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the  
**MIGHTY**  
**SPARROW**  
FIRST FLIGHT

EARLY CALYPSOS FROM  
THE EMORY COOK COLLECTION



Smithsonian Folkways



# MIGHTY SPARROW

## FIRST FLIGHT

EARLY CALYPSOS  
FROM THE  
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- |    |   |      |
|----|---|------|
| 1  | <b>No, Doctor, No</b> (The Situation in Trinidad) | 2:59 |
| 2  | <b>Sparrow vs. Melody Picong</b>                  | 4:23 |
| 3  | <b>Carlton Peeping at Me</b>                      | 4:57 |
| 4  | <b>Harry in The Piggery</b>                       | 5:13 |
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| 14 | <b>Post Card to Sparrow</b>                       | 3:53 |
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| 18 | <b>No More Rocking</b>                            | 5:14 |

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*Words and music by Slinger Francisco, except "Sparrow vs. Melody Picong," written by Slinger Francisco and Fitzroy Alexander. All songs published by published by Mighty Sparrow Music, COTT.*

## FIRST FLIGHT: EARLY CALYPSOS OF THE MIGHTY SPARROW

by Gordon Rohlehr

Slinger Francisco, the Mighty Sparrow, was born in Gouyave, Grenada, on 9 July 1935. When he was twenty-one months old, his mother, Clarissa, emigrated to Trinidad to join her husband, Rupert, a builder, who had settled there two years earlier.<sup>1</sup> Arriving in Trinidad in 1937 just before the famous “Butler” Labour Riots, Clarissa and Slinger Francisco were among thousands of migrants who, driven from their Southern Caribbean island homes by poverty, unemployment, and the aftereffects of the Great Depression, had between 1938 and 1948 been primarily responsible for the increase in Trinidad’s population, from 436, 000 to 537, 000.<sup>2</sup> Such an increase—22% in a decade—placed pressure on an already turbulent colony, which, in its agricultural and industrial sectors in the middle and late 1930s, had exploded into hunger marches, strikes, demonstrations, and riots.

This situation was only partially alleviated by World War II and the consequent demand for skilled and semiskilled labor on the military and naval bases at Carlsen Field, Wallerfield, and Chaguaramas. The presence of nearly ten thousand American soldiers and marines had an ambiguous impact on local society: it brought employment and a higher standard of living for many, and an increase in prostitution and venereal diseases, which in 1947 had reached the then astronomical figure of 9,600 reported cases.<sup>3</sup> Sparrow grew up during the years of World War II, years of extraordinary flux, restlessness and sharp and sometimes violent intergroup rivalries, where one’s chances of survival often depended on the quality of one’s self-assertiveness. His early calypsos are products of his struggle for identity, visibility, and preeminence in this environment.

Young Slinger Francisco attended first a kindergarten on Western Main Road, St. James, and later St. Patrick’s Roman Catholic School (better known as Newtown Boys’ R. C. School), where he had his first experience of singing onstage at end-of-term concerts. Also, he was a choirboy at St. Patrick’s

Roman Catholic Church. Calypso at the time was regarded by the devout as the devil’s music, but this young choirboy was sufficiently aware of calypsos to be able to sing Lord Invader’s “Yankees Invade Trinidad” at a school concert, and on leaving school startled his mother by declaring his desire to become a calypsonian.

He had taught himself to play the guitar; he could sing the calypsos of Growler, Kitchener, and Melody; and by 1953 or 1954, he had begun to sing them at the Lotus Restaurant<sup>4</sup> and elsewhere. Accompanying himself on the guitar, he preferred to test his own compositions on the restaurant’s audiences, but they wanted to hear what they already knew. The positive side to performing other singers’ work was that it taught Sparrow a versatility that has characterized his fifty years as an entertainer.

