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DIFFERENTOLOGY: THE LIFE OF IAN ‘BUNJI GARLIN’ ALVAREZ AND HIS CONTRIBUTION TO THE CARIBBEAN MUSIC INDUSTRY FROM 1999-2017

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DIFFERENTOLOGY: THE LIFE OF IAN ‘BUNJI GARLIN’ ALVAREZ AND HIS CONTRIBUTION TO THE CARIBBEAN MUSIC INDUSTRY FROM 1999-2017

Abstract

This Biography is a study of the life of Trinidadian singer and songwriter Ian ‘Bunji Garlin’ Alvarez and the contribution he made to the Caribbean music industry from 1999-2017. It also explores the concept behind the song and the term “Differentology” as a representation of how his music evolved prior to the song’s release. Ian ‘Bunji Garlin’ Alvarez, Ian Pantin (former manager), and Rene ‘Sir Skarz’ Charles (former band member) were interviewed. The interviews focused on Bunji Garlin’s early background, early career, composition and performance approach, improvisational skill, and his influence in the music industry within the Caribbean region. The results revealed that Bunji Garlin’s music was well received by scores of members of the public from the onset of his debut, although he experienced opposition and criticism from other parties upon entering the music industry. This research reveals insights in his experiences in the music industry. In the online survey conducted, 57 responses were received from persons connected with the music industry both locally and or regionally. Those who responded belonged to the professions of: Instrumental and Vocal musician, Songwriter, Arranger, Music Educator, Radio Presenter, Manager, Producer and Promoter. More than 50% of these persons are formally trained in music and hold some form of Certification in music.

Keywords: Ian “Bunji Garlin” Alvarez; Music Industry; Soca; Ragga Soca; Caribbean; Differentology;
Introduction

According to *Music of Latin America and the Caribbean’s* writer Mark Brill, “The Caribbean stands apart in terms of culture and especially music” (115). “In the second half of the twentieth century, the music of the Caribbean became the world’s second-most popular and influential, after that of the United States. [Different] genres of music emerged from the Caribbean… which have become extremely popular on every continent” (Brill 118). Brill states that soca music is one such genre of music that is named among the music that emerged from the Caribbean and more specifically from Trinidad and Tobago (118). Although, “each Caribbean country has played a [significant] role in popularizing soca internationally” (The evolution of Calypso).

Soca “said to be derived from “soul calypso,” [which] suggested a blend of African American and Trinidad music” (Dudley Carnival Music in Trinidad 87), was subsequently “spelt sokah” and was [invented] in the late 1970’s by the late Garfield Blackman also known as, “Ras Shorty I” (Dudley Soca). In contrast, “Sokah” is meant to be a fusion of calypso with East Indian music” (Dudley Carnival Music in Trinidad 87). While it is debatable that soca is an alternative style of Calypso, most of the songs that are used for dancing on the streets for Carnival in Trinidad are considered as soca. (Dudley 87) Through the popularity of soca in Trinidad and Tobago and the wider Caribbean, many artists and artistes have entered this industry composing and performing soca music to earn an income or merely to acquire or develop their skill in the performing arts.

“There are many dedicated and “famous artistes” such as: “Kes Dieffenthaller, Patrice Roberts, Bunji Garlin, Alison Hinds, Edwin Yearwood, Rupee and Peter Ram” (The Evolution
of Calypso). Many artistes from the Caribbean such as these and others not mentioned, have made noteworthy contributions to the music industry. As such, it is important to have their contributions documented as many of these persons have attracted positive attention and brought immense honour to their homeland.

The life and career of Trinidadian born singer and songwriter Ian Antonio Alvarez who goes by the sobriquet and stage name “Bunji Garlin,” has not yet been researched and documented for an academic purpose such as this Caribbean Studies project. Therefore, this project will provide a foundation for further research into his career, and musical contributions. Bunji Garlin will celebrate 20 successful years in the music industry in the year 2019, and while that is an outstanding and notable achievement, it was considerably challenging to acquire literature, to inform this project. While there are many newspaper articles, as well as online content that can be found, much of which have contributed to the information gathered in compiling this document, I discovered that there was very little academic literature that featured the singer/ songwriter. However, there is a wide range of video and audio recordings available in the public domain.

