

important means to strengthen Garifuna youths' self-esteem and pride in their background, which he knew was vital if the culture and language are to be preserved.

Last November, two performances, one in Dangriga and one very special and intimate free show for the residents of the little seaside Garifuna town of Hopkins, confirmed how much he meant to the home folks, as he was embraced and applauded and everyone knew all the words to the songs and sang along. When Andy took the stage in Dangriga—the band dressed all in black, white and yellow, the symbolic colors of the Garifuna flag—absolute pandemonium broke out. This was only the second time this lineup had played live in Dangriga, the center of Garifuna culture, since the album's release and seemingly everyone in town turned out for the occasion. It was evident that the acceptance by his compatriots, especially the younger generation, meant even more to Andy than all the awards, honors, titles and international acclaim he had received, and he sang his heart out that night.

The Collective was preceded by a paranda contest and a set by Adrian Martinez leading his own band. On *Watina* Martinez plays and sings his song "Baba," and in concert was greeted with fervent response as he launched into what was clearly a tune beloved by the audience. It is soulful, bluesy and slow-paced, hardly a dance-inspiring beat, so the audience reaction was unexpected and awesome. "Baba"—"Father" in so many languages on Earth—refers both to God, and for the Garifuna in their traditional ancestor reverence, a more personal relative. It is now sung as a hymn in church services throughout the community. *Watina's* "Weyu Larigi Weyu" (Day By Day) is also a prayer for guidance and protection: the Garinagu are largely Catholic, with the additional incorporation of their ancestral spiritual beliefs and practices.

As our water taxi approached the Barranco pier after a jolting 45-minute trip from Punta Gorda, the sound of drums and a chorus of voices welcomed the boatload of visiting reporters. A procession waving leafy branches greeted us on the dock as we disembarked and paraded to a gathering in the village, where most of the 100 residents and a busful of friends and fans from Belize City watched as Andy P was lauded as *Barranagu*, a proud son of Barranco, his lineage recited in African style, to celebrate his achievement as the recipient of the UNESCO Artist for Peace award (an honor shared with 37 other iconic musicians including Manu Dibango and Gilberto Gil). It was a deeply touching homecoming: speeches were made, drums beaten, children sang, women danced, and the framed UNESCO certificate was presented to Andy in the presence of the people he loved.

Just eight miles north of the Guatemala border, Barranco was one of the first Garifuna coastal settlements, dating back to 1802. Fishing and subsistence farming provide meager sustenance and a communal style of living and sharing helps families survive hard times. Garifuna is spoken on a daily basis here, and traditional ways have endured over the centuries, due partly to the isolation of the village, which was accessible only by sea until a road linking Barranco to the main highway was constructed in the late '80s.

Garinagu have been leaving their home territories and pursuing education and employment overseas; the far-flung Garifuna have by necessity adapted to foreign life and are slipping away from their heritage. Back home too, as modern life continually encroaches (satellite tv with hundreds of channels is ubiquitous, even offering Channel 5 KTLA local programming from Los Angeles), the traditional lifestyle has been eroding at a disturbing rate.

On *Watina*, the song that best describes Andy's mission is the moody, brooding "Amunegu" (In Times to Come), as he ponders the future of his people and their culture in words that speak directly to the Garifuna diaspora and warn of what is at stake.

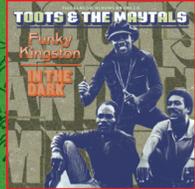
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Paul Nabor sings for the local kids at an impromptu roadside encounter in Seine Bight. Andy P's mission was to keep Garifuna culture alive for the younger generations.



Legends Of Reggae



1976 ★
Toots & The Maytals
FUNKY KINGSTON

Jamaica, New York? More like Jamaica, Memphis. Effusively soulful vocals on percolating reggae rhythms. The Maytal sound. Featuring "Pressure Drop," "Time Tough," "In The Dark," "Funky Kingston."

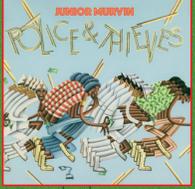


1976 ★
Bunny Wailer
BLACKHEART MAN

Thoughtful. Thought-out. Sublime. The Wailers' Blackheart Man delivers a masterpiece for his debut. Features "Dream Land," "Rasta Man," "Fig Tree," "Fighting Against Conviction."

★ **1977**
Junior Murvin
POLICE & THIEVES

London's burning. The Junior Murvin / Lee 'Scratch' Perry collaboration ignites the punky reggae party. Expanded edition with bonus cuts: "Police & Thieves," "Roots Train," "I Was Appointed," "Rasta Get Ready."



