

JAMESIE PROJECT: ANDREA E LELAND producer

Tape J Feb, 2004

Jamesie and Blinky at Peggy's Interview transcription

Andrea E Leland on camera

(not every word was transcribed because unable to understand dialect. Refer to original video for complete transcription)

00:03:16

J: We are playing for this big fellow ----- that he went down some island and he didn't come back.

B: Oh, -----

J: And this boy Hoggins, that time he used play ----- guy he used to sing Spanish. And we went down start to play what he singing become more like the people ----- to hear that, but then when we come back we start to play local music. Well man, -----, you know?

B: Well you remember *Peje*? *Peje* the one that carry us down to Puerto Rico we used to play his place, he used to have dance every Sunday night, we make music there. And, he *carry us to* Puerto Rico. That was in 1956 I think. That's when I start practicing the sax, again -----

J: So anything more?

01:13:00

A: Yea, I have another question. What, this is uh, Blinky I was going to ask you, what is really unique about Jamesie. What is unique about his music, and maybe you could play a song to demonstrate it.

B: What is unique about his music?

A: Yea, about him.

B: Well, he is his music.

01:32:28

A: How do you separate them?

B: You can't, well, he is doing the old time Crucian music, that's what he doing. There is a difference between the music he play, there's a difference between that St. Thomas play, or Trinidad or whatever, there's a difference.

1:55

In Trinidad you have calypso, they're known for calypso. Calypso is songs that are made of fiction mostly, you might find one or two songs that *Sparrow* might sing that have something to do that took place someplace, somewhere. But the music that we play here, I'm taking about Crucian music, Crucian music, it is something that actually happen. Every song that he sing or that I play when I'm playing Quelbe is something that actually happen every song is true.

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Calypso is fiction, or most of it is just fiction, you can make up a story and sing it or make a song out of it, it not true.

2:56 As far as he's concerned, he's playing the music of St. Croix which is mostly three change, with an accidental, most of it is. Calypso you can have like five changes, five different cords in a song, make six cords in a calypso song, where you diminish and you know sharps, flats and all them thing. But this music he play is generally a three cord music, or with a relative. And, this he has maintained all the time. Now, me, in my band,

3:39 I play the same music that he play but then I *venture out* it depends on what we playing for, if we playing for a wedding I play a ballad or you know state-side music or something like that. But he stick to the culture. That's the difference between us.

J: I will not move, I will not move. You could walk -----

04:15:20

Plays a song

06:33:20

B: Question?

06:41:15

C: Yea another change, is when you started using electrifying instruments, what was that, when was that, what was that, and what was the effect, how did people take to that?

B: Well I can tell you a little bit about that, because quadrille at the time sort of slide out, and then it was coming back gradually in the, um, we had a quadrille dance once every maybe six months or something. Joe Paris at the time had some players Fansa Joseph, Fansa Knockout, and so on, and these guys die off and Stanley came in.

J: This man, with ----- he used to blow a flute too, yea, I tell somebody that and they tell me that on a Friday night I was talking the same thing, I say that man.

B: That's in -----

J: Yea, and he used to blow too.

B: He come one time in the, um, hall, I remember. But ----- so we didn't have any amplification, and you know, you familiar with the St. Gerands hall, so the bands used to set up halfway down, we never used to be on the stage, the stage is on one side. The bands used to set up in the middle and the side.

8:00

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Because they didn't have any amplification, the call had no mic or any kind of thing either. So he used to stand in the middle and he be dancing too and he be calling the center quadrille. -----
- was, he came in with his saxophone one time, and I came in there too, trying to learn these songs.

8:42 And Bosso, , because they were playing one key one key, I changed the key, and Bosso tell me, know I am a self taught musician, say know them key, ----- one key, and I said oh, you play your key but I play after that. So then Stanley start playing with and I used to go with them. Now Joel had a little box, he ----- amplified, so pipe and all them things banjo and everything, so, but we were halfway down the hall and the side, everything was there, and so time goes along, and then, it wasn't the bass, the biggest set that his guitar was, could play louder, and then my saxophone,

9:45

because quadrille was never played on the saxophone it was always played on the flute. In the 60s, I introduced the saxophone to the quadrille, and from there that's where it started. But before that it was just flute, Stanley, Joseph, the man from St. Thomas Bobo, ----- flute playing. When I started the saxophone in the quadrille.

