

Interview subject: Short Pants

Interviewer: J. Hunter Moore

Date: September 30, 2017

Location: radio station studio on Maraval Road, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, following Short Pants's weekly calypso program

Actual name: Llewellyn Mac Intosh

Date of birth: July 4, 1948

Place of birth: Pointe-a-Pierre, Trinidad and Tobago

Awards (as of March 2018): National Extempo finalist (multiple years), Most Humorous Calypso, 2009 (for "De Infidel")

Best songs/best-known songs: "The Law is an Ass," "De Infidel"

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Individuals heard during the interview:

SP: Short Pants

HM: Hunter Moore

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

Knock on: to improvise on a musical instrument

Nuh: you know

Yuh: you're

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Interview:

HM: This is September 30th. I'm sitting with Llewellyn Short Pants Mac Intosh. And just how did, tell me, you were just telling me how you got the name Short Pants, so if you could just explain that to me again.

SP: Well, you know styles of dress, modes of dress change tremendously over the years, but when I went to, well in Trinidad and Tobago we call it college, but college in Trinidad and Tobago, the students are age eleven to nineteen. That's college, that's before you go to university, which is what you call college, right? So, when I was at school youngsters wore short pants that was, that's how we dressed generally. In fact, even up to recently the policemen, part of the uniform would be short pants, and they wore what was called puttees, military, there's a

kind of, like a stocking that they would wrap around. So I wore short pants until I got to the latter years of secondary school, age fifteen, sixteen. So short pants was not uncommon. Of course, the years changed dramatically after that, because my eldest son, when he started secondary school at age eleven, he started in long pants. But I didn't, I started in short pants which I, generally you spent seven years in what we call secondary school, right, so up to my fifth year I was still wearing short pants. We had two uniforms. We had what was called the dress uniform you'd use for formal occasions, the first day of the term, well, you say semester, but we had three terms in the year. So, the first day or there might be a special occasion where you'd be told, "Wear your dress uniform." So, I got my dress pants as a long pants first, but I didn't get, you know, I didn't get the everyday long pants until maybe my sixth year. So, because I wore short pants and I might have been looking for a rhyme at some point in time in, because I actually started to compose calypsos while at school. So I simply called myself Short Pants, you know.

HM: Well, that was my next question, when did you write, start writing calypso, so you started in school.

SP: I started in school. I remember writing the first one, might have been in my fourth year in school and really it was an extension of poetry writing. At one time I liked history a great deal, and I, in my younger years I would have told you that history was my favorite subject. But after two or three years of secondary school I got to like literature a great deal. When I say literature, English literature. So, I liked, you know, Shakespeare and Dickens and the poetry. We did, well, if you remember that Trinidad was a British colony, we only got Independence in 1962. I would have started secondary school around, what, '61, but it took some time for school curricula to change. So we did a lot of English poetry and so on and I got to love the poetry. I got to love the literature and at school we had a literary and dramatic society or a literary and debating society. I can't remember which it was called, but I got myself involved in both and while the teacher or there might have been a teacher as the person in charge, the supervisor, largely it was the senior students who managed it. And they would have publications and from time to time they would walk around to the classes and ask if anybody had any articles they wanted to put. You had a poem, you had a story, you had a joke. And it was great fun if I can put it loosely, to have your work published within the school. I think the, you couldn't even really call it a magazine, a kind of journal, four, five pages stapled together, sold for a few cents, but you would be glad to buy it because there was your work in print and I had a couple of the poems I wrote that was published like that. But annually the school would have a magazine and that was more formal and I did have a couple poems published in the magazine. And then as would happen with young men, you know, there'd be young love, there would be the young ladies around, whether where you lived or the schools near to you that you felt that you were in love with and so on and, again taken from the poetry you were reading, there was love poetry, so you know, you would write verse to these girls, you know.

5:33

HM: So, this was poetry, but would you consider it calypso? I mean at that point? Or was it just poetry?

SP: Well, I started writing, I was writing poetry and following what, you know, what the teachers would have taught. I mean, you did learn a little bit about what were feet and what was meter. And you know, you learned that and, well, coupled with that there were other things happening.