Having served a brief but fruitful apprenticeship singing in restaurants, Sparrow next, according to one source, ventured into the calypso tent in 1954, when, singing as “Little Sparrow,” he performed “The Parrot and the Monkey” at the Old Brigade Tent, then located at the junction of Charlotte Street and 50 South Quay, Port of Spain.<sup>5</sup> It is, however, easier to document that the Old Brigade did appear at South Quay in 1954 than to verify Sparrow’s presence there that year. An article in the *Port of Spain Gazette* states that J. P. Hutchinson, Mayor of Port of Spain, opened the South Quay tent on Monday, 4 January 1954.<sup>6</sup> The same venue was a few weeks later inaugurated as a calypso club—the Dirty Jim’s Swizzle Club—by the deputy mayor. This calypso club offered variety shows based on local folk dances, and featured calypsonians Panther and Cristo (a.k.a. Christo) in its early sessions.<sup>7</sup>

The Young Brigade had become a powerful force in calypso since 1947, when, under the leadership of Kitchener and Killer, a group of younger singers affirmed their newness and difference by breaking loose from the veterans of the 1930s. In 1955, the now established and not quite so young Brigade secured the South Quay venue; it may be significant that they called themselves not the *Young* Brigade, but the *New* Brigade. An advertisement for the tent announced: “Calypsos sung tonight, and every night at the New Brigade Tent, Trinidad Calypso Club, 50 South Quay; by the giants of Calypsos.



*Some members of the the Young Brigade, from left to right: Sparrow, Lord Melody, Sir Galba, Sam Bodie, Cobra, Mighty Spitfire, and Lord Cristo. 1956.*

Featuring: Lord Melody, Calypso King 1954; Sir Galba, Mighty Spitfire, Lord Christo, Superior, Cypher, Sparrow and the Growling Tiger.”<sup>8</sup>

That there was to be a floor show and dancing after the calypso performance, from 11:30 p.m. to 4:00 a.m., with music supplied by both a steelband and an orchestra, indicated that the venue was simultaneously housing a calypso tent and a nightclub. The cost of the full night’s entertainment was \$1.50 for reserved seats and \$1.00 for other seats.

Sparrow in 1955 sang “Race Track” (a.k.a. “Horse Racing”),<sup>9</sup> “The Missing Baby” (a.k.a. “Ruby, Where the Baby Disappear”), “The High Cost of Living,” and “Ode to Princess Margaret.” The first three of these were recorded, but failed to register with tentgoers and record-buyers. Together, these four calypsos, songs of Sparrow’s first flight, located Sparrow solidly within the tradition of calypso with respect to both thematic content and craft. “Race Track,” a metaphorical comment about prostitution, explored ground that Growler (“In the Dew and the Rain”), Kitchener (“Ding Dong Dell”), Invader (“Rum and Coca Cola” and “Yankee Dollar”), and Lion (“Pampalam”) had already traversed with various mixtures of censure, hard gaiety, and scorn.

Nurtured by such predecessors, Sparrow emerged in a postwar Port of Spain that was just as treacherous, challenging, and desperate as the world of ten to fifteen years earlier. This was the world of bad-johns (hoodlums), robust men (tough guys), razor-men, saga-boys (playboys), wahbeens, jagabats, and prostitutes fallen on hard times. The world Sparrow entered upon leaving school, the world from which his mother sought to protect him, was the mid-20th-century version of the 19th-century demimonde of jamettes and batonniers—a world of bravado and high rhetoric, where violence of tongue and hand, the cut and thrust of word and razor, were reduced to a finely honed skill. It wasn’t the world for which Sparrow could have been prepared in the school and choir of St. Patrick’s, but it was the world that surrounded both school and sanctuary and lay outside the homes in Long Circular Road, St. James, and Four Roads Diego Martin, where Sparrow grew up. This other or outer world had alternative codes for living; calypso, with its rhetoric of celebration, praise, censure, lacerating laughter, and elequent self-signification, was one of those codes.

Sparrow swiftly learned its codes, as is evident from the calypsos he recorded during his first five years as a performer. In this period, he wears numerous masks, assumes a variety of personas, and speaks in several voices, as he becomes a channel for the multiple dramatic experiences of the world he has entered, so he is at one time the grieving lover of “Postcard to Sparrow,” and at another the cynical



seducer of careless or inexperienced young women ("Thirteen Year Old Mabel," "Country Girl"). A trickster-figure, hard and worldly-wise, or pretending to be such in some calypsos, he is in others the victim of women's deceptiveness and infidelity ("Dear Sparrow," "Sailor Man," "Teresa"). Brash sexual adventurer in "Horse Racing," where he plays the role of a successful jockey, he is also the bitterly censorious verbal flagellant of degraded prostitutes in "Keep the City Clean" and "Jean Marabunta." A trader of crude or subtle insult in a world where violence of the tongue is a norm, he can dissolve into the cliché, jelly, and blubber of the lover in conventional love songs, like "Dorothy."