A: Hold on, it's too much sun so we have to block the sun.

B: What do you know? We can go to Canada...

10:57:00

C: That's the world in 1968.

B: When?

C: 1968

B: What, we got a different map now?

11:40:03

B: Ok I was taking about Mr. Orgin. Mr. Orgin was a very good quadrille fan. He came every quadrille that ever had in those days, this was in the 60s, and Mr. Kite, what was his name again, Kite? Anyway, he used to sell mortar.... Wilson. I played, when I play him, then I remember Mr. Orgin, which was a very ----- student at quadrille, and....

(setting up shade to block light

Blinky plays, Jamesie comes and says something while Blinky playing, can't understand

14:42:29

J: Hey this is what I say I want to do, have this ----- thing and this thing too, because these people I want to know

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B: I ever tell you ----- something that

J: See what I mean

You want a real Crucian bottle? This is a real one. Wait, let me get...

J: You know because.... They, -----

C: Then we have to call it Cruzan

J: No, them people they ----- sell they from, in the *harbor*... yea well, you could go there them people willing to do anything to help this project -----. Them, people, you know...

B: I think it a ----- or something. ----- Anyway, you still filming? What I was saying is when I statarted with the quadrille putting the saxophone in the quadrille and all these people who are accustomed to dancing the quadrille with the flute, these are the old people, old people at the quadrille from, who knows when, all in the 60s and so on. When I stated the saxophone in the quadrille, Mr. Orgin, who was quadrille fan, he came out voiced his opinion, --- ----- he bring his saxophone, goddamn saxophone, the flute -----, damn sax.

So I play with them and ----- think of that, I went, never come up again. So, the band when ----- Stanley play then, and they play couple of thing, ----- say man how come you -----, say man what you don't want no saxophone, no ----- saxophone sound sweet man, he make me order ----- no saxophone. So I went back and start to play again, when I start to play the note, let me tell you, the young people start coming, now me don't know what it is, me or whom, but they just get into the quadrille beat. We had to move from off the landing there to up in the stage, because so many people start coming. Young people take over the quadrille now that the older people left, they have room to dance. Then we have to join a union because somebody complain that we playing and this is not a union hall and all them kind of thing, so we had to joining a union. They had to make the hall a union hall, because plantation was complaining every Friday night they are a union hall, they got a union playing, and every body going to the hall to dance quadrille, so we had to join them. And from then it was every Friday night, don't keep *nowhere else*, the hall was always full of people. Full of people and Friday nights ----- cause they aint coming. Going to the hall, and this went on for years, years and years, till Paris them *freak* me out and I left the band, find my own band. And they ----- started to play with us for a while, stayed with us for a few years just learning the different numbers and things, and then after that I think he went with paris when I left, then he went with you. So, so much for that.

19:19:29

A: When did you start Blinky and the Road Masters?

B: 1979. And, the same time we start the band we won the road march.

Excuse me, say, in 1979 we started Blinky and the Road Masters

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B: 1979 we started Blinky and the Road Masters. And, we went into the festival parade that day, and won the road march at that time it was, the road match was my wife so sweet. We won the road match with that. I remember Peggy father, he was Blinky just started the band, and then, he won the road march. He was really, enlightened to hear that. He was here then.

20:15:04

So explain what is a road march. The history of a road march, what you know about road march?

B: What I know, a song, a certain song become the popular song for the festival or festival parade. It happens when, lets say one song or so many songs come up during a year, the song that is judged during the road march is the one that the different bands, how many bands play that same song. Then it becomes a road march. So, so many different bands must play my song. - ---- St. Thomas, -----, they all play, -----, your saying that this has to be the road march, said my wife----- he was the one that was pushing it really, and he said this has to be the road march and then most bands start playing it.

21:13:29

C: Could you sing that song?

B: Well, its not much, *My wife*-----

J: And they say *children*, that too

B: You don't know how the record??

21:31:20

C: Yea, I heard the record but the audience ain't. Well could you pick it out and play it, right now?

J: Yea but he aint play any guitar he was blowing

B: Yea, well I song. Then the men were answering me in the background "Why, why would they go -----". Thee beat, the beat is what won the road march. The beat behind it.