The focus of this biography is based on the perspective that Bunji Garlin brought a different approach to the delivery of soca music upon making his debut into the music industry, and that as an artist(e) he has made a notable contribution to the music industry in the Caribbean. As a society with a rapidly growing and diversified music industry which has embraced soca as a very important aspect of its culture, it is important to study this music in a formal way. While it has been noted that extensive research has been conducted in many areas of music, including soca. Many of the prominent artists/ artistes in the music industry ‘past and present’ are the individuals responsible for making soca music what it is today. These individuals are also largely
responsible for the popularity that soca music gained on an international level. While the stories and contribution of some of these prominent artists/artistes have been researched and documented for academic purposes, no academic research have been to document information on at least one of these stalwart musicians Ian Antonio Alvarez also known as ‘Bunji Garlin.’ It was on this premise that I decided to undertake research, to compile a Biography of his life and his contribution to the Caribbean music industry. Also, because I understand there are aspects of his life and musical journey that have not been documented and I seek to change that, as I believe that there should be a detailed account of the life of a musician of his caliber which can be used for further and future research. Some of the people likely to benefit from this initiative are Secondary School Teachers, Musicians, Musicologists, Ethnomusicologists, Arrangers and Songwriters. Likewise, the findings of this study will serve as potential inspiration for musicians, younger or less experienced artists/artistes, and other members of the public to understand and appreciate the contribution that he made to both the Trinidad and Tobago music industry and by extension the rest of the Caribbean region.

**Literature Review**

This Biography is a study of the life of Ian “Bunji Garlin” Alvarez and his contribution to the Caribbean music industry from 1999-2017. It explores many of the variations in Bunji Garlin’s style of composing, singing, and performing, as well as his idiosyncrasies as an entertainer throughout his musical career. In Rudolph Ottley’s book, *Calypsonians from Then to Now Part 3*, the concluding chapter entitled ‘Bunji Garlin’ gives an account of Bunji Garlin’s background, musical influences, and his early career. This book is one of a series of three, which encapsulates the careers of various Calypsonians over decades. However, in part three, the writer discusses the careers of Calypsonians from the time of “The Mighty Terror to Bunji” (Ottley
Although there is an entire chapter in this book dedicated to Bunji Garlin’s life and career, it only includes the first few years of his career.

In the book *Carnival Music in Trinidad: Experiencing Music, Expressing Culture*, Shannon Dudley explores and explains different aspects of Carnival: “The Trinidadian society, the National Instrument, Steelband Repertoire, Panorama, Calypsonians, and musical genres associated with Carnival.” Dudley also defines Soca, Rapso, Ragga Soca and Chutney Soca. Both the Soca and Ragga Soca genres will be discussed as they relate to Bunji Garlin’s career as these two genres play a significant role in this research.

John. E.H. Barry reveals data on “Calypso [competitions] between 1939 & 1953 – 2006 and Soca Monarch Finals 1993 – 2006” in his book *The Finalists*. This data incorporates a profile of competition placings] in the National/ International Soca Monarch Finals and National Calypso King/ Monarch Finals. In addition, there is a breakdown of the consecutive appearances of performers in these competitions (Barry). This book provides statistics on all Bunji Garlin’s Soca Monarch appearances, but it is void of information pertaining to other competitions. There are other competitions which have not been addressed in this book like, Ragga Soca Monarch and the Young Kings competition. Also, Barry gives no indication that interviews with Bunji Garlin were carried out neither does the content of this book explore his performances in terms of stage presentation and performance style.

Newspaper articles from among Trinidad Express, Trinidad Guardian, and Newsday, were sourced to get information Bunji Garlin’s career in the music fraternity, his achievements, and any other pertinent information relating to his life. Among the writers of some of these articles are: Keith Smith, Nigel Telesford, Angela Martin-Hinds, Aneela Maraj, Donna Pierre and
Michelle Loubon. Also, some Youtube videos with Bunji’s performances were viewed for critiquing.