So at the national level there was a lady who was very popular. She was called Auntie Kay. She hosted a radio program for youngsters. She did it for several years. And it was hosted at, in fact, very close to here. There is a building near to here that was called Radio Trinidad at the time and she hosted the program there. And on Sundays youngsters would go and there would be a quick audition before the show and then she'd select five or six finalists and you would perform. And it was sponsored by one of the businessmen, I think a biscuit company eventually, although it may not have been the first sponsor. And you know, the children would sing or recite or whatever and you would have winners by the end of the show and they would get prizes. And it became popular and it became a place for youngsters to go on Sunday afternoons as a bit of recreation. And she decided one year why not have a calypso competition for the youngsters. And at home, you know, as I am quite certain it happened in most homes, one listened to this competition. And I listened to it and I heard it and I thought that I would compete. And I wrote a calypso to compete and sang it for my colleagues in class and they liked it, and you know, but . . .

HM: So, in that case it had, you had a melody as well as words?

SP: Well, what I did, my initial melody was, I used, well, I mean now I am old enough and I look back I can see that I stole, plagiarized a melody from a folk song. There was a folk song melody at least part of it. I think the chorus. The chorus was a folk song melody. I don't think the verse, I don't think it was, but the chorus was definitely a copying of a folk melody. And the guys in my class they were all enthused, and they thought I would do well. The song was about football. Football was very, well, you call it soccer in the States, football.

HM: Sure. It makes more sense to call it football.

SP: (Laughs.) College, college football is very popular.

(Microphone is repositioned.)

SP: Up to now in Trinidad it's probably even more popular than the big leagues in which adults participate. If you went to a college game you'd be surprised to see how huge crowds are. And there was intense rivalry between the colleges. And there was a particular game, and the college I attended, we lost and it was heartbreaking. So that's . . .

HM: That was the subject?

SP: That was the subject of the calypso.

HM: But you were, were you, as a child at that time, so how old were you at that time, would you say?

SP: I'd of been sixteen, seventeen.

HM: So were you listening to popular calypso on the radio during Carnival season or anything, like . . .

9:44

SP: Yeah. Calypso was, I might even say, more popular on radio then than it is now. You know that's one of the things. The other thing, too, is that we had very few radio stations at the time. Maybe one or two. There would have been a third one. The third one would have been one that the armed forces had. There was a military base here and there was an armed forces radio station. But local radio stations, we had either one or two, so it meant that if you said you were listening to radio, you were listening to one of the local ones and if there was only one, you know, you went to it, whatever they aired. And especially during the calypso season, they would play the calypsos. And my mother, who is what you will now describe as a housewife, meaning she worked at home looking after the children, there was seven of us, she would be singing them regularly. It was also the golden age of Sparrow. Sparrow was very popular. And he would release, what, he put out an album every year. So, it means that every year there were ten new calypsos that Sparrow sang. As a rival he had Lord Melody and there were a couple others and the calypsos were aired, they were quite popular. People sang them. I heard my mother singing calypso so I grew up . . .

HM: You grew up listening to it. That's how you learned, . . .

SP: Yeah, right.

HM: . . . was hearing it on the radio.

SP: You know, you hear it on the radio, but, you know, there was mummy . . .

HM: And your mom sings, too.

SP: . . . over the tub, you know, washing clothes over the tub, and she'd be singing. And not only that, you talked about it at school. I mean, that was in the era in which I grew up, 1950's, 1960's. It was the popular music. And we talked about it as youngsters, you know.

HM: Well, and you said you primarily write words, you know, so as you went along writing you discerned that your gift was primarily with the lyrics and did you find people to work with, musicians to work with?

