

Jamesie Project / Andrea E. Leland producer
Tape #E Ag Fest 2-14-04 Camera 2 Tape 1

Tape #C Ag Fest 2-14-04
Interview with Stanley, Edgie and Willard John

Interview begins at beginning of tape, interview starts over at 00:54:00

00:54:00

W: Stanley, Edgy, how are you doing today?

S: Alright, alright.

00:59:00

W: Isn't today Valentine's Day?

S: Yes, happy Valentine's Day.

01:04:00

W: We want to talk a little about Quelbe music, scratch band music, Quadrille music.
What is it? What do you know it as?

S: Quelbe, it's Quelbe music.

01:15:00

W: And what about you?

E: Quelbe.

01:18:00

W: Ok, we refer to it as Quelbe. Tell me, um, this is the indigenous music of the Virgin Islands.

S: Yes

1:24

W: How did you Stanley get involved in it?

S: I get involved with it because I like it from the time I know myself. And I'm allowed to play guitar when I was like six years old. And I be liking it. I also like it.

01:43:00

W: So tell me, you talk about *West Indian* music, that's separate from Quelbe music. So how are they are related.

S: Quelbe, well *West Indian* is a predecessor to Quelbe.

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01:57:00

W: Ok, ok. So Quelbe evolved out of the *West Indian* music

S: *West Indian* was skin music, it was just drum, drum and singing

02:07:00

W: So out of percussion and voice

E: Quelbe music evolves from the African drum beats

02:19:00

W: So we talking about when they brought the slaves here to St. Croix, they started out with the very indigenous drumming music, which evolved into *West Indian* which evolved into Quelbe. And of course when it involved into Quelbe it had the influence of Europe. The Europeans brought their style of music and we blended it.

S: ---- in charge, he used their music and the melodies

02:44:00

W: I understand at one point in time they had banned any drumming on the plantations so that was one means of suppressing the African expression.

S: So they had to go to the hills.

02:58:00

W: Exactly. And then what happened was many of the slaves or the plantations people began to imitate the European music. So Edgy how you hear about the Quelbe music

E: Well from like, I got involved when I was a very young age. I had an uncle who had some friends who used to come into the yard under the tree and with a big drum, drum every weekend and they would play music from Friday to Sunday to Monday. And, you, know I should keep my distance because when you're a young boy and elder people around you had to be at a distance. But I sat and watched and listened and I learned to like it.

03:43:00

W: So you come hear them and eventually you imitate them. What instrument you play?

E: Banjo

03:46:20

W: The banjo. This Quelbe music, is, you know you guys have been playing for quite some time on St. Croix and I would say at present there might be four or five Quelbe bands

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on St. Croix. But Stanley and the 10 Sleepless Nights is the most prominent band. How did you get to that point?

S: I believe it's because of our perseverance and our longevity we start from the late 60s and we still playing and I believe that's why. We be playing all the time we won't stop.

04:23:15

W: Additionally, I think that your song is separate and distinct from the other Quelbe songs. How would you characterize it? How would you describe your difference from another Quelbe band.

S: Our, well, we basically, what we have, we have the instrumentation has evolved, we don't use a guitar anymore, we use a keyboard, a keyboard to bring the cords, a keyboard and the banjo to bring the cords. The Quelbe instrumentation originally started with guitar and banjo. As a matter of fact the lead instrument use to be a violin, see, then we bring sax and flute and bring actually any instrument could lead. As a matter of fact St. Thomas man by the name of --- Wallace, used to play a euphonium, *bombali*, and he would lead a Quelbe band with that.

05:27:20

W: So you're telling me the thing that creates the difference in your band is the setup of the instrumentation. The type of instrument you use and how they blend.

S: yea. And we also got a conga, everybody's got conga, and a drum set. It used to be just pipes, which is a thing..., pipe, steel squash, guitar, banjo, flute. That was it. Two guitar. Course we and there was no electric, now what happen is electricity come and everything become, everything has become amplified and now a days you need amplification because other people can't hear, if we played music like we used to play before, people gonna ---- cause they can't hear it.

06:13:00

W: What I'm saying is if I sat an audience down and I blindfolded and Blinky and the Roadmasters play, and Native Rhythms play, and Stanley and the 10 Sleepless Nights play, they gonna know Stanley sound without looking. Why is that?

S: Every band got their own thing. Its just like people, no two people is alike, no two band is alike. There was a time when you hear a band and you know who the band is. That's the reason. They got our own, their own brand.

E: And another thing, Stanley band, our band is the only band that uses a flute. The rest of them use saxophone

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06:55:03

W: And that evolved from the fight am I correct?

S: Yea the fight. So they call ---- flute.

07:07:07

W: Do you write any of your own songs or do you just replicate songs of the bands.

S: Both, we have made up songs. A lot of the songs have been made up ----- I write a couple of them, Edgy writes a couple of them. Some of the songs, we get together come up with one idea and we come up with something that both of us like.

07:33:29

W: So I would think of an example of this is centennial C.D. that you came out with.

S: Yea, yea that got something like that.