**Methodology**

This study examines the impact that Bunji Garlin’s style of music has had on the music industry both locally and regionally, and to examine some of the influential factors that were involved. Qualitative research methods were used to source information for this study, using both Primary and Secondary sources. Examples of the sources used to conduct this research were: reading through literature in books, newspaper articles and online articles. Also, video and audio recordings were reviewed. A personal interview was done with Ian Alvarez (Bunji Garlin). A telephone interview was done with Bunji Garlin’s former manager Ian Pantin. Likewise, a telephone interview with Bunji Garlin’s former band member, Rene Charles (Sir Skarz). An online survey was circulated from which 57 persons responded.

The online survey was undertaken to determine the impact Bunji Garlin’s music had on the music industry and to acquire feedback from the survey participants on his contribution to this industry in the Caribbean region. The group targeted to complete this survey were persons involved in the music industry (See appendix A.). Links were sent via social networks (Facebook and WhatsApp,) and through email. Persons who received the link were asked to forward it to others working in the music industry in any capacity. Interviews were conducted with Mr. Ian Pantin former manager of Bunji Garlin, and Mr. Rene ‘Sir Skarz’ Charles, former member of the Godfather’s Asylum Band. Newspaper articles were among other sources which provided significant information pertaining to Bunji Garlin’s career and success. Online articles were used
to find information that was not found in books or newspaper articles. Videos of live performances were viewed to observe his on-stage persona, performance style, and his use of improvisational approaches. An assortment of books was also employed to source information on the artist and other areas relative to this research.

**An Overview of Soca**

The twin island Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is one of the Caribbean islands of the Lesser Antilles popularly known as the land of Calypso and Soca music (find source). An online article entitled “The History of Calypso” on the National Carnival Committee for Trinidad and Tobago’s website indicates that, “The Calypso in Trinidad and Tobago, is mainly of African origin, and can be traced to the traditions of West Africans in terms of music, structure and function…” “Over the years the calypso art form has been transformed and presented in various categories the major ones being: Political Commentary, Social Commentary, Humorous, Soca, Ragga Soca, Chutney Soca, and Nation Building” (History of Calypso). According to the online survey conducted, Soca is considered one of the lead genres of music in Trinidad and Tobago as well as other countries within the Caribbean region. Bunji Garlin is known as one of the most popular and successful artistes that perform in this genre and he was named as one of the “top 10 soca artists to be recognized.” (Mc Leod).

**Early Background**

In an interview with Ian “Bunji Garlin” Alvarez conducted on Tuesday 27th, March 2018 at his office, he gave an account of his family background and an even more comprehensive account of his musical background (Alvarez). Bunji Garlin gives his Ian Antonio Alvarez but he
goes by the alias (and stage-name) Bunji Garlin. He was born in Sangre Grande and grew up in Waller-Field. Bunji Garlin was born on July 14th, 1978 to Eric Ted Benn and Harriet Alvarez and he is the last of eleven siblings. He was emphatic of his ancestry, with his maternal grandmother being Vincentian, his maternal grandfather being Venezuelan, his father being St. Lucian. He referred to his lineage as a ‘cultural mix up’ and went on to explain how and why he once identified himself as the ‘Black Spaniard’ (Alvarez).

“Bunji’s academic life commenced at the Lower Cumuto Government Primary school, then he attended the Sangre Grande Junior Secondary and finally Arima Senior Comprehensive school” (Ottley 94). While at Comprehensive school he got involved in Volleyball and became captain of the team” (94). Bunji Garlin explained his experiences after relocating to another residence in Arima.

He spoke about the factors which contributed significantly to the foundation of his musical career (Alvarez). It was his introduction to ‘free styling’ and ‘song clashing’ at the Arima Senior Comprehensive school (now Arima North Secondary), which lead to his interest and diligence in becoming the prolific songwriter and free style artist that he became and still is, to date. Furthermore, he alluded that during his time spent singing while he was at school, the focus was primarily on lyrics rather than the structure of the melody. It is from this background that Garlin developed his ability to create music with such strong lyrical content (Alvarez).

When Ian Antonio Alvarez entered the musical arena nineteen years ago in the year 1999 with his hit song “Send Dem Riddim Crazy,” he made a resounding impact in the local music industry here in Trinidad and Tobago (Ottley). Ottley quotes Bunji Garlin as saying “that song caused all enmity and animosity amongst calypsonians” (93). In the personal interview on Bunji Garlin spoke about the impact which was considered positive by some and negative by others He
expressed how he came under heavy criticism by some for his difference in style. However, on the contrary, he was embraced by those who identified with and appreciated his style (Alvarez).