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ANDY PALACIO

THE PRIDE OF THE GARIFUNA

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I wonder who will bake cassava bread for us in times to come

I wonder who will speak with me in Garifuna...

I wonder who will sing Arumahani songs

*I wonder who will heal us with the *dugu**

The time has come for it to be preserved

The time has come for it to be taught...

Lest we lose it altogether

Our ancestors fought to remain Garifuna

Why must we be the ones to lose our culture?

Let's not do it

Parents, please listen to me

Teach the children our language and our songs;

Our beliefs and our dances

As is characteristic in Garifuna music, other songs on *Watina* are based on personal experiences and slices of life—a lost canoe, a drowning at sea, a drunken husband—or offer advice and instruction; others speak of spirituality, social consciousness and resistance to discrimination.

“Lidan Aban” (Everybody Together) has a lilting reggae beat, playful horn and vocal choruses. Reggae is of course extremely popular in Belize, and like the best roots reggae, Andy’s lyrics inspire and teach: “Everybody together on Satuye’s vessel traveling from Yurumein, bearing Garinagu” recounts the history of the Garifuna traveling from their ancestral home of St. Vincent, led by Joseph Chattoyer (Satuye) and calls for Garifuna unity.

In recognition of the culture’s endangered status, in 2001 UNESCO proclaimed the Garifuna language, music and dance as Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity, largely through the endeavors of Andy P at the Belizean Ministry of Rural Development and Culture. Changes are beginning within the country to reclaim and reinvigorate the legacy as the first school for Garifuna education just opened in Dangriga in November, and a textbook on the history of the various ethnic groups in Belize has been recently published.

The battle for recognition and equal standing of the Garifuna in society still has a long way to go, however. Despite the efforts of Andy P and many others in the struggle for cultural sensitivity in Central America, and although paranda musician Aurelio Martinez, 31, was elected in 2005 along with two other Garifuna representatives to the National Congress of Honduras, making history as the first Garifuna congressmen in 75 years, a little anecdote shows how much more public education will be required:



Flipping through a local newspaper filled with congratulatory advertisements placed by local businesses—banks, shops, insurance companies, and such—in honor of Settlement Day (celebrated since 1941 and a Belizean national holiday since 1977), Andy pointed out that each ad featured a clip-art image of a different kind of drum: *djembe*, conga, and so on, and remarked ironically that none of them accurately portrayed a traditional Garifuna drum with its characteristic twisted rope-and-peg lacing, except for one—and that ad, no doubt with all the best intentions, had attempted a headline in the complex Garifuna language that was rendered meaningless by misspelled words. A couple of others featured Christmas *jonkanoo* masquerade figures that have nothing to do with Settlement Day traditions. Momentarily wearied by the perpetual struggle for community awareness, Andy’s bemused plea was to “please spare us embarrassing acts of kindness.”

The album’s title song, “Watina,” (I Called Out) tells of a hitchhiker trying to get a ride on the road; no one will stop. Andy said it also has broader meaning: a cry from the Garifuna—“We’re here! We exist! And we have something we want to share.” The message he continually imparted has worldwide resonance: “We are all one, we come from the same source.”

The Garinagu have a long memory. They still revere their paramount chief Chattoyer, a freedom fighter who died battling against the British in 1795. Their ancestors are always with them, looking after them. Andy’s renown will live as long as there are Garifuna to tell his story and keep him in their hearts and their songs. Farewell Andy, and God bless you. We’ll be calling out to you in the *dugu*.



Along with the characteristic two-drum ensemble, the *primero* and the *segundo*, at the core of *Watina* is the guitar-based Garifuna paranda music, which derives from 19th century coastal encounters with Spanish music. Paranda icon Paul Nabor, at 70-some-years-old, is wizened and seemingly frail, but his voice is still strong and when he gets on stage he is invigorated with fresh ener-



• Above: Jacob Edgar, Andy and Ivan Duran following the Hopkins performance. A sudden rainshower drenched clothing but not spirits.

• Far left: Paranda singer Sofia Blanco is one of the Garifuna women who perform on *Umalali*.

• Left: Photos of Paul Nabor in earlier days hang on the wall of his Garifuna temple in Punta Gorda.

