

Celebrating our Calypso Monarchs 1939-1980 T&T History through the eyes of Calypso

Early History

Trinidad and Tobago as most other Caribbean islands, was colonized by the Europeans. What makes Trinidad's colonial past unique is that it was colonized by the Spanish and later by the English, with Tobago being occupied by the Dutch, Britain and France several times. Eventually there was a large influx of French immigrants into Trinidad creating a heavy French influence. As a result, the earliest calypso songs were not sung in English but in French-Creole, sometimes called patois.

African slaves were brought to Trinidad to work on the sugar plantations and were forbidden to communicate with one another. As a result, they began to sing songs that originated from West African Griot tradition, kaiso (West African kaito), as well as from drumming and stick-fighting songs. The song lyrics were used to make fun of the upper class and the slave owners, and the rhythms of calypso centered on the African drum, which rival groups used to beat out rhythms.

Calypso tunes were sung during competitions each year at Carnival, led by chantwells. These characters led masquerade bands in call and response singing.

The chantwells eventually became known as calypsonians, and the first calypso record was produced in 1914 by Lovey's String Band. Calypso music began to move away from the call and response method to more of a ballad style and the lyrics were used to make sometimes humorous, sometimes stinging, social and political commentaries.

During the mid and late 1930's several standout figures in calypso emerged such as Atilla the Hun, Roaring Lion, and Lord Invader and calypso music moved onto the international scene. Two classics that came from this period were Atilla the Hun's "Graf Zeppelin", about the famous airship coming to Trinidad in 1933, and Roaring Lion's "Ugly Woman", later showcased in a Hollywood musical.

The 1930's and 1940's saw the production of other calypso standards which continued the tradition of social commentary. The 1937 hit "Edward VIII" by Lord Caresser dealt with the scandal of the day, England's King Edward VIII abdicating the throne to marry the American divorcee Wallis Simpson.

In 1939 the abstract art form saw its first formal competition known as the Calypso King Competition which was won by "The Growling Tiger" whereby he received a first prize of \$20.00 dollars. The Competition was held at the Princes Building Grounds (Where the NAPA Building Stands at present). The Competition was formally changed to the Calypso Monarch with the advent of Calypso Rose's victory in the Competition in 1978.

Calypso gained commercial appeal in the United States in 1956 with the release of the Calypso album by the Jamaican singer and actor Harry Belafonte. This album featured Belafonte's version of the "Banana Boat Song" ("Day-O"), a Jamaican work song sung by dockworkers loading bananas. The album was criticized as not being true calypso however, and the commercial nature of Belafonte's music was parodied in the 1957 Broadway musical Jamaica.

1956 also saw the arrival of The Mighty Sparrow, a dominant force in the genre even today. His song "Jean and Dinah" celebrated the departure of U.S. servicemen from Trinidad after World War II with lyrics such as "Yankee gone, Sparrow take over now". "Jean and Dinah" marked the beginning of a powerfully political calypso which became aligned with the People's National Movement party and was influential in Trinidad gaining independence from Britain in 1962.



HISTORY OF MONARCH WINNERS

- 1939** - Growling Tiger
- 1953** - Spoiler (Bed Bug)
- 1954** - Melody (Second Spring)
- 1955** - Spoiler (Pick Sense Out of Nonsense)
- 1956** - Sparrow (Jean and Dinah)
- 1957** - Pretender (Que Sera Sera)
- 1958** - Striker (Don't Blame the PNM/Can't Find A Job To Suit Me)
- 1959** - Striker (Ban the Hoola Hoop/Comparison)
- 1960** - Sparrow (Ten to One is Murder/Mae Mae)
- 1961** - Dougla (Lazy Man/Split Me in Two)
- 1962** - Sparrow (Sparrow Come Back Home/Federation)
- 1963** - Sparrow (Dan is the Man/Kennedy)
- 1964** - Bomber (Joan and James/Bomber's Dream)
- 1965** - Sniper (Portrait of Trinidad/More Production)
- 1966** - Terror (Pan Jamboree/Last Year's Happiness)
- 1967** - Cypher (Last Elections/If the Priest Could Play)
- 1968** - Duke (What is Calypso/Social Bacchanal)
- 1969** - Duke (Black is Beautiful/One Foot Visina)
- 1970** - Duke (Brotherhood of Man/See Through)
- 1971** - Duke (Mathematical Formula/Melvine & Yvonne)
- 1972** - Sparrow (Drunk and Disorderly/Rope)
- 1973** - Sparrow (School Days/Same Time, Same Place)
- 1974** - Sparrow (We Pass That Stage/Miss Mary)
- 1975** - Kitchener (Tribute to Spree Simon/Fever)
- 1976** - Chalk dust (Three Blind Mice/Ah Put on Meh Guns Again)
- 1977** - Chalk dust (Juba Dubai/Shango Vision)
- 1978** - Calypso Rose (Her Majesty/I Thank Thee)
- 1979** - Black Stalin (Caribbean Unity/Play One)
- 1980** - Relator (Food Prices/Take a Rest)