Sparrow spent the postcarnival season of 1955 touring Guyana for a month in the company of Small Island Pride, a fellow-Grenadian. Performing for all sorts of audiences in towns and remote villages, he became in one month a seasoned professional, the no longer "Little" but now "Mighty" Sparrow, who with "Jean and Dinah" captured the titles of calypso king and road march winner in 1956. The Young Brigade left Dirty Jim's Calypso Club at South Quay and relocated at the Good Samaritan Hall in Duke Street under the leadership of Lord Melody, who served as master of ceremonies. Sylvester Taylor managed the tent, as he was to do for many years. The Growling Tiger, who in 1955 had managed the New/Young Brigade at South Quay, went back to the Old Brigade, now located at 100 St. Vincent Street, where he sang under the management of Atilla the Hun (Raymond Quevedo), calypsonian and member of Parliament for Laventille until he lost his seat in the general election later that year.

Those early Sparrow years set the pattern for the next four decades. In 1957, Sparrow and Lord Superior spearheaded a move by most of the major calypsonians to boycott the calypso king competition at the Queens Park Savannah, and to conduct their own contest at the Globe Cinema. The major issue of 1957 was the small financial reward given to calypsonians when compared with the plethora of rich prizes awarded the carnival queen. Sparrow sang "Carnival Boycott," and Superior sang the equally trenchant "Brass Crown."

The year 1957 also saw an attempt to censor four Sparrow calypsos: "Jean and Dinah," "Eye on the



*Sparrow is presented with the silver cup after winning the calypso competition, Trinidad, 1956.*

Finger," "Queen's Canary," and "Everybody Go Get." For the next decade, there would be a lively debate over the issue of whether calypsos should or should not be played during Lent. At the center of that debate, sometimes acknowledged, sometimes not, was the issue of whether calypsos were mainly "smut," that is, preoccupied with sexuality, and whether it was not Sparrow who had unleashed the demon of sexuality in the nearly 200 calypsos he had performed and recorded by 1967. Confronting or evading censorship, then, was a feature of Sparrow's first and future flight.

Other features of Sparrow's first flight were his efforts to make an impact on the North American market, which had suddenly been opened up by the success of Harry Belafonte's *Calypso* album (1956). In partnership with Lord Melody, Sparrow gained access to a corner of that market in 1958, and both singers left Trinidad at the end of January 1958, in the middle of the calypso season, to fulfill contracts in the United States. By 1959, Sparrow and Melody had begun to record regularly with RCA Victor. The corollary to this international success was the withdrawal of Sparrow and Melody from both the 1958 and 1959 calypso king competitions. In 1959, Sparrow and Melody accepted \$500 each for guest appearances at the Jaycees show at the Queen's Park Oval, rather than participating in the calypso king competition at the Savannah. Asked to comment on the behavior of Sparrow and Melody, Atilla the Hun, the oldest great calypsonian alive, replied: "The attitude of Melody and Sparrow is the very antithesis of the kaiso tradition. I suppose that is one of the compensations we have to pay for its commercialization."<sup>10</sup>

Another major feature of Sparrow's early years was the responsibility he undertook for validating the measures of Dr. Eric Williams's People's National Movement, which in 1956 had won the election that gave Trinidadians relative autonomy in the conduct of their affairs. Sparrow helped legitimate the new government by presenting unpopular legislation in a sympathetic light, by suggesting the need for tolerance, and by pouring scorn on the opponents of Williams and his régime. With calypsos such as "William the Conqueror" (1957), "Present Government" (1959), and "Leave the Damn Doctor" (1959), Sparrow offered the new government protection and critical support, and thus emerged early as a relevant and representative voice of his time and society.

## TRACK NOTES

These calypsos are a sample of what Sparrow produced between 1956 and 1959, when he recorded the bulk of his calypsos, on either the Balisier or the RCA Victor labels. These tracks have all been derived from the Emory Cook recordings of early Sparrow. They have been selected and grouped to illustrate the variety of themes, styles, and moods with which Sparrow experimented in those years.

