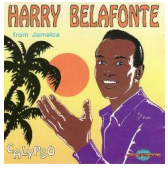
Harry Belafonte - Calypso From Jamaica (1992)



01. Day O 02. Jamaica Farewell 03. Matilda, Matilda 04. Come Back Liza 05. Mama Look A Boo Boo 06. Man Smart (Woman Smarter) 07. Kingston Market 08. Jump Down, Spin Around 09. Island In The Sun 10. Brown Skin Girl 11. The Jack-Ass Song 12. I Do Adore Her 13. Hosanna 14. Man Piaba 15. All My Trials 16. Will His Love Be Like His Rum 17. Dolly Dawn 18. Cocunut Woman

It is interesting to note that the pop-calypso (as opposed to real calypso) boom of the mid-'50s was engineered largely by a charismatic singer born in Harlem and a Julliard-trained composer from Brooklyn. Both Harry Belafonte, whose mother was from Jamaica, and Irving Burgie, who spent his childhood in a West Indies neighborhood in New York, had musical roots in the Caribbean, certainly, but their version of the islands was largely an imagined one, although imagined so well that their collaborations have actually filtered back into the folk music of the region. Intelligent, confident and with a firm grasp of artful arrangement, Belafonte almost single-handedly brought world music into the commercial pop arena with the Burgie-composed "Day-O" song, and in Burgie he had found the perfect song writer, a man whose compositions had the lilt and flow of ocean sunlight itself. Several of Burgie's songs (and Belafonte's versions of them) have become stone cold classics, including "Banana Boat (Day-O)," the lovely "Jamaica Farewell" (both of which were centerpieces of 1956's million-selling Calypso album that made Belafonte an international star) and "Kingston Market." Calypso From Jamaica contains all the tracks from that groundbreaking release plus related tracks from Belafonte's subsequent RCA albums to make a wonderful sequence of artful, faux Caribbean folk that isn't particularly Jamaican, although it definitely is shot through with a West Indies sensibility. The only actual folk song from the area included here is the gorgeous 19th century ballad "All My Trials," which by the 1950s had migrated to the American south and by the 1960s had become a staple of the folk revival. Whatever the origins, the songs collected here have a wonderfully summery vibe, and if most of them didn't actually come from the Caribbean, they certainly ended up there, and many of these tunes have become mento standards. Calypso From Jamaica is the most generous single-disc collection currently available of this phase of Belafonte's career. ---Steve Leggett, Rovi

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