

JAMESIE PROJECT: ANDREA E LELAND producer
Tape AA Feb, 18 2004
Jamesie, Derby, Trashy at Peggy's Interview transcription
Matt Benedict on camera / Andrea interviews

00:00:00

Music, Trashy & Derby playing

02:57:00

Andrea: Ok, do you wanna? I just want you maybe to talk, let's start out about how both of you separately; how did you get involved with music? At what age, who taught you? Derby, do you want to start?

D: Yea I'll start. My father-in-law, I was approximately seven years old, um, who I lived with my mother, he was a musician, he was one of the top musicians in those times in the forties going over to the fifties, Quelbe, which were known as the *Simmons Brothers* that's the guy that taught *Stanley* ---- quite a big musician come round his time So as a young kid he used to play the flute, his brother *Fordry* used to play the banjo. So I get entrusted and I begin ----- *Sardine Pan* something with Jamesie though, there used to be in those days electric wires we used to make strings of, thin string which is more or less like the E string for the guitar right now, we didn't had the bass strings, one bass string, and then that's how I really begun playing the music. At an early age, seven years old. Then the time I make, ten, I start getting a little more up knowing the banjo a little more and then the real banjo player went to the army which were the 47s and then I become the banjo player for the band for about six or seven years. And when --- blessed with more than one talent caused me to drop out of playing the Quelbe music and then I become a Calypsonian and to me that was my real profession. I believe it I get to like it more than playing the Quelbe at the time, And I remain there a period of years till about 7, 6 or 7 years ago the ----- wanted a leader, a banjo player, so he knowing me to be a banjo player, he encouraged me to come back to play and he also give me a banjo, and then, that is how I came back into the music. But the love of it was always there. But as I said before the calypso take over.

06:18:20

A: How did you meet trashy? How did you, you can talk to each other actually, rather than to the camera... remember how you...?

T: My first music I started was a hand ----- steel band. I used to play bass, and after that the band break up and I get involved with instrument with ---- Joseph, and then I play with her, Ten Sleepless Nights many a years, and I get involved with Omanicar, I used to play conga with him, then he died then I get involved with Woody and Kafooners that's how I get in music - my squash, I made my squash myself, play it, often though I sit and play with Jamesie also. And that's it no more.

07:23:13

A: How many instruments do you play?

T: Well I play the weevo, the steel, I can play conga, I can play drum, three.

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A: How do you know each other?

T: Well many years ago.

D: Well I know, I know Trashy forty years or more. He was living at Bethlehem, I was living in Kingston. And, we get more involved because of horses. Trashy used to train horses and everything like that. So we come, we get to know each other at that point as a musician, I rode for fifteen years been a jockey. And the involvement with me and him come closer. I didn't know him really to be as a musician to an extreme. I knew he played with a band, a steel band the *Black Owls* which was in Bethlehem the most powerful band on the road playing for road music. And then, we has been together, he was like family, he come to the house he know my wife they came from the same *area*, we not friends really we are more family. Trashy come to the house open the ---- take ----. So we close, we very close. And, in those days were different than now. Now we are realizing how strong, there was people from the Virgin Islands especially St. Croix were so highly talented we didn't think this music to be that great. Cause, we could pick up something and make music. So we didn't know the strength of it. It was just like a pastime for us, not really as a profession so to speak to live of., because everybody could play something. But, not knowing the strength of it you know we are just as great as Duke Ellington or any of them and to me more natural. I could walk down the street pick up any band and say lets play some music and they gonna get two cans and they gonna hit and music going to be play we don't have to go college to play music or go to our music teachers so to speak we was very good observancey, in, when I were playing, one of the greatest banjo player at the time was Soda, I was ----- then, and he live right across from me, and I used to go over there and see him play sometime when he gone to work, ----- take up his banjo and try to play. And when he come home it's a barrage ----- instrument, so I used to watch him play and when I watch him play I think that I go home and I say well I see finger on a tall fret, and then we start to play like that and the song sound good and so we were mostly self taught. But in the later years, in those days those guys were limited to the cord structure, two or three cords, g or d, things like that, but growing up now we realize the bands like *Vivatone* and Archie Thomas and those were playing a different music from the Quelbe music because of the structure the cord structure, so they were playing more classic music, more Latin music, that called for a little more cords. So I used to go my friend Thomas and ask him one or two things about the cord skippo, I would go and ask him, the thing was I knew a lot of cords but not knowing the name of them ----- seven keys, and all the cords are related to each other, so sometime I be playing I can find all the cords no problem, and I can match it and they correspond, but not knowing what the name of them so by through all that and being a calypso is a little more cord to be using than playing the Quelbe music. So, like I'm a composer I'm looking for using the melody lines I got to find the cords and sort the keys and then after that I get to know the name of the cords in the different keys. And, it give a little more, for my type of what I'm doing, I really need the cords. So if I as I said before if I run a little problem I go by Fred and ask him for the name of the cords. And then after that now going to the schools and teaching kids I got to tell them, they have to know the cords, you know it's easy to say like you playing in the key of G say first, second, third relative, accidental, that's how I was doing the cords then.

