



from Trinidad

Le Jazz Primitif

The purpose of these notes is not arbitrarily to define or to hand down a glowing judgment on Trinidad Jazz. The jazz patois is what it is, frozen in plastic grooves. It is vigorous enough to make its own statement.

Rupert Clemendore

We first saw Rupert in a live show at Radio Trinidad. It was early Sunday morning, yet in no time Rupert and his orchestra had a capacity audience on its feet and rocking. A broadcast in Trinidad is a precarious thing. Air time shows on the clock, the announcer starts the program, but the audience is still straggling in. After them come band members. Then the first number gets under way somehow, while Rupert jumps around the studio with his sharp intuitive ear, tuning up guitar, string bass and other latecomers. One by one, they join the choruses, and then that enchanted glaze over the eyes . . . (see cover) . . . as though someone had pulled down a shade. All the old signs of the jazzman are there.

This extraordinarily gifted drummer also plays bass, vibes and a miscellany of horns. Many of the numbers on this record are his own compositions. One can listen back thru his novel drumming and his use of bongos on two occasions here to the Clemendore who was a versatile drummer *primitif* not so many years ago.

There is a fascination in hearing a frankly *Shearing* sophistication set to a Caribbean beat. But that is not the reason we recorded Rupert. Rather, it was the freshness, the pixie turn of phrase, the beat. Whatever it was, here it is for each auditioner to sample: jazz improvisation with the Trinidad touch.

The Little Carib Theatre (B side)

The scene was a pre-Carnival Saturday night dance at the Little Carib Theatre in Port of Spain. The hour was very late, the band on second wind, and the enthusiastic crowd of several hundred colored and creole people needed no rum in order to become unrepressed.

Caribe

Musically, the Caribbean is one of the dynamically creative areas of the world. They copy, but they also add freely of their own to the result. In Trinidad, originality has become a habit. Group drumming in whole orchestras composed of drums¹—bamboo-tambo²—calypso³—the steelband⁴, all more or less originated in Trinidad by the combination of old forms into new ones so compellingly different as to warrant separate identities.

The Venezuelan Waltz

In our own peculiarly PanAmerican world of jazz, it is easily predictable that the remarkable music of the *Joropo* folk dances of Venezuela are destined to reach us thru adjacent Trinidad, switched into jazz instrumentation on the dance floors of Port of Spain. John Buddy Williams' band opens the B side on just such a piece, shot thru with maddening contrapuntal 3 and 2-beat rhythms. Perversely, in Trinidad this is called the *Venezuelan waltz*. Vaguely resembling the less palatable *huapango* of Mexico, this mutation of the *Joropo* should eventually put a stop to the old fallacy that 3-beat music has no real place in jazz.

The *Bakanal* (She 'Pon Top, Jamaican calypso) which follows seems to combine a rock 'n' roll calypso with a touch of the holy roller, and after a blast of 2 and 4-beat dance tunes, the Williams' band goes out in an improvisation on the calypso *Last Night The Landlord* (nearly killed me).

PHOTO: COOK



SIDE A

Rupert Clemendore, drums, vibes and bongo; Bert Innis, piano; Gerald Charles, bass; Frankie Francis, sax; Les Sergeant; guitar; Clayton Peters, drums.

Princess Charming (Vivian Comma), *Bongo Mood*, *We Mambo*, *One Bass Hit*, *The Fly*, *Mambo Basso*.

SIDE B

John Buddy Williams, bass; Oliver Sanchez, maracas; plus two doublers on sax-clarinet, trumpet, tomtom, guitar and piano.

Alma Llanera (Venezuelan waltz); *She 'Pon Top* (Bakanal, calypso); *Man In Dey* (calypso); *Last Night the Landlord* (calypso)

¹The Drums of Trinidad; nation rhythms of Carriacou, group drumming by Little Carib Theatre drummers, 12" LP cat. #1045

²Bamboo-Tambo, Bongo & the Belair; native dances and percussive forms, singing, chanting and drumming, 12" LP RR #5017; ethnic

³Calypso Lore & Legend; Patrick Jones chants and stories, Popsit's oldtime string orchestra, 12" LP RR #5016; ethnic

⁴Brute Force Steel Bands of Antigua, 12" LP cat. #1042

Steel Band Clash; 12" LP cat. #1040; both contain mambos, sambas, calypsos, etc., by Brute Force, Big Shell, Hellsgate Bands of Antigua



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