

Interview subject: Winsford Devine

Interviewer: J. Hunter Moore

Date: November 2, 2017

Location of interview: subject's home in Diego Martin, Trinidad and Tobago

Other sobriquets/nicknames: Joker

Date of birth: August 15, 1943

Location of birth: Morne Diablo, Trinidad and Tobago

Awards (as of March 2018): Honorary Doctor of Letters (University of West Indies, St. Augustine), 2018, Honorary Distinguished Fellow, The Arts (University of Trinidad and Tobago), 2016, Hummingbird Medal (Silver), 2015

Best songs/best-known songs: "Progress," "Saltfish," "Phillip, My Dear," "Steelband Woman," "Capitalism Gone Mad," "Say Say," "Too Young to Soca," and many, many others

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Individuals heard during the interview:

WD: Winsford Devine

GB: GB Ballantyne

HM: Hunter Moore

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Trinidad and Tobago terms and expressions as used in the interview:

Dey: there

Eh: ain't,

Mih: my, I

Yuh: you

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Subject sings: 7:01

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(Interview begins mid-sentence.)

GB: Flamingo?

WD: That's the same happen mih with that name. I said, "I ain't keepin'. Mih name Winsford Devine."

GB: Yeah. I had the same problem. Sparrow tried to call me "Jibby." J-I-B, that's why, I could show you a pamphlet, Sparrow put my name J-I-B-B-Y on the tent promotion. I said, "Birdie, it G-B."

WD: I remember. I saw . . .

GB: You saw it?

WD: . . . when you make your debut.

GB: 1986.

WD: With . . .

GB: "Big Country Attitude."

WD: "Big Country Attitude." You and, was three people make debut that year. You, Penguin with "Telco Poops."

GB: Right.

WD: . . . and Trini, Trini sing, now he had (a few missing words), but he really came out when he sing, I write the song, with my "Soca Your Woman."

GB: Right.

WD: He was big in the tent by then.

GB: Anyway, listen, I only came along here to help in case Hunter, or something. You?

HM: That's alright. Tell me, most of the questions I'm gonna have are about songwriting, about how you write. But when did you begin writing calypsos? When did you write your first calypso?

WD: First, my first calypso was, came out in public in 196-, '69 or '68, between there. I wrote it in 1968, but it came out in 1969. Blakie sang it, Lord Blakie.

HM: Blakie sung it. What was the name of the calypso?

WD: "Road March Recipe."

HM: Ah. But what about the first one you wrote, when you were probably pretty young, before, I mean, that didn't come out in public, but just the first time, do you remember when you, first time you wrote a calypso?

WD: Okay, okay. I write, I remember writing a song name of "The Suit."

HM: "The Suit."

WD: Yeah.

HM: How old were you when you wrote "The Suit"?

WD: Well, I was in my teens.

HM: In your teens.

WD: I wrote that song, "Well, you borrow a suit from me."

HM: He borrowed a suit?

WD: I borrowed a suit from him to go to a wedding and the day of the wedding he tellin' me, "Don't sit down dey, don't stand up dey, look rain fallin', come out of the rain." (Laughs.)

HM: Come out of the rain.

WD: Yeah.

HM: Have you ever written anything besides calypso, any other kinds of music besides calypso?

WD: I wrote two ballads.

HM: Two ballads.

WD: Two ballads. Two ballads were, a ballad for King Austin. And I wrote a calypso ballad for a guy name of, (four missing syllables) that is the same guy with, perform on New York Connections.

HM: What was the name of the King Austin ballad?

WD: "To Be with You."

HM: "To Be with You"?

WD: Yeah.

HM: 'Cause I want to listen to that. Well, how do you know . . .

WD: I doubt if you will get a copy of it. It came out on a little, one of them little 45's. You wouldn't see that any more.

HM: Sometimes it ends up on the internet, though, even though it was just a small record.

WD: I tried to pull it up the other day.

HM: It didn't come up.

WD: I'm pullin' up all the rest of the songs I've written.

HM: Interesting. Well, how do you know when it's a calypso versus a ballad. What makes it a calypso to you, say, you know? You say "I'm writing . . ."

WD: Rhythm.

HM: The rhythm?

WD: Yeah. You see all, nearly all popular songs that are written in 4/4 time, 4/4. Could sing in any genre, all you have to do is change the rhythm.

HM: Do calypso-?

WD: Unlike, there are some calypso that is written in what they call cut time.

HM: Cut time.

WD: Cut time, right. Two-fourths. Well, I does write in two-fourths. I write, look, I'm not formally trained to write music, so I write in two-fourths.

HM: You write in 2/4.

WD: Yeah. Which is cut time. And when an international musician playing it, it sound different. I had that problem when I arranged for a guy from New York one time and when we were working with some Haitian musicians, they reading the music correctly, but when they played it, somehow the metering and the lilt of the song . . .

HM: It was different.

WD: Well, yeah. I had to practically put them to sit down and (Demonstrates conducting.) Bup-bup-bup-bup.

HM: And teach them.

WD: Yeah.

HM: So, the rhythm is the main thing.