07:46:15

W: So now you beginning to take this Quelbe music to the next level. Where you're writing your own songs and developing it and its evolving constantly its not what it was long ago and its continues to change as time goes on

S: Another thing is that we're introducing more complex cord structure, patterns, that's one of the things the old people had a lot of complex cords also, but the were not as prominent as we. You see? Its just the evolution of music, our music has evolved more.

08:24:20

W: Now what are your feelings towards this music cause obviously you play a lot you get around and you play. You do stuff for senior citizens you do stuff for all types of groups and often times you don't get paid. So it's beyond the money thing. So tell me what your feelings are about this music and what are you're intentions for the future

S: We play for love of music. The band has always played for the love of music. That's why we do so much free gigs because we love it. And we have come to the consensus that we are going to play for senior citizens and children free. All the time.

09:02:00

W: And everyone in between gotta pay.

S: Yea

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E: Yea

09:07:01

W: That's good. But, you know, um, your efforts in preserving and promoting this music is significant. And as we've noticed recently, there are people in our legislature that has passed bills to honor and make Quelbe music the music of the Virgin Islands. And that's good. And I think its' because of your efforts. You and all the other tradition bearers in this area that have consistently and without pay many times played this music and pushed this music without reward. And now we begin to see some of this.

S: Yea, yea the idea is to carry it on, to carry it on. To keep it from dieing out. Because a whole lot of this music has disappeared beyond our, we can't get it again. You know there are many many songs that we lost because nobody was really keeping it up. So when we start keeping it up, we are trying to pick up what we know, our effort in resolving it is called regarded, so that well, because of the formal education will not put it in the schools, we decided well lets regard them and one of these days somebody down the way, our great grandchildren, gonna listen to it and like it and play, copy it. So that's the reason

10:36:25

W: I wanna get back to an issue you raised earlier. You talked about the music having more complex cords. Can you give me an example of that?

S: Well there's some freedom and what's the next one, freedom and ----- those sounds got, cords like symphonic, you know? Things like that.

E: It got minor cords...

S: ...and that comes from the love of music. One thing we have noticed. Though, is that most people that the average person don't concern themselves with cord structure, cord pattern, they just like to hear a drum beat, and some words that they could remember, but musicians like us, we like to hear, you know the changes, the cords we like it.

E: Type of music --- ---- its gotta sound correct, you know what I mean?

11:41:12

W: That's interesting you're taking this Quelbe music experimenting, writing, and expanding on it so it can be developed to something that it wasn't in the past. And at the same time, you're playing to the extent, your commemorating our ancestors and what they did and preserving

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S: All were doing is amplifying what they did, they really a lot of the old songs them had really complex cords because, in matter of fact that's what attracted us to it, its really, that's really why we... amplifying that , like I said that's what we're doing. We're trying not to change it, you know?

12:28:03

W: What about, lets talk a little about the lyrics and its subject of your songs. What areas you sing about?

S: Politics, melee

12:39:29

W: Melee meaning gossip right?

S: Yea gossip, teasing somebody,

W: Teasing people

S; Yea, and then social commentary, and love, all music has love in it, expressing a love for somebody, a lot of time is somebody, especially love for somebody who don't love you.

13:08:15

W: Let me interrupt a minute, that song --- is a most unique love song. When I listen to it I'm very very impressed. Tell us about it, what is it speaking of. Tell me about it, Edgy, tell me about it, what is *Maybis*

E: Maybis is a powder, just like...

12:27:20

W: A body powder?

E: Yea, talcum. After bath, used years ago, it use to come from an island, Antigo, one of those places. It used to come in a red tin, this song is an old song. We didn't write that. This song was played by somebody, elders long ago. He used to powder his woman all over, after she take a bath he has a tin and he used to powder her all over.

14:00:19

W: That's an interesting Edgy, an interesting way to express affection and love. Sticking powder in her hair, in her face

E; In her face All in her neck

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12:11:20

W: Very interesting. So you cover the whole *gimmick* in terms of the subject matter that you sing of. You sing of about politics, you sing about love, you sing teasing each other.... All about life and all the aspects of life.

E: We sing about, about melee like a fight, we sing about that too.

14:31:28

W: You bring the news. And I know you guys and going to have to go and play, because I hear a lull in the music and I know you are on next. So we gonna have to pull out the hay and get set up and get going. But anything you want to say in closing?

S: Well I am glad that the Virgin Islands legislature have seen fit to make Quelbe the official music of the Virgin Islands. I think that it should not have taken a legislative act to do it, It should have come out of the people naturally but there are some things that that need to be done like that and this is one of them.

E: As Stanley said put it in the curriculum at school. Put it is a, a subject. For a grade...

S: That has been our objective all the time, to get it in the schools get it back to the children.

15:30:28

W: Well you do work in the schools don't you?

S: yea, we doing that now?

W: You getting paid for that?

S: No, we don't we don't think like that. We don't look for money. We want to keep the music alive. Keep the music going

15:45:12

W: I can say on behalf of all of Virgin Islands that we all appreciate your music and what your doing and your efforts towards preserving and promoting this unique indigenous music of the Virgin Islands and we hope that you always continue to pass it on.