J: And, do what, what does push these road march is the amount, ok you could have seven band but it where the crowd follow to the music. Because I have seen people play, I have seen road march music play, and I have seen the band them playing there and they aint got nobody there everybody pushing down on her to this band playing the music. And that is where the, this the band that is taking everybody. And I watching he forget to say, when he used to play in these thing and the road, aint have no sax man, coulda blow different to he and and Haldo on anything on the road. Listen, man used to, instrument play the guitar and banjo, next day ----- you understand? He rock and ----- I play with him and I used to -----, had to ----- me.

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B: That was eleven year, I used to with a 5 reed back then. Now I play a two.

23:40:17

C: What's the difference?

B: The 5 is very very strong, a very stiff reed. You need jaw strength and lip strength to play that. Now I play the two, it'll tell you...

J: I tell people remember when St. Dura Hall have quadrille music, the same band will play from 10 till 6 in the morning. And still going to leave from there,

B: -----Oh you remember that

J: Something down the street, come round the street, and still got to go back up by ----- to play in the parade coming down.

B: I used to do that man. I tell you no problem, here's the thing, the first time I start this, ----, walk coming down the street, we need no truck.

J: I tell them, look, we play for a birthday party in ----

24:40

-, the party done when some scotch and -----, man walk from ----- to Fredreksted to play music again, you understand, when we used to play in those days coming down the street, no different to the flute, and then, you know what I used to do, I got a calabash when the band playing down here then, put that little thing had to help that man, when you done play all you getting very well seven cent and thing, but them days it was so happy to play this me son and so beautiful man.

B: When we leave the hall, we play at 12 to 6, so we went again play over and *have to go to the set* ----- no this is it, make this the last time. So we play, set up everybody like that, then we have to get a pickup and start to play going around the street. We went to the hospital, went through the hospital, and soon as we start playing people jump up, sick people jump up out the bed and start dance.

26:23

J: Remember Benny Archer? We, we come down we play in Christiansted, the catholic church, St. Marie's Hall, we play up there and when we finish, how you say, you know this thing ----- in hand said what thing,, said well look, watch down the street.

26:50 So when I come out now, Soda, Soda in them times you couldn't tell Soda you stopped playing or you have to *kill him*, no you have to kill him cause..., when he drink he brandy, he used to drink brandy. When we come out they say, look at the line we have all these people out

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there, when we look I expect that we going in the *carry*, what I come up with no. Frances, the old man used to do wedding, he *get off the car*, so now,

27:38 we come down the road and we playing or no we gonna start to play, when we reach there by where we that place where the Whim great house. I see the truck come and he stop. So I had a look say, oh god man -----, know how they doing in them time, when ----- rum, you in trouble. So on this day he start -----, so we start from ---- coming down the road now, we end up in La grange, they used to call it, up there for the – set up people some people like ants, and remember we just play up there no?

28:40

And we come down with they, and we play until 8 o'clock in the night. No, you aint have no lamp----. Remember how they saw them ----- down in the trees? Well the weather was a beautiful days weather,

28:28

J. but I want me, Junie I will tell you, you mighten believe me when I saying it over my granmother and my mother I go for you a lot, I go for you a lot, but let me tell you something, if you can keep this in your old head...

B: Old head?

J: Yes. You understand, Any work I have I would like to work with you cuz the thing of it is, you have a drive that really.

B: Wait, at any time. As long as I could make it, see

J: I understand, ladies and gent you understand what I'm saying right? I would love to have him playing with me. --- say too I'm taking over. Yea, you know, but I would like to have you play with me,

30:00 even Derby was telling me the other day, Pikey could blow, you understand.

B: But Pikey is a more polished musician. More polished.

J: He could blow, but he just, he been in this, you know what we got to look at, you are known in these Virgin Islands, you play lot of Puerto Rican music.

30:38

And we have a lot of Latin followers. They follow us, you know what I mean. And we have to be able to make everybody happy when we playing. I sing it ...

B: I gonna tell you this, if you could get Bomba to change his thing for Meringue, you cannot get – to play all the other songs, if you get he to change a meringue beat, alright.

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J: He will do it. He will do it.

B: Well you gotta get, you got some tape with whats-his-name, and he'll do alright. They play and let he hear it. You cannot keep playing the same beat you play for calypso or quelbe and play for meringue and that's what he does. And it doesn't, difference yet, the difference between the two beats. The different beat, the drum is what make a meringue a meringue. Let me,

31;39I have gotten, -----, you hear a meringue beat. Play a meringue beat. And I got his record with ----- and he playing conga with meringue beat. Here in America, then, then even with him, *blame it on*, linch. He play it good but he aint play with a meringue beat.

