

# dance calypso!

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An on the scene recording at Port of Spain,  
Trinidad & St. John's, Antigua

*Calypso Hits by—*

**SMALL ISLAND PRIDE**

*Boxing Bout, Federation, Carnival*

**DICTATOR**

*Chinese Cricket Match*

**LORD CRISTO**

*Last Night the Landlord (Nearly Killed Me)*

**HERBERT HOWARD**

*Sauerkraut Calypso*

*Dancing with Johnny Gomez*

*and his Orchestra*



## The True Story

### Louella Parsons Didn't Print

(she couldn't—she wasn't even there)

It happened in the Normandie—British coat-and-white-tie mill—in Port of Spain, Trinidad. Johnny Gomez' danceband had just gone off set, and a couple of calypso singers were working the tables for dollars. The idea is—you have to know—if you *don't* pay you may find them singing your own horoscope to you, loudly.

They attacked the Yankee tables first, for sound economic reasons, and after finishing with ours, moved to the next one, which was heavily ornamented with male and female supernovae from the Hollywood firmament who shall remain forever nameless, down for larks and a month of location work. They had made a sneak entrance into the club (really important people wear dark glasses and avoid clarion entrances) and were now waiting impatiently to be discovered.

One sing around this table,—no dollars. Nothing but drooped eyelashes, mouths, shoulders, strict avoidance, hoping not to be made a spectacle of, alert to resent the absence of tumultuous spontaneous worship and obeisance. Second time around, conversation in the Normandie stopped, all eyes shifted heavenward. No reaction, no dollar, no nothing, only monumental, rigid introversion. A miasma of self-importance began to roll out into the dance floor like a California smog gone wrong. The discovery was not proceeding according to plan. No cheering, avid throng? Normandie merely amused? Horror!

Without even intending it, the lead calypso singer's stage was set. He sensed it, and as he sang his written-down composed song, something primeval and generic of calypso stirred within him.

Suddenly *calypso singer* turned *Calypsonian*. He screwed up his face into a baboon-judge-executioner rolled into one, adopted a gesticulating athletic stance, tossed his pat verse, and started singing from 'the top of his head.' Swinging to face the leading member of the galaxy, voice pitched sharp and true, he roared,



Small Island Pride

"... if this small island shows you hospitality,  
then is only one thing worries me,  
— we all think it would be just too bad,  
you leaving any babies behind in Trinidad."

Bribery flushed out fast in the form of five dollar notes; the Calypsonian moved on. Calypso continued at the Normandie, but Hollywood was seen no more.

Moral:

It's a helluva a country where  
nobody lives and dogs bark at strangers.

### calypso is:

- a humor-coated pellet of uncamouflaged truth,—
- taking the opportunity of saying something to somebody in song that you couldn't say in polite society,—
- an orchid and a sea nymph,—
- an expression which, having heard, you modestly admit is exactly the way you would have put it yourself, come to think of it,—
- like Ogden Nash in rhyme,—
- satire that makes you laugh because in it is unveiled all that is ludicrous and irrational in a lot of other fellows; sometimes you may even recognize yourself if you listen hard,—
- free association plus improvisation,—
- reading a lesson of male supremacy in the face of war, sea, danger, politics and rum,—in fact in the face of anything except woman,—
- not the sort of thing you listen to at a Bermuda beachclub in order to be stimulated,—
- also a dance which turns loose each vertebra in the body to fend for itself, thus exposing the tender inner compulsions,—
- of Trinidad, and Carnival,—
- not 8 bars but 9 or 7 or whatever it feels like,—
- the dummy for a singing ventriloquist,—
- ★ not susceptible of precise definition.

E. C.



**JOHNNY GOMEZ & ORCHESTRA** playing for dancing at the Normandie in Port of Spain  
Train Calypso, Johnny's Nightmare, Skokiaan, Anna

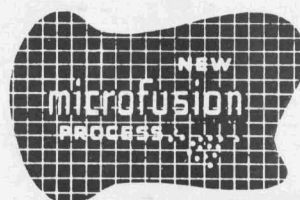
**SMALL ISLAND PRIDE** singing with combo and "The Revivalist Five" (Trinidad)  
Goin' Down Jordan, Federation, Boxing Bout, Carnival Celebration

**DICTATOR** recorded at Bretton Hall, Port of Spain, singing  
Chinese Cricket Match

**HERBERT HOWARD** and The Brute Force Steelband, St. John's Antigua  
Reel & Tun, Sauerkraut Calypso

**LORD CRISTO** (Trinidad)  
Last Night the Landlord (Nearly Killed Me)

*On-the-scene* recordings from Trinidad & Antigua, British West Indies



**COOK**

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**COVER  
PHOTO:**

Limbo Dance as performed at the Normandie, Port of Spain. Photo taken by Cook with pinhole Brownie a few minutes after incident described above.

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