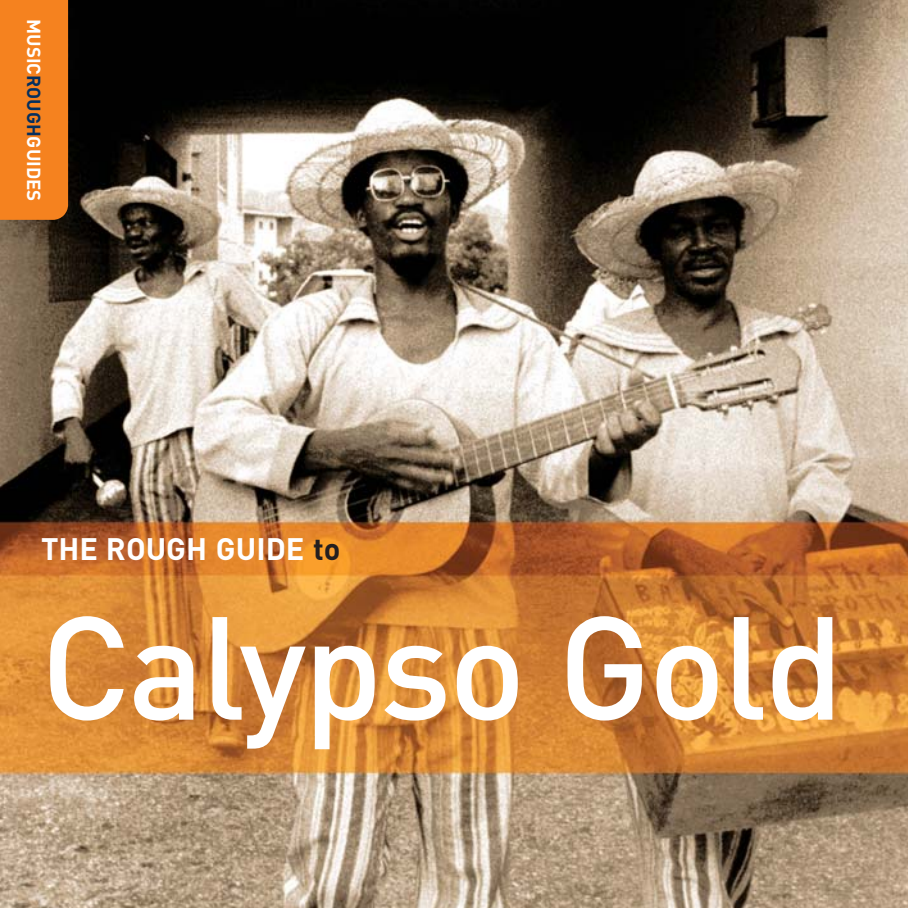


THE ROUGH GUIDE to

Calypso Gold



You now have in your hands a collection of very rare calypso recordings from the dawn of the recording era.

The first mention of 'Calypso' comes from a dance, described by Abbé Masse in 1882. Otherwise, most scholars who have tried to trace the story of calypso agree that the word itself is not connected with the divinity who lured Homer's Odysseus to her island. The origins of the word are not clear and scholars debate this with no definitive answer. The name possibly began with the French *carrouseaux* and went through patois and Anglicization – *carrisseaux*, *calisseaux*, *caliso* and finally to 'calypso'. There are also suggestions that the name originated with

exclamations of encouragement to the singer by the chorus or audience or both. But, whatever process brought the word 'calypso' into everyday use, the main thing is the calypso itself.

Quick wit, knowing observations of human behaviour and commentary on its absurd aspects are all elements of calypso, which prompted the American periodical *Time* to label calypso 'The Living Newspaper' in 1944. For eloquence and topical diversity, no other genre comes close to the calypso of Trinidad and Tobago. The Calypsonian assumes a stance between reporter, editorialist, moralist and satirist with commentary on scandal, disasters, politics, sexual indiscretion and

everything from local to international affairs. Calypso songs, or *kaisos*, would outlive the colonial authorities who, at the time, were ignorant to the subtleties, innuendos and insinuations connected with calypso.

Robin Bryans wrote of the calypso, 'No sacred cow, human or institutional is safe from the wit of the Calypsonian', and Don Hill adds that 'It is at once a social document of the country's history, a compendium of the people's language, an archive of their music. The Calypsonian serves his country equally as well as the griot of ancient Mali served his. But our native bard has not received the place of honour he deserves. Perhaps it is just as well. No honour

or patronage should impede his freedom to speak out.'