WD: Now, if you're writing for four-fourths you would not have that problem.

HM: But when you write calypso, are you influenced by other kinds of music?

WD: Sometimes. Not all the time.

HM: It's mostly you're influenced by other calypso that you've heard in the past.

WD: Hardly, hard-, I don't listen to much calypso.

HM: So, yeah. So.

WD: Now I was talkin' 'bout that with GB. Conceptualizing a song. What happen is I have mih own style. And I write these days, I used to write in longhand long time, with a tape recorder in front of me.

5:02

HM: So, you used to write it out in longhand?

WD: Yeah. Longhand, with a, I had a guitar, as far as I don't play guitar now, can't play a guitar again, but I, since I had my stroke, if you notice my arm.

HM: Would you sit with a guitar?

WD: I sit with my guitar now and plug in my cassette tape recorder.

HM: Music tape cassette recorder?

WD: Any kind of tape recorder. And I sit down there and I get the concept and I start writing line by line, line by line. After I have the whole song put down, right . . .

HM: Do you start from then right . . .

WD: . . . then . . .

HM: . . . from the beginning to the finish or do you do the chorus first?

WD: Anyhow. Sometime the chorus come first. Sometime the chorus come first. One of the problems with I writing songs is when you get an idea and write a verse and a chorus, follow-up, following up there, especially a calypso that's kind of long. It's hard to pull up the rest of the verses.

HM: To get the rest of the verses.

WD: Sometimes, I wrote a calypso for Baron, "Say Say," and it took me a whole year. I had the music for the chorus, everything. Down. Pat. And Baron in New York waiting, waiting for the song. And they're not for hell, them words . . .

GB: Wouldn't come.

WD: It wouldn't come out. Told GB. Here what happened, and then, happened that me and Merchant we start this rhythm thing, we started write on a rhythm. Now we would sit down with we guitars and make rhythms. And with, you know, them Casio . . .

HM: Keyboards.

GB: Keyboards.

WD: Them small Casio keyboards. I used to use that.

GB: Right.

WD: I started with a small one. And then I started to graduate to the bigger one. Then I used a use a, use the Brazilian beat, man.

GB: Samba.

WD: Yeah.

HM: Ah, samba.

WD: Yeah, the samba beat. Then you will translate to calypso after. I put down that song, and I have it dey.

HM: And that helped.

WD: (Sings.) Baby, my soul on fire. (Speaks.) I have the melody.

GB: Yeah. (Sings.) Set my soul on fire, fire, fire.

HM: So when he had the keyboard it helped

GB: Yeah. Oh yeah.

WD: So, here's what I did.

GB: (Sings.) Bring the water.

WD: When Baron call me, he tell me, "Joker, that last piece of melody, that you have?" I said, "Well, mih, I don't have the words for it," and I sat down there dey, I said, "Let me take a little smoke."

GB: (Laughs.)

WD: And I take that smoke. I said, now here what happened. I get the chorus, "Baby, my soul on fire."

GB: (Sings.) Fire, fire. Bring water.

WD: Then I make that. And then I play that over and over and over and over and over, and here what happened, then I come and I make the verse right on top that chorus. Hear me, that's what I was telling you. The only person who play that right is your partner who do it with the Hatters.

GB: Ah-hah. Achiba?

WD: No. The man from, the senior man from, his son does arrange now.

GB: (Two missing syllables) boy?

WD: Played with the band. A tenor pan.

GB: Not Achiba?

WD: Nah, he used to arrange for Hatters at the time.

GB: Later.

WD: From Boogie band.

GB: Right. Phase II.

WD: Yeah. From Phase II. Forget his name. Ah. His son went to Berklee.

HM: What's the name of the song?

GB: "Say Say."

WD: His son went to Berklee.

HM: Son went to Berklee?

WD: Yeah. He does play band now.

GB: (Three or four missing syllables).

WD: Who? Nah, not either. We'll continue.

GB: Was it Tambu? Tambu went Berklee.

WD: That boy, he had a little minor stroke the other day.

GB: Went to Berklee.

WD: His son does arrange. He does arrange all around the place.

GB: (Three or four missing syllables.)

HM: I know there have been several that went to Berklee.

WD: He arrange. He's the only man who played that properly.

GB: Play it properly.

WD: Properly. Here what, because I . . .

GB: You play the verse on top of the chorus?

WD: I mention that. I tell him, play (Sings a line.) Dai-dai-dai-dai (etc.) Then I make the chorus. And happen, GB, happen. When I went, when I reach New York, with that song to come here. Had the, all on the plane I writin' the lyrics.

HM: You're writing the lyrics. Yeah?

WD: Yeah. When I reaching New York with that song and Baron says, "Let me hear me the song now." Was Reno and me, I think. I ain't sure, GB. Gypsy was there. Was me and a fellow named Reno. Reno does sing calypso, too. We sitting in my room and understand (three or four missing syllables) they said, "Sing the song." Well I take my guitar and when I sing that song. The woman in there was a lady named Melda we used to stay by. When she heard it, she said, "I love that one!" (Laughter.) I had the whole song. When Baron hear that, when Baron put down the voice, and when Baron start, he have a high part.

