



Roy Cape

It is easy to understand why music is the universal language. The ethereal sounds of the maternal heartbeat were the first drum. That was the music with which every pulsation conveyed nourishment to our souls.

Like the maternal drum, Roy Cape's horns have been making music and providing sustenance to our minds and hearts and souls for more than 50 years.

Born in Success Village, Laventille, failure was never on his agenda. Institutionalised at age 12 at a Dickensian-styled orphanage, in an environment where many others would have been broken, he flourished. There he found hope, his faith and his calling. There he met the clarinet and the saxophone, his heart-throbs. His love for music may have been nurtured by the steelpan but his infatuation with horns has blossomed into an enduring and lifelong romance.

Roy Cape's contribution to the Caribbean soundscape is monumental. In particular, his exploits in brass music are beyond compare. But his contribution to the steelband movement, though far less obvious, is noteworthy. He has mentored, connected personalities and built relationships that have godfathered the pan movement.

Twenty years ago, he founded the Roy Cape All Stars of which he remains the leader and musical director. This is the

band of choice for most singers, composers, kaisa and soca artistes as well as masqueraders and party-goers. Roy and his band have been great ambassadors of the calypso/soca art form and have been responsible for spreading its gospel far and wide.

Roy has toured, travelled and performed widely, taking his music and his musical message to the WOMAD and Portsmouth Festival in England, the Hoogstraten Festival in Belgium, The Helsinki Festival and the 2006 World Cup Soccer Finals in Germany. Of course, he has toured and performed extensively across the Caribbean.

Numerous articles in the popular press have highlighted and paid glowing tribute to his work. In 2004, he received a national honour – the Humming Bird Medal in gold.

Here is a man of disarming simplicity and subtle sophistication. His preference, however, might be for poetry rather than prose so here goes:

Now threescores and ten

But still cyah forget when

Ah get chase from the panyard

Ah take mih licks but ah come back hard

Ah discover alto saxophone

From then ah was never alone

Even in the Belmont orphanage

Ah was always dreamin' ah the big stage

Despers get pan from Manette and Cobo Jack

Still for Panorama they back ah the pack

Ah take Bev Griffith up The Hill

Then trophy for so, they cabinet fill

*With Hilanders dat was love at first sight
Bertie Marshall was real real bright
Everybody know how the steelband start
Ah happy ah play a little part*

*Threescore years ah blowing mih horn
For Carnival, here and dey, from dusk to dawn
Everybody know Black Stalin mih pardner
Now both ah we they have to call Doctah*

*Chancellor, when you receive him and confer upon this
Caribbean Man, this music maker, mentor and man of music
the degree of Doctor of Letters, honoris causa, we shall, as
we already do to his devoted friend Black Stalin, have to
refer to him deservedly as "Doctah".*

St. Augustine Campus

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