SIR LANCELOT – Sir Lancelot was born Lancelot Victor Edward Pinard. After secondary education in Trinidad, he was sent to New York to study medicine. There he was afflicted by the 'calypso bug' of which he could not dispense a cure, and consequently took up a guitar and started singing the calypso. A legendary bandleader, Gerald Clark, needed a singer at that time and had seen Lancelot perform 'arias' at a concert, and approached him to sing at a recording date on the Varsity label. Lancelot accepted, and very soon he was touring Oregon and California. It was in the latter that Lancelot's fame

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musical commentary on
scandal, disasters & politics



broadened, as he got a part to sing in the movie *Two Yanks In Trinidad*. He acted in several other movies and his voice was featured in cartoons and films. 'Scandal In The Family', which he sang in the movie *I Walked With A Zombie*, is his rendition on this CD. Sir Lancelot died in 2001.

KING RADIO – King Radio was born as Norman Span and is known far and wide for his 'bouncy' tunes. It was at Clarence Lynch's Red Dragon Tent on George Street in 1929 that King Radio evolved from being a 'Chantwell' to a top notch Kaisonian. His songs dealt with the life of the common folk, their loves, their cares and their wants. 'Man Smart Woman Smarter' still remains popular amongst listeners and

recording artists, amongst whom The Carpenters recorded a version in the 1970s. 'Mathilda' is his most popular *kaiso* of all time, released in 1938.

LORD PRETENDER – Real name Aldric Farrel, Lord Pretender was just a boy when he burst upon the *kaiso* stage. Pretender was a master of improvisation and, if given a topic, he could immediately provide and sing choruses and several verses without any preparation. Sadly, Pretender passed away in 2000 and his death was the closing of an era – he was the 'last of the golden age singers'. Pretender is represented on this CD with 'Human Race'.

CALYPSO ROSE – 'Rum & Coca Cola' is probably the most recorded calypso, and has been covered by the Andrew Sisters, Barry White and Julio Iglesias, just to mention a few. Performing the track here is the 'Calypso Queen of the World', Calypso Rose (aka McCartha Lewis), who was born in 1940 in Tobago. She began writing songs at the age of 15, and has written over 800 songs in total. In 1966, she wrote the song 'Fire In Me Wire', which has since become a calypso anthem.

CARESSER – Lord Caresser's (birth name Rufus Callender) recording career was launched on 16 February 1937 with the immensely successful and popular 'Edward The VIII', which is based on King Edward's

abdication of the throne for his true love, Mrs Simpson. The following year he released 'Madam Khan' with an instrumental also recorded by Codallo's Top Hatters Orchestra.

*'Well, talk about a woman bad like a crab
I mean your heart and soul, an' all she would grab
Cut out your pocket and leave you to groan
Den beat you with big stick, bottle, an' stone
Hold your hand, Madame Khan...' (1938)*

THE MIGHTY BOMBER - 'The Mighty Bomber' Clifton Ryan was born in Grenada in 1928. In 1958, he had a hit song called 'Gloria' that was resung by Harry Belafonte some years later. In 1964 he created history by winning the National Calypso King Competition in Trinidad



and went on to represent Trinidad and Tobago at the Commonwealth Festival of Arts in England the following year. He became the stage manager at the Mighty Sparrow's Young Brigade Tent and held that position for fifteen years. Close to the age of 80, Bomber still continues to compose new material, write for many singers in the Caribbean, United Kingdom and the United States, and to carry out workshops teaching children the calypso art form.

LION – Hubert Raphael Charles, known as Lion or Roaring Lion, origins as a genuine Calypsonian lies in doubt, but what is important is what he did between 1926 and 1929, performing in the calypso tents of Trinidad. Always impeccably dressed, Lion was known for his lion-headed cane and his regal bearing. He was a strong singer and a composer of all the major types of calypso. 1934 was considered to be the third phase of recorded calypso as Lion, in accompaniment with Atilla, sailed to New York to make recordings, occasionally working alongside Bing Crosby and Rudy Vallee, who invited Lion and Atilla to what Trinidadians touted as the 'First Radio Broadcast by Trinidadians'. Lion passed away in 1999.