GB: (Sings.) Bring water. Plenty water.

10:01

HM: So does Baron . . .

WD: (Sings.) Dai-dai-dai (etc.)

HM: Baron was recording this?

GB: Baron. Oh yes, it was a Baron song.

WD: (Speaks.) Here what happen. When the boy was arranging it, Ardin Herbert for Invaders. I tell them, I said, "Alvin Daniell come here." I tell them what to do because (two or three missing words). (WD and GB sing groove for "Say Say.") That could play the whole, right through the whole tune.

GB: Okay. (Sings groove for "Say Say.")

HM: I gotta listen to that.

GB: Yeah.

WD: Yeah. Here what happen. And the bass, the one I do the bass line to. So, the tune could, the whole damn bloody tune could play on that one bass line.

GB: On the bass line.

WD: Like a rhythm.

GB: Like a James Brown kind of rhythm.

WD: Me and Merchant is who started to do that too.

GB: Okay. Rhythm and bass line. Build on top of that.

WD: We got that, I got that from Arrow. Arrow is the man who started to do that with "Hot, Hot, Hot."

GB: (Sings.) Feelin' hot, hot, hot.



WD: Do you know it is Leston (Paul) who did "Hot, Hot, Hot"?

GB: Yes, yes.

HM: That makes me think . . .

WD: He never gave Leston no credit for that.

GB: No credit, but let's not talk about it.

HM: Ah, Lord Superior, Supie told me that Lord Melody used to write his songs just by playing bass lines on the guitar, he couldn't really play the chords, but he could play the bass lines.

GB: Mm-hm.

HM: And so that's how he would . . .

WD: Would you believe that in the dying stages of Melody's career I write two songs for him? He came here and sit down here and I write two songs. I write for Nello Nelson, too. Two songs. I could remember one of the song. Nelson come with that topic. He said, "Joker, anything you want, you could find it in town." He come down. I used to live down there. He come down. I see this man walking down there, asking people, "Where Joker livin'?" And he come down here, he sit down there, "Well, I want to write." I write two for, I can't even remember what the name of that other song. I know one of the songs named "Town Have It." That was the chorus.

GB: "Town Have It."

WD: Anything you could think about . . .

HM: "Town Have It."

GB: Anything you want you can get in town.

WD: "Town Have It." Yeah.

GB: Yeah.

WD: You know who I write one for and I can't remember the song. Anytime you see him you must ask him. Rikki Jai. I write two songs with Rikki Jai. I can't remember . . .

HM: Rikki Jai. Yeah.

WD: My partner Sean Randall can't even get it. Can't remember.

GB: That's after I launch him with "Sumintra."

WD: Yeah. After you launch him with "Sumintra." I tell him you write "Sumintra." He and Bally used to come. Here what happen with Rikki Jai, right? Rikki Jai used to come here nearly every week. He came here one day without Bally when I said I didn't want to talk to him with Bally. He come and he start to come by me without Bally. Because Bally do me something years ago, a

funny thing, but we talk about that later. Here what happened, he came by me and sit down right dey and I sittin' right there. I had this house already. He come and he sit down dey, and he talkin' 'bout "What can I change?" I said, "Rikki, here we talking, now listen now to me. Go back to your basic." He said, "What do you mean?" I said, "Watch me. You're an East Indian. You hardly will win the crown."

GB: Right.

WD: You know what I'm saying? The face change. The face change.

GB: Yeah.

WD: Cause I told him, I said, "Watch me. Go back to your Chutney origins." And that was such a good vibes, cause I meet him in award show where they did award Machel for ah-

GB: (To HM.) The light coming through the window. You can get a nice picture from here. Capture it. Catch that.

WD: Yeah, I met him in an award show and we discuss that. He tell me, he said, "Joker, you know what you were saying." That man become a millionaire.

GB: Yeah, but I, I launch him and set him up nice. (To WD.) Turn, turn, turn and and look at Hunter. You'll get a better, yes.

HM: Can you turn and look at me like that?

GB: Yeah. See that situation? Did some photography in school and seein' that picture. With the light coming through the window, coloring the face there? Nice shot.

WD: I like Rikki Jai.

GB: Yeah.

WD: He treat you right, though?

GB: (To HM.) Beautiful. Beautiful. Yeah. Yeah. (To WD.) Yeah, he treat me, well, he tried to make up, but, he started off . . .

WD: He became a millionaire.

GB: . . . when he start seeing big money, so he get stupid.

WD: Yeah, well that is how it does happen.

GB: He couldn't even pay for the song.

WD: He came by me, after that, he said, "Joker, boy."

HM: He couldn't pay for the song?

GB: He couldn't even pay for the song. He was working as a clerk with Bally in customs on Abercrombie Street.

WD: Yeah. In customs. I remember. That's when he used to come by me. He used to come by me and sit in that chair.

GB: Yeah. I gave him two songs. After "Sumintra" I give him a song called "Good Fathers" and "Citizen."

WD: He win the south crown.