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A: Can you give me, while you're talking, could you give me examples of what you're saying, cause I don't know music, so can you explain to me?

D: Ok like we play in the key of C right? We call this first, F, second, G seven or G third. But now knowing now knowing it now this is C, F, G seven. A musician in those times really didn't know the cords like that. We would say ok we go to G, G seven, E minor, and D seven, we make up the cord, in the key of G. So, we had to know that, in other words when the arranger is arranging the songs, he would write the cords G the name of the cords, you don't see no first, second, and tall and all that; E flat, B flat, D, D diminished, so I had to learn the cords then, but the names, so...

14:47:18

A: Sorry, what about Trashy? Do you learn the cords too? Do you need to know the cords for your music?

T: No... I have never tried to play a guitar or banjo or blew a saxophone or nothing but... since I started playing with the music I said well let me see if I can make my own instrument so I make it and I went and tried out and it sound good but otherwise to play with instrument I never tried that. The only thing I do is play conga, that's the music I play, and the steel and the squash.

15:29:14

A: But you were saying that, and remember I don't know anything about music, so you need cords for string instruments but what do you need for...

T: Well, what you need you need to know the sax scale and you need to know the scale in the guitar, but this here you need to know how to play it and when you can change, when you play in the music.

16:01:0-0

A: So it has more to do with rhythm or something?

T: Well that's it, rhythm.

16:10:25

A: Ok, so... Can you give me an example off, you said you were talking about the different cords, can you give me an example of the scratch music as opposed to calypso. Can you do something, maybe sing a little, or play, so you can demonstrate what you just talked about? And Trashy, can you play along with him?

D: ***Singing and playing***

T: ***playing***

D: That is Quelbe. We could....

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A: I want to get you (Jamesie) a chair... OK?

D: So this music, this music was here before calypso music. The Quelbe music.

19:11:17

A: Ok, so the calypso did you ever play calypso Jamesie?

J: No, when I start playing this was Latin I used to play. I used to play with them Puerto Ricans. I had made a group, but they ----- my fellows then went to Puerto Rico. All them island boys, so then I find out that he had getting plenty work to do so; they had to play with us.

19:49:23

A: Why don't you play another tune?

22:26:29

D: Well coming from the Quelbe side it was not hard for me to become *involved* as a calypso man.

22:37:00

A: Why?

D: Well the rhythm is not different. The only thing that is different in calypso is that they use a lot of piano which in the Quelbe before the bass or the pipe, so we went over instead of using the pipe we use the bass, the drums, five or six horns, which we don't have that in Quelbe and then Quelbe music do not be arranged and calypso music is written and arranged, as I said before Quelbe don't have that type of thing. But singing is more or less the same. What is different though is where we have to compose, we have to write songs, create melodies of that nature. So it wasn't hard to become -----

23:37:21

A: Where do you get your ideas for songs?

D: Well, its like, the word on the street is very important for making songs, if something happened on the street you might come over and say Derby man, last night down by the market *Centia* and her husband had a big fight over the next man on the counter. So I pick up my *melee* write the song. Its like most other Quelbe is saying something, you know it's saying something, so that is how I make a lot of my songs. And, I am noted to be very controversial in my recordings because if I make eight songs, out of eight songs they gonna ban at least five. So that five songs end up in court, right now I have a song named *The manhole backing up* that is a court issue, we had last year a deposition with Carnival committee. Next month I have a deposition with the government because we are suing for freedom of speech and civil rights. Cause as I said, I open my mouth, whoop, it stop me, cause I sing the truth. I sing what other people thoughts about.

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25:23:15

A: So it's in court? What do you mean it's in court?