SP: Yes, for a little while I've got a distant cousin who was an extremely good musician. I remember him visiting my home as a youngster and I was amazed that, my sister would sometimes had, or she did have at one time, a baby piano as a gift that she would have gotten for Christmas or something. And, I mean, you know, she got it as a gift and it's there and you knock on it. And you were talking just now about notation, numerical notation. You might get with the piano a little card and it had numbers and the notes had numbers and you could knock out a tune. But after Christmas is over on the sixth of January, you know, you hardly bother, but this cousin would come home and he would take the piano up and he would do what I found was amazing things. Because he was trained formally as a musician and he could play. And we always kept in touch, so when I got to the stage where I was taking calypso-writing seriously enough, I would, as I'd begin composing, I would pay him a visit and say what's in my head, and what I am thinking and maybe I might have a fragment of a melody if you could call it that. And he would improvise something and I would say, "Well, no, that doesn't sound right." And I'm sure I spent seven, eight, nine years doing that, meaning visiting him annually, sitting in his drawing room, you know, we will drink something, and, well, he was good both on the guitar and the piano, but even though I knew him as a pianist, and he's quite a good pianist, he would take the guitar most times. He would play, he would show me a few chords. Over the years I told myself I would learn to play this thing. Initially, I made a cuatro, right?

HM: Four strings.

SP: I learnt it, I made it at school. I mean you did those things at school long ago. I marvel at what they do at school now, but I made a cuatro at school, go to the woodwork room every lunchtime and you built it. And I tried to learn to play it. And didn't get very far. But eventually I bought a guitar and there was one particular session that did very well for me. There was an old guitarist who tutored guitar. And there was a session that ran maybe about nine months and it would be every Saturday for two or three hours for nine months. And I learned some barre chords and I learned a couple things and that really became the, well, virtually all the music I did, you know.

HM: Was using the guitar?

15:32

SP: Using the guitar and going to my friend, and he would have shown me an additional chord or two, because he might play something and it's, that's not within the range that I knew, so he might, you know, show me and I would sit with him and learn and then I would go home and sit with the cassette and . . .

HM: Learn that.

SP: And learn that.

HM: Was everything that you were writing, did you consider calypso, or were you writing other kinds of music as well?

SP: No, I only did calypso. I mean, there were once or twice I did other things that I might have wanted to call songs. Like I remember once the, we've got an organization called the Field Naturalist Club. Somehow, I met them and they were having a big anniversary, might have been their 100th year or something and they wanted a song for that and they asked me and I wrote a song. But I don't know if one sat down, I don't know, I am not sure now where you would make the distinction between what is song and what is calypso, I mean given what I write. You know?

HM: And that, I want to follow that by saying, how do you know when it's calypso, so you know, what makes it calypso? What's your, I, every-, you know, there might be a hundred definitions, but what is you're, when you're saying, "I'm writing calypso. I'm not writing something else. I know it's calypso because . . .

SP: Yeah. I'm starting off by saying that's a difficult one, right? But you know if I were to attempt a definition. I mean there are things about the calypso, well, those that I write anyway. It has four stanzas, right? Currently, I mean calypso has evolved. So I'm talking about what I do now or what I have been doing, right? So, you've got four stanzas. You can separate what you'd call the verse or the stanza from the chorus of it. There is a chorus. The theme even though I can say and I say it all the time particularly when I do my Sunday shows, calypsos have been written about virtually everything. But it tends to be commentary, right? It tends to be social commentary. The better ones to my mind, in addition to being very profound commentary or some might be in fact be philosophical. Because, too, of the kind of history we've had, lots of

them the writers make use of what is called the double entendre. So, what you hear is subject to a variety of interpretation and there are historical reasons for that. Because at one time the calypsonian was under severe pressure. You could be, you could find yourself in jail for saying the wrong things. But you found a way to cleverly construct your lines so that your words could have varying interpretations and therefore they couldn't pin you down in a court of law by saying, "This is what you mean," because you can always say, "No, this is what I mean."

HM: I was just singing about milk. That was all I was singing about. You know? (Laughs.)

SP: (Laughs.) Right, so there is that, and, well, you know, the origin of the thing is in Trinidad. You sing it in a calypso tent setting. All these things help to make it a calypso. But I don't think that my ability to compose calypsos prevents me from composing other kinds of music. I just haven't done, haven't done that, or haven't done it very often. There might have been one or two occasions that somebody might have asked me to do something. But I wouldn't get upset if somebody were to look at it and say, "But, yeah, yeah, it's a song, yes, but it's quite calypsonic, right."

20:24

HM: If you're, if it's, if you're writing calypso are you influenced by other kinds of music when you write the calypso, things outside of calypso itself, are you influenced by other music that you hear or other types of songs that you hear?