RELATOR – Lion wrote 'Nora', here sung by Relator. This calypso, recorded in the UK,

expresses homesickness. 'Nora' is reputed to have been the most famous calypso of 1950, its popularity stretching from the Caribbean all the way to West Africa. Relator, aka Lord Relator (born Willard Harris), is also famous for writing the 'Gavaskar Calypso' to celebrate the game of cricket and Sunil Gavaskar's first Test series, in the West Indies in 1970-1.

LORD KITCHENER – Born in 1922, he was christened Aldwyn Roberts. His other nicknames were no less than 'Caisonian Fadder', 'The Boss', 'Genius', and 'Master'. His first sojourn into music was serenading workers at the Water Works in Arima, Trinidad, in 1937. The following year he used the melody of Atilla's 'Women Will Rule The World' for his calypso 'Shops Close Too Early', but it wasn't until the end of the war, in 1945, that Lord Kitchener really came into prominence, with hits such as 'Tie Tongue Mopsy'. In 1947 he sang his popular 'Green Fig' for US President Harry Truman. 'Ah Bernice' aka 'Kitch, Come Go To Bed', created such an impression on Princess Margaret that it is rumoured that she went out and bought a hundred copies of the lyrics.

DUKE OF IRON – The Duke of Iron (Cecil Anderson) was born in 1906 and learned to play the *cuatro* (a four-stringed guitar). In 1923, he migrated to New York City, where he met

fellow Trinidadian Gerald Clark, who was instrumental in his recording career, as were Sir Lancelot and Macbeth (who also started their calypso careers in New York). He went on to record several 78s and 33 1/3 albums, and he helped popularize the calypso outside Trinidad, with 'Big Bamboo' being one of his biggest hits. He acted in the movie *Calypso Joe* (1957) and was even written about in a novel *The Voodoo Murders* by author Mike Avallone (1957). On this CD he is featured on 'The Lost Watch'. The Duke of Iron passed away in 1968.

TIGER – Neville Marciano, known as 'The Tiger', was born at Siparia, South Trinidad. He took up boxing at the age of 14 and – under the appellation of 'Siparia Tiger', then as 'San Fernando Tiger' – won the title of Flyweight Minor Champion of Trinidad in 1929. His entry into the calypso arena reads like a fairy tale since his 1934 debut, as he soon travelled to New York to record. Tiger recorded 'Gold In Africa' in 1936. The song dealt with Benito Mussolini's Italian army invasion of Ethiopia the year before Emperor Haile Selassie was forced into exile in the UK. Tiger suggested that Mussolini was after the Emperor's wife. Tiger's 1979 album *Knockdown Calypsos* was nominated for a Grammy award.

ATILLA/KISKEDEE TRIO – Atilla, also known as Atilla The Hun, was born Raymond Quevedo in 1892 and sang his first calypso in 1910. He was an elected member of the Port of Spain City Council, and became Deputy Mayor. He was also President General of Trinidad Labour Party (TLP). Lion and Atilla the Hun first introduced the concept of a 'Calypso Duet' around 1932-3. This precedent gave way to trios in 1935 as Tiger, Atilla and Beginner recorded under the title of The Kiskedee Trio. Atilla is featured on this CD with 'La Reine Maribone' ('Queen Wasp/Bee'), recorded in 1936, and with Kiskadee Trio on 'Congo Barra'.

SAM MANNING – Sam Manning was one of the earliest Calypsonians to achieve international acclaim. In the early 1920s, he moved to New York, where he recorded music that combined jazz and calypso rhythms. His recording career was launched in 1924 with the release of 'Amba Cay La'. A song originally done by Cat the Beginner, the melody of this song comes from an ancient stick song from the 'Canboulay Era' (1870-1890). In 1947, Manning wrote and directed *Caribbean Carnival*, a Broadway musical which was billed as first calypso musical ever presented. He died in 1960 when travelling in Africa.

BELASCO – A pioneer in disseminating calypso outside Trinidad, Lionel Belasco was born in

Barbados in 1881 and raised in Trinidad. During his youth, he learned to play European classical music on the piano but was drawn to the traditional music that was all around him, especially Afro-Trinidadian genres. His first records were made in Trinidad in 1914. He subsequently made numerous other recordings, both in the USA and in Britain. He also gave performances, sometimes as an accompanist for concert singers. He soon moved to New York, which became his base of operations for much of the rest of his life. Lionel Belasco and his band recorded at least 278 songs under his own name between 1914 and 1945. Belasco is part of this CD with 'Blow Wind Blow'.