D: Well it was 1989, I sung a song named *Rum and Coke*, *rum and coke* yea, and, the carnival committee in St. Thomas wouldn't hire me because they feel I am singing too political and the governors and all the dignitaries has been to the calypso show functions, and they ain't gonna look right if I be singing about a governor and *he's there sitting* down, and this and that, so they wouldn't hire me, but they hire other people more or less of the same nature so its some kinda discrimination why not me? Why ban me? Why, is it everything? Last year before election I had a song name *You know what you got, you ain't know what you're gonna get* and that was being banned too. They, ----- I had one named *Election Rock Out* that was being banned to, so then I had a song named *White equal* ---- that was being banned too. I had one named *Jehovah Wickedness 70s advantage* that was being banned too. Then in the sixties I had a song named *Midnight Shepard*, this guy, he *Rodney Lugel*, he claimed that he was coming up the stretch at a road like diamond road and a sheep run across the road, and he messed up the car, break it too and he said he saw a sheep, and I know sheep don't walk at the night, I know ----- nighttime sheep. So, I made a calypso name *midnight shepard*. They banned that too. They keep banning them all the time. And I had one there was ----- when I sing about who free, who free the slavers ----- that was the next problem again. So sometimes I don't, if a song ain't being banned for me it's no good. I've always had a problem with the medias, for what I am singing. So the way I feel, there is some kinda discrimination. In other words, what criteria do they hire calypso men? They don't have criteria. I have, out of ten years I had six leading songs, number one in the top forty, and then they wouldn't hire me. So, what should I sing to be hired? I take --- ----- person have most favorite song ----- because people coming to hear that public lesson, and then you're not hiring me. So, it's a long-winded thing going on with me.

29:05:12

A: So did they play your songs on the radio?

D: Some do radio station and some radio station wouldn't play. I remember in 198-, I think it was '89 before they had cable and we had *Rum and Coke* St. Thomas station banned it, the people there start to draw back --- so it was band for --- ---.

29:32:09

A: Do you want to play one of the songs that was banned?

D: Yea sure

29:39:16

A: Ok hold on one second. When they're playing, can you hear his voice. Ok, alright, is that alright to play one of them? Whichever one you want. Than maybe you can tell the story about it.

32:57:12

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D: This song is be, the reason I make this song right, I was at the race track so at the same time we had two problem. We had a pothole problem and we had ----- problem. So I go to the tv said like this "forget about the pothole, ----- them, and concentrate more on the ---, first priority free manhole ---- . So I said to myself, a guy named Burk he was telling me man go do something we got two problem now we got manhole and we got pothole problem. So right away I decided I think, you know that's a good topic, right? So, I write one and start putting the words together so I decided now to go to a radio, I mean to tv station, I mean to the ----- I make the song. When the song came out □, the first station banned it was XXDX which I could see the relationship because the owner of the radio station was a lieutenant governor and then --- radio station in St. Croix banned it. St. Thomas played it. It was the most popular song at that time. So uh, but the problem that I didn't sing nothing that I could see that they wanted to ban it. In other words, yous a stranger come from somewhere about, which is a fact as reality, you smell a manhole and see the water running over. So what did I really do wrong. If you want to put it or you want to put it that is your problem but the face value of the song have nothing to do, why you ban it? The song had nothing about sex into it, I worked for the government over twenty-five years in utilities, I used to be acting director of utilities. ---- manhole you find bed stain, you find -----, you find --- young children are bought in the manholes, bricks, many time we got clear the manhole ----- so I mean, this song is reality, They just told them that if you don't fix this manhole in 6 months they could go to jail. Thomson was the commissioner at the time. And perhaps he take it on, and he get, I mean he get a heart attack or something, and he died. So I put him in a song *Tom Gold man who killed Thomson*, I mean, that make me tell me how you go be around, he wasn't an anteman, Thomson wasn't an ante man and I didn't say that, He working for the government, he working for tom Gold. He take orders from Tom Gold. They, they ban it. They ban for me for what I singing. But you know, this gonna be an interesting case. Cause this is the worst that ever happened. That the song has been gone to court. Saying it be very interesting.

37:18:07

A: Did you take it to court or did they take it to court?