SP: If that is so, well, let me start by saying I'm not sure yet, but let me say if that did happen, if there were influences, for me, because my strong point has really been the lyrics, the influence would be the theme, the messages, right? Lyrical construction and things like that, more than it would be the music, right? I have written things where there might have been, I might have mirrored something or there might have been a phrase that might have come from something that came from elsewhere, but I think it's largely from me. It's, the words have been my thing

HM: Where do your, where do you find your ideas? Do they just, are you aware of your ideas coming from a certain experience, a certain relationship, a certain event? Where do they come from for you?

SP: Yeah, well let me, maybe I should say a little bit more of my development to answer that, right? I had my first three or four years, if I look at that. I went to University here in Trinidad. And I am not sure now what prompted it, but you know maybe I challenged that initially. I wrote calypsos initially, after writing, well I didn't complete that story. I should. Let me do it this way, if you don't mind. That very first calypso I wrote that I was going to sing, I didn't complete that. What happened was the part of the story that I didn't give is the very strict father that I had. He was a policeman. He was very strict. I didn't think that he would let me go on the radio to sing. I didn't think so. I never asked. I was too fearful to ask, right? I, in school of course I told the boys I would sing and so on and so on. But I knew very well, so on Monday they all wanted to find out what happened and I can't remember what story I gave them, but it was because I, you know. So that calypso died, right? Eventually, I had a younger sister. Like I said there were seven of us, so my youngest sister, she would be easily twelve, fourteen years younger than I am. She started going to school and by that time calypso competitions in schools had become popular and she wanted to enter. And I wrote a calypso for her. I don't think she was very successful with it. I had, I have a brother who was after that youngest sister, the very last of my mother's

children. He also started going to school. And there was a competition in his school and I wrote for him. It was a humorous calypso I wrote for him. You know, he came and he said they had this and given that I felt I had some skill, I thought I would write it for him and what I did was, I wrote a calypso arguing, I mean quite flippantly, but now when I think about it's, I'd probably say the same thing now forty years after, that politicians are not doing a good job of managing the country. What we should do is to put sportsmen to do it, because sportsmen really seem to be doing well. And I showed how in the calypso, you know, because at that time Mr. Universe in one of the divisions was a Trinidadian. So, I would argue for example that he could be Defense Force because he was strong and he could. And my brother chickened out. He didn't enter the competition. That same year, I was at University. And there was a competition at the University, but you had to sing two calypsos. So, I had to find a second song. And I felt strongly about capital punishment and I wrote a calypso about capital punishment. And I sang the two and won the competition.

HM: So that, so those were both inspired by . . .

SP: Events.

HM: . . . your observations of local events, . . .

SP: Right.

HM: . . . the politics and . . .

SP: And I don't think, largely that hasn't changed much. That hasn't . . .

HM: That would be . . .

SP: . . . that has been my focus.

HM: . . . your chief source of inspiration.

SP: Yes, right.

HM: So, I was going to say are you drawn to particular themes. So they would they be social and political?

SP: Yes.

HM: That would be the best way to say . . .

SP: Largely, largely. Yes, yes.

HM: How are you influenced by the community, so you're, these are, you're being influenced by events, but what about the local community? Are you, do you feel like you're a spokesperson for the community?

SP: Well . . .

HM: Or, you know when you express these things or . . .

SP: In this way, you know. If you are a calypsonian as I have been, and after a time, because of, you know, because of performing and so on, you become well-known, your images appear in the newspaper or television. People would see you and say to you, "Why don't you sing on . . . ?" "Eh, sing on . . .," "You know what you should do? You should sing a calypso . . .," and sometimes, sometimes an idea sticks.

HM: Will come that way.

SP: Yeah. I could give you a good example. If I jump forward to say eventually, I had a daughter who has become, I mean I would think and other people will tell you, quite a good calypsonian. In fact, at one time, and this is very interesting, at one time people would meet me and say, "Your children sing calypsos." My daughter is called Heather, and they would say, "There goes Heather's father" or is it the other way around? Or they would see me and say, or "Heather is your daughter." That's, I think that's what I wanted to say, that's how it used to be. At one time they would say, "Eh, that's Short Pants," or, "Heather is your daughter," and so on. But now they don't say that. Now when they see me they say, "Look, Heather's father."

