

steelband promenade

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jump rhythms from 11° N latitude by the famous
MERRYMAKERS **THE BRUTE FORCE**
HIGHLANDERS **SOUTHERN ALL-STARS**
THE NORTH STAR

The Gentle Anarchies of Field Recording

Almost always there is something musically wrong with performance if a field recording date runs smoothly without famine, drunkenness, arson and assorted disasters. One can not be prepared for everything, but almost anything may happen. That is why, on each of these three occasions, I knew instantly that the tapes would be crashing successes.

The Brute Force

In this album we are presenting a triad of steel virtuosity with three top West Indian bands. The Brute Force is here in two selections to remind us that they were really the first to achieve worldwide notice — in company with the everlasting nocturnal Antigua crickets*. They and the Brute Force romp thru a couple of short selections as though they were all anxious to hop down to the Bucket of Blood on the beach and play for limber listeners instead of stiff microphones. But what actually happens afterward is that irrepressible pan-beater Herbert Howard runs musically amok. Escorted by a flying-squad of crickets and steel, he special-deliveries the vocals for an eyebrow-scorching calypso called *Saxophone*, now to be found sniggering improperly in a corner with others of its genre on Cook 1189 *Calypso Exposed*. Next, in a most inappropriate fit of contrition, leader Lauchland Howell goes to musical confession with a tenor pan solo of *The Lord's Prayer*, a tape now reposing primly on the shelves of the Cook ethnic archives where it belongs. By this time the recording session is beginning to fall apart, and rum is passed out in the attempt to break these chains of satiation and compensatiation. Finally the band members gradually disappear, careening off in all directions into the night. All told, considering the enormous crickets, it was a bumpy evening.

The Brute Force

Measurement Silent T-V

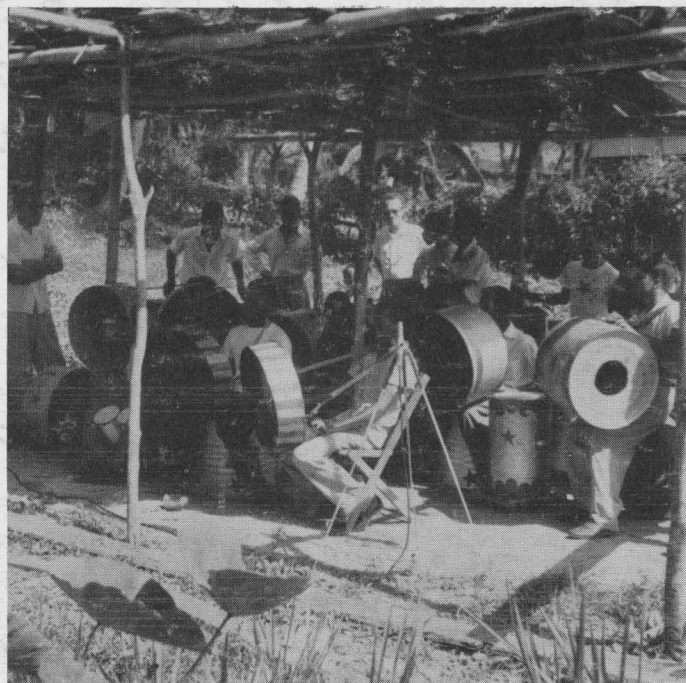
(incidental music for
violence in the home)

The Merrymakers

Lisboa Antigua
Doctor Nelson
Chow Chow samba
Little Darling
Chouconne
Back to Rome

Southern All-Stars

The Bandit — Nascimento
Semi-Lo merengue
Puerto Rico mambo
Wild Merengue in C
(played in D)



The vegetables grew noticeably . . .

The Southern All-Stars

The Southern All-Stars were recorded under a high open canopy pitched amongst a small vegetable garden in San Fernando, Trinidad. This was within a turnip's throw of the largest oil refinery in the British Commonwealth, bought out by Texaco in 1958 to a handsome tune, accompanied by lusty antiphonal choruses featuring both British Houses of Parliament. We doubt if the Southern All-Stars were very much concerned. However, the contrast between the truncated 55 gallon drums of their orchestra and the huge refinery storage tanks had seeped in and lubricated their approach to music. Some day we'll have a macrosteel band, played by macromen. It will be so loud we won't need phonographs or radios. It will be heard across oceans, and will disperse hurricanes. It will be comprised of descendants of the Southern All-Stars and miscellaneous wreckage of the Texas Company. The vegetables grew noticeably during our two-hour performance. The Indians knew it all along. Now everybody knows music is good for vegetables.

*Like owls, steelbands are really awake only at night. Also, because they are so loud, it is useless to record them indoors because of reverberation from walls and ceiling. Hence outdoors, night, crickets, the Antigua trademark of authenticity. LP 1048 (Cook) jacket contains a treatment in parable of the subject, and the Brute Force is also to be found on 1042, 1040, 1049. Send for complete steelband catalog.

COOK Records

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cover photo: Ted Merolla

The Merrymakers

The Merrymakers Steel Orchestra occasionally plays at Port-of-Spain's Normandie, a posh French-scented hotel and cuisinierie surrounding an azure swimming pool. The stature and dignity of the environment are not calculated to lead into elastic, light-hearted musical performances. But the band is good — they have to be. If we are to take them at all, this is *it!*

Tape recorder in the cloakroom, we sit down for dinner with an august assemblage. There is Beryl McBurnie, O.B.E., noted dancer and choreographer, survivor of one royal command performance after another. There is Baron John DeKetschendorf complete with saber scars and the dreary distinction of having had more estates harvested by Nazis in World War II than any leading baron ousted. Then of course there is Bruce Procope, Esq., force in Trinidad politics, a mysterious dark horse to be reckoned with. Like most first class hostelries in the West Indies, the Normandie has trouble with waiters. The aromatic tradition of generations of house service does not scent their pool. Sometimes things get awkward. Take our new waiter — a little Spanish — his eyes are soaking up their first soul-jarring taste of Beryl's shawl-off-the-left-shoulder effect. Just now he places the Baron's soup. The remaining plate immediately unbalances the tray from on high, and it all comes crashing down on Bruce. Although he had not started out from home that way, this most eligible bachelor in Trinidad is now in formal attire — soup and fish. No one could possibly argue the point. We three survivors mop down Bruce as far as the buttons, and proceed stickily with the meal. By coffee time, meat, music and good conversation are beginning to heal the trauma. But with his coffee, Bruce is having fruit cup for revenge. The waiter approaches. Now Beryl's shawl is off the *other* shoulder. You can imagine the rest. Dali would have found it most satisfying.

Later, rushing forth from the kitchen flourishing a tray of goodies, this same sly juggler suddenly spies a microphone in the aisle and stops. He spots me at a nearby table with equipment. Reminded, his face flushes with the sweet memory of recent accomplishments. The reels of tape are turning. He leers triumphantly at the microphone.

"Oh! You're making a recording!" he bleats into it, rushing by.

I have improved my footwork and open field running of recent years. The microphone cable moves imperceptibly. Every microphone has a cable, and it leads to the tape recorder. Every man's patience has its limits, and sometimes this leads to small satisfactions. The tray and pastries miss me nicely, and not one Merrymaker drops a single note.

These true life vignettes of stereo location recording are typical collecting experiences. This is always what happens when you abandon home and fireside to search the wide wild world for music. To hell with it. It's their best number. We'll use *Little Darling*, tray and all. If you don't hear it hit the terrazzo, then you can assume it struck something soft. Turn up the volume! It *must* be in there somewhere!

Emory Cook