The purpose of these notes is not arbitrarily to define or to
downplay 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 an ample 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
instruments. 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 jazz-
man 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 Sovran sophis-
tication 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 audience to
taste, 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 hun-
dred colored and creole people needed no rum in order to become
unpressed.

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 drums—bam-
boobamboo—the steelband, 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 from 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, shor thru with maddening counterpuntal 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
doxy 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 (calypso).

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 Coman), Ban-
go Mood, We Mambo, One Bass Hit, The Fly,
Mambo Basis.

SIDE B
John Buddy Williams, bass; Oliver Sanchez,
marsacs; plus two doublers on sax, clarinet,
trumpeter, tenor, guitar and piano.

Alma Llorona (Venezuelan waltz); She
‘Pon Top (Bakanal, calypso); Man In Dry
(calypso); Last Night the Landlord (calypso)

1The Drums of Trinidad; nation rhythms of Car-
riacou, group drumming by Little Carib
Theatre drummers, 12" LP cat. #1045
2Bamboo-Tamboo, Bongo & the Belot; native
dances and percussion forms, singing, chanting
and drumming, 12" LP RR #5017; ethnic
3Calypso Lore & Legend; Patrick Jones chants
and stories, Poppie’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 mambo, samba, calypso, etc., by
Brute Force, Big Shell, Halligate Band of
Antigua

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