HM: (Laughs.) They know you . . .

SP: They know her.

HM: . . . because of her.

SP: Yes. It's the other way around, right? They might know that I write for her, right? Working here at the radio station, and as you heard this morning, there are callers. And there was an old guy who would call regularly. In fact, he, a lot of the callers would assume a name. Most times it's from the district from which they called, so it's Miss Woodbrook or Mr. San Fernando, or Miss Curepe as the case might be. But this fellow was called "Old Man" and eventually "Mr. Old Man" and he would call. He got to like me a great deal in fact, he invited me home, told me where he lived and I got to meet him and, lovely guy and a tremendous memory, and he became a wonderful source of ideas for my programs. He would make suggestions and he knew, he's been around. He knew a about sport and he knew a lot about music. And he would tell me about musicians, or he would call the radio and give us little snippets, and you could follow that up and you'd get an idea for a program.

29:50

HM: So that was a source of inspiration, too.

SP: Right? One of the things he kept lamenting was the music of the 1950's and 60's, where people went out on Saturday evenings and danced, and people fell in love. And the music kept them in love and we were a nicer people because of it, right?

HM: So that there was a combination of the music, and the people being together, and . . .

SP: And he felt that the music did that, but he felt . . .

HM: There was a socializing element going on there that was positive.

SP: Very. Yes. And he was sorry that, you know, and he felt that the radio played the kind of music that inspired people to fall in love with each other and be nice. And you missing the music and he would be talking about who the musicians were.

HM: The specific people.

SP: Right. And I would go and look and find the music, you know, play some of it and eventually I wrote a calypso called "The Old Man's Lament" and gave it to my daughter to sing.

HM: Ah. Great.

SP: In my own view she should have won.

HM: Well, that leads to a question. And I've just got a couple more. I appreciate your time. With all the social media and people being so tied to their phones and, is, it's affected the way news is disseminated. Has it changed calypso's role as a source of information for people, because they're so tied into social media. Do you see calypso's role being something different today because of that than it was fifty years ago?

SP: Off the bat I would say maybe it should be, but somehow it hasn't, you know. It hasn't because, well, at one time perhaps the calypso was simply the news, the information, or mainly that. And I think of a calypso like "The Graf Zeppelin." He's just describing what is happening. I think of the king who left the throne so he can get married to the American woman . . .

HM: The Duke of Windsor, yeah.

SP: Caresser sang. So you get the information. What you get now is the analysis.

HM: Is the commentary, like you were saying. So it's not just the facts, it's, "Here's a point of view about the facts."

SP: And that is where the political calypsos seems to be going, because this year 2017, there was the big, well, it started last year there was this big debate about child marriages. Right?

HM: Right. And Chalkdust's song.

SP: Exactly.

HM: That won. It's about . . .

SP: It was a point of view. It was a point of view.

HM: About that issue.

SP: About.

HM: Discussed. It was discussed a lot.

SP: Right.

HM: People were talking about it.

SP: And he wrote the calypso, you know, about it. And the, well, it is for me, and maybe I should have done this before, but it now comes to mind, what makes the calypso so very different from the ordinary pop song or the folk song. It's the angle, that's the word I use, the approach to the song. So, it's not just, one isn't just saying, it isn't, you're not moving from point A to point B just in a straight kind of way. There's always an interesting, and that for me makes the calypso really great. That the, you get all the information and you would hear me say, and I say it quite often to my daughter when I'm trying to kind of educate her. I would look at a calypso and I would say, "Pamphlet!" meaning a journalist could have written that, right? The calypso, really it adopts a kind of position, it's not just the straight fact. There is some angle that the writer uses which makes it. Because what is the point of having a calypso, if, and I mean it answers the question that you've just asked, if you've got all social media . . .

HM: You can already find that out.

35:04

SP: Right!

HM: Right there on your phone.

SP: Exactly. The calypso is different because the writer has to find a point of entry. Is the same information, but when you see how he presents it, you say "hey" and that is . . .