### 1. No, Doctor, No

(a.k.a. The Situation in Trinidad) (1957)  
from *Calypso Kings and Pink Gin*

"No, Doctor, No," also recorded as "The Situation in Trinidad," was, together with "PAYE" (i.e., "Pay As You Earn") and "You Can't Get Away from the Tax" (1959), Sparrow's effort to convert popular anger against the new government's novel system of taxation into passively stoical acceptance of the inevitability of paying taxes. So the narrator of "No, Doctor, No," who begins by threatening in the style of a typical bad-john (hoodlum) to rain blows on the newly elected politicians if they fail to "come good," ends by declaring that he has no intention of using his mango wood. Similarly, in "PAYE," the protagonist's father begins by sharpening his axe in preparation for the tax collector's visit, but ends by selling the axe to

raise money to pay what he owes to the tax collector. This was unrestrained endorsement of the new government, and "PAYE" became the road march, the song most played and sung during the two days of carnival in 1958.

### 2. Sparrow vs. Melody Picong (1957) from *Jump Up Carnival*

"Sparrow vs. Melody Picong" is a live performance of what used to be termed a "calypso war" between Sparrow and Lord Melody, one of Lord Kitchener's Young Brigade from 1946, and in 1957 leader and master of ceremonies of the original Young Brigade. The *picong* session—of sometimes sharp, sometimes coarse improvised insult—is an old calypso tradition, in which Sparrow's (probably memorized) jibes prove more effective than Melody's.



*Mighty Sparrow (left) and Lord Melody in a picong duel, Trinidad, 1958.*

**3. Carlton Peeping at Me** (1959)  
from *Sparrow in Hi-Fi*

"Carlton," the first of three "barrack-yard" calypsos, illustrates the sort of tension that grew out of the semicommunal, semiprivate nature of existence in the city's "yards." The yard bred stock characters like the "macco," the person whose chief occupation was to mind other people's business. Carlton the Peeping Tom is an extreme and degraded version of the macco, a voyeur upon whom the yard passes judgment in the form of the cruel but poetically apt retribution that the woman's bad-john sons mete out: soapy water and salt and pepper rubbed in the eyes, and the threat of a severe beating with a bull-pizzle (a whip made from a bull's penis), legendary weapon of bad-johns, should Carlton's peeping recur.

**4. Harry in the Piggery** (1959)  
from *Sparrow in Hi-Fi*

In the case of Harry, that "ungrateful dog" who "forgets his wife and gone to sleep by a hog," the yard's initial punishment is to raise a scandalous outcry so as to hold Harry up to public censure and ridicule. Embarrassment becomes the yard's mode of social control. Harry's wife is indirectly made to share in this embarrassment, first when Harry is discovered sleeping with the pig instead of her, and next when the yard's "mac-cocious" moral-ethics posse insists on involving the police and the magistracy in harrowing Harry. "Bacchanal" (free-for-all), "scandal," and "commesse" (confusion or chaos) are traditional features of yard culture, and calypsos about the yard usually contain a strong melodramatic and narrative element.

**5. Mango Vert** (1958)  
from *Sparrow in Hi-Fi*

"Mango Vert" is also set in the location of the barrack-yard. Here, the victim of the yard's laughter is an American who is reluctant to eat the hairy object that his woman offers him. Sparrow employs the technique of innuendo in which the images of "eating" and "hair" suggest one thing while the simple dénouement of the story—"Is a *mango vert* the man 'fraid to eat"—deflates and mocks at both the macco in the next room and the listener to the calypso, who has been seduced into functioning as an honorary member of the barrack-yard, eavesdropping on a noisy neighbor.

**6. Gun Slingers** (1959)  
from *Sparrow in Hi-Fi*

"Gun Slingers" marked the beginning of an entire genre of Sparrow calypsos, one through which Sparrow assumes the persona of the violent, rebellious antihero of the ghetto, who may be a bad-john, a warrior, or a criminal. The first-person narrator of this calypso, however, is not so much the gunslinging cowboy, gangster, or hood-

lum, as the businessman, an importer, vendor, and distributor of guns, who is responsible for supplying local bandits with “any kind of weapon that’s good for war,” such as razors, brass knuckles, cutlasses, sledgehammers, hatchets, and even saws. Sparrow’s gunslinger sells “from cannon to razor blade” because he recognizes that the sale of weapons is what really pays. An ambiguous calypso, sung at a period in Sparrow’s life when, as both antagonist and victim, he on occasion participated in street violence, “Gun Slingers” seems simultaneously to celebrate the emergence of the antihero as a representative urban icon and to satirize those elements among the business classes who controlled every species of illicit trade. “Gun Slingers” was upstaged in the 1959 road march race by Lord Caruso’s more socially acceptable “Run the Gunslingers.”