Growling Tiger



Tiger was a promising boxer who became the bantam-weight champion of Trinidad in 1929. He turned to singing Calypsos in 1934 and won the first competition for Calypsonians in 1939 with "The Labour Situation." He went on to sing at the Original Old Brigade Tent in the early 1940s. He retired from singing in calypso tents in 1960, but continued to write songs for other singers.

As an adolescent he used to sing songs from the U.S.A. in the streets for money (four cents to buy marbles). He did not have an interest in calypso at the time but he did have a profound skill for singing. At fourteen he started boxing and was known as the San Fernando Tiger. Tiger became known as a champion for the underdog, spinning out songs that supported labour, civil rights and challenging British colonialism.

In 1935 with some friends, he went to Caripichaima seeking more employment opportunities. He continued to sing for money and he sang calypsos because it was the preference in that area. He would sing a song by Beginner because it was the only one he knew at the time. After hearing him, a Mr. Mentor asked him to compose a song about a recent event in the papers concerning a labour strike to raise salaries above 60 cents a day. This was the official launch of his calypso career. In an hour he had completed the song and within a few months he was performing at his first Calypso Competition in San Fernando. In the same year he was selected by Mr. Eduardo Sa Gomes to record in the U.S.A.

In 1939 he won the title of the first official Calypso King when he was crowned at the Princess building by the Honorable Captain Cipriani. He composed 'Money is King', 'The Gold in Africa' (addressing the Italian invasion of Ethiopia), among others. In 1954 he was president of the Calypsonian Association. In 1979 he was commissioned by the Rounder's Recording Company of New York to make a long playing album of old time calypso. This recording was highly acclaimed by the Library of Congress.

- From Knockdown *Calypsoes by the Growling Tiger* written by Steve Chapiro 1979.

The Mighty Spoiler

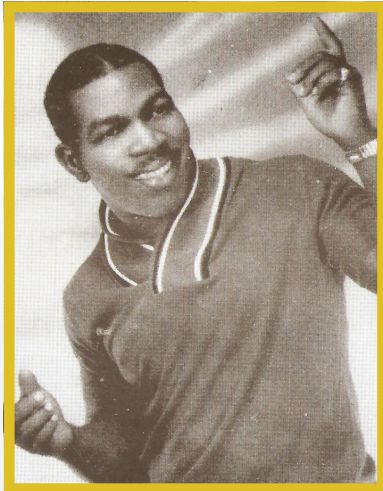


His forte was humor, and with an imaginative brain he dished out many hits in the 1950's to the extent that he is responsible for associating calypso with humor. Joining the tents in 1946, in the year of the calypso resurgence following the war, Spoiler concentrated on local happenings, and well known events while filling them with humor. His creativity was outstanding and unrivalled, in calypsos such as "The Fountain of Youth", "Tarzan" and "Cat Brain". On the night of 21st February 1955 at the Queen's Park Savannah, the Mighty Spoiler won the Calypso Monarch title. As his prize, he received a return trip to Barbados, \$50.00 and a silver cup. His winning song was "Pick Sense Out of Nonsense". In relation to this song, a man who spat on the wall at a club explained, that there was a sign in the club which read, "Don't spit on the floor". A man bathing naked by a stand-pipe was told to go home and get properly dressed. He returned

wearing a necktie. Such was the wit and humour of the Mighty Spoiler, Calypso King 1955.

Besides being a good singer, he was a good dramatist, using his eyes, hands, head and lower body to communicate his whole story with the audience. In fact one of his calypsos had no chorus, it being a dramatization by Spoiler. It was called "The Laughing Man in Salvation Store." A legend in his day and a genius of the absurd, his favorite words were: "ah want to fall." Very often he was introduced on stage by this phrase and not his name; the crowd knew instantly that the artiste to perform was Spoiler. He passed away on Boxing Day 1959, after leaving the General Hospital in Port of Spain where he was hospitalized.

Lord Melody



Fitzroy Alexander was born in 1926, San Fernando, Trinidad and Tobago and died on September 26th 1988. He was a popular calypsonian, best known for singles such as the self-deprecating "Boo Boo Man", "Shame & Scandal", "Jonah and the Bake", "Juanita" and "Rastaman Be Careful". Melody's career spanned some forty years, from the early development of popular calypso to his embrace of a reggae influenced sound in the late 1970s.