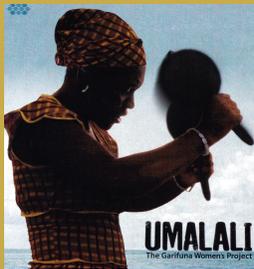
gy. Astonishingly, in 2007 Nabor accompanied Andy and the group on a grueling six-month tour of Europe and North America. Andy encountered Nabor, the last surviving paranda musician in Punta Gorda, and brought him to the Stonetree studio to record the *Paranda* album (1998), along with other aged *paraderos* who were keeping the music form alive, and the few young practitioners like Adrian Martinez and Aurelio Martinez. It was the first time Nabor’s music had been recorded. Not merely an elderly fisherman and part-time paranda player, Nabor holds the honored role of a Garifuna shaman and healer (*buye*). He maintains a traditional temple in Punta Gorda and leads ceremonies that syncretize Catholicism with ancient practices accompanied by drumming, singing and dancing to honor the dead and entreat the ancestors to heal and assist the living.

Watina producer and Stonetree Records founder Ivan Duran, 35, his parents originally from Spain, was raised in Belize. For 10 years his quest has been to document and preserve Belize’s unique music, creating the country’s first record label and seeking out local groups and artists such as Mr. Peters Boom and Chime, Garifuna drummers, punta rock and paranda musicians. After years of toiling away in this obscure corner of the world, Duran has finally been embraced by the world music industry and fans. A gifted producer and accomplished musician himself, Ivan guided the *Watina* sessions, frequently jumping in to play guitar and bass as the music took form in a rustic improvised thatched-roof studio on the beach in Hopkins Village.

An earlier production, *Garifuna Soul* (2004) from Honduran musician Aurelio Martinez, gave a good preview of Ivan’s vision as he crafted traditional paranda into internationally appreciated world music without sacrificing its soul. This album was the template/precursor for the sound on *Watina*, with a variety of rhythms and tempos, a palette of world music touches, including South African-styled horns and electric guitar flourishes, but always the *primero* and *segundo*, the fundamental Garifuna drum ensemble.

I like to think of Ivan as the Coxson Dodd of Belize, a pioneer establishing the foundational music of his nation. Certainly Jamaica had many other great producers, but Coxson is widely acknowledged as the seminal founding father of Jamaican reggae. One day Ivan may be accorded the same recognition in Belize.

The Stonetree “studio band” and a stable of musicians appear on many of his recordings, Chichiman, Lugua Centeno, Chella Torres, Justo Miranda, Sofia Blanco on *Watina* and *Umalali*, and guitarist/engineer Al Ovando, pro-



viding continuity and a reliable and authentic sound, a la the Soul Vendors or Sound Dimension. Multi-instrumentalist Rolando "Chichiman" Sosa was assistant producer, arranging, directing the sessions and contributing horn lines, guitar, drums, percussion and inspiration, literally living in the studio for three months while working on *Watina*.

But there's some King Tubby in Ivan too: Using traditional song as the point of departure, as in Tub's dubs, Ivan imagines and creates the subtle atmospheric touches, ambient sounds and understated ideas that one might notice only after several hearings, always respectfully, adding multilayered sonic landscapes and the innovative effects that characterize his recordings.

It was probably inevitable that Jacob Edgar, a graduate of UCLA's Department of Ethnomusicology, would team up with Ivan (a defacto, if not degreed, ethnomusicologist himself) to bring *Watina* to the attention of the wider world. The California-born Edgar, age 38, worked with Putumayo Records for eight years to learn the ins and outs of the music business and in 2006 launched his own label, Cumbancha, a brave act considering the present uncertain climate in the music industry. The gamble has paid off handsomely, though, as in the first year of operation, five well-regarded albums were released.

With the great and unexpected success of *Watina* under their belts, the pair has put the finishing touches on Ivan's next pet project, one also in progress for 10 years: the music of Garifuna women. Ivan sought out female singers, traveling to remote villages to record songs and document an artform virtually unknown to the outside world. *Umali: The Garifuna Women's Project* (*umali* means "voice") features Sofia Blanco and a handful of other women from Belize, Honduras, Nicaragua and Guatemala.

Women's music is primarily private, sung at home, at community gatherings or in rituals called *Abaimahani*. The bluesy-sounding minor-key songs tell simple stories of personal experiences, family, longing and loneliness, dreams and memories, death and disaster. Retold here, enriched by Ivan Duran's arrangements and production, the stories become especially poignant and yield additional pleasures with repeated listening.