GB: He win south monarch. He win Young King. He win, he make Dimanche Gras and won sixth. He win some other thing. Unattached Monarch. He win three titles in that year.

WD: I think so, I think so, yeah.

GB: Then he come and he win Chutney with "Sumintra" and the next song.

WD: I remember.

HM: What was the other song, "Good Fathers"? What was the other one?

GB: "Good Citizen." And, ah,

HM: "Good Citizen."

GB: Yeah.

15:00

HM: The songs you gave him. Yeah.

GB: Yeah. Rikki Jai.

WD: Here what happened.

GB: Don't forget about the interview.

HM: (Laughter.) Oh, yeah. The interview.

GB: I'm going to walk away. I don't want to interrupt you.

HM: Where, where do you, where do you get your ideas?

WD: I just sit and I conceptualize.

GB: Conceptualize your own thing.

WDS: Yeah.

HM: So, but when it starts, where does the idea come from?

WD: You know, I can't tell you that. You know many times people ask me that. I don't know.

HM: Something someone says, something you see.

WD: Yeah, something I see. Maybe I something I see. I hear on the news and all this kind of . . .

HM: I know it can,

WD: . . . sometimes I sit and I just take a phrase.

HM: Of something someone says? Or you read or something.

WD: No. I, what you call it, you coin a phrase. I coin a phrase and I write on it.

HM: I know it can happen different ways. Is there, can you think of a particular song where you can remember where the idea, you were sitting there and something happened and then it ended up being this particular song?

WD: Yeah. "Progress" was written after I went San Fernando and I see something. I see a deterioration of the environment. In San Fernando.

HM: Of the nature. A deterioration of nature?

WD: Yeah. The environment, really. (Five missing syllables) 'cause there was a hill in San Fernando. Anywheres you stood up in south you coulda seen that hill. Anywhere. And when I went there that day, the government had allowed them to quarry and they quarried down the whole hill and I think they stop it now. But there's only a little piece of the original.

HM: Hill was left.

WD: Yeah.

HM: So that you saw that and that inspired the song.

WD: To write "Progress."

HM: That's a beautiful song. Are there, in your work overall, are there certain themes that seem to come out more often? A certain, topics or themes that come from your songs?

WD: There may be lines that I could, maybe I have a tendency to repeat sometimes to get across a certain idea.

HM: So, what, say, could you say that again? What, is that a particular theme?

WD: I said I may use a certain phrase, to get across a particular idea. Now all songwriters (four missing syllables) that is how you know you could know their brand. You listen and hear that.

HM: Because it's your sound.

WD: A turn of phrase and all this kind of . . .

HM: But what about a particular topic. Are you drawn more toward singing about certain things?

WD: Well, I like, I don't hardly write a local political songs. Hardly.

HM: You don't do that.

WD: Yeah. I write world politics.

HM: About world politics.

WD: Yeah.

HM: So bigger.

WD: Yeah.

HM: Not just local.

WD: Yeah. The reason for that is that when you write local politics, like if you write for the competition? The highest standard is political commentary in Trinidad and Tobago, and I does hardly write by that because if you, when you write political commentary in your own country, you have a tendency to take a side.

HM: Ah, people take a side.

WD: Yeah. And when you take a side you haven't got the next side.

HM: So you've lost . . .

WD: And that put me in a lot of trouble in my life, you know.

HM: You've lost that part of the audience that . . .

WD: Yeah.

HM: . . . disagrees.

WD: Yeah. Here what happened.

HM: How did you get in trouble?

WD: The government wasn't doing well at a certain time, and a party was aspiring to be in the government came to me, a high-ranking member of the party came and asked me to write a song for them. Now, the government side had already sent an invoice to ask me to write a song for them. I wrote that song. And subsequently the ruling party didn't want to pay for the song so he get vex, he had a disenchantment with the party because certain things happen in his life that he came back and tell me, "Joker, you can do whatever you want with that song." So, I

disregard that song and I write a new song for them called "Vote Them Out." "Anytime you have a chance, vote them out." Was a song by a fella named Deple, D-E-P-L-E.

HM: Okay. D-E-P-L-E.

WD: That's the artist that we used for that. I didn't even put my name on the song because I'm afraid the political . . .

HM: Content.

WD: Repercussion and so on. And I write the song and then they lost. They had thirty-six seat in the parliament. They lost thirty-three to three. "Vote Them Out" was the name of the song.

HM: So, that, your song helped that happen.

19:58

WD: Yeah. I wrote twice and put them out of power, you know. Crazy came here (two or three missing syllables) and tell me. He came and ask me write a song for them and I write a song for them and they lost again, but not so bad.

HM: So that made you unpopular? With them?

WD: Well, who know? Because I have a tendency to keep mih name out of these songs.

HM: Not have your name on it.

WD: Crazy was the fall guy the second time. So, everybody down on Crazy.

HM: Ah, they were down on Crazy for that. For putting that out.

WD: A song name of "Patrick Manning Will Have to Go." That Crazy.

HM: That was in the song?

WD: That is the name of the song. And Crazy sung it and he record it. But the one with Deple, I never put nobody name. I tend to, now that I'm doing over and I get my doctorate and people interview me and I'll say it, because I've done that.