J: Aint got nobody that could play our real way of our culture playing style of meringue like that, like Puerto Rico.

B: The only ----- used to do it in Peruvia, -----, even Leo. Could you get Leo -----.

32:35:00

C: Sure

B: Cathleen? You going to take him out?

C: What, yea, what you mean?

32:54:14

A: I just wanted to know if you could play an example of the meringue beat that you're talking about?

B: Yea but you see, again you ran into our little trap. You need a drum, you need a drum to make that meringue beat the music. I can play meringue but it not going to....

C: It's not going to sound the same...

B: Alright, let me try, just a shot, but it need drum to make the difference

J: We don't want to do anything that when you hear it again we got to back up to it.

B: You're going to get the beat, I will play the sound but the beat, you need to drum to make the difference.

34:23:13

Play a meringue tune

35:52:20

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B: That, you see, you need more than that you need a drum to make a difference in the playing. And, the bass to make it sound like a meringue. So, now we just playing a lone. This a Spanish, -----

36:18:12

C: Is that guy you talked about Amile ----- the's from Santa Domingo? Can you talk about him, that's one of your main influences right?

B: Yea, he died. He died, sometime when he left Santa Domingo went to Puerto Rico and somehow they say he dead now. At that time, in 1956 that was a big thing going on there

J: But who bring he here is the saem guy that tell you, he had the -----, what's her name were living there, by the market the Puerto Rican woman, ----- remember had a man used to it before she had him?

B: Hold on I'll remember, Johnny? Johnny Gilado?

J: No, after Johnny, this guy have the place.

B: Oh, okay I know what your talking about now.

J: He had a brother.

B: Yea a brother. He play guitar.

J: The brother walk to that store, why he come down.

B: He ---- market, across, me market, I know that, but I don't remember....

J: What bring he here?

B: I know him very good. ----- Puerto Rico,

J: He bring them here? And then ----- the ticket. Brother, that same fellow, ----- blood man. You were very, he had a ----- *then*

B: Yea I know, I know, he retired in, social security, then he went back to Santa Domingo. And then ----- again I think leave again. Yea, he was big arm wrestling. That play used to -----

J: He been with um, with been with one of them girl in Puerto Rico and than after he find out, after everything that come through, he leave her then he bring in woman from Santa -----, he had that place up by where the doctor got ----- remember that big building there?

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B: I remember, I just can't remember his name. He had that place there -----

J: Ok well you know what I'm talking about. You remember when his truck, then the brother coming down King Street and when he turn there by -----, the bull then went on one side and they had to ----- and everybody start to run. Well known man, well known.

B: For some reason you make me forget his name. (Jamesie and Blinky talking at same time, hard to understand)

40:28:01

A: I have a question, do you enjoy playing as much as you did in the old days?

B: Today? No.

J: This wasn't something that we had, that we could set up

A: No I don't mean today, I mean in general.

B: Oh I thought you meant right now

A: No about 2004, now. Do you enjoy playing music in these days as...

41:00

B: Yes, today like in the 40 years ago. Even more so. The governor has said the quelbe in now the official music of the island, so we enjoy playing it much more today.

J: -----

B: Tell you, as far as quelbe is a name that they give between the quadrille and whatever. This is going to bring a heap of questions.

41:41:00

C: I wanted to know, one thing I always wanted to know, where do all the quadrille songs, where do they come from?

B: The quadrille songs? They're all true stories.

C: No but, like, the sets of quadrille, each one is a story?

J: Yea.

42:04

B: Everyone is a story. Number one, ---- *Simon Frances*----, I know Rosita, and I spoke with Simon Frances, and I did not know, this man used to tell me stories, this was a man had gray hair coming down to here, and he got these things coming out like a cat, sideburns.

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42:31 And in the afternoon I used to talk to this man and he tell me all kinds of stuff. And I asked my mother one time because I said listen I met Simon Frances and he work with me, but is this Frances, the man they make this song out of? She say Yes, they made this song out for him because a Rosita, he was with this woman, and he left her, and she you know freak out. Now, I saw Rosita, Rosita I mean she was, she was the color of this thing here, she was really really black, but her nose was turned out like that. She looked like a young guerilla. I hate to say it but. And she would living in Betesta yard

J: I know man I know

B: And my father had ---- across, so I used to see her come out of her yard. And I said jeez, this woman is really old maid? . The next day I went to work and Simon Frances as usual started to talk to me. And I go (humming song), he said where you hear that! I said, I didn't know it was you. He said listen, I know Rosita, but if I had my last dollar today, I will give it to Rosita she need it. I just walk away, you the guy who they singing about. That's a true story. And also,

45:05:22

Starts to play

46:56:16

C: So was the tune there before?