Melody was raised at an orphanage in Port of Spain, and met Alwyn Roberts (Lord Kitchener) after moving to Arima while still in his teens. Roberts took him under his wing and they returned to Port of Spain, where Lord Kitchener became the leading calypso star, with Melody as one of his main challengers. His popularity increased locally when Lord Kitchener emigrated to England in 1947. Melody began singing in the calypso tents in the mid 1940s and was one of the leaders of the Young Brigade tent

during the 1950s and early 1960s. He also regularly toured the Caribbean. His early successes included "Berlin on a Donkey", mocking Adolf Hitler, and "Boo Boo Man". In 1954 he won Trinidad's Calypso King title with "Second Spring", and he was signed to the American Emory Cook's record label, Cook Records, in 1956.

Melody went on to compose a number of other songs that poked fun at his own appearance, such as "Creature from the Black Lagoon". His first album, Lord Melody Sings Calypso, was released in 1957, with a second album, Again! released the following year. He frequently sparred in song with the Mighty Sparrow. Rivalry between Melody and the Mighty Sparrow was recorded in the calypsos "Ten to One is Murder" and "Cowboy Sparrow". The humorous rivalry between the two calypsonians was immensely popular with audiences. Another one of Melody's calypsos, "Shame & Scandal" (composed in 1962), became an international hit and was recorded in the U.S., Europe and Australia. His greatest success came when Harry Belafonte recorded his songs "Boo Boo Man" (retitled "Mama Look at Bubu") and "Sweetheart From Venezuela" (aka "Juanita"), having a top 20 hit in the US with the former in 1957. In 1958, his "Cricket, Lovely Cricket" became a favourite on British radio, and his records started to become available in Europe, with several singles becoming favourites with Britain's West Indian community in the late 1950s.

In the first half of the 1960s, his popularity waned, but he again found success in 1965 when his "Melody Mas" won the Panorama Competition at that year's Carnival. In the late 1960s Melody moved to New York, and he subsequently toured with Belafonte. He was diagnosed with cancer in the early 1970s and the illness restricted his career, although in 1979 he released the I Man album, a reggae tinged album on which he expressed his embrace of Rastafari, the singles "Rastaman Be Careful" and "Brown Sugar" becoming local hits in the same era. In 1982 he made another album, the soca-styled Lola. His health continued to deteriorate and he died from cancer in September 1988, in Port of Spain.

Mighty Sparrow



Slinger Francisco, known as The Mighty Sparrow or Birdie was born on the 9th of July in Grand Roi, a fishing village in Grenada. He moved to Trinidad when he was one year old. His introduction to music began in the choir of St. Patrick's Catholic School. At fourteen he joined a steel band and there began his introduction to Calypso. His Calypso name is based on his movements while performing. In 1956, he won the Carnival Road March and Calypso Monarch competition with the song 'Jean and Dinah' at the tender age of 20. This early success paved the way for an illustrious career.

The Mighty Sparrow managed to showcase his diversity with the release of at least one album each year dating from the catchy Jean and Dinah. In 1957 he sang "Carnival Boycott". This song was eventually responsible for the formation of the Carnival Development Committee an organization to assist calypsonians, steelband men and mas men. This committee was fully endorsed by the Founding Father of Trinidad and Tobago, Dr. Eric Williams.

This renowned lyricist, composer, singer, comedian and entertainer is an eleven time Calypso Monarch and is credited with over seventy albums. He has retained the King of Kings title for several years and has won the Trinidad and Tobago's Carnival Road March Competition eight times, second only to the Lord Kitchener. Sparrow received many other University citations and awards from Governments and organizations too numerous to mention.

The Mighty Sparrow continued to climb the ladder of success with his numerous accolades and awards, becoming the most popular calypsonian of all time. In the 1980's Mayor Ed Koch of New York proclaimed March 18th, The Mighty Sparrow Day. The singer demonstrated year after year, with his social commentaries, that the calypsonian is really the eyes and ears of the people. He made another appearance in Nigeria, this time as Chief Omo Wale of Ikoyi, during his National Tour of Africa and upon his return he was awarded an Honorary Doctorate Degree, Doctor of Letters, from the University of the West Indies. In 1990 he gave us "Let the Music Play" and was inducted into the SUNSHINE Awards Calypso and Steelband Music Hall of Fame on June 24th. Sparrow continued to define the true meaning of "The Calypso King of the World".

A combination of talent, hard work and opportunity enabled Sparrow's ascendance to Calypso King of the World. He brought honor, glory and dignity to an indigenous art form that was once scorned upon by the elite of Caribbean society. He is an extraordinary entertainer who utilizes his medium of calypso and song to not just entertain but also to edify, enlighten, and educate. He continues to write and perform. In 2008, he released a song in support of Barack Obama, "Barack the Magnificent" and most recently he did a remake of his "Congo Man" song with Machel Montano on the "Flame On" album.