**7. Jean Marabunta** (1958)  
from *Sparrow in Hi-Fi*

While the characters Jean and Dinah are generally representative of the reduced postwar prostitute, “Jean Marabunta” is particular in its focus and vicious in its ridicule and condemnation of

an outcast whom nobody wants. A marabunta is a wasp with a fearsome sting. Jean, outcast of outcasts, robs her patrons by picking their pockets, is ready to do anything with her mouth, and, it is implied, inflicts the sting of disease on her clients. “Jean Marabunta” contains a line that has become almost proverbial: “If Sparrow say so, is so.”

**8. Sailor Man** (1957)  
from *Calypso Kings and Pink Gin*

“Sailor Man” is about a stock figure of calypso, the horned or cuckolded man, but its focus is rather on the woman who entertains a succession of lovers apart from her complaining helpless spouse: a sailor, a steelband man, and worst of all, calypso’s most hated antagonist, the “ugly,” “hog-faced” policeman. “Dorothy” is one of the most conventional names of the Everywoman of calypsos. Here she is both cheating wife and trickster, who violently defends her honor at even the husband’s weakly sarcastic query: “Darling, you joining the navy?”

**9. Eve** (1958)  
from *King Sparrow’s Calypso Carnival*

If Lord Melody is to be believed,<sup>11</sup> “Eve” is the portrait of a woman in St. Thomas who made it as difficult as possible for him and Sparrow to obtain permits to perform in St. Thomas. This is therefore a revenge song, in which Eve is caricatured as a woman who has been “making confusion” “since the days of Adam.” She has done this for such a long time that she has grown into an “old and frustrated,” habitually drunk, litigious, “miserable,” and “disagreeable,” “old witch.”

**10. Stella** (1958)  
from *King Sparrow’s Calypso Carnival*

The narrator presents himself as a responsible gentleman, who will not take advantage of Stella in her intoxicated state; Stella, however, as an independent-minded twenty-two-year-old, challenges him to have his way, asserting that she can take care of herself, and that she needs only two more drinks to prove to him that the advantage-taking will be all hers. What seems to be a situation of sexual challenge turns out in the flattened ending to be something quite different.

**11. Short Little Shorts** (1958)  
from *King Sparrow’s Calypso Carnival*

This is a fun song. The governor, an Englishman, abolishes or fails to apply the law against indecent exposure in public when a shapely young woman parades in Bermuda shorts. He ogles the woman as any local grassroots male might have done. Here, the morality policemen and censors of sexuality prove, beneath the skin, to be the same as the objects of their condemnation.

**12. Country Girl** (1958)  
from *King Sparrow’s Calypso Carnival*

Here, a country girl, obeying her mother’s advice never to talk or ride with strangers, becomes a threat to the narrator’s reputation as a seasoned seducer. “Hard like a gru-gru seed” (the nut of a gru-gru, a palm of genus *Acrocomia*), she resists all of his advances until in desperation he realizes that he needs first to conquer the source of her obduracy, the mother. This he does, not by speech, but by song, though he still has not succeeded with the country girl, who now begins to question her mother’s sudden reversal of her own laws.



**13. Dear Sparrow** (1959)from *Calypso Kings and Pink Gin*

"Dear Sparrow" mocks at the "Dear John" ballad of the 1950s, measuring calypso's hard, cynical realism—Sparrow's girlfriend has delivered a baby that is the image of his uncle Joe—against the sentimentalism of the American bubblegum version of this trope. The calypso protagonist refuses to be fazed by the woman's infidelity, and instead takes advantage of the situation by using her letter to justify what he probably intended to do in the first place: refuse to take responsibility for the newborn baby.

**14. Post Card to Sparrow** (1958)from *King Sparrow's Calypso Carnival*

This is a nostalgic calypso about the pain of having to celebrate Christmas—a special festival in the Caribbean—away from one's lover, who has remained at home. "Post Card to Sparrow" uncovers sentimentality beneath the cynical face that the Sparrow protagonist wears most of the time. Separated from his love, the narrator reads her Christmas card and cries "more than Alice in Wonderland."

