

RIGHT: Tuning requires a sensitive ear. The drum can be toned up or down by decreasing or increasing the depth of the curved notes. The drummer on the cover, for example, is flattening one of his notes by prodding it with a drumstick

pictures on these pages. In another method the top is cut, radially, into segments, each segment heated over a coal pot until the metal gives out a note of exactly the desired pitch, then plunged into cold water. When all segments have been so tuned, they are welded together again, the whole brightly painted, and there is the drum having a range of about an octave. With 20 or 30 such drums of varying shapes and sizes, most of the musical scale can be covered and the steel band can, if it so wishes, play almost any piece.

The commercialisation of calypso is not new. It enjoyed popularity in New York in 1939 and then in 1945, through the impact of a number called "Rum and Coca Cola," it became an overnight mania. The current calypso craze is attributed to a number of factors, among them the increased American tourist trade with the islands in the Caribbean and the desire of disc jockeys in the United States to play something besides Rock 'n' Roll. Harry Belafonte's recordings were selling quite well, and so the jockeys pushed them to the exclusion of those by genuine Calypsonians. Belafonte has therefore received credit for this sudden new interest in what is called calypso, but which embraces all manner of rhythmic aberration, from hits like "Day O" to such opportunistic items as "Rock 'n' Roll Calypso" and "Hill-billy Calypso."

Few calypsos are contained in Harry Belafonte's popular LP album titled "Calypso." Clarinetist Tony Scott, who worked with Belafonte during much of 1955, said he felt that Harry was doing calypso songs as authentically as possible for the American public. "It's not authentic, because the real calypso is so pure . . . it's got that syncopation and is really too deep-rooted. Harry has been like Glenn Miller who used to take a jazz piece and do it very simply. Harry takes this authentic material and works on it until it's ready for American consumption."

On his research trips, Belafonte travels the islands of the Caribbean with a tape recorder on the prowl for material. "When I hear them sung in the West Indies," he said, "I try to capture that feeling and relate it to myself, and to my audience. Naturally, we compromise because we try to relate the material." Belafonte wants no identifica-

tion with this "so-called calypso." "Two of my big records now are not even calypso. 'Jamaica Farewell' is a West Indian folk ballad and 'Day O' is a West Indian work song. No matter how big this craze gets, I will never sing one of those phony numbers merely to sell a lot of records." In fact, Harry and his associates bridle when they hear him referred to as "The King of the Calypso," or some such title. His talents extend far beyond just one corner of the musical scene and he should remain on that scene long after the calypso fad has passed.

Readers may want to hear some real calypso so that they can get this confusing business straightened out. Listeners to the serial *Bold Venture*, which is presented every Wednesday at 10.30 p.m. on the ZBs will no doubt be familiar with the character called King Moses, who sings the odd calypso to Lauren Bacall whenever Bogart is in real trouble. His renditions are genuine

and extremely appealing. Record collectors may like to try the following: the two Argo LPs by Edric Connor, "Sir Winston Churchill," by Lord Beginner, "Prince Rainier," by Lord Invader, "Manchester Football Double," by Lord Kitchener, "Sir Winston-not out," by Young Tiger, "Mister Charlie," by Lord Flea, and "No Carnival in Britain," by the Mighty Terror. There is also an LP just released on the local market called "Songs of Trinidad," as presented by Wilmouth Houdini, a Brooklyn-born calypsonian, who was taken to Trinidad. This should be as genuine as you are likely to get in this country. The flurry of popularity achieved by the calypso back in 1939 was chiefly due to the recordings of this same Houdini.

I was quite fortunate the other day. I walked into a local record store and there on the counter was a 78 recording by The Trinidad All Steel Percussion Band of the calypso "Papito." This disc will never get on to the Hit Parade, but

for those who are interested in the real thing, this is worth hearing.

How long the calypso craze will last is hard to tell. Existing restrictions in the United States make it difficult for authentic talent to enter the country from Trinidad, and consequently there is a shortage of the genuine product. Calypsonians are concerned lest too much of the counterfeit article may spell a sudden end to its popularity. I can't see it myself. Calypso is part and parcel of Trinidad, and all the while the natives of Port of Spain, its capital, hold their Carnivals, parade their steel bands and sing their songs, the genuine calypso will remain a favourite with the tourist.

—Ray Harris

("What's This Calypso?" is the title of a programme to be heard from the YAs, 3YZ and 4YZ this coming Sunday, July 7. On Sunday, July 14, at 3.0 p.m., 2ZB will present "Calypsos and Calypso Singers.")



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