Lord Pretender



Born in 1917 Tobago, Lord Pretender was of the view that calypsonians had a responsibility to document the history of his people, following the African griot tradition of praise singing and storytelling. His introduction to Calypso began at age five when he began rhyming and singing extempo. He sang his first calypso at age eight. At age twelve he made his first professional appearance at the Red Head Sailor tent in Corbeau Town, with an ode to a young girl he promised to meet on resurrection day. "Preedie" as he was fondly called by fellow calypsonians and close friends was at age 85, said to be the oldest calypsonian alive. His debut at the Red Head Sailor tent in 1929 was the beginning of a career that saw him on stage until the early nineties when a combination of illnesses limited his ability to perform. Onstage at the first calypso competition in 1939, Lord Pretender ran third to Growling Tiger. In 1957, he sang a calypso based on the ballad "Que Sera Sera". This would win for him the only national calypso title in a career that spanned more than sixty years. In 1961, he was in the finals again, forced this time to bow to the Mighty Dougl'a. 1969 was his last time as a contestant on the Dimanche Gras stage.

Recollecting that his parents often considered him a blemish on the family for singing calypso, Farrel was equally determined to succeed at the art. In 1972, he was awarded the Public Service Medal of Merit silver for calypso. In 1994 he was again honoured for his achievements, receiving the Hummingbird Medal (Gold) for his contribution to Trinidad and Tobago's culture. Throughout his entire career he sang and composed calypso in the "double tone" styling of 16 bar verses and choruses, with greater emphasis on the lyrics than on melody. His hallmark song "Never Ever Worry" was first recorded in 1961 and more recently redone as a duet with Brother Resistance. The Great Pretender truly was an extempo icon, calypso legend and cultural icon of Trinidad and Tobago.

(partial source- "From the Horse's Mouth", Dr. Hollis Liverpool)

The Mighty Striker



Percy Oblington was born in D'abadie in 1930. His parents moved the family to Arouca after a few years and it was here that Mr. Oblington met Dillary Scott- Lord Cypher. At thirteen years old, Mr. Oblington began working for twenty- five cents a day, husking coconuts on a coconut estate with Lord Cypher, Lord Eisenhower and Lord Montgomery. The four aspiring calypsonians kept their eyes on the goal of one day entering a calypso tent and singing to big crowds. This dream became a reality for Striker when in 1949 at the age of nineteen, he went with Lord Cypher to perform at two Calypso shows hosted by Lord Melody. Both performances were met with requests for encores and the newly inducted calypsonian was paid the grand fee of \$1.00. In 1957, he entered the Calypso Monarch competition for the first time. Just one year later in 1958, he became Calypso King. In that same year, Princess Margaret visited Trinidad and Striker was persuaded to cut short his trip to Barbados to come home and perform for her welcoming ceremony. The princess thoroughly enjoyed the performance inspiring the calypsonian to write and sing the song "Tribute to Princess Margaret", which was recorded at Radio Trinidad. A copy of that album resides today at the Buckingham Palace.

In 1959 the Mighty Striker was again victorious in the Calypso Monarch competition, becoming the first calypsonian to win the title for two consecutive years. His renditions of "Ban the Hoola Hoop" and "Comparison" won him the prize of \$1000 and a silver trophy. Striker was also the first calypsonian to win a world-wide song competition. The contest was held in Brooklyn and the singer's winning piece was entitled "Tribute to Carl McDonald of R.C.A Film Company".

Mr. Oblington has won numerous awards and continues to be lauded for his achievements. In 2006, he was honoured by the University of the West Indies for "The Chord Master" a steelpan which he developed that is played with three or four sticks. Striker continues to invest his talents in teaching the youth as the calypsonian plays several instruments and also arranges music; ensuring that his legacy is firmly secured.

History through the eyes of Calypso

PROGRAMME - ACT 1

National Anthem

Prologue

Opening Narration

Medley of Money is King, Shame and Scandal/Never ever worry
(Tribute to Growling Tiger, Lord Melody and Lord Pretender)

Pick Sense out of nonsense

Food Prices

Split meh in two

Bed Bug

Medley

Portrait of Trinidad

Black is Beautiful (Theatrical presentation)

Medley (Tribute to Duke)

Kurtis Gross

Jeune Agape
Fede

Peter Cipriani

Tracey Donald

Erphaan Alves

Lord Striker

Kwesi Jeffers

Playersfrom
Creative Arts UWI

Duane O'Connor

Intermission

PROGRAMME - ACT II

Medley of Joan and James/Last elections/Pan Jamboree
(Tribute to Bomber, The Mighty Terror and The Mighty Cypher)