**15. Dorothy** (1959)from *King Sparrow's Calypso Carnival*

Like "Postcard to Sparrow," "Dorothy" reminds us that Sparrow in this period also sang and recorded love songs in the popular Anglo-American vein. Nat Cole, Brook Benton, and Billy Eckstein were among his favorite singers. This version of "Dorothy" has converted the narrator into a lovesick, anorexic insomniac, beset by *tabanca* (a feeling of lovesickness). Yet, as is typical of calypso, the rhythm and melody are cheerful.

**16. Russian Satellite** (1958) and**17. Mad Bomber** (1958), both from*King Sparrow's Calypso Carnival*

These calypsos resonate with peculiar relevance in this early 21st-century time of intrepid cosmonauts and urban bombers. "Russian Satellite" protests the Russian use of a dog as a guinea-pig to test the hazards of space travel in the time of the sputniks. Columbus, according to Sparrow, did not have to use or poison a dog when he ventured out into the unknown. "Mad Bomber" captures the terror and uncertainty

caused by a bomber who planted time-bombs in American cities. Sparrow's concern with international affairs and events locates him in the mainstream of calypso tradition.

**18. No More Rocking** (1958)from *King Sparrow's Calypso Carnival*

"No More Rocking" is Sparrow's celebration of that brief moment in 1957 when calypso successfully vied with rock and roll for international popularity. Curiously, the "calypsos" that made this breakthrough were Harry Belafonte's remake of mainly mento songs, first recorded by Trinidadian baritone Edric Connor and then by Louis Bennett, a Jamaican folksinger, storyteller, and folklorist. Sparrow, who made his first significant impact on the calypso world in 1956, the same year as Belafonte's Calypso album, comments indirectly on the success and the inauthenticity of the Belafonte moment, and acclaims Trinidad as the true home of calypso and himself as a genuine purveyor of this music, built on "strictly rhythm and rhyme."

**ENDNOTES**

- 1 Dexter, "Sparrow Ornithology," liner notes to *Sparrow's Greatest Hits*, 33-rpm LP record, RCA LPB 1067.
- 2 *The West India Committee Circular*, 1932.
- 3 *Trinidad Guardian*, 22 January 1947.
- 4 Keith Smith, "Sparrow on Song," *Express*, 15 June 2000, p. 17.
- 5 Dexter, "Sparrow Ornithology," liner notes to *Sparrow's Greatest Hits*, 33-rpm LP record, RCA LPB 1067.
- 6 *Port of Spain Gazette*, 6 January 1954.
- 7 *Sunday Guardian*, 21 March 1954.
- 8 *Trinidad Guardian*, February 12, 1955, p. 10.
- 9 The Mighty Sparrow, "Horse Racing," in *One Hundred and Twenty Calypsoes to Remember* (Port of Spain: 1963), p. 48.
- 10 *Trinidad Guardian*, 8 February 1959.
- 11 Gordon Rohlehr, interview with Lord Melody, for the Folk Archives, UWI Library, St. Augustine, Trinidad, 24 November 1987 and 1 December 1987.

Gordon Rohlehr is Professor of West Indian Literature at the University of the West Indies-St. Augustine. Since 1968 he has published over 100 essays on Caribbean literature, calypso, and popular culture. Among his books are *Calypso and Society in Pre-Independence Trinidad* (Port of Spain, 1990), *My Strangled City and Other Essays* (Longman Trinidad, 1992), and *Voiceprint: An Anthology of Oral and Related Poetry from the Caribbean* (Longman, 1989). His most recent book is titled *A Scuffling of Islands: Essays on Calypso*.

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- 9 The Mighty Sparrow, "Horse Racing," in *One Hundred and Twenty Calypsoes to Remember* (Port of Spain: 1963), p. 48.
- 10 *Trinidad Guardian*, 8 February 1959.
- 11 Gordon Rohlehr, interview with Lord Melody, for the Folk Archives, UWI Library, St. Augustine, Trinidad, 24 November 1987 and 1 December 1987.

Gordon Rohlehr is Professor of West Indian Literature at the University of the West Indies-St. Augustine. Since 1968 he has published over 100 essays on Caribbean literature, calypso, and popular culture. Among his books are *Calypso and Society in Pre-Independence Trinidad* (Port of Spain, 1990), *My Strangled City and Other Essays* (Longman Trinidad, 1992), and *Voiceprint: An Anthology of Oral and Related Poetry from the Caribbean* (Longman, 1989). His most recent book is titled *A Scuffling of Islands: Essays on Calypso*.