Bunji Garlin indicated that his early foundation in music began in the Pentecostal Church since he came from a Christian background; with one of his brothers being a Pastor and among other family members who always played music via a sound system or instruments (Alvarez). His musical journey started in Junior Secondary school although he never took interest in the music offered at school. His complaint was like others heard, “I could not understand why of all the instruments we have in Trinidad and Tobago, we were given the recorder?” (Alvarez). He described himself as somewhat of a ‘rebel’ since he never wanted to adhere to the school curriculum for music. Bunji Garlin said, “I had my own beliefs and my own ideas of what I wanted to do. I didn’t know where I wanted to go with it, I just know that I had this driving force to just be different to everything else” (Alvarez). However, this nonconformist mindset also propelled him towards making his own path in music where he could develop his talent and practice his art, which eventually became a conduit for other like-minded individuals to follow. He indicated that he never saw himself possessing this kind of ability, but he always had these experiences of seeing waves at night at the age of six to seven years old. Nevertheless, it was not until his first studio recording that he understood that these were sound waves he used to see (Alvarez).

Bunji Garlin’s musical journey continued as he advanced to Arima Senior Comprehensive School (Alvarez). There is where he met other people who were chanting. He said at that time, he was good at beatboxing, so he would usually accompany the chanters by doing so, while they were clashing during their ‘burn-out’ (chant-out) sessions. He became so impressed with the crowd’s response to chanting that he decided he wanted to become a chanter
himself. Subsequently, he started practicing rhyming to develop this chanting skill. He and his other friends who were present during chant-out clashes, eventually formed their own clique and started doing the same to improve their skills. Their goal was to increase the number of lines that they rhymed, to become more proficient lyrically (Alvarez).

Bunji Garlin recalled, while he was at Junior Secondary School he would take other people’s music and rewrite them using his own lyrics and while he just did those things for fun he did realize that there was an actual skill involved in song writing (Alvarez). He claimed that by the time he was in form five he was one of dominant forces lyrically. However, the music lacked melodic contour and variations. It was after leaving school when he met people outside of school and in various places he realized there was more to variety that could be added to the structure of his music. While Calypso and soca were the main genres, he spoke of the musical influences that filtered into the Trinidad and Tobago communities from other Caribbean Countries when citizens from our neighbouring islands came to this country as well as music (Alvarez).

Bunji Garlin then explained how he was influenced by a style and genre of music (Alvarez). He said when he travelled by maxi taxi there was a heavy influence of Jamaican Dub music by artistes such as ‘Shabba Ranks.’ He was then advised by producer Daryl Braxton to take that dub style and put it into what is found here in Trinidad and Tobago since the Jamaican music industry was already heavily dominated by artistes producing the same kind of music that he was singing (Alvarez).

While Garlin takes no credit for being the creator of ragga soca music, he has been credited with being the inventor of that genre of music (Pantin). “In the 1990’s some Trinidadian artists began to refer to their music as “ragga soca” (Dudley). Bunji stated, there has been a
misconception of what Ragga Soca is. He explained that “Ragga was short for ‘raggamuffin’ and soca was considered music which was not for raggamuffins although it was grassroots music” (Alvarez). Dudley stated “the term ragga soca references yet another fusion of musical styles, this time between soca and Jamaican music. Ragga is a term used in the United Kingdom for… ‘raggamuffin’” (Carnival Music in Trinidad 2004). He believes that he “represented the revolution of a generation that wanted to have their own identification and not be a part of what society said before but wanted to tell their own stories and have their own experiences” (Alvarez).

In an online article, Bunji is also described as “the leader of the Ragga Soca Movement” (McLeod). When asked about whether Bunji Garlin deliberately tried to create change in the music, he said “while I always wanted to be different from everyone else, most of the things that I did differently were not done intentionally but rather came naturally. “The music was already changing” (Alvarez). However, he thinks that because he was the face at the forefront that represented the change in the music, he was blamed for the direction that the music was heading. He went named other artistes such as Ken Marlon Charles (KMC) and General Grant who performed that style of music (Alvarez).