Medley

Caribbean Unity and Play One

Medley

Ten to one is murder (Theatrical presentation)

Medley

Tribute to Spree Simon / Fever

Maisha Zuri

Chalkdust

Kurt Allen

Calypso Rose

Players from
Creative Arts UWI

Sparrow

De Fosto (Saturday)
Kernel Roberts (Sunday)

The Mighty Dougla

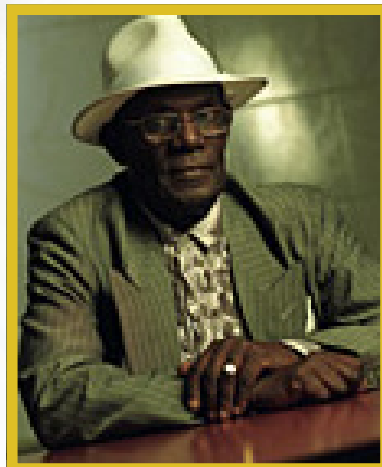


Cletus Ali was known in the calypso world as the Mighty Dougla. He was a true representation of this racial mixture. A barber by trade, it was not surprising to see him, along with the late Mighty Robin, entertaining many a customer. Even today the barber shop is where many opinions are shared and discussions held. In the George Street barber shop, many calypsos were made and edited right along with the witty banter, before they were made public by being performed at the calypso tent. It was in this environment that Dougla fashioned his work as a calypsonian and

which propelled him to join Sparrow's original Young Brigade in the late 1950's. Moreover, as his name suggested, Dougla focused much of his songs on the ethnic problems which affected the people of Trinidad and Tobago. Dougla won the Calypso Monarch title in 1961 with the songs, "Split me in Two" and "Lazy Man".

Although he was criticized, particularly by the Mighty Sparrow, for having a deep croon in his voice, Dougla was highly successful and produced a number of hits which included "Teacher, Teacher", "If Ugliness was Strength", "Trinidad Carnival", "Man Nicer than Woman" and "The Marks of Trinidad". The calypso world lost one of the most creative calypsonians when Dougla passed away in the late 1970's.

Bomber



Clifton Ryan known in the calypso world as the Mighty Bomber was born in St Georges, Grenada on 30th January 1928. His mother was a Grenadian and his father was a Trinidadian from Serraneau Road, Belmont. From a very early age he realized that he could compose and sing calypsos and would keep notes of the songs in a copy book. His work soon came to the attention of a friend who arranged for him to enter the Grenada Calypso competition in 1940 at the tender age of 12. His rendition was so good that he won this first competition and repeated this feat until 1947. Bomber also wrote for a friend Wilfred Baptiste known as Young Melody who was often second to him in these competitions. After 1947 he started to give his best calypsos to Young Melody who began winning the Grenada Calypso Competition at Queens Park.

In 1956 Bomber migrated to Trinidad and was accommodated on Prince Street by another calypsonian, Theophilus Woods

who was known as Small Island Pride who was also from Grenada. He started entering calypso competitions in Trinidad the following year. The first of these was the Radio Trinidad Tenth Anniversary Calypso Competition where Bomber tasted victory in Trinidad for the first time. In 1958 he had a hit song called 'Gloria' that was resung by Harry Belafonte in 1962.

In 1960 Bomber was invited by the Mighty Sparrow to sing at the Original Young Brigade Tent. He also participated in the Independence Calypso competition in 1962 and placed 4th, though many people in the audience felt that he should have won the competition. In 1964 he created history when he defeated the Mighty Sparrow, winning the National Calypso King Competition in Trinidad with the songs "Bomber's Dream" and "James and Joan". He went on to represent Trinidad and Tobago at the Commonwealth Festival of Arts in England the following year. He also represented Trinidad and Tobago at Randals Island, USA where he met Harry Belafonte. He became the stage manager at the Mighty Sparrow's Young Brigade Tent and held that position for 15 years. In 1988 Bomber accepted an invitation by the National Carnival Commission (NCC) to manage the New Wave Calypso Theatre.

In 1990 with the encouragement of his family he returned to the calypso stage at the Review Tent singing a special song called the 'United States of the West Indies' and continued singing there until 2003. In recent years Bomber's calypso renditions have remained at a very high standard and he was chosen to participate in the Monarch finals at the age of 75 years making him possibly the oldest calypsonian to reach the Calypso Monarch finals. He also writes calypsos for upcoming calypsonians, nurturing and motivating them. His legacy is a reminder of the importance of developing one's talent and sharing it for the benefit of many.

