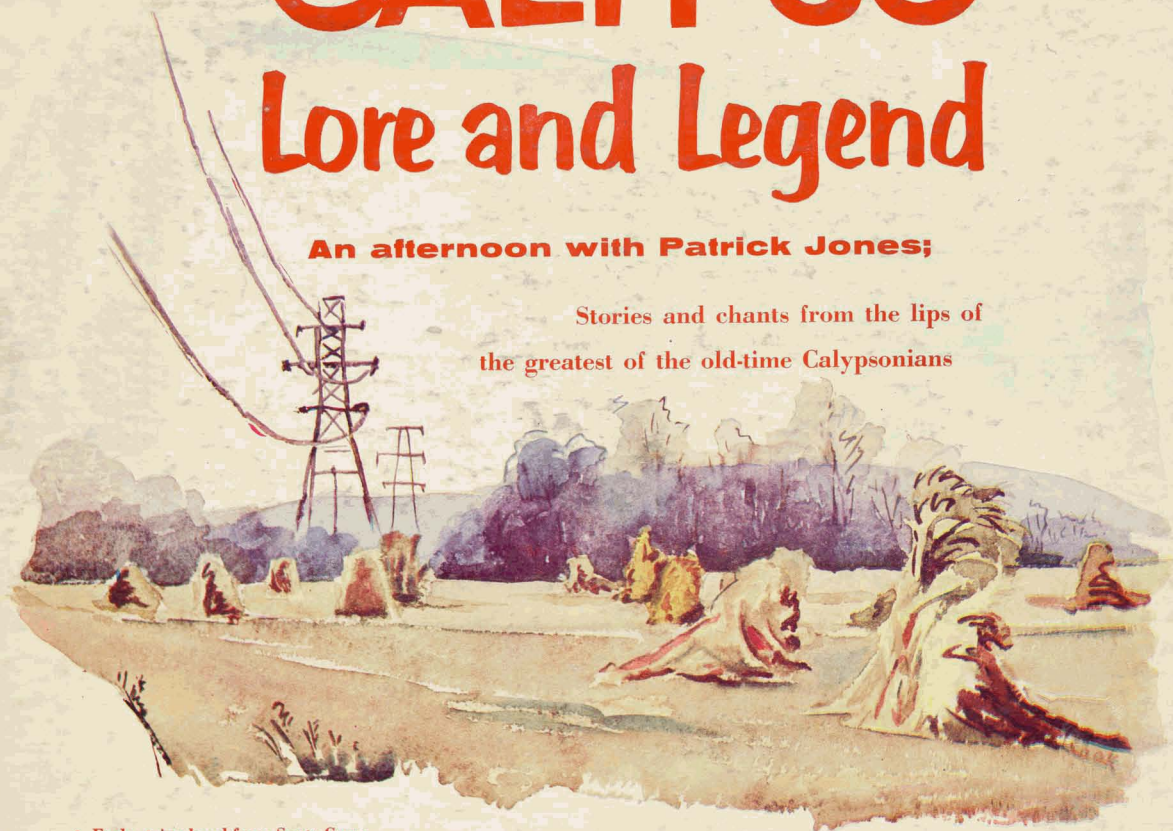


CALYPSO

Lore and Legend

An afternoon with Patrick Jones;

Stories and chants from the lips of
the greatest of the old-time Calypsonians



- Early string band from Santa Cruz;
violin, cuatro, string bass, quaquá,
and the driving flute of Poposit
- Bamboo Tamboo sequence
- Current calypso from the Carnival Tent of
the Young Brigade, Port of Spain; "The Ugly One"

Recorded in Trinidad

Echoes of Calypso Kings

Outside the door of the house, from all over town the distant sound of steelbands in Carnival parade could be heard. Inside was an empty chair and a microphone, surrounded by younger Joneses in lively conversation about Carnival, the course of calypso, papa.

After having been a guest of honor at a social function the evening before, papa had spent a particularly bad night with his liver infirmity, and now he was being readied for still another public appearance. Thru the window, sounds of Carnival 1956 rose and fell; within the house they seemed to blend into echoes of calypso kings of long ago. The clock struck twelve. Then, in his own home, Patrick Jones, one of the greatest of the old time calypsonians, made his entrance, sat down in the chair by the window as his family looked on in genuine admiration.

Patrick Jones clearly remembers over 600 songs, words and music, and as he speaks to us now, one can sense the sureness and speed with which he flips thru his mental filing cards to select the best examples for his narrative.

The flexibly topical nature of calypso improvisation was never clearer than in the listening to some of his songs of the 1920s, sung in the old time manner. At that time the cinema had not yet penetrated Port of Spain, and theatrical entertainment was provided by traveling plays and operettas. It was only natural that the traveling opera companies, few though they must have been, made a strong impression in this musical island. The imaginations of the contemporary calypsonians were kindled brightly, especially by the Gilbert and Sullivan companies. The resulting calypsos (hear Jones' amazing verse) must have done much to burn off local political tensions of the times.

Today, Patrick Jones is 71, but no true calypsonian, no past and frequent wearer of the crown ever quite stops singing. As he chants, "This Is Our Charming Paradise" a torrential downpour of short duration punctuates his statement from outside the window.



The Calypso Tent

Even in Trinidad, one hears no calypso in studios or night clubs, only the singing of calypso songs. The point is clear; the total spontaneity of old time improvisation is gone, but in its place remain amusing and sometimes clever departures from the printed verse. During the performance of a "made-up" calypso song in a calypso tent or at Carnival, the calypsonian will often rock the audience with subtle (or not-too-subtle) surprises. As a result, the vital element carrying over today can only be found in company with an appreciative audience of addicts,—in the tent.

The Old Time String Band

Popsit's band played for us at a moment's notice in Santa Cruz. The members were scattered about the village, but Popsit rounded them up easily. As they started to play, a crowd collected, and before he had finished the second number dancers were sailing by the microphones.

String bands varied considerably in their make-up. This one has a violin, string bass, cuatro, and grater. The driving wooden flute of Popsit leads it off. They play for dancing both in double and triple beats, the waltzes being strongly influenced by the proximity of the *Joropo*, or Venezuelan waltz music.

In the Caribbean the string band is a sort of country music, but it is well along on its way out. Reason: other readily available dance music via radio, records and small jazzbands.

Abakailab (a ba caille)—*Venezuelan waltz*—*Paseo* (typical early carnival *leggo* or let-go; let go of the body, relax)—*Venezuelan waltz*.

Sequence

Patrick Jones comes from the past to the present in his narrative; the sequence of the other side of the record goes in the opposite direction: Calypso tent¹ (Young Brigade—Mighty Spitfire—The Ugly One)—Steelband pass (from Carnival)—Bamboo Tamboo—Early string band. E.C.

For notes on *Bamboo Tamboo*, see RR 5017 jacket liner.
¹Another calypso tent episode appears on *Jump-Up Carnival*, cat. # 1072

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