**The Differentology Era**

Bunji Garlin described the Differentology era as the period of his career preceding the release of “Differentology” in 2012 (Alvarez). While he explains in a video that “2013 is going to be the year of Differentology” (Vp Records). During the Differentology era Bunji Garlin experienced a successful career with notable achievements (Pantin). In Bunji Garlin’s first year of his career he had “instantaneous success” with his hit song “Send Dem Riddim Crazy”
In 1999 he participated in the International Soca Monarch 1999 (Barry). Prior to this competition, Garlin competed in the Ragga Soca Monarch competition at the Arima Velodrome where he placed 3rd with Iwer George coming out as the reigning champion.

During this period, in addition to Bunji Garlin’s musical style he also set himself apart by his costuming as was he was known for wearing his signature colour fluorescent green, with a pair of fluorescent green sneakers (Newspaper article). This colour was the identity of his persona at that time and it gave him a conspicuous appearance which caused him to stand out from other entertainers. In a live video recording of the Carib International Soca Monarch 1999 taken from the home of Garlin’s mother, Garlin can be seen outfitted in his fluorescent green (Soca Monarch 1999). The following year proved Garlin to be no ‘one hit wonder’ as his music was once again flooding the airways. His sensational songs “Chant Down Babylon,” (“Chant Down Babylon”) and “Gimme D Brass.” (“Gimme D Brass- Bunji Garlin”), were the next contenders for Ragga Soca Monarch and Carib International Soca Monarch. This time he made his appearances on-stage wearing some fiery red outfits. For the 2000 Carnival season Bunji branded himself with the colour red as seen in one of his performances (“Bunji Garlin & Square One, ”).

Bunji Garlin was under the management of “IP Music International headed by Ian Pantin” (Martin-Hinds). During a telephone interview with Pantin, he stated that he “managed Bunji Garlin for 15 years” (Pantin). Mr. Pantin indicated that Bunji Garlin’s preceding manager Victor Donawa approached him and requested that he took over Bunji Garlin’s management because Donawa felt that Mr. Pantin could do more for Bunji Garlin. Donowa thought Bunji Garlin to be extremely talented with a promising career that Donowa did not want to be wasted. During the first year of Bunji Garlin’s musical career, he was under joint management between
Ian Pantin and Daryl Braxton. Following that period, Pantin became Bunji Garlin’s sole manager. Pantin professed, “he was very easy to work with, not just with me as his manager, but with record labels…very humble”. Pantin recalled one time when they both took a tour of Europe together. He also recalled a moment in the early part of Bunji Garlin’s career when they were on the Brooklyn Bridge at around 6pm. He said Bunji Garlin began to talk about his spirituality and described that evening as “a bonding and pore raising experience”.

While under Pantin’s management Bunji Garlin collaborated with other artistes throughout his career. One of these collaborations with “American R&B group Allure who released their hit single “All Cried Out” in 1997” (Allure (3)). This connection was made between Mr. Pantin and Allure’s co-manager Flipmyster to do a collaboration for the song “Bump” (Pantin). A newspaper article states “Garlin was chosen for the project over Machel Montano because of his style and exciting and energetic stage presence. Allure’s co-manager Flipmyster of…was impressed with Garlin’s performance…” (Maraj 29). “He has the potential to be very big if given the right opportunity. He’s got the voice, his presence and talent”, says Flipmyster, (qtd.in Maraj 29). The song that Bunji Garlin and Allure was said to collaborate on was entitled “Bump” and was expected to be released as a single internationally, with the video to be aired on notable international video music programmes” (Maraj 29).