HM: You've done that.

WD: Yeah, I've done felt the repercussion. Because they kind of ostracize me after that. Any song that I write now. You see it is feasible for the ruling party. Calypso plays a very important part in the politics here, so what the parties do, the judgin' of the calypso, they will install the activists inside there, so the activists will look out for their party, but the people don't know that, GB will know that, you understand, so we people know that now, and they write to suit the judges and then they bond with the judges, and the judges know that. "I am kind of for your party." When they judgin', they judge accordingly. GB is a master f that. GB know how to ride the waves.

HM: How to ride the waves.

WD: Yeah. I stopped doing that.

HM: You can't get too tied into one party.

WD: Yeah. I don't know. I don't write on no side. I mean, I write a song how I feel.

HM: You'd rather, you rather stay, talk about, you were saying world politics. Larger issues.

WD: Yeah, and then if I'm writing local politics, if you pay me, if you come with a fee, for me to write for you for election, they call it a campaign song, that is plenty money. There are plenty of people do that, because the song becomes yours (three or four missing syllables).

HM: It becomes who you are. Well, I was just going to say, then, are you influenced, is your writing influenced by the community around you, what's important to the community?

WD: Sometimes.

HM: Sometimes?

WD: We call that social commentary.

HM: Social commentary.

WD: Most my songs are like that.

HM: Not political, but social.

WD: Not political songs because I write things that focus on God, the gods, and all them kind of things.

HM: So issues . . .

WD: That's what is standing me in good stead these days. Maybe get me that doctorate the other day. I have a doctorate and I have a fellowship from the other university, too.

HM: Right. Well I knew you got your doctorate from U.W.I. last week.

WD: Yeah that's (three or four missing syllables) but I got a fellowship from U.T.T., too.

HM: From U.T.T. also.

WD: Yeah.

HM: That was a big honor. Do you write at particular times of day? Is there a particular time of day you like better?

WD: I write when I feel like it. When I'm doing nothing, sitting upstairs. I have a computer upstairs.

HM: And what time of day would that be?

WD: Anytime.

HM: Anytime, but you're upstairs is the location.

WD: Anytime. I have a keyboard. I can't play the keyboard. You know, I can't play my guitar again. I have guitar and all them kind of thing, but I can't play.

HM: But you play a keyboard?

WD: But I have a keyboard, I coulda thing with one hand and all this kind of thing.

HM: So you can find the notes.

WD: Yeah. With the right software. I put on the Reason or Logic on the computer and all them kind of, and I build a rhythm and I sit down there and I . . .

HM: So, you build a rhythm on the keyboard.

WD: Yeah.

HM: And find it, and, but the time of day doesn't matter so much.

WD: I could put, I know what chords and all them kind of things. I could do something for yuh. I could show you. Like a G chord for two bars or four bars.

HM: You can decide if you want it to last for two, how many measures you want it to last.

WD: Then I had to have this thing on the computer whey yuh does write music with, I forget the name, boy. Notepad. I use Notepad. You come and yuh get an empty staff and I would show yuh and I could put a,

HM: Is Notepad the software? Or is . . .

WD: Notepad is a software. You get an empty staff. (Draws an example.) And then you could write the notes and the chords. You can put the chords.

24:58

HM: You can lay out the chords.

WD: You could lay out the chords, that's all you want, but you have to be, you see I used to arrange for steel band and enjoy. I would put D, (Continues drawing.) four bars, C, two bars, and I would put it in the computer and the Notepad does read it and play it.

HM: So it would play it then once it was programmed, once you had it in there.



WD: You have the right note Notepad it will play it.

HM: So you just build the track that way.

WD: Yeah. And then I will hear it and then once I have them chords play, I could sing on top that.

HM: Then you could sing your melody over the top.

WD: Yeah.

HM: Well, you said that you might start with the chorus, you might start with the verse, it just depends on the song. When you were writing before computers did you write anything down before you were finished? Or did you complete the song and before you put it down,

WD: Yeah. If I out of my house.

HM: You do what?

WD: If I'm outside of the house. Like if I'm in town,

HM: You went outside the house?

WD: If I'm in town.

HM: In town?

WD: I constantly does be beatin' my foot all the time. If I in town I could write a song in town. It's like what GB said he went up there.

HM: You would just do it in your head? You would think about it.

WD: Yeah. Make it and not to forget I take a piece of paper. And I write down the notes and . . .

HM: You would write down the notes.

WD: . . . and the value of the notes and when I come home here I remember it.

HM: Where did you learn to write the notes? In school?

WD: Well, people taught me.

HM: People taught you?

WD: Yeah.

HM: How to, was that from pan?

WD: Was from pan. And then some of them guys when I start to write, they used to come here, people like you heard about Clive Bradley? You must have heard for Clive Bradley, he used to

come here regular. And I had a keyboard upstairs, one of them Casio keyboards and he showed me certain things.

HM: So, you learned how to notate the music.

WD: Yeah.

HM: That's helpful.