Sniper



In 1965, on the 1st of February to be exact, Mervyn Hodge, The Mighty Sniper won the Calypso King title. His two winning songs were "Portrait of Trinidad" and "More Production". Portrait of Trinidad was a look at the country with regards to the negative way it was perceived by some people. Sniper dug into ole time kaiso and found a crown.

Sniper had a good voice which he used to his advantage. He put over his songs sensibly in the then fast dying 'Mi Minor' of old time Calypso. During the 1965 season, Sniper sang at the Calypso Revue but was a relatively new singer with just about two seasons behind him.

The Mighty Terror



Fitzgerald Cornelius Henry known in the calypso world as The Mighty Terror was born in Arouca, Trinidad on 15th January, 1921. He had his primary education at Arouca Government School and at the Piccadilly Street E.C. School. From an early age, Terror learned to play the trumpet and also sang in school and with church choirs. His life as a calypsonian began in 1947 when he appeared to the public soon after the opening up of Trinidad and Tobago's first radio station, "Radio Trinidad". Soon after, in 1948 he made his debut at the Calypso Palace calypso tent.

Between 1949 and 1953, Terror sang with the Young Brigade Tent. Terror then took a job on a ship as a fireman and ended up in England in the said year 1953. His life changed on his arrival in England. He began to work in a pottery company but with his calypso spirit intact, he sang at many London night clubs while also free lancing as a bassist and drummer. Terror was crowned Calypso King of Great Britain in 1957 with the selections "Life in London" and "I'll walk a Million Miles". With his calypso career

now in full bloom in England, Terror was now associated with Lord Kitchener and the Bert Mc Leon Trio.

In 1964 Terror returned to Trinidad and joined the Calypso Revue in 1965 and the next year 1966 was crowned Calypso Monarch with the songs "Steelband Jamboree" and "Last Years Happiness". Terror represented Trinidad and Tobago at the very first World Festival of Negro Arts in Senegal in 1966.

Throughout his illustrious career, Terror like Kitchener, was closely associated with the Steelband. Many of his songs that were so inclined were 'Tribute to Solo Harmonites', 'Steelband Boycott', 'Sugar for Pan', 'Pan in Tune', 'Panorama Jamming Pan' and 'Back with Pan'.

Terror was popularly known as "The Golden Voice" and was one of the founding members of COTT. He received COTT's Golden Achievement Award in 2004 at this organisation's sixth music awards. Fitzgerald Cornelius Henry, The Mighty Terror died in March 2007 after ailing for many years. His passing was indeed a loss to the calypso world.

Mighty Cypher

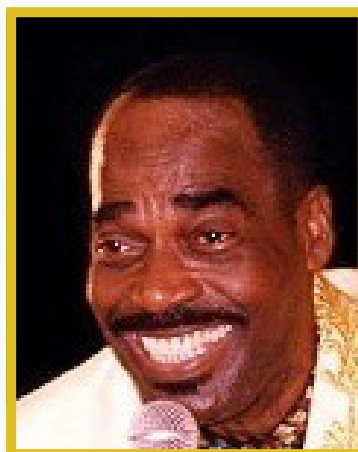


Dillary Scott, known in the calypso world as the Mighty Cypher dates back as a claypsonian to the days of Railway Douglas, Executor, King Radio and Atilla but it was with the sobriquet "The Crown Prince of Calypso" that he has been remembered. Cypher in his illustrious years, reached the finals of the 1956 Calypso Monarch with the selection, "Defining Love". It was not until 1967 however, that Cypher was crowned Calypso Monarch. In that year, he sang "If the Priest Could Play", a composition on the mas playing priest of 1966 Fr. Clifford Hendy, as well as "Last Elections", a commentary on 1966's general elections.

The Mighty Cypher started his singing career in 1935 but never won a Road March title. He did have a contender in the 1950's entitled "Shaver Man Coming Down". In the calypso tents, Cypher was a sight to behold with his pleasant manner characterized by his hat plumed by a feather making him quite recognizable. Cypher took part in many contests and although he had not won great awards, he was quite happy with what he had achieved. His goal was to make music that entertained his audience, keeping them laughing and allowing them to forget

their worries and troubles. Cypher defended his Calypso Monarch title in 1968 and in one of his songs that year, he took umbrage to the way in which the US administration had treated Cassius Clay by sending him to Vietnam. Unfortunately, he did not retain his title. When he died several years later, an era of fun and laughter had come to an end.

