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 pitong (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 Boobo 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 labrynthine 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

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:
Senorita
General Election

Chang-Kai-Sheik:
Naughty Boy

King Fighter:
Silly Menl (Coocoo Soop)

Lord Cypher:
P. N. M. Balisier

Road March Hit Tunes
by the orchestra of the Young Brigade Tent

COOK Laboratories
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