WD: Yeah. I would notate what I write in town and when I come home I look as close as possible to what I do. And when I come home here, on any paper, you know, wouldn't have to have staff, just write the note on top of the note.

HM: Then you could write it down.

WD: Yeah. Let me get a piece of paper, lend me a pen and I show you how to do it. I'll show you. I write the note. I write like it this, (Writes an example.) then I write all the notes.

HM: Then you would just write down all the notes like that.

WD: Then I would put E.

HM: Oh, and you would put the name of the note over the note. So, you didn't have to write . . .

WD: Or I could write the value over it

HM: . . . you didn't have to write it on a musical staff. You know . . .

WD: Nah.

HM: . . . with the five lines?

WD: Nah.

HM: You could just write it down and write,

WD: Could put it, do so. Notate the . . .

HM: Yeah, okay. So those would be the measures.

WD: Yeah.

HM: That's interesting. Yeah. I'm teaching something at the school right now that we use in Nashville and instead of writing E or D or C we write the number of the note in the scale it's in.

WD: Oh, yeah. You could put that number?

HM: If it was in the key of C

WD: Same thing. Same thing

HM: Same thing? So if it was in the key of C and this was a C, you would write a "1," 'cause that's the, that's the bass, the tonic.

WD: Ah. 'Cause I have something, that I should, that Bradley do for me, with all the relevant chords in every key.

HM: Oh, they had a, it was like a diagram or a chart?

WD: Yeah.

HM: Would show you, then you could just read down and see . . .

WD: Yeah. Let me see, like the key of C. Another thing, there were certain things, like diamond, like notes, I don't know. Let me teach you something.

HM: The diamonds, yeah.

WD: There are notes that, if you have a pan here. Let me say if you have a pan and your guitar. There are notes, from the time you hit the note it will resound on your guitar.

HM: You would also sound on the guitar.

WD: Yeah. I don't know if you ever had that experience. It would sound on the guitar.

HM: Yeah. Sympathetic.

WD: Yeah.

HM: Sympathetic vibration.

WD: Yeah, I don't know what you call it. But there are notes that you will sing. And if you have a pan there, a tin cup or something, it will bounce on that tin cup and head back and all that kind of thing. These are powerful notes. Bradley and them teach me these things. I never knew them things. These are things I teach people in my mentorship class and all that.

HM: You had a mentorship class?

WD: Yeah. I had a successful one.

HM: So you would teach them that, too? That really helps to have that 'cause I've talked to some calypsonians that they would write everything in their head when they were younger, not older but younger before they would ever, and they would never write it down because they didn't know how to write it down.

WD: I can't remember.

HM: They would just have to remember it.

29:59

WD: And then they have what they have called the formattin' songs. I had to teach these guys that one there. About format. I told them, "Watch me. It don't make no sense. Calypso is a complete format of a song." You understand that? We use it as we . . .

HM: Oh, you can use it over and over again?

WD: Yeah, but we really modern ones, like me and GB, we start to write different.

HM: Different, not using the old formulas.

D: Yeah. Because I does write. now I does write, I never write a calypso . . .

HM: The old traditional kind.

WD: . . . without the two parts. I always do like the Americans. I will write a third part where, now we used to call it in town mediate in the days gone by. Now they call it a bridge.

HM: A bridge. Yeah. Yeah. But that, in traditional calypso there wasn't a bridge.

WD: (Two missing syllables) at all.

HM: Just a verse and a chorus.

WD: They still had a bridge you know, but they used to use the chorus, what they used to call the band chorus.

HM: It's a different chorus, an instrumental.

WD: Instrumental chorus. Because if you notice, they will start with an instrumental chorus.

HM: At the beginning?

WD: Yeah. Put it at the beginning. And they will repeat that chorus between the stan . . .

HM: Between, as an Instrumental.

WD: . . . verses.

HM: Sometimes we call that a turnaround. That's just the instrumental piece that you would insert in between.

WD: Between the verses? You give me a new word there.

HM: Okay. Because that's where it would turnaround.

WD: We call it band chorus.

HM: Band chorus.

WD: Yeah.

HM: Interesting.

WD: Well, now I told them, "Start teaching people to write three parts." Because some, especially in the soca genre . . .

HM: You need something different to change it up?

WD: You need something different to make it more interesting.

HM: Kind of give you a relief, a change somewhere.

WD: Well, I taught people how to do that. There's a method that they mention. I do it in the American method. If you're writin' in C. (Writes.) You write in the scale of C, when you go to that third part with your bridge or whatever, you go to F.

HM: You go to a different, you modulate to a different key.

WD: Yeah. You go to F, you understand? And you end on the fifth, on G.

HM: On the G.

WD: Yes, and then you repeat the chorus.

HM: Go back to the chorus in the original key.

WD: Yeah.

HM: And so you get a lift.

WD: Yeah.

HM: Just a little break.

WD: Yeah. When you go to F with the sixth note of the key, right, you get a different, different feel. And then you could end up on the sixth. The seventh or the sixth, you understand, and then you come back to the tonic in the original key. I used to teach them fellas that.

HM: It sounds fresh that way.

WD: It sounds different, yeah.

