Lord Christo jumped to the occasion with the song which follows *Taxi*, perhaps the first spontaneous calypso singing commercial.

But *The Mighty Sparrow* won the crown with his song *Yankee Gone*, heard complete with accompanying trio and public address system in the first night of Carnival on the Savanna.

*Mavis tell me straight to me face  
How she find I too fast and out of place  
. . . Don't make no row!*

*Yankees gone—Sparrow take over now.*

Hundreds of bands marched on tirelessly through the night, while the steel music with its soul firmly rooted in and evoked only by Carnival boiled and fizzed, spinning in the air magic webs of notes that rose and fell in waves. Mambos, from the enormous, red hot, roaring mad to the faintly sad and poignant, rolled out from band after band. Only a steelband can play mambo in such a way as to make you feel wistful. And the steelband plays this way nowhere else and at no other time.

*Bain looked buoyant. "We've had an exceptional Carnival this year. Even the staid old country club is a perfect shambles." He leaned over confidentially, "Did I ever tell you," he whispered, "there is an old saying here that on the stroke of midnight, all the Kings and Queens from Carnivals past meet on the Savanna, and re-enact our old Carnivals?" He chuckled. "You must come tonight!"*

It was cool on the hill as the singing and steelband pizzicatos died away. The Tuesday midnight had come, and Carnival was gone until another year. Under a bright moon, Port of Spain was quiet again, owls and dogs resumed their conversations.

E.C.

Carnival is calypso tent . . .



. . . and steelbands on parade . . .



. . . and saucy provocation.

### HEAR ON THIS RECORD:

- **Steelbands in carnival pageantry** in the streets of Port-of-Spain; a completely new sound in steelband . . . kettles, pans, booms, brake-drums, maracas passing in review. (Side A)
- **The shuffling of hundreds** of pairs of feet in step on the street marching before an oncoming mambo. (Side A: first third, band 2)
- **Inside a Calypso Tent**, the real goings-on; Lord Melody tells about "Booboo" before 1,000 people in the Young Brigade tent. (Side B: band 1) Small Island Pride sings *Taxi Driver* (don't laugh); Lord Cristo, BWIA singing commercial (Side B: band 3)
- **Saturday night blowout** at Little Carib Theatre, with John Buddy Williams, best danceband in Trinidad. (Side B: band 2)
- **The Calypso King** on Queens Park Savanna before an enormous audience, while he actually sings the song, *Yankees Gone*, that wins him the crown. (Side B: band 4)
- **Tuning of a pingpong** followed by a modest little jazz piece with tenor pan, vibes, sax, drums, piano. (Side B: band 5)
- **The panorama of sound from below**, a few moments before the midnight end of Carnival, from a quiet spot on the hill overlooking Port-of-Spain. (Side A: last band)

### Records in the Carnival Series:

*Jump-Up Carnival in Trinidad* 12" LP #1072  
*Le Jazz Primitif; John Buddy Williams, Rupert Clemendore*, 12" LP #1082  
*The Drums of Trinidad; nation rhythms of Carriacou, group drumming by Little Carib Theatre drummers*, 12" LP #1045  
*Calypso Lore & Legend; Patrick Jones chants and stories, Poposit's oldtime string orchestra*, 12" LP RR #5016; ethnic  
*Bamboo-Tambo, Bongo & the Belair; native dances and percussive forms, singing, chanting and drumming*, 12" LP RR #5017; ethnic  
*East Indian Drums of Tunapuna; Moslem ritual drums, wedding and ceremonial*, 12" LP RR #5018; ethnic

### also in Caribbean Series:

*Brute Force Steel Bands of Antigua*; 12" LP #1042  
*Steel Band Clash*; 12" LP #1040; both contain mambos, sambas, calypsos, etc. by Brute Force, Big Shell, Hellsgate Bands of Antigua  
*Jawbone of an Ass; Cuban jazz from Santiago, one band uses jawbone as percussion instrument*, 12" LP #1083  
*Three Rituals; Shango from Trinidad, Tumba Francesca from Cuba, 3 Yemenite songs from Israel*, 12" LP #1043; ethnic  
*Caribbeana; calypso from Jamaica, Lebanese ud from Port au Prince, harp & jarana from Vera Cruz, etc.*, 12" LP RR5003  
*Tiroro; best drummer in Haiti, with jacket notations by Henry Cowell*, 12" LP RR5004

COOK

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