D: No, I find that I have been --- in other words especially the carnival committee in St. Thomas they would bring 15-20 guys from abroad, and I be right here. What, what is the criteria. Why not have me? I won eleven crown. Seven consecutive crowns, All the guys they bring from outside haven't won a crown, they don't have a hit song, and they are being hired. And I was the leading Calypso in the island. Can I be hired? Why? And government funds are being there, its not a private show that if you don't feel like hiring me you don't have me, that's up to you, But you get 200 – 300,000 yearly from the government, I am part of the government I pay my taxes. Are you bringing strange group from all about and giving them a job and I was born and bred here, can I get a piece of the pie? What is the reason for that? What are you going tell me you don't feel like hiring? The people get the public get and they really want to know why I'm not being hired. My fans. It's not saying that I don't have something to offer. I have the top songs. And you're not hiring me, in my own country. So what is the reason for not hiring me? Me and the governor ---- are friends, we are not enemies. We met up in *first* in November and ---, so the kids would play, you know play, and after up and down he congratulate me for the job I am doing with the kids and everything like that. So at the same time I *tell him outside call me* you

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enemies, I said enemies for what? He said for consoling this song. So I said, no this is not him, it have nothing to do with this song, its his surrounding. He told me that talking right now. After that we did a c.d. for the kids. He said Derby anything I can help you with these kids, feel free to call me, I need \$10000 to help with the C.D. come out with the c.d., the governor give me \$10000, we are not enemies. We had a write up in the newspaper couple months about make headlines, a man called *king Doby*, he was home in he was in a hospital in a sick bed, he called me home to congratulate me. Me and the governor talk and, we are very good friends.

40:18:12

A: Is that, is that song on a CD?

D: Yes I have it on a CD.

A: Could I have a copy of it?

D: Sure. I will.

40:29:19

A: So have you ever written songs about Jamesie?

D: No not yet. I got to pay some tribute to him.

40:40:15

A: What's unique about Jamesie style of music?

D: Jamesie, Jamesie is not a cord, a guy of many cords. Right? But it has no body in the music, in the Quelbe music, can play a guitar better than Jamesie. None, when it come to strumming. It have nobody can sing Quelbe like Jamesie. He's the king of Quelbe music. He's unique with his styling, his phrasing is completely different. Jamesie have a voice that call you to him in his song. He is strange, I can't sing Quelbe, like him. He have a unique special voice, you only have one Jamesie, ain't got nobody like Jamesie who sings him, you find a guy a song like me sing it, style it, but you can't find none imitating what he do. And the beauty with Jamesie, Jamesie sing one song eight different ways. You can never write down, you could never write down all the lyrics and sing behind Jamesie and Jamesie sing that song with different lyrics into it. The next day a different lyric. The melody the same, but he gonna add something different from the first time, that is unique. How we do it, I don't know. Only some people are gifted to do certain things, and he's one of them. None, none better than Jamesie. None. It take a next, next hundred years find somebody with what the things he do.

42:36:16

A: So can you give me an example of that, can you sing a song like that, give me one song where the lyrics change.

D: Jamesie...

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Playing, singing

44:30:22

J: Now, you see that song there, there was a guy used to run like James, sure that he sitting out , no no no, not, ----- he had a problem once with, you know, he ---- on some radio station,

D: Bagoon

J: Bagoon. Well that happened, when ----- ok, the problem that happen is we used to go up there to him every weekend, guys everywhere we play he get it. So we go up there to play. And this man, they had a white man down the road, and the jackass wasn't Bagoon's, but the jackass always --- so what happened is the man had a nice land and what happened, he, the man ---, and bagoon wife was friends from ----, so he said to bagoon, she call him and say bagoon this for you, this the man down the road, and the man bagoon check out--- and punch at him and here he said why don't you tell you good sir, why don't you come here now and get this jackass off my ass. This guy ----- so bagoon said well you know that jackass isn't my jackass so he said, well if I shoot it, so bagoon said well I could tell you what, you could kill it, and when you kill it see what gonna happen to you so he ----- down the road and we don't believe he said that and I just leave and walk outside like on the east porch and Soda come out there with me, ----- and when I run into Soda, I look, and when I come in ----- you know, that's why you see me, you saw me over there, remember in the song I said will he run, now you see, that song in there is what I'm trying to get good together so that we could get it you know.

D: That's, we are creative people.

J: See I walk and I just look at things, you know

D: Just how he sing this song, Mr. Moore Jackass, he come back a second time say master Moore, he sing it different every time he sing it, never sing it the same way. And that's what's unique about him its good what he's doing, but everybody can't do it. He's great. He's a living legend in this music. I don't know half his music if I can play for it, Cause I play this music for the love.

J: --- the thing of it with me, for him, for me, with this, with the ---- I go for them the reason why I go for them, these are way back man that know the culture music. Ok, I have this guy here that good at that, you know, I wouldn't change money for Trashy. Derby is a man he know and he play this strum, because I look at him and he play the banjo similar the same way that ----- play and you know that I got that rhythms and these feelings he's playing and he's playing with me, see it more Paul, that what, ain't gonna find no man pulling culture music with me like *Paul* has

49:12:01

A: What's unique about the way they play, why is it like culture music as opposed to...?