HM: It sounds new.

WD: But people out there don't know these things, what I tellin' you. I had to teach them all that kind of thing.

HM: That's good that you were sharing it. One question I had about calypso being sort of the news, in the traditional sense, was giving people the news, about different things, but now we have twenty-four hour news, we have news seven days a week, we have social media. Does that change what the role of calypso is?

WD: In a way, yes. Because you could pick out something from the news. And highlight the news itself by repeating that certain thing over and over and over. And it becomes like indoctrination. You understand?

HM: Kind of beat it in . . .

WD: Beat it in.

HM: . . . into your head.

WD: Beat it into your head. Calypso does that a lot.

HM: So is that changed, though, with people being so kind of overexposed to the news or does it . . .

WD: Here what happened. They're taking a different side of it.

HM: A different look at it.

WD: Yeah.

HM: Kind of take it, rather than what they're just hearing on TV.

WD: Maybe a humorous, or what we call, what word I looking for? What is called, you could put a spin on it.

HM: A spin on it. Yeah, use some humor, some irony.

WD: They use that word to, in the political commentary. GB, what is the word that is used for political? What, satire.

HM: Satire.

WD: I learned all them thing in school, you know. We learned it during English and thing though I don't pay attention to it too much.

HM: (To GB.) We're talking about just the news being so, so much news that, what's the role of calypso. He's saying, you know, is satire is putting a different angle on it.

34:56

WD: Sometimes when I listen to calypso and I, let me tell you something, let me tell you this, there are plenty of people (four or five missing syllables) there is a calypso right now in Trinidad and Tobago for every issue that you could ever think about.

GB: Exactly. Yep.

WD: Every issue, a story. Yeah. 'Cause I used, I still, I writin' my thoughts in my little news calypsos.

GB: Right.

WD: I will use a calypso to say something to the minister.

GB: That's right.

WD: You understand? And I will write the calypso and then post it and say, watch me, like this one here I post. I write Guardian. I post on Guardian, to say here what I want to say this morning. I want to tell the chief justice, here what happened, the very same thing that he stood silent with, when he said, watch me, "Privacy." There's nothing like absolute privacy.

GB: Now he's protesting. When somebody does that. That's right.

WD: He protestin' and want to use the same right now in court.

GB: He wants to exercise the same right that he denies somebody else.

WD: He never deny.

GB: How many more questions do you have?

HM: I'm almost done. Do you need to go?

WD: He never denied.

GB: No, no. He's almost talking more to me than to you.

WD: GB, GB, he never denied.

GB: Right.

WD: But he stood silent when that stupid statement was made.

GB: Was made. That's right. Now it affect him. He jump up. He filing lawsuit.

HM: I've got one more.

WD: So I wrote the Guardian in the beginning, if you listen, I have the exact words there.

GB: Right.

HM: Let me ask one more question. The fact that you were not a performer. That you were a composer for other performers, did that affect your writing? The fact that you weren't going to have to go sing on the stage, but you were writing your songs for other people, did that affect your writing? Did that affect you?

WD: Well, you reversed it man, there. You found that I was not a performer.

GB: He was.

WD: I never perform on stage, but every song I write, and GB could tell you that. Every song I write I saw myself performing.

GB: Okay.

WD: Right up there

GB: Interesting.

HM: In your head? You were singing it on stage?

GB: No. He saw himself performing. Everything he's ever written.

HM: So . . .

GB: He saw himself performing.

HM: You were imagining yourself on stage.

GB: Yeah.

WD: And in some cases I instructed who didn't know to perform the song, how to perform it.

GB: Yeah.

M: How to do it. So, you were visualizing yourself as the performer.

WD: People like Trini.

GB: Yeah.

WD: Trini's a guy who used to take me to the . . .

GB: You had to drill Trini to sing a song properly at first. He didn't, kaiso doesn't come natural to him.

HM: He had to learn.

GB: Teach him phrasin'. Work with him in the studio, how to sing a line. Yeah, Trini's a hard work.

WD: Yeah. Well, I know you write for him that song.

GB: Trini's a hard work.

HM: Is there anything else that I haven't covered that you would like to say?

WD: Well, you'd have to ask me.



GB: (Laughs.) No, he said, he didn't answer. It's a joke you have to think about.

HM: I'm saying, anything, I'm all, those are all my questions. Is there anything else that you'd like to say that we didn't cover about writing and how you write.

WD: I'd like to, here what happened, I'm trying to remember that girls' name. (Note: before the interview began WD was trying to remember the name of a female country artist.)

GB: (Laughs.)

HM: The country singer?

GB: Joker, what do you think about the policy that Kitchener, Superior, Chalkdust have, that if you are not a writer, you don't write your own song, you're not a real calypsonian.

WD: Well, I argue that with Supie and Chalkie and them already.

GB: Yeah. What's your position on that?

WD: Here what happened. When they had the tent, you know they had that tent over there by Seaman and what, somewhere around there, all of them was there. And after me and Supie argue that in the back, an issue (two missing syllables) with me. Supie, Chalkdust . . .

GB: Same people.

WD: . . . acting big shot. You were there.