HM: You see it a different way.

SP: That is the challenge every year for me of writing the song. How will I say it? So sometimes you find the topic, if the thing is important enough maybe three or four other calypsonians would have the same topic.

HM: Theme. Topic.

SP: But you know that the angle that you will come from . . .

HM: Will be different.

SP: Will be so different.

HM: It doesn't seem to work as well, my limited experience, if I feel like you're trying to, I'm interested in your comment on this. If you're trying to convince me, I mean, so you're expressing your point of view but, if I feel like you're, do you feel this way? If someone is trying to, not ram it down your throat, but trying to sell you, then it's not as effective to me, it's not as effective, but I usually, that's not usually how I feel. I mean, I don't feel that way, that's not a criticism, but do you know what I'm saying? I'm trying to say, is that, is there calypso when it's good, you don't, it makes you think, it's not making you feel like, you know, I'm trying to convince you of my point of view? Is there a difference, there? I'm asking a question, I guess, really, is there a difference there?

SP: Yeah. Let me answer you this way, I remember making a comment once and another calypsonian eventually put it in a song and he quoted me. He said, you know, "Short Pants say when you hear a good calypso you feel it inside." And I am saying this to you deliberately, because there are two calypsos that come to mind. One of the issues we have, many Trinidadians, is trying to get to the United States. It's probably going to get worse, getting visas. And not too far from here there is the embassy. Things I admit, things have improved considerably, but five years ago it was awful. Meaning that people would be lining up four o'clock in the morning, right? In fact, it got so bad that vagrants, who are homeless people, people would come at nine in the night and pay them.

HM: To stand in line.

SP: To stand, to take up a position in the line. And then you go home and sleep and then you come back seven o'clock in the morning and you pay off the vagrant so you get your position in the line, right? It got very bad one year and I wrote a calypso, right? Another friend of mine also wrote a calypso, and my daughter and this friend of mine, he wrote for another girl, they both ended up in the same competition, and the angles were different. And I remember the other girl, her calypso was called "Not Enough Ties," because generally the U.S. Embassy would reject you, reject your application because when you apply they want to see whether you have enough ties to Trinidad and Tobago . . .

HM: To keep you here.

SP: Right. So that it's really, it's a vacation you are going on and you're going to come back. Because you have a wife, you have four children.

HM: A house, whatever.

SP: Right. If you don't have, you know, if you can't justify, they will assume that you're . . .

HM: That you're going to stay.

SP: Right.

HM: Over there.

SP: So, you don't get, so what she did is, she made a skirt out of ties and around her neck she put a number of ties and in the calypso the one he wrote for her, she talked about things like Taiwan, and she's tied tongue, and so on, right, you know. And I am saying this was the angle that she used. I think eventually she placed fourth in the competition. The one I wrote for my daughter, the calypso was called "Keep It," right? And what I did, my approach was. "I don't understand why you all would want to go to the States at all." We have mountains we can look at. We have rivers you can bathe in, we've got festival, there is one tonight in St. James, you might have heard about it. So, you know, why are the Americans behaving like that, you know? I mean, keep your visa. I can, you know, enjoy. So, what I wrote was really a patriotic song. So even though I am attacking, if you want, the American Consulate . . .

HM: The policy.

40:18

SP: And how the, and all the difficulties and, in fact, the way I saw it, the utter humiliation that people were subjected to, to get to go to the United States, right? I in fact presented a patriotic song. "This is a lovely country, we've got great things," and the calypso listed all the things, you know, called them and I deliberately made a list, you know, "This, this," one after the other, and when you felt normally this is where you would end the chorus, I doubled it, right? So, the listener becomes overwhelmed with, "You know, we really, we don't really need to go to the United States." I mean she won. She won. And to my mind . . .

HM: She won.

SP: Galloping. Because what you saw was the patriotism, as distinct from . . .

HM: It still addressed the issue.

SP: Right.

HM: And so, I think what we're getting into now is sort of nuance, of what makes a good calypso.

SP: That's right.

HM: And is, sometimes I'm thinking, relating it to country music, you can be too obvious.

SP: Right.

