

CALYPSO KINGS

and pink gin

on-the-scene recording of Trinidad's

King Sparrow (Jean & Dina) sings "Dear Sparrow";

King Melody (Booboo) sings "Creature from the Black Lagoon"—

Competing with King Fighter, King Solomon, Mighty Cypher, Chang-Kai Sheik, March of Dimes Quartet



Behind his own fence every dog is a lion

Not so many years ago every city square in Port-of-Spain boasted at least one home whose backyard pitched a calypso tent. In the abandoned, carefree and festive days before Ash Wednesday tents sprang up like mushrooms in the night, their mysteries and humor competing with the extroverted glamor of carnival streets. Sixpence and the shilling were reserved for those tents where sang the great, the clever, or the Kings Calypso of carnivals past; if you were so fortunate as to own a wallet, your hand must have caressed it tightly as you edged from the road into the jostle of the unlit alley.

The analyst is always left far behind and agape by the very calypsonians whose behavior he is pursuing, by these men who never had any ideas of social destiny apart from the immediacies of money, women and the avoidance of manual labor, who had no axes to grind other than yesterday's dull injustices. In the Young Brigade Tent that night it was easy to understand the irrepressibly resurgent nature of calypso perpetuating itself thru generations of calypsonians.

The cover photograph of this record jacket shows the inside of this "tent" of tile and mortar, a public place hired for calypso, where people come, pay admission, expect to laugh, do laugh, and are entertained all evening by intrepid audacities and iconoclastic satire. On the rostrum are the bold singing Falstaffs who often feel what they sing so strongly that if it were to be spoken in everyday prose the police would be catapulted into action.

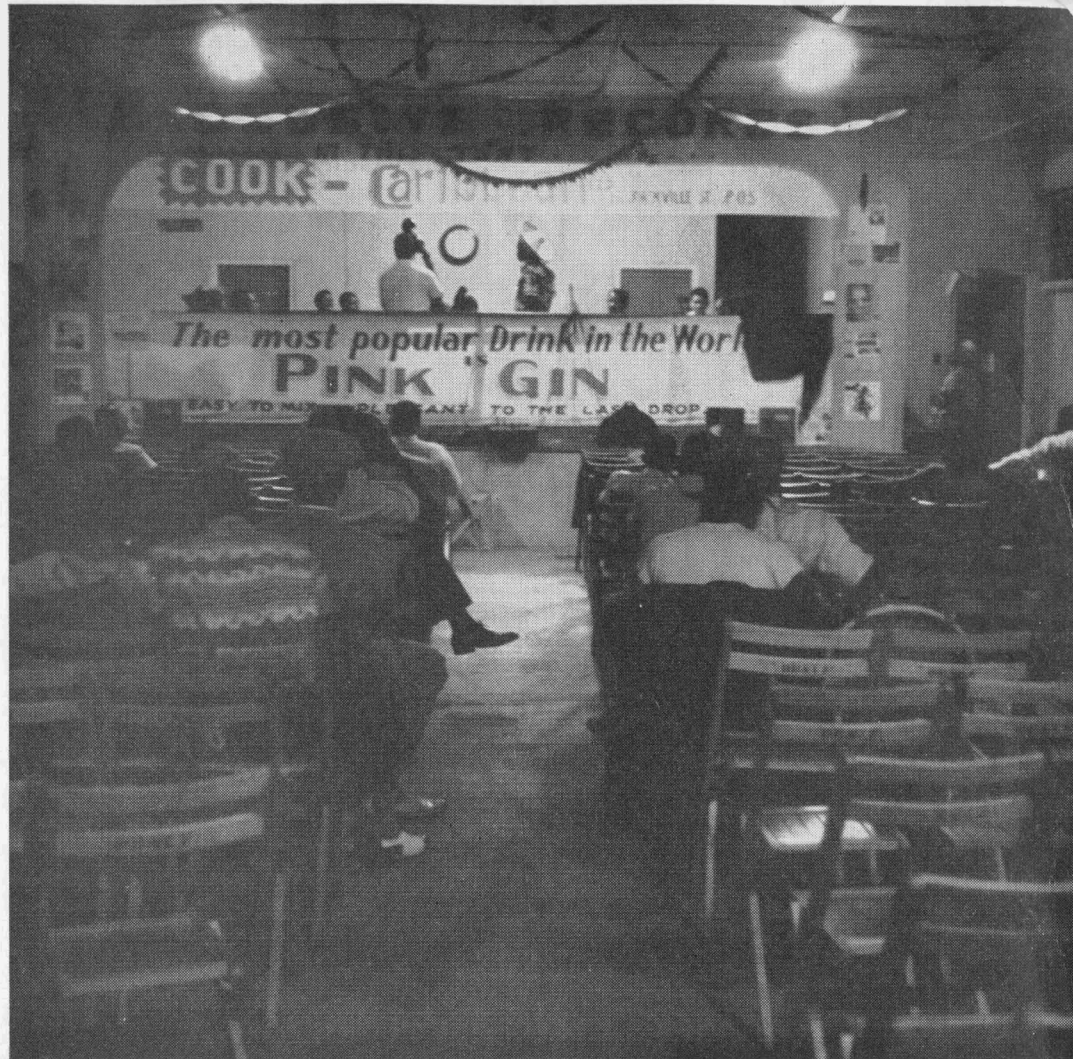
The photograph shows **Sparrow** and **Melody** onstage, singing the rarely recorded *picong* (piquant) of extemporaneous mutual insults. They are the stars and kings of this collection, no less in stature than those carnival giants who for more than a century have kept West Indian politics and spirits on the move. This night they sing in a new time of atoms and missiles, Texaco-oil-in-the-gulf and Federation, with almost too much to sing about. The crowd is spellbound and captured as Sparrow sings *Dear Sparrow*, a song that chirps brightly from the same traditional vine that bore *Brown-Skinned Gal* and many others before. In contrast, the mature reflective debauchery of Melody's *Creature from the Black Lagoon*, and *Booboo Man*, the gentle phlebotomies of his *Jonah and the Bake* crown him the Shakespeare of calypsonians in an island world where in place of literature and art, the drumming, dancing and singing are accepted and traditional safety valves for creative boilers.