B: No, they made the whole thing.

C: So the Quadrille songs that you dance to is not really old?

B: Oh yes they are.

47:22:29

C: Well how old is that?

B: Well before me.

J: And before me too.

47:31

B: I work with Simon Frances yea, but, I mean jeez, when I met Sammy I was a young man working, about 19 years old, he was already in his 60s.

47:44:24

C: Quadrille and scratch band music all came at the same time? The quadrille songs, scratch band songs, that all came at...

J: Well you see, there's the same people them, that play the qaudrille songs them, right? It's the same people, that playing those old time, them is who make, go into quadrille they play that

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kind of thing, our ----- music. Have nobody else doing it, and we come in, we just keeping it going.

48:27:17

C: What is your take on quelbe now is the official music of the VI, what is your take on quelbe, scratch, quadrille, the names, I mean there's a big ----.

J: Well I say, right, I lay out of this part of the thing. You understand? Cause I know when we no man could afford to buy instrument everything if you a musician and you want to go and play music,

49:04 you have to find a way to get this instrument. You know, and the boy Clark, the father from Grove, and there was a man in Bethlehem which is his father.

49:40

He used to, them they could know how to bend these know they got they went into muffler crate, but before it was them water pipe. And how them man used to get them pipe bent, I don't know. -----, from Grove, he know, he the one that make the pipe bend, but, I know in them time when a man used to walk to play music they make their own instrument, you know. And that's what the man has said, scratch band music, you understand. But now I been hearing this so I am not getting in this thing about quelbe.

50:25

B: listen, when I used to play with my father, cause this is back in 48, we, the music had no name then. We, would advertise the Ivy Macintosh we be playing a Crucian *buk up* in Glen, new works Bethlehem. I never heard the word quelbe then. Now it come into the 50s when a lot of people from the stares,

51:11 tourists and stuff, coming down they hoard men like Levie messer, and all them were playing music with a little conga, banjo, steal, squash, and because of the squash (ricky ticky) they oh, they playing scratchy music. That's how we get the name scratchy music. Because of the squash, that was the first set of tourists that start coming down here in the early '50s, call it scratch music.

51:47 And we adopt it as scratch music. Now, now comes quelbe, quelbe now is I think they made that word up from quadrille and belbe, or whatever, put them two name together get quelbe. They gave the music that we play here on the island a name, Quelbe. It was not so then, it was not quelbe.

52:57 They just give it this name that we play, which is unique as I say because all the songs that he play or I play when I'm playing in my band, is true stories. And that is St. Croix music, St. Croix music, and I'll repeat it again. This thing that they call quelbe is directly out of St. Croix because all the songs that we sing those quelbe, even the quadrille numbers are all true stories.

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53:06 So you might hear, he said -----sings a little----- that was a true story. This woman take, a fish ----- oh there you are. It's true, so is Benjamin, ----- that's a true story. ---Sings more, explains story ----- true story. You know, and everyone is a true story. Quelbe, every song is a true story.

54:27 Story of Mr. Clark.

J: It's the same thing with the song that I say, Mr. -----, what happen is, (Jamesie explains the song/story)----- was a big man who -----, and what happen, ----- police, and this woman was a beautfil woman she used to -----, and then haven't got, you could with your cat – water--- this woman when she coming, cry out see the woman, ----- --- and when she come out she start to fix her clothes because she going to work. The man say aha! Why you going out ----- now right away, he went to thinking, so my father and Mr. Clark used to be associate. So if Clark ain't got no staple for the fence, they call my father. So my father send me down ----- when I hear he start to say that and, ----- and from that I put this song about that. You remember the slaughter house, remember you didn't have to go nowhere to pick up the cow, had on the grass. Woman, big woman you know, be naked and you couldn't ----- no more either, you understand. You see and don't see. She ----- -- swimming and – the grass went between her leg, and ----- that is how I got the song ----- . That's the way I sing, you know what I mean?