Sofia Blanco gently pats Ivan's hand and beams kindly at him as they submit to a filmed interview. She patiently gives precise, well-considered responses in Spanish to the journalists' often-bumbling, rambling queries as Ivan translates. Her expressive eyes, framed by wire-rimmed glasses, twinkle with good humor. Beautifully dressed in a fashion that hearkens back to earlier days, she exudes pride in her culture and traditions. Garifuna women wear painstakingly handcrafted outfits embellished with dress-making details rarely seen in our mass-produced world: blouses featuring contrasting fabrics and colors, pleats, peplums, yokes, flounces, gathered sleeves with meticulous trimmings, full tiered skirts and matching headwraps.

Miss Sofia is from Guatemala, the hilly coastal outline of which can be seen from the beach at Barranco just eight miles away. She is not a professional singer, but like other Garifuna women has sung all her life at home and community gatherings, often with her husband Goyo. Nonplussed by the so-called "glamour" of the music biz, this 54-year-old grandmother of seven is not certain she wants to continue with her public appearances, preferring to be home on familiar ground, but on stage she performs joyfully, dancing in the foot-skittering, hip-swaying Garifuna manner.

She sings effortlessly, in the characteristic tone employed by the Garifuna, a bit nasal and piercing, reminiscent of the technique of Malian women of Wassoulou, but accented with a range of sounds and guttural embellishments. Ivan considers her one of the greatest living *paranda* singers.

Among the highlights of the enchanting *Umali* album is Sofia's *paranda* composition "Yunduya Weyu" (The Sun Has Set), telling of the difficult birth of one of her children. Others of note include "Merua," sung by Chella Torres and Desere Diego, one of the most user-friendly and danceable tracks here, where call and response, a clave beat and horn chorus recall West African highlife, underscored by wah wah guitar and an undercurrent of conversational voices.

"Barubana Yagien" (Take Me Away) by Silvia Blanco, Sofia's daughter, is also reminiscent of highlife, with a rollicking guitar line that sounds like soukous played on a banjo. "Hattie" has a menacing tone and twangy, galloping "Ghost Riders in the Sky" guitars; sung by Desere and Sarita Martinez, the song deals with the wrath of Hurricane Hattie, the Category 4 monster storm which slammed dead center into Belize City on Oct. 31, 1961, killing over 400 people, destroying half of Belize City and causing widespread destruction and hardship.

"Luwuburi Sigala" (Hills of Tegucigalpa), composed and sung by Masugu Guity, tells of searching for her family in the hills of Honduras; shimmering guitar reverb underlines

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ISLAND REGGAE

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THE PRIDE OF THE GARIFUNA

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her mournful voice filled with pain and longing. "Uruwei" is a drowsy, bluesy vamp with a dreamy slide guitar. Bernadine Flores sings a song composed by her grandmother as low voices murmur, overlap and sleep-walk down the hall. Ivan added in the sound of a hammock rocking to gentle waves to enhance the intimate ambience.

Thrice exiled, the Garinagu have traveled a long hard road, wrenched from Africa into alien lands filled with perils and forces beyond their control. Their resilience, toughness and will to survive underscores all aspects of their culture and lifestyle, and as Miss Sofia pointed out, women are not considered an inferior, weaker sex, but full and essential partners in the everyday struggle for existence. These substantial women are every bit as hardy—and talented—as the menfolk.

The *Umalali* album will be released in March. In view of the tragic demise of Andy Palacio, at press time plans for the extensive 2008 tour by the Garifuna Collective are not complete, but it will go on and the performances will be dedicated to Andy's memory and legacy. Some of the *Umalali* singers will accompany the Collective on tour dates as special guests on a rotating basis, and there are plans to create a *Umalali* performing ensemble for a 2009 tour. ★

LUCKY DUBE: RASTAS NEVER DIE

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I first met Lucky at a sound check at a concert venue in Philadelphia. When I came into the theater looking for him, I noticed someone sitting alone on the empty stage, his hands clasped around his knees. Coming closer, I saw that it was Lucky. He was simply waiting, in his unassuming way, for the technical people to get things together. He never moved with a large entourage and was not one to demand special treatment. Through all the years of grueling U.S. tours, I never heard a word of complaint from him, other than his feeling that certain venues were not large enough. But of course he was used to playing stadiums in Africa. Whatever promotional work needed to be done, Lucky did his part with no hassles. That night at the show, he demonstrated the performing prowess that had made him a star in Africa. Playing "only" a two-hour show (as compared to his lengthier African concerts), he and his full band, replete with horn section and I Three-like trio of female vocalists, delivered a tight but never slick set highlighted by Lucky's deeply felt vocals and by the singing and dancing of his chorus. Special highlights came when Lucky's robust baritone, delivered with the laconic phrasing that was so reminiscent of Peter Tosh, would suddenly take flight in a stunning falsetto. Lucky's sound, though based on the classic reggae sound, always had elements of South African music, such as the distinctive organ sounds that were reminiscent of mbaqanga or the Zulu dancing performed by Lucky and the women. It was important to Lucky to maintain his South African identity. Interestingly, Lucky became one of the few non-Jamaican reggae artists to be embraced by Jamaicans, who traditionally had been less than impressed by U.K. and American reggae artists. Indeed he was extremely popular throughout the entire Caribbean.