Calypso often is a comment on money and politics in addition to woman, and thus has the edge at least in variety over the subject matter of U. S. popular songs. With impatient good humor and surprising grace the calypsonian refrains from emulating modern paperbacks in their usage of unabridged language, builds his statement on strong sometimes labyrinthine allegory, metaphor and connotative reference. His pin-pricking deflation of balloons saw an oblique counterpart in the humor of our own Will Rogers, and as in the case of King Solomon, an itinerant crusader who assaults not too soberly * the rustling windmills of U. S. calypso, no game is taboo, no inhibition too sacred, no target unmarked.

E.C.

*Port of Spain is a city surrounding the home office and headquarters of the Angostura Bitters people. Recipe for PINK GIN: Gin, bitters, agitation, water, ice, soda as and if available. Always support home industry.

An on-the-scene recording in the
YOUNG BRIGADE CALYPSO TENT,
Port of Spain, Trinidad



... no game taboo, no inhibition too sacred, no target unmarked.

LORD MELODY sings:

Creature from the Black Lagoon
Jonah and the Bake

MIGHTY SPARROW sings:

"Dear Sparrow:"
Situation in Trinidad
Sailor Man

SPARROW vs. MELODY

Picong (a duel with insults at 6 inches)

KING SOLOMON:

Mornin' Time
"Belafonte"

MARCH OF DIMES QUARTET: Nat-Hepburn

Senorita
General Election

CHANG-KAI-SHEIK:

Naughty Boy

KING FIGHTER:

Silly Men! (Cocoo Soop)

LORD CYPHER:

P. N. M. Balisier

ROAD MARCH HIT TUNES

by the orchestra of the Young Brigade Tent

COOK Laboratories

101 Second Street, Stamford, Connecticut