Pantin attested to the claim that Bunji Garlin did in fact contribute immensely to the Caribbean music industry, as well as affect change (Pantin). Like Bunji Garlin, Pantin spoke about the criticism that Bunji Garlin experienced as “his music became controversial”. He explained that, “Singing Sandra made some suggestions [about] him singing with a Jamaican accent [and] older artistes [made similar remarks].” He indicated that David Rudder said, “these young artistes are singing nursery rhymes”. He went on to say that “the older artistes were very
critical of him, but I think it was more of a fear of change” (Pantin). During that controversial period, Bunji Garlin won an Accent in the Ragga Soca Monarch Finals where he became the reigning champion. (Newspaper article). Arising from the criticism that he endured for his accent, was a song that Bunji Garlin composed which was sort of double entendre called “Accent” (Pantin). This song earned him the fifth place in the NJAC’s 2000 Young King’s competition. (Smith)

A leading contributing factor to Bunji Garlin having such an impact and influence in the Caribbean music industry was “that he gained respect from the Jamaican artistes when they took note of his accent” and a resulting factor from this, was that “Bunji Garlin became one of the first Trinidadians to record on major international dancehall ‘riddims’.” “He has since lost that accent…” (Pantin). Pantin also suggested that Bunji Garlin contributed to the music industry when he “headlined a new genre called ‘Ragga Soca’”. He expressed that although, there were other artistes performing in that genre, Bunji Garlin was the representation of that genre. Bunji Garlin was known for was his ability to excite and awaken his audiences when he entered parties, found something wrong with the crowd and began to improvise on a topic relative to what was happening at that moment (Pantin). He recalled one time where Bunji Garlin “was performing at a fete called ‘Red Edge’ and the sound system broke down. He ‘freestyled’ for about 15 minutes straight” (Pantin).

Further research gathered the perspectives of other persons in the industry who worked with Bunji Garlin. In a newspaper article on the Sunday Guardian, Soca artiste Neil “Iwer” George laid the claim, “I was the first person to go on the radio station and get them to recognize his talent. But he like to do things that nobody else ever think about doing, or they too fraid to do” (qtd.in Springer). Bunji Garlin implied and partly reiterated the latter part of George’s
statement during the interview on. Former band member of the Godfather’s Asylum (Bunji Garlin’ Band), Rene Charles also known as ‘Sir Skarz’, shared his experience about working with Bunji Garlin and spoke about the influence that Bunji Garlin made in the Caribbean music industry.

In a telephone interview with Charles, he revealed that he was a member of the band from its inception in 2003 until 2010 (Charles). During that time, he went on tours to various countries with band. When asked what the experience was like working with the artist(e) and band leader Bunji Garlin, he stated emphatically, that “it was magnificent”. He explained that he sang with Bunji Garlin for many years before and he was happy to work with him because it was as if they were living a dream that they all shared when they were younger. He said that Bunji Garlin was always a respectfully and respectable person and his relationship with the band members was good. “It was like brotherhood.” He described Bunji Garlin’s musical style as “creative,” and said that Bunji Garlin “brought the roar Ragga Soca into the [music industry] with the real Jamaican dancehall style” (Charles).

Charles suggested that Bunji Garlin influenced other Caribbean artistes in the music industry, as many of these artistes like ‘Skinny Fabulous’ and ‘Baby Killa’ have great respect for Bunji Garlin and he guided many artistes who sang in a similar ‘ragga soca style’ on creating their own space in their local music industry, just like he (Bunji Garlin) did for himself (Charles). Bunji Garlin was asked whether the making of ‘Differentology’ encapsulated the evolution of his music throughout his career. He emphatically stated “that Differentology era was basically the sum up of everything that I went through to that moment…and it is the beginning of a new era now, of sound.” (Alvarez).
A New Era: A New Sound

While the release of “Differentology” was the pinnacle of one era in Bunji Garlin’s Career, it was also the hallmark of another (Alvarez). Post the release of Differentology, a fresh style and sound can be heard in Bunji Garlin’s music. Some of these songs are: “Before My Glory”, “Take Over Town” and “Touchless” (Discogs). These songs can be found on his albums.

The outcome of this research illustrates a demarcation in the style of Bunji Garlin’s music throughout his musical career. When Bunji Garlin was asked whether he planned on coming with his own slangs? he responded by saying, “nah!... It was natural. It was not planned. There were certain things that I said that [became] slangs like, yuh done know and brrrt… but it was just part of what I wanted to do because I just wanted to be different and they [became] slangs” (Alvarez). He was careful to explain that the Eastern region in Trinidad produced some of the most successful chanters. He named artistes such as Benjai, Squeezy Ranking, Apache, Guitar Dan, Sir Skarz…, and himself (Bunji Garlin).