Lucky's political views, while always strong, never followed any party line. His song "Women," for instance, stirred controversy internationally with its straightforward depiction of women as subordinate to men. Lucky was met with protests from women's groups in the U.S. but he never backed away from the song. It may have been that the song was meant to depict, rather than endorse, a disturbing reality but he did not attempt to rationalize it. In his life, though, Lucky's attitude toward and treatment of women was exemplary and he was quick to take men to task for mistreating women. Lucky was not one to court controversy or to speak in inflammatory terms but his convictions were penetrating. His way was to simply state his viewpoint; he would listen to other viewpoints but generally he held his position.

Other aspects of Lucky little-seen by the general public come to mind. He had a dry sense of humor and took delight during casual conversation in making shocking statements with a deadpan expression; if his listener reacted, he just smiled. He could laugh at himself as well. When Gallo Records, his South African label, made a deal with Motown's Tabu Records for his *Trinity* album after several releases by Shanachie in America, he told an interviewer that he would see what the major label could do for him

and if it didn't work he'd "come back to Shanachie with his tail between his legs." He needn't have worried; when the *Trinity* album did not break big and Motown did not wish to continue with him, we were thrilled to have him back. He also loved horror films and had acting ambitions.

The last time I saw Lucky, after a show (spectacular as usual!), we chatted about life in general. We compared notes on the challenges of raising teenaged daughters and I was struck by his deep concern for his eldest daughter who was undergoing a rocky emergence from adolescence. Clearly he was deeply involved in insuring her well-being, despite his relentless international touring schedule. During the past 20 years, there was no other reggae artist who was more widely popular across the globe. The small country boy had grown up to conquer the world on his own terms. I believe that in the last horrific moments of his life, Lucky had refused to give up; he had after all, stared down the gun barrels of apartheid as a youth. Even after he was shot, he was able to drive his car away from his attackers until he lost consciousness and crashed. We are left with his magnificent music as well as our memories and the lingering question he posed in his song "War and Crime"

*We know where we come from
We don't know where we're going
Why don't we bury apartheid...
Fight down war and crime? ★*

LAST VISIT WITH LUCKY DUBE

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Q: Excellent. And you always had one of the greatest female backing vocal groups back then too, I can remember seeing you live many times at the Music Machine and a lot of other places and what a full, full sound you always have on stage.

A: It's very nice to have that, even with times when we were still doing mbaqanga we used to have that, we used to have even a bigger band then but we've always had the female singers and stuff, it's just great to have that, the big band, the full band, very good.

Q: Yes, a fullness.

A: It feels nice on stage, it helps us sing better maybe!

Q: Coming from South Africa at the time you came out, your music was revolutionary in more senses than one. I'm just wondering, what's it like for you now in South Africa?

A: Well, there's a song on that album *Respect*, it's called "Monster." It says "One monster dies and another one comes alive." Even though in the past we had that apartheid monster that died, but there is some other monsters that came up now which we still have to fight. 'Cause even though we change the books in South Africa, we didn't change the peoples' minds. So now that is the next thing that we have to deal with: the people's minds now.

Q: Yeah well, isn't that the way of the world.

A: That's the way it is! [Laughs].

Q: Another song I really like off the new album is the one called "Mask," and this is kind of a personal song isn't it?

A: Well it is in a way because as artists, as musicians we have to be actors as well. Because there's a lot of things that go on, maybe even before a show but when we go on stage it's all smiles. It's like you put on a mask that nobody sees what's behind you and the whole thing but that's kind of like with every celebrity I think. We all have masks, the masks that people put on and I've heard of people who stay in relationships, people who stay married even if they're not happy but because it looks good to the outside world or maybe because they have to be seen with that person and they will have to put on a mask to get into that character.

Q: You bring up an interesting point because the fact is in a lot of your music over the years you've talked about things like divorce and separation from your children—whether these are circumstances of your own that you're talking about or universal situations you're voicing, it's unusual for an artist to be so honest in his music.

A: The thing is with music I cannot lie in music. Maybe that's the reason why I don't have a lot of love songs where you have to have like "Oh, baby

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