Duke



Kelvin Pope, known in the Calypso world as 'Mighty Duke', is a legendary Calypsonian whose work spans a period of over fifty years. Born in 1932 in Point Fortin, south Trinidad, 'Duke' grew up in a period that was marked by striking workers who challenged the colonial authorities by protesting against working conditions, wages, racism and exploitation in the oilfields. Growing up in this turbulent period would have a lasting impact on Kelvin Pope and the music that he would create in years to come. Pope left a career working at Shell Oil to perform calypso music. He made his Calypso debut in the late fifties. His neighbor was the calypsonian known as 'Syncopater', he encouraged to become a calypsonian and write his own songs. Soon after he joined a tent in Point Fortin with fellow calypsonians 'Impressor' and 'Blacks'. Duke believed that the role of the Calypsonian is to inform, to educate and to speak out when others are afraid to.

In the 1950s, he played locally in his hometown, and then began playing in San Fernando at the Southern Brigade Calypso Tent. In 1964 he relocated to Port of Spain and performed at the Original Young Brigade. He won the National Calypso Monarch title for four years straight (1968-71), and was noted for exploring ideas such as black consciousness and global politics in his lyrics. Lord Nelson was one of many for whom he composed music. In 1987, his "Thunder" was awarded the National Road March prize.

His serious Calypsos reflect a spirit of resistance that is still very much alive up to this day. Influenced by Calypso stalwarts like 'Lord Syncopate', 'Mighty Spoiler', 'Mighty Cipher' and 'Lord Kitchener', 'Duke' has, over the years, become renowned not only for delivering social commentary, political and witty, humorous songs with equal skill, dignity and lyrical mastery but also for his stately stage presence and for being one of the best-dressed Calypsonians to this day. The only Calypsonian to win the National Calypso Monarch Crown four times in a row, Kelvin Pope's body of work includes "Black is Beautiful", "Teach the Children", "Brotherhood of Man", "Mathematical Formula", "Treat Your Woman", "Land Of Love" and "Pan In Yuh Ruckungkertungkung".

His focus has not been limited to local issues as he has demonstrated the importance of a global awareness in his interest in the liberation struggles in Africa. With such songs as "How Many More Must Die" and "Apartheid" he was a vocal critic of apartheid in South Africa.

Kitchener



The Lord Kitchener has been dubbed the 'Grandmaster of Calypso' and 'Road March King of the World'. Such titles have emerged after years of sacrifice and consistency. He has had a very long and outstanding career as a calypsonian. At age 16 he was already Calypso King of Arima. He came from a musical family; his father was an accomplished musician and his mother was a singer and composer of songs. According to him, his father would often draw crowds to his native Arima as he beat out rhythms on his anvil while at work as a blacksmith. Another son often joined in to provide for harmony in metal percussion to the delight of admirers.

In 1945 and 1946 he performed at the Victory Tent. In 1945 he sang at the House of Lords Tent on Edward Street in Port of Spain. In 1947 he appeared at the Young Brigade Tent and in 1963 he sang at the Good Samaritan Hall on Duke Street. He then entertained at the Revue at the Strand Cinema on Tragarete Road in 1964 and 1965. The tent was removed to the Legion Hall on Richmond Street in Downtown Port of Spain where it operated from 1966 to 1970.

He has won the more Road March titles than any other Calypsonian. In 1969 he received the Humming Bird Silver for his outstanding contribution to culture in the field of calypso. In 1993, at the age of 72, Kitchener was publicly honored by various organizations for the 50 years of sterling service to the art form.

Chalkdust

(formerly known as "The Educator")



Hollis Urban Lester Liverpool was born on March 5th 1941 in Chaguaramas. He has been singing calypso since 1967 and has recorded over 300 calypsos. Chalkdust began writing songs as a student at St. Mary's College in 1954, composing songs for the school football team's intercollegiate matches.

In addition to being a calypsonian, he is a teacher, historian and author. He has a P.H.D. in History and Ethnomusicology and is currently a Cultural Anthropologist and Professor of Social Sciences at the University of the Virgin Islands, St. Thomas. He is a Professor, a Calypsonian, and historian, a Calypso Monarch, a writer, an author of many St. Kitt reigning National King "Socrates" with Mr Hollis Liverpool books.

He takes his role as a Calypsonian very seriously and considers it to be the role of the artist and not an entertainer. His first song was about how teachers are underrated in the education system. He won the Hummingbird Silver medal in 1976. He is an eight time winner of the Calypso Monarch competition, most recently

in 2009 with 'Doh Touch My Heart'. Chalkdust also won Carifesta in 1976, the World Calypso King title in St. Thomas, US Virgin Islands eight times, and the Calypso King of the World in New York City on the two occasions when that competition was held. He is the author of the books Rituals of Power and Rebellion: The Carnival Tradition in Trinidad and Tobago and From the Horse's Mouth, a socio-cultural history of calypso from 1900 to 2003.