According to the summary of responses given in this survey more than 75% of the respondents first heard Bunji Garlin’s music during the first 10 years of his career. Those who responded were from St. Lucia, Bermuda, Belize, Trinidad and Tobago. All participants indicated that soca is a popular genre of music in their country of residence. More than 75% of the persons who responded were of the view that when they first listened to Bunji Garlin’s music it was different from other local music genres. Throughout this survey more than 50% of the respondents indicated that Bunji Garlin’s music influenced change in performing, composing and various aspects of the music industry.
The questionnaire asked, “Do you think that Bunji Garlin's music has evolved since the first time you heard it to now?” 90.9% indicated that his music has evolved since they first heard it to the time this survey was taken. As Bunji Garlin revealed in the previous chapter, “Differentology” encapsulated the evolution of his music during his career. Moreover, the two (2) leading words used to describe the song “Differentology” are: “Different and Catchy”. Most respondents attributed the phrase “unique arrangement of music” to describe a concept behind Differentology. While, the majority of persons indicated that they thought the concept was always hidden in some of Bunji Garlin’s other music. Although his style of music is projected as different, more than 90% of the persons who responded agree that his music is a good representation of the musical talent found in the Caribbean and contributed to others appreciating soca music locally, regionally and internationally.

The term Differentology have become so popularized since 2012/2013 to present, that this can be studied as a term for a new genre of Caribbean music like that of Electronic Dance Music (EDM). Even in the ‘New Era of Sound,’ “Differentology” has earned Garlin much success as the song “copped the 2014 Soul Train Award in the Unites States for “Best International Performance… [it] “also featured on an episode of ABC’s top-rated drama series Grey’s Anatomy.” (Loubon). He is also noted for his achievements as he is also a “four- time Soca Monarch” (Telesford). Loubon quotes Bunji Garlin as saying, “I guess Differentology’s success will be an encouragement to the next generation.”

Based on audio and video recordings critiques, comments found in both online and newspaper articles, and discussions with other musicians, there is a consistent inclination which continues to suggest that Bunji Garlin has always been different in his singing and composition
approach and continues to be. “After all, evolution and change [are] the nature of music” (“The evolution of Calypso”).

Works Cited


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Ottley, Rudolph. Calypsonians from Then to Now Part (3) From Terror to Bunji. 2008.


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Appendix A

Ian "Bunji Garlin" Alvarez's contribution to the Caribbean Music Industry

As part of the research conducted for my Caribbean Studies Project at the University of the West Indies St. Augustine, this form serves to get a consensus of what musicians involved in the Caribbean music industry think about the contribution of Bunji Garlin’s music to the industry, and to explore the difference in his musical style compared to that of other Caribbean music.

NB: More than one option can be selected for answers preceded by a square

1. Are you a resident of a Caribbean country?  
   Mark only one oval.  
   [ ] Yes  
   [ ] No

2. In which Caribbean country do you reside?  
   Mark only one oval.  
   [ ] Anguilla  
   [ ] Antigua and Barbuda  
   [ ] Barbados  
   [ ] British Virgin Islands  
   [ ] Belize  
   [ ] Cayman Islands  
   [ ] Cuba  
   [ ] Dominica  
   [ ] Dominican Republic  
   [ ] Grenada  
   [ ] Guyana  
   [ ] Haiti  
   [ ] Jamaica  
   [ ] Martinique  
   [ ] St. Kitts and Nevis  
   [ ] St. Lucia  
   [ ] St. Vincent and the Grenadines  
   [ ] Trinidad and Tobago  
   [ ] None  
   [ ] Other: ____________________________

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1dVuUmY0v1vuHtIk2vs2uucQ271obVByDnwTdzWQRW7Wtd/edit
3. Choose one or more of the following to identify your occupation in the music industry.
   Check all that apply:
   - Musician (Instrumentalist)
   - Musician (Vocalist)
   - Songwriter
   - Arranger
   - Manager
   - Producer
   - Promoter
   - Other:

4. Have you acquired any form of certification in music?
   Check all that apply.
   - Yes
   - No
   - ABRSM
   - Trinity Guildhall
   - CXC/ CSEC Music
   - CAPE Performing Arts
   - Certificate in Music
   - Associate Degree
   - Bachelor's Degree
   - Post-Graduate Degree
   - Other:

5. Whether you are formally or non-formally trained in music, how would you rate your level of proficiency in this field?
   Mark only one oval.
   - Not a musician
   - Beginner
   - Intermediate
   - Advanced

6. When did you first hear music by soca artist Bunji Garlin?
   Mark only one oval.
   - Between 1999-2009
   - Between 2010-2018
   - Never

7. Is soca a popular genre in your country of residence?
   Mark only one oval.
   - Yes
   - No

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1ViuOYk1w1wH2w2twc02710eBtV5yOswTd4VYsW0z/edit
8. When you first heard Bunji Garlin's music did you think his style was different from your local genres of music?
   Mark only one oval.
   - Yes
   - No

9. Would you say that his style of singing influenced any sort of change in your local music industry?
   Mark only one oval.
   - Yes
   - No

10. Did you have any past experience(s) working with the singer and songwriter?
    Mark only one oval.
    - Yes
    - No

11. During the time that Bunji participated in the International Soca Monarch Competition, do you think that there was any significant difference in the presentation of his performances compared to other Artists?
    Mark only one oval.
    - Yes
    - No
    - I never saw Bunji compete in Soca Monarch

12. Do you think that his style of performing influenced any sort of change in your local music industry with regards to the way other local Artists perform?
    Mark only one oval.
    - Yes
    - No

13. Do you think that his style of composing influenced any sort of change in your local music industry with regards to the way other local artists compose music?
    Mark only one oval.
    - Yes
    - No

14. Do you think that his music contributed positively to your local music industry?
    Mark only one oval.
    - Yes
    - No

15. Do you think that the lyrical content of Bunji Garlin's music is strong?
    Mark only one oval.
    - Yes
    - No
16. What genre would you class most of Bunji Garlin's music in? Check all that apply.

- Calypso
- Soca
- Ragga Soca
- Rapso
- Dancehall
- Other: ____________________________

17. This Artist/Artiste is known for his prolific "freestyle" (improvisation) ability during on stage performances. Do you think that he introduced this new dynamic to live performances in the Caribbean music industry?
Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No

18. Do you think that his style of singing was somewhat controversial when it was first heard?
Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
- Maybe
- I do not know

19. Do you think that Bunji Garlin's music has evolved since the first time you heard it to now?
Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No

20. Which two words do you think best describes the 2012 release "Differentology"?
Check all that apply.

- Strange
- Catchy
- Wild
- Different
- Boring
- Revolutionary
- Poetic
- Funky
- Appealing
- Nonesense
- Nice
- Not familiar with "Differentology"

Add further comment(s) here: ____________________________

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1V1umY0v1vUHh2vG3ucOZ71obVb5yoDmxTg1WYRWiuWcol/d#
21. Give two words that you think best describes Bunji Garlin’s music”? 
Check all that apply.
- Appealing
- Strange
- Nice
- Catchy
- Lyrical
- Boring
- Strange
- Add comment here: ____________________________

22. Which of these phrases would you use to ascribe to a concept for “Differentology””? 
Check all that apply.
- Unique arrangement of music
- Unique style of singing and performing
- Revolutionary effect
- Unappealing to the listener
- Change from the ordinary or acceptable
- Controversial
- Not familiar with “Differentology”
- Add further comment(s) here: ____________________________

23. Upon hearing “Differentology” do you think that the concept of differentology was always hidden in some of the singer’s-songwriter’s other music? 
Mark only one oval.
- Yes
- No
- Maybe

24. Bunji Garlin had many achievements throughout career. His music was used in the television series Grey’s Anatomy, he won several competitions, received a Soul Train Award, and the Humming Bird Medal (Silver). Do you think that his music is a good representation of the musical talent found in the Caribbean? 
Mark only one oval.
- Yes
- No

25. Do you think that his music contributed to the appreciation for soca music from persons locally, regionally or internationally? 
Mark only one oval.
- Yes
- No
- Maybe
Appendix B

Las Vegas styles carnival production coming to T&T