GB: Mm-hm.

WD: And they talkin' bout . . .

GB: What's your take on that?

WD: . . . here what I asked them: "How I know you write your song?"

GB: Thank you.

WD: How I know you write your song?

GB: Good point. Good point.

WD: 'Cause I said, "You can come with a song and you can say 'I write it'."

GB: I write it.

WD: You understand? Some of the best song Chalkie sing, he never write. Two of the most acclaimed song that he said he wrote, the man come right there, and sit down for me. And that same man . . .

HM: Somebody else wrote that song.

GB: Cheat.

HM: You wrote Chalkie's song?

WD: Nah, nah, nah. I did not. The man who wrote the song come right there and sit down. "Supreme Happiness."

GB: "Supreme Happiness."

WD: "Supreme Happiness." (Four missing syllables.) He used to write so much song. He write two songs for Chalkie. He write "Ram Kirpalani."

GB: Okay.

WD: And he write "Supreme Happiness." Brother is a, was a big, was a big, big man in the Guardian, you know.

GB: Okay.

WD: Public man although I don't know where he gone. That was the brother. He was a police officer. His brother used to write for the Guardian.

GB: So Chalkdust deceitful then.

HM: Yeah. Because he's not writing it.

WD: I wouldn't call that deceitful.

GB: What is it again? Dishonest. Choose your word. Dishonest. Deceitful. Political.

WD: He's still protecting that he could not (four missing syllables).

GB: He hypocritical. Because you see, if the writer is not well-known. He's a small guy, "Supreme Happiness" was never no high-profile performer, right?

WD: But he's right.

GB: But most people eh know.

WD: You know something Sparrow told me?

GB: But most people eh know he write song.

40:00

WD: Sparrow told me "No artist pass a good song." None.

GB: None. Regardless of who write it. That's right.

WD: Not gon' pass a good song.

HM: They'd be stupid to.

GB: Thank you. Thank you.

HM: If they've got a better song . . .

GB: See the point you made just comin' down there.

HM: . . . they would be foolish not to record the best song.

GB: You just made the point coming up here. We just talk that. Yes, so you're correct. Once you hear a good song, you don't care who write it.

WD: You know "Supreme Happiness," you know why he open up to me? He came here and sit down here because he wanted to win the political. He was sick. He said he was suffering from diabetes bad.

GB: Okay.

WD: He come here and he said, "Joker, Ah want you to help me." He said, "I could help you, too." He said, here what happened, "I want to win the police crown." Two times he win the police crown I write for him. And so he come and he sit down there and that man start to cry. He start to tell me what Chalkie and them fellows. He write "Ram Kirpalani" and then he write "Marilyn."

GB: Right.

WD: Two of the most acclaimed songs.

GB: Songs Chalkie's ever had. "Marilyn," the uptempo one?

WD: Chalkie, he have a style.

GB: Yes.

WD: He have a style, he have a way he does go up.

(Note: someone brings in refreshments.)

GB: Hi. Hunter, you want . . .

HM: Sure. Thank you.

WD: He have a way that he does go up. Go up and (Sings.) Dah-dah-dah-dai. He go up there. All of the, most of the calypsonians go up there now. But (two missing syllables) what, me and Merchant learned to write on a four chord. We were, you understand, the four chord it goes C, C.

GB: (Laughs.)

HM: C in the key of G?

WD: C, nah, C, the sixth. A.

GB: C, sixth, A

WD: The second, the median, B, D minor. Then go to a G7. That is a whole sequence there. Can write anything there.

GB: You study music?

WD: No.

HM: He, but people taught him. He had people teaching him. How to notate stuff.

GB: Okay.

WD: Here what happened. Here what happened, GB. You could write nearly anything on those four chords. That's what that sequence is, you know. That's a four-chord sequence.

HM: (to GB) See, he was showing me how he learned to write it down, from pan, and from just learning how to . . .

WD: Here what happened. You could write anything on them chords. Here what happened, who teach me them chords. Clive Bradley.

HM: Clive Bradley.

WD: Clive Bradley. GB . . .

GB: I was just talking about (two or three missing syllables).

WD: GB, told me. Hear what happened.

GB: I was not talking to you about that, right?

WD: Boogie showed me how to extend and look at them. With that, with those things you could have, you could break it down into two chords.

HM: Two chords.

WD: Two. You could have the tonic. Tonic on the tonic sixth or the tonic ninth and you got the same chords basically you could play. You could play the notes of the bass on the, for instance, you could play C, C, A, A, A because they are the ninth, let me see, in the key of C.

GB: C. C ninth.

HM: C9 would have a D in it.

GB: A D. Right.

WD: D, yeah, but high. You could have an octave D. But when you put that thing like this, like you could put the eleventh, and all them kind of thing.

GB: The thirteenth and thing, yeah.

HM: The tensions.

WD: You could change the whole complex.

HM: Yeah. Those are jazz tensions.

WD: These are things that (three missing syllables) the Americans (four missing syllables) now.

GB: I don't play.

WD: I was well-taught, you know.

HM: I'm going to turn this off.

End of interview