

Hot! Hot! Hot!, Soca and Limbo

Additional information for the World Celebrations feature on Carnival in Trinidad and Tobago from the January/February 2010 (Volume 10 No. 4) issue of Music Express

ABOUT THE SONG

Arrow is a singer from the Montserrat region of Trinidad and Tobago. "Hot! Hot! Hot!" was Arrow's #1 soca classic in 1983. This song put soca "on the map," so to speak, throughout the rest of the world. Following this hit, Arrow recorded CDs that containing more fine examples of soca, including *Knock Dem Dead* (1988), *O'La Soca* (1989) and *Soca Dance Party* (1990.)

ABOUT SOCA

"Hot! Hot! Hot!" is in soca style. Soca evolved from calypso as instruments from India, such as tabla, dhantal and dholak began to be incorporated, along with their unique rhythms. The result fused the musical traditions of the two major ethnic groups of Trinidad—descendants of African slaves and descendants of indentured workers from India. While soca could be considered a more modern, up-tempo form of calypso, it is not, as sometimes thought, a combination of soul music and calypso. It was originally spelled "solka" by its creator, Lord Shorty—the stage name of a very tall man named Garfield Blackman (1941-2000), who began performing calypso at the age of seven. He intended the term "solka" to be short for "soul of calypso." The spelling was later changed by a journalist, and that spelling "stuck." Currently, soca is considered the definitive modern music of Trinidad, and calypso is considered Trinidad's slightly more historical unique gift to music.

ABOUT LIMBO

The invention of the Limbo dance is credited to Trinidad, and may have roots in Africa. Individuals lean backward as they move one at a time under a horizontal pole held steady by two other people. The pole is gradually lowered with each go-around. In other words, after all of the participants have passed under the pole, the pole is lowered a bit. They all go under again, then it is lowered again. The goal is to pass under the pole without touching it. Anyone who touches the pole or falls down is eliminated, until only one person is left—the winner. As you might guess, the name is related to the English word "limber," because you must be really limber to do this dance!