

Interview with Mr. Angus Steele, Entertainment Agent and Owner/Manager of Spice Concoction
www.spiceconcoction.com



1. BDN: What brought you to this often- maligned business of calypso, soca, and carnival?

Angus: I think it's more about my love for music since I was growing up (learned to play drums with the Pitt brothers - Richard "Sabina" and Selwyn "Kung Fu", looking on keenly at the years with Rodney "Doc" Rapier and Eddie Bullen and loving the Classical Guitar around the same time to today, played Steelpan early in GBSS, tried the piano and didn't like it much, contracted artist under LIME in recent years in St. Vincent and thereafter in Grenada, setup my own Entertainment/Artist Management business in April 2014, worked on putting together formally The Carenage Rhythm Section - "Frontline Rhythm Section" early 2015), that saw me end up in my current situation and specifically those Genres since it's the most common of skills locally. I may add that one of my Artist is into Urban Reggae music so I'm also diving deeper into that Genre as well despite little local talent as our "culture" mainly spins such music around Jamaicans.

2. BDN: Is Soca a brand new musical idiom, or is it a mere modernization of calypso?

Angus: Soca is not a new musical idiom in my view of things and more an evolution from Calypso and other types of music. We see it every day evolving into anything possible where recently we've seen much the inclusion of Reggae (typically called Ragga Soca), Afro Beats, Bouyan and we're also seeing a rebirth of adding Zouk and Cadance beats as well. I also expect we're see some fusion with Rap and the likes of the new beats out of Puerto Rico soon. I really doubt there is one definition of "Soca" from anyone or any musical circle that lives it daily and don' expect that to change at all. Locally Jab Jab music is also now developing it's own style of music under the Soca theme built up from the local Jouvert morning reveling of Diable Diable/Jab Molassie culture that we are internationally known for as the Jab Jab Country.

3. BDN: Has soca brought /welcomed women to the stage?

Angus: It has somewhat but also degrades women highly which also is somewhat accepted by them for some reason. As Soca is usually known for speeds of 160+bpm, it seems to be enjoyed mainly around the music and if persons like the beats than around the content and/or the delivery by the "Artist". So some women have joined the field of players in Soca but it still remains male dominated today for various reasons including the said degradation of women within the lyrics of many of the songs played on the airwaves today and over the years as it evolved. Soca has become a music form that beats do the work and lyrical content or delivery is somewhat 3rd place and beyond.

4. BDN: What story do you wish to be told of the 2016 edition of the Grenada Carnival?

Angus: The story of the upcoming 2016 edition of Carnival is one yet to be determined but from my personal view of it, it has once again disappointed my expectations resulting in me creating my own Hashtag for it using a known movie title, #GroundHogDay. Why, same ole, nothing new, actually probably getting worse. This is as a result of a combination of many matters from Politics, same

structures expecting different results, no standard or definitions of expectations, no culture of mentoring or coaching of "Artist" (I always use that word within inverted commas as personally I even asked that question recently in a Carnival What's App Group I have which consist mainly of Musicians, Artist - as they call themselves, Promoters, Radio DJ's - or people on radio as I describe many who give themselves that title, Producers of Music and Radio Stations Leaders), total focus on seasonal shelf life music for the whole 133 sq miles of their world, little to no vision locally for the entire music industry (look at the recent so called Pure Grenada Music Festival and use of our national brand in executing it), lack of any plan to educate or understand the industry or increased involvement of Copyright Organizations like ECCO (Linda is the local representative and has an immense struggle without support from the Walls That Be) and the EU EPA for Creative Industries (something I remember from my 4 years in Vincy to 2011 where it sat under the Chamber there where I was President and still trying to figure who is executing it here).. The usual annual drams remain around Steelpan, around the politics of the "in charge" bodies charged with the responsibility to execute the country single largest event, outstanding debts remain and remain a haunting story to the organizers, reports to the public on performance remain elusive as finding Bigfoot, etc. etc. etc. So the story is evolving over the coming weeks to midnight 9th August 2016 but I doubt I'll be far off in my estimate to date. "Thank God for Calypso" I say this year !!!! At least some stories/topics would be learned yet again amidst the #Monotonous glorified Soca.