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J: Well you see, as far as you go with this thing, these man is man that really know the timing and the strumming of the music to the sound. You know what I mean, you get another man outside he ain't gonna have that strum and that way of playing like how they would play. --- know it, so that's why I look for them.

D: And this group play the rhythm that accompany Jamesie. Cause with *bully*, we are together, the same group, so we know each other limitation, we know how far to go in, if ---- I know to strum it, the time I hear bomba I hit it I know, its like, I could tell the other Quelbe music is different. We are the only authentic group and we don't use to much sound amplification, we don't have no have rhythm backs, no ain't got no piano, we are closer to how the music was a hundred years ago. Closer, and that make a difference. And there's the same time say one *second*, say *two* Jamesie strum is the really way, if you want the people seventy years ago how to use to dance the quadrille and Quelbe music, its different than how this modern one doing it. They had a way that there was, they were the music, something about that, because when I was *with the old group* for example, when we was *agriculture fair*, and if you watched how Rawlins the guy ran it, the guy had on --- and that movement, see, right, how far back he go back, even when he stop do that and hold a partner, he had a way to the shoulder that he used to, it very hard to describe, but I know what I'm looking for, these guy right there, its natural they another girl, a garden she came out he started to go to the side and move, that's the way they used to dance that particular music. So its different when you watch *Rawlins*, It's amusing, its fun, you gonna laugh, you're dancing but it's amusing to see this things, when I watch *Rawlins* play, I dance, it tickled me when I been a little boy 7 or 8 years old, seeing these older guys dance this music I remember in 19-- when he play the Simmons Brother play for president Truman when he came here, We play at ----- house of up at that place there. That was the most money we ever make as a Quelbe group; we made \$75, Which when I started we used to get \$3 a night. So we come off with 15, 25 cents. But I mean the money was not the thing it was the fun of it and we used to like to do it. Any time you get \$2 the thing depends on how the tourists... and we spend, what is \$3 a night for seven musicians, in those days. But still, and that's why the musician, the athletes, and all those things, the guys of yesterday are better than them of today because its wasn't money, it was the fun of it. And when you're doing something for fun, you get to feel it, you come ----- when the time come, so you're not happy, when you're happy doing something you do it fast and you do it better too. ---- You don't play cause you're getting paid.

J: ---- (sound cut off briefly, on and off) ----- the stroke of the drum you watch the people them foot, and you play the steel the squash you look at them. They got a movement to every stroke of this instrument.

D: And they could throw you off if they ain't dancing right. It's exactly, when you meet the tourist right, they try to dance it. So some time I will have to, but don't watch them, or otherwise I will play how they doing it. Its different, you know, because the movement, so you can't really watch them too much otherwise they *turn out to* a walk.

J: That's true. That's why you see, when we playing like when we played up there for the -- night, I start looking like this way, and then when I look across this lady this time up there and

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she left foot moving, And----- and you ask me what happen, you know, the strumming I dropped you know because I looked at...

D: Yea, the dancers are very important to a musician nobody fool you, cause music is timing, and if you in there you see musician normally when they're playing they keeping the time, this --(sound cuts off)-- and if your seeing that, something wrong,

56:07:24

A: So you know when you're playing well and when you're not playing well?

D: Yea, you can feel it. I can feel it cause the rhythm is the drums. It's one of the most, the drums is one of the most important instrument in music. That drum, cause that is where you're carrying the time. Nobody fool you don't mind the saxophone and the trumpet and the other, the drum, those drums, is what giving you you're rhythm. You could start like this a one, a two, a one two three, ****singing**** and have a beat....

J: You hear that foot ----

D: --- choking you, you can't do, And then, you the band know, some music have a change in the timing. What you, when you go to that timing to let the dancers know when your strumming so they could get ready to go into the change in the music otherwise when you just change you confused them too. ----- so you getting ready now, and that's what's going to carry you, then you start making the cord changes. When you, notify them that you are going somewhere, music is, is an art that only some people can do it, Music is the greatest thing in the world. Music have spelling, arithmetic, everything in it (sound cuts off for a second) this that, cause arithmetic is math, That's music. But we should be proud of this music, because ---- music, people have to learn to do it by going to school or something, but we could play this without going to school.