HOUDINI – Wilmoth 'Houdini' Hendricks, aka Edgar Leon Sinclair, was born in 1927 and heralds in what is considered the second phase of recorded calypso. Vocal calypso was first recorded in 1914, however, after the initial start to such recordings made by Calypsonians. Vaudeville artists made the vocal recordings prior to Houdini's sessions. Houdini is featured here with 'Caroline', a song Lion claims to have written, and 'Uncle Jo' Gimme Mo'' and 'Blow Wind Blow', both of which were recorded in the summer of 1928. He provided the vocals on the latter with Belasco's Orchestra.

MONROSE'S STRING ORCHESTRA – From 1923 comes Cyril Monrose and his Monrose's String Orchestra with a popular hit 'Old Lady, Old Lady'. Monrose was a cousin of Belasco. He lived and performed – singing and playing a West Indian violin – most part of his life in the United States but moved back to Trinidad in 1933.



- 01 **SIR LANCELOT** Scandal In The Family
from the album BEST OF TRINIDAD 1912-1952
(Lancelot Pinard) pub MCA Duchess Music Co.
Universal Music Publishing.
- 02 **KING RADIO** Mathilda
from the album BEST OF TRINIDAD 1912-1952
(Norman Span) pub Colgems EMI Music, MCA Music Publishing.
- 03 **LORD PRETENDER** Human Race
from the album THE MAN WHO NEVER EVER WORRY
(Aldric Farrel) pub RCRP.
- 04 **CALYPSO ROSE** Rum & Coca Cola
from the album CALYPSO AT DIRTY JIM'S
(Rupert Westmore Grant) pub EMI Music Publishing.
- 05 **CARESSER** Edward The VIII
from the album BEST OF TRINIDAD 1912-1952
(Rufus Callender) pub RCRP.
- 06 **THE MIGHTY BOMBER** Ugly Woman
from the album CALYPSO AT DIRTY JIM'S
(Hubert Raphael Charles) Copyright Control.
- 07 **LION** Mary Ann
from the album BEST OF TRINIDAD 1912-1952
(Hubert Raphael Charles) Copyright Control.
- 08 **RELATOR** Nora
from the album CALYPSO AT DIRTY JIM'S
(Hubert Raphael Charles) Copyright Control.
- 09 **LORD KITCHENER** Ah Bernice
from the album BEST OF TRINIDAD 1912-1952
(Aldwyn Roberts) Copyright Control.
- 10 **DUKE OF IRON** The Lost Watch
from the album BEST OF TRINIDAD 1912-1952
(Hubert Raphael Charles) Copyright Control.
- 11 **TIGER** Gold in Africa
from the album BEST OF TRINIDAD 1912-1952
(Neville Marcano) pub RCRP.
- 12 **KISKEDEE TRIO** Congo Barra
from the album BEST OF TRINIDAD 1912-1952
(Raymond Quevado, Neville Marcano, Egbert Moore) pub RCRP.
- 13 **CARESSER** Madam Khan
from the album BEST OF TRINIDAD 1912-1952
(Rufus Callender) pub RCRP.
- 14 **ATILLA** La Reine Maribone
from the album BEST OF TRINIDAD 1912-1952
(Raymond Quevado) pub RCRP.
- 15 **SAM MANNING** Amba Cay La
from the album BEST OF TRINIDAD 1912-1952
(Sam Manning) pub RCRP.
- 16 **BELASCO'S ORCHESTRA FEAT HOUDINI**
Blow Wind Blow
from the album BEST OF TRINIDAD 1912-1952
(Lionel Belasco) pub RCRP.
- 17 **HOUDINI** Caroline
from the album BEST OF TRINIDAD 1912-1952
(Wilmoth Hendricks) pub RCRP.
- 18 **MONROSE'S STRING ORCHESTRA**
Old Lady Old Lady
from the album BEST OF TRINIDAD 1912-1952
(Cyril Monroe) pub RCRP.
- 19 **HOUDINI** Uncle Jo' Gimme Mo'
from the album BEST OF TRINIDAD 1912-1952
(Wilmoth Hendricks) pub RCRP.
- 20 **KING RADIO** Man Smart Woman Smarter
from the album BEST OF TRINIDAD 1912-1952
(Norman Span) pub RCRP.

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