HM: And, so that's kind of what I was getting at, so thank you for addressing that. I just was going to finish with just a few quick questions about things like, the technical things like you don't use a musical instrument when you write because you're writing primarily words. Do you write at a certain time of day more than another? Does it matter? I mean, what is your like method, methodology as it were? Is it consistently . . .

SP: Consistently bad because I have a difficulty as a person with what the Carnival does to another festival that I enjoy which is Christmas. Christmas comes on our calendar just before Carnival. What, because of commercialization and all kinds of things, what happens is the people who invest in Carnival, they want more time.

HM: Stretch it out.

SP: Right. So they start the Carnival earlier. December. In fact, there's a band launch tonight. They are launching a Carnival band . . .

HM: That is a Carnival band. I saw the advertisement.

SP: Tonight. That upsets me, right? And I have decided that that shouldn't happen. Let's have Christmas and let after the Christmas we, 'cause there are good things about Christmas that I like and enjoy. So somewhere in my head I will not do the Carnival until after Christmas.

HM: So that's, you wait until after Christmas to begin writing, basically.

SP: Boxing Day. My daughter suffers. I've been lucky because she is bright. So, in October and November the people she'll, the people she's competing with, they are coming out of the studio.

HM: Ah, she's got to move it up, she's gotta do it in a shorter frame of time, yeah.

SP: And there are times when I have to admit, maybe if I had given her the song two weeks before it would have been better. She'd have done a better job.

HM: Had a better, more time to practice.

SP: But somehow . . .

HM: You just can't get into it until after Christmas.

SP: I, I mean, for 2018 I'm telling myself, "Please let me try to," but somehow something in me opposes that, so for the last five years, and somehow, now, don't misunderstand me. I know the topic, I know the theme.

HM: So, you have those already in your mind.

SP: Right. And, and, and . . .

HM: So, it's just a matter of sitting down and writing, working it out.

44:51

SP: Right. Boxing Day. In fact, nowadays, I go on the computer. Now that she's older and she can challenge lines. I mean she didn't do it when she was younger. She now challenges lines that I write, you know. I would do things on the computer, email it to her, right? When the ideas come because I will tell her, you know, "I feel we should sing on . . .

HM: This idea.

SP: Right, but I'm looking for the road, there's the language we use, meaning I'm looking for the best way of saying it, right? I'm not going to do what the journalist is doing, right?

HM: How to approach it.

SP: Right.

HM: The road.

SP: But the information, the things I would say,

HM: You have those . . .

SP: I start. No. I start collecting. I'm collecting. So, I get (imitates typing). Save that. I am now giving her the work. Save that. And then, come December, say, "Okay, send it back to me."

She's got computer skills that I don't have. She'll put all into a folder and she send the folder back and we've got thirty-one things, forty things. I take and I print and I have fifty pages.

HM: Wow.

SP: And I go through the fifty pages with the highlighter and I highlight, right? And then I take a sheet of paper, is typically what I do (Folds sheet of paper.) And I fold it and I get four. Right?

HM: You get four.

SP: If I . . .

HM: If you folded that.

SP: . . . if I fold this twice.

HM: Okay. Then you get four. Four squares, basically. Or rectangles.

SP: Right. And the fifty pages I have that I go thru and highlight, I group them. Okay, I'll handle this in the first stanza.

HM: Oh, those are the four stanzas.

SP: I do this. I do this in the sec-, I would talk about this in the, I talk about this in the fourth stanza.

HM: Ah. Okay. That's how you organize what you're going to put in each stanza.

SP: Right. And the other thing I do is since she's got to sing it and I've tried to tell her that, I say, "Since you've got to sing it, the song can't be boring. The song has four stanzas, so they will listen to your first stanza, yes, they will listen to the second, by the time you get to the third it might wane, so that third stanza has to be powerful."

HM: It has to do, yeah, it really has to be good to keep their attention.

SP: Right. So, my third stanza therefore I put everything into it.

HM: Does she perform under the name Heather Mac Intosh.

SP: Yeah. Mm-hm.

HM: I'm going to look up . . .

SP: You would see her work on . . .

HM: YouTube?