Calypso Rose



Calypso Rose is a living legend and icon in the calypso world, having taken the art form to every continent, while opening the door for other women to follow. Born MacCatha Lewis (after General Douglas MacArthur), Calypso Rose began performing in her native Tobago when she was 15. Rose won the Calypso Queen competition five years in a row, while also trying to compete in the male-only Calypso King contest. In 1978, Rose captured calypso's premiere title with "I Thank Thee" and "Her Majesty", breaking down the gender barrier, causing the title to be renamed the Calypso Monarch.

She has written over 800 songs altogether. She is the first female to win Road March in 1977 with the song Tempo. She began writing songs at the age of 15, and has written over 800 songs.

She has won both the Trinidad Calypso Crown and Road March competitions in 1978, the Sunshine Award in 1989 and the Trinidad and Tobago Hummingbird Medal in 2000.

Rose also became the first woman to capture the coveted Road March title, an honour she held for 21 years, until Sanell Dempster captured the championship on the road with "River". In 1978, by order of the Queen of England, Rose received the Medal of Merit from the Trinidad and Tobago Government. Calypso Rose has been making up for lost time after being slowed by her fight against breast cancer in the 1990s, again touring the world, from New York festivals to London's Royal Albert Hall with new political songs and her women's rights anthems including "No Madam" and "Me No Want", as in "Me no want no married man".

Included in her volumes of music are themes as varied as the waves she has created. She has composed such political commentaries as "The Balance Wheel" and "Respect the Balisay"; party songs and rhythms such as "Do Dem Back" and "The Action Is Tight"; has raised our awareness of current conditions in "Gun Play On The Parkway" and "Help"; has taken a stand on women's rights in "No Madam"; and has enamored us with songs such as "You Can't Buy Love".

Calypso Rose is still expanding her horizons, as her 1994 album, Soca Diva, illustrates, the Mother of Calypso fuses the rhythms and melodies of Africa, Central America, and the Caribbean into a sweet and spicy bouquet. Besides being a vibrant and exciting performer and composer, Rose's world-wide recognition has made her one of the most awarded and honored figures of the Caribbean music scene.

Black Stalin



Born Leroy Calliste in San Fernando, Trinidad and Tobago, Stalin began singing calypso in 1959, but did not join a calypso tent until 1962 when he joined the Southern Brigade. In 1967 he joined Kitchener's Calypso Revue tent and managed to place in that year's Calypso Monarch competition.

Stalin won the Calypso Monarch competition for the first time in 1979. In that same year he moved over to the Mighty Shadow's King of the Wizards Tent and recorded his first album, "The Caribbean Man". He then went on to win the Calypso Monarch title again in 1985, 1987, 1991 and 1995. In 1987 he was awarded the Hummingbird Medal for his contributions to culture. Black Stalin became Dr. Leroy Calliste on October 31, 2008, when he was conferred with an honorary doctorate from the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine for his tremendous dedication and contribution to Calypso music and culture in Trinidad and Tobago.

The Relator



Willard Harris known in the calypso world as Relator was born on 28th January 1948 in the East Dry River area. His talent as a calypsonian and all-round entertainer showed early. At age 17, he was crowned Junior Calypso Monarch when he appeared on Auntie Kay's Junior Calypso Competition on radio.

In the following year 1966, he teamed up with another young calypsonian, future Calypso Monarch, the Mystic Prowler. Together they won the popular Scouting for Talent show on television. Up to and inclusive of 1970, Relator was still an amateur in the calypso world, completely unattached to any Calypso tent, yet he was crowned "The Buy Local Calypso King". This victory no doubt made it easier for him to be readily accepted in the tents. He was then runner-up in the Buy Local Calypso contests of 1971, 1972 and 1973. Bigger things were in store for this calypsonian however. In 1979, he was first runner-up in the National Calypso Monarch competition. In 1980 he went one place higher and

was crowned Calypso Monarch with his two songs "Food Prices" and "Take a Rest".

In addition to having attained the Calypso Monarch title, Relator is also one of the best known calypsonians in the art of extemporizing and impersonations. Whenever the opportunity presents itself, he uses his extemporizing skills to suit the occasion. Many years ago, he was able to impersonate the likes of Louis "Satchmo" Armstrong, "The Mighty Robin", "Dean Martin" and "The Mighty Terror" in his performance. This displayed his versatility and all-round abilities.

Early in his calypso career, Relator was influenced by Lord Kitchener who had a great impact on his style and lyrical content. This is certainly seen in his performances. Relator has strong views on calypsonians who are motivated by recognition and money, not the art form itself. He believes that the role of the calypsonian in society is important and he/she should be awarded due respect. He also holds the view that education in Trinidad and Tobago should be enhanced by the use of calypso.



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