## CREDITS

The tracks compiled on this CD were recorded by Emory Cook and issued on the Cook label as the following: *Calypso Kings and Pink Gin* C 01185 (1957); *Tour of Stereo* C 02004 (1958); *King Sparrow's Calypso Carnival* C 00920 (1959); *Sparrow in Hi-Fi* C 01126 (1963)

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His Excellency, the  
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[www.mightysparrow.com](http://www.mightysparrow.com).

*Back of booklet, from left to right: Small Island Pride, Mighty Sparrow, Sir Galba.*

the  
**MIGHTY**  
**SPARROW**

FIRST FLIGHT

**EARLY CALYPSOS**

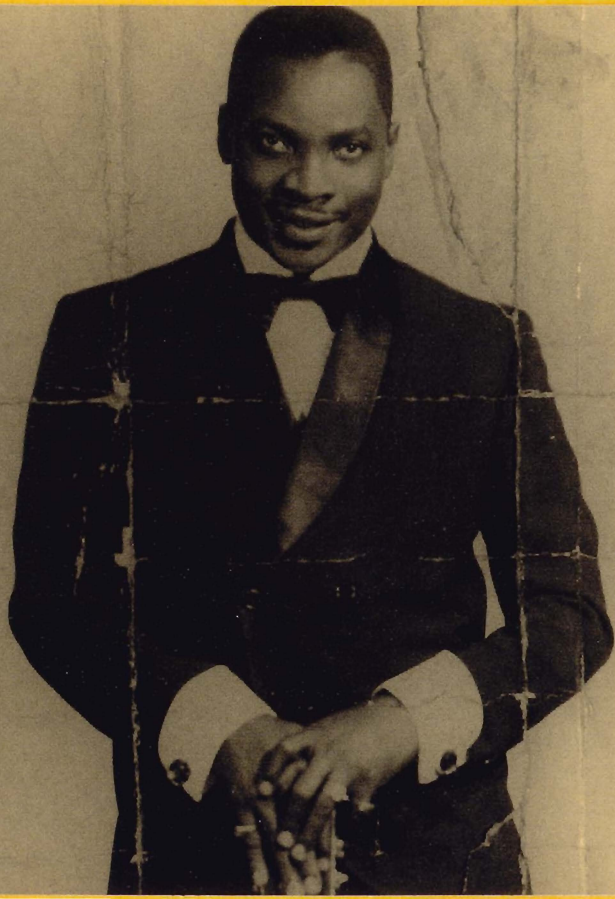
FROM THE EMORY COOK COLLECTION



Smithsonian Folkways Recordings

**SFW CD 40534**

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the  
**MIGHTY SPARROW**  
FIRST FLIGHT

**EARLY CALYPSOS** FROM THE EMORY COOK COLLECTION

Mighty Sparrow's *First Flight* reflects his post-World War II Trinidadian world of bravado and high rhetoric, in which violence of tongue and hand, the cut and thrust of word and razor, were reduced to a finely honed skill. Sparrow's earliest calypsos served up unflinching social commentary, spun with invincible exuberance and literary panache, and set the pattern for the next four decades of his career. *First Flight* reminds us that calypso, in the hands of masters such as the Mighty Sparrow, is much more than party music. **75 minutes, 20 pp. booklet, historic photos.**

- |    |  |      |
|----|--|------|
| 1  | No, Doctor, No (The Situation in Trinidad) | 2:59 |
| 2  | Sparrow vs. Melody Picong                  | 4:23 |
| 3  | Carlton Peeping at Me                      | 4:57 |
| 4  | Harry in The Piggery                       | 5:13 |
| 5  | Mango Vert                                 | 3:41 |
| 6  | Gun Slingers                               | 4:04 |
| 7  | Jean Marabunta                             | 4:03 |
| 8  | Sailor Man                                 | 2:49 |
| 9  | Eve  | 4:31 |
| 10 | Stella                                     | 4:30 |
| 11 | Short Little Shorts                        | 5:50 |
| 12 | Country Girl                               | 3:14 |
| 13 | Dear Sparrow                               | 4:16 |
| 14 | Post Card to Sparrow                       | 3:53 |
| 15 | Dorothy                                    | 3:06 |
| 16 | Russian Satellite                          | 5:04 |
| 17 | Mad Bomber                                 | 3:54 |
| 18 | No More Rocking                            | 5:14 |



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MIGHTY SPARROW FIRST FLIGHT

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