

Bear Family Records CD Review

Publisher:	Socanews, Mai 2015
Article No.:	BCD16057
Link:	https://www.bear-family.de/loveys-original-trinidad-stri-calypso-dawn-1912-trinidad-string-band.html
Artist:	Lovey's Original Trinidad Stri
Title:	Calypso Dawn: 1912 (Trinidad String Band)



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What do you think of when you hear the term 'old-time calypso'?
Something from the early 1960s, perhaps, or even the 50s? Or does your mind go back past Sparrow and Kitchener to the likes of Roaring Lion and Atilla the Hun?

Well, if the 1930s aren't distant enough, you could always try some 100-year-old dance tracks on a CD appropriately called *Calypso Dawn: 1912*. That's right, these songs were recorded half a century before Trinidad gained independence, in the year the Titanic met that iceberg. This is not so much history as archaeology, and we can only marvel at the dedication of those who unearthed these treasures and painstakingly prepared them for 21st-century ears.

The CD has been out for a couple of years but only came to SN's notice recently. The 21 songs were recorded during a visit to the USA by a Trinidadian band led by George Baillie (or Bailey), aka Lovey, of Charlotte Street, Port-of Spain. All are instrumentals and described as either 'vals' (waltz) or 'paseo'. The paseo style is closest to what we would recognise as 'traditional' calypso, but some are reminiscent of Martinican biguine.

There are two remarkable features of this compilation. The first is the sound quality of these antique recordings, which is far cleaner and richer than the scratchy, hissy sound normally associated with old 78rpm records. Nevertheless, the crude equipment of the era was limited in terms of sound frequency range, and some instruments did not record as well as others, so the listener should make some allowances.

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The second surprise is how good some of the songs are, even though, sadly, we lack the vocals for them. They may not be jump 'n wave soca, but they were designed to keep people's feet moving, both in dancehalls and on the road at Carnival. It doesn't take a great effort to imagine someone singing contemporary lyrics to tracks such as 'Tobo Justina', 'Sarah' and 'Discie You Doan Know de Law', while the paseo 'Trinidad' is both stirring and beautiful. Perhaps they are ripe for revival!

The CD comes with a well-written, attractively illustrated and very informative 39-page booklet with erudite notes by calypso scholars John Cowley (author of *Carnival, Canboulay and Calypso* and *Creole Music of the French West Indies*) and Steve Shapiro. Thoroughly recommended for anyone who's curious to discover how calypso sounded in our great-grandparents' time.

Lovey's Original Trinidad Stri Calypso Dawn: 1912 (Trinidad String Band)

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