5. BDN: Do you think that the Carnival could boost /ignite a national spirit?

Angus: It can but the direction now of most of the stage players of what it has evolved into seems only around a pride of demonstrating for some reason that we are everything Jab Jab whatever that means or whatever the plan in demonstrating that is supposed to mean. So maybe that the plan around igniting a national pride given we have no idea of our "culture" and what is our "culture".

BDN: If yes, How will we make this happen?

Angus: I really don't know how "WE" as you asked could make it happen in boosting or igniting a national pride if that's the plan to show we're the Jab Jab nation. There is no plan of what we want of our Carnival so all elements are left to do as they want which I doubt could ignite a national pride since if nothing is set to the country of the plan to achieve, then there is nothing to look forward to than whatever is given. So making it happen takes us back to No. 4 above and changing many of those things and trying desperately to move away from the Cyclone we're stuck in called #GroundHogDay.

6. BDN: Can you offer some brief introductions to the various artistes that you now represent?

Angus: This would require another email I imagine or a visit to my website (www.spiceconcoction.com) where pictures are available and soon, Bio's on all once I change my business model after the 2016 Carnival. In the interim I did submit over the last couple months some of their Bio's to the Grenada Cultural Foundation which could be viewed at <http://culture.gd/index.php/music2> (a tour around that site should also be of interest and also one that should shake our head from left to right. Great intent but.....)

This is ongoing "Bull" work (as we say locally) as I do fire and hire since I have no time for the nonsense of people who didn't study music, didn't study management, don't have a plan to improve, really bring anything to the table that's serious and long term, that is actually seen as required thinking/planning/execution beyond 133 sq miles etc. yet have self-imposed titles and usually try to demonstrate (at least to me) they know both sides of the coin, singing as a skill (inherent or developed) and management of that skill.

7. BDN: What indices will allow us to crown the 2016 carnival "successful"?

Angus: I cannot answer that since I've never seen any proposed metrics or indices of measurements for any Carnival in determining "success". Some and different agencies may look strictly at financials, some may look at ticket sales/door receipts, some at visitor arrivals during the period (with or without and

distinctions of family reunions, incoming groups of sorts from countries that picked our island for one reason or another etc which may have no direct association with Carnival as examples), some simply at the visual organization/execution for main events (start time, flow, stage management, logistics), some just as if they felt they "got their money's worth" in their view of things and others simply if the results of shows of winners satisfied their minds. I have NEVER seen or heard the likes I'm accustomed to from private industry such as maybe reducing cost by 5% over previous year or over a 3-year period, increasing revenues year on year by 10%, anything on creating/managing assets for SMC, developing a SWOT Analysis diagram and picking say a Top 3 list of one to Improve further as a top performer, one to maintain and one to improve to reach minimum expectation as an opportunity. Etc. Etc. So I don't know what success looks like and it'll be different to everyone including the organizers and political players.

8. BDN: Anything you wish to add?

Angus: Too much to add and which moves beyond the discussion of Carnival as I think we're slowly moving into creating a society that has no standards or values or vision or plan for the future which is not just a Grenada thing but a wider Caribbean thing. Even with our people living elsewhere in the world, few seem to even try to help in setting those standards and merely accept whatever is given to them on return home at any point as the norm and expectation. So, nothing really truly changes. We simply see a change in the way done but to the same results, Carnival or otherwise. Our mode of remaining stuck in a cyclone where many forces keep us within it despite attempts of sorts to break out of it and become free is our daily hallmark of achievement and success.

Thank You Angus for participation in our Carnival; Playing the Past, Previewing the Future edition
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