SP: Yes, she's done really well, you know. So that's . . .

HM: That's your process, yeah, well, that, you just described, you know, your writing process, but now you don't have the same person to work with on guitar. Do you have someone else that does the music?

SP: Yes, what has happened in the, very recently, the last four years or so, we've got an extremely well-respected, and good musician called Pelham Goddard, right? And I just happened to be walking down the road one day and he was passing. He was coming in the opposite direction. I knew who he is, never had anything to do with him but I knew who he is. I mean, he is . . . And as I went past him, a voice said, "When Heather is ready you can bring her." And you know, he said, "Whenever Heather ready, bring her, nuh."

HM: Wow. Yeah.

SP: So, I took Heather to his studio. So now, a lot of the work . . .

HM: The musical work.

SP: Comes . . .

HM: Comes from him.

SP: . . . comes out of, yeah, out of his studio. I, well, I have now learned, Heather might have shown me how to record on the cell phone. So, I have rudiments, if you can call them.

HM; Just some ideas.

SP: Musical ideas, that is, right? I wake up three o'clock in the morning. And it has happened enough times for me to know to take it seriously. I get up at three o'clock in the morning and there's something I can hum or sing, a line. I can do it, and I say, "Six o'clock, when I get up," when I get up at six o'clock it's gone.

HM: Gone. You got to get up and do it.

SP: No matter how I can't pull it back.

HM: Yeah. Been there.

49:51

SP: So three o'clock in the morning when you get up, you do it, go on the computer, you write, sometimes it's just two lines, just one line, right? I still fiddle around with the guitar just that, just fiddle around a little bit. I take up the (sings several notes).

HM: Sing into your phone.

SP: Take one. Do it again. Take two (sings several notes). Later on Heather, who, she learned, I eventually sent her to do singing formally and she can, she'd say, "But this one is different from that," and I say no because I'm not really a, I mean, yeah, I sing calypsos but I'm not the singer, right? I am . . .

HM: She's saying you're changing it.

SP: I'm really the writer and you know so I have variation. And I go into the studio with that. Now I can I go to the studio with two or three lines, the idea, and so on, and, well, Pelham is good. He gets on the piano and sometimes I wonder how I dare, I say to him, "No! Not that!" But I am not a musician.

HM: But it's just not what you're hearing . . .

SP: It's not right! Right?

HM: . . . in your head.

SP: And my daughter will tell you because I tell her that all the time. I said, "I'm hearing it." She'll say, "Well, sing it for me." "I can't sing it, but I am hearing it, so I want you to play for me what I'm hearing, what I can't sing for you."

HM: So, they'll try some things and you'll say, "That's it!"

SP: Right.

HM: "Not that one, this one."

SP: Right. And we get some things and we record and it's a little better. And I go back and I come back and, right, and he will tell me, "No," I will say, "Nah. Yuh mad. Not that, not that. This, right, we got to do." And I will try and, you know and it's work and we do all that from Boxing Day. And other tents are opening, other people are starting to sing, release their stuff.

HM: Yeah. You've got to do it all really quickly.

SP: But it seems as though under the intense pressure, right? So, it's hardly a daylight thing. It's not as if I haven't written things in the daylight. You know, but it's hardly a daylight thing.

HM: It's usually at night.

SP: It's 1 am.

HM: When things are happening for you.

SP: Right.

HM: When you're getting ideas.

SP: And sometimes I have been, "I can't rest," to come to it. It's not that. I'm doing the usual thing. You're washing the car. Sometimes I cook something.

HM: Sure, you're busy with something else.

SP: I go out, right? And at one o'clock everything shuts down. The house just shut down, everybody, turn off the TV, just the dogs are barking, the occasional car, and you sit there. And

at five thirty when the birds started to, you've got three stanzas and you say, "Nice, I can go to sleep now." I can always write before it's sun. I might even write it in the day, but, and I get the three.

HM: Well, I'd like to continue this conversation at another time, and I, but I really appreciate your time today and I won't take any more of it, but you've been very generous and I've really enjoyed, I've learned a lot just listening.

SP: Well . . .

HM: So, thank you.

SP: I feel it's different for everybody, but . . .

End of interview