

Calypso Boom Biggest Thing Since Presley

By RENE CAPRON
NEW YORK, April 20 (AP)—Last summer a Manhattan folk music impresario named Art D'Luogoff, plying his trade in Greenwich Village, made his tory for himself by presenting some calypso fare to the board and beret set.
The reception was so tremendous that a boom in the making was plain to the practiced eye—a boom which has duly become the biggest thing in pop music since Elvis Presley squirmed out of Tennessee.

"Art got the message that something colossal was brewing," says Fred R. Ayfield, a hard-to-quiet spokesman for the D'Luogoff outfit. "And even though most people still don't know what calypso is, everybody and his grandmother are enjoying it."

Grandmothers apart, the evidence is abundant. For months, calypso recordings like "Mardianna" and "Jamaica Farewell" have ranked high on best seller lists. All-calypso rooms mushroomed in New York, Chicago, Miami and other cities. In Milwaukee recently, a pop concert billed as "Calypso Night" broke all attendance records.

No Rock-Roll Antidote
Inevitably there has been talk of calypso as an antidote for the rock 'n' roll delirium. But while it's true that the West Indian import edged the native-born fad in Los Angeles at one point, Presley records still top calypso favorites in nationwide disc sales.

"Calypso doesn't give the kids the same kind of muscular release," a recording company executive said. "Furthermore, you can't really dance to it. So I doubt if it will eclipse rock 'n' roll."

"Calypso has a special, exotic flavor, but it's the kind that doesn't go well as a steady diet—something like Hawaiian music." Calypso's very success may be threatening to rock the banana boat. There's a shortage of authentic talent in the land, and Tin Pan Alley is pumping pseudo-calypso into the boom. The experts say that nothing is so quickly fatal to a musical craze as a profusion of imitators.

Two Previous Invasions
Precisely why the Caribbean rhythm-and-song should have captured the nation's ear after two previous invasions—in the 30s and early 40s—succumbed to waves of apathy is fairly mysterious. Increased American travel in the West Indies is doubtless a factor.

But virtually everyone in the music business concedes a lion's share in popularizing it to Harry Belafonte, the honey-voiced troubadour and folk singer whose album, "Calypso," has sold around a million copies.

Belafonte himself is not surprised at the success. "I thought the music was as big three years ago as it is today, judging from the sale of my records and the crowds," he commented in Los Angeles. "It's like everything else, the public is first to catch on, the trade last."

And what, exactly, is calypso? Like American jazz, its roots lie in West Africa; it echoes a beat brought to Trinidad in the holds of slave ships. It has intricate rhythms, simple melodic line, and irreverent, catchy lyrics rarely suitable—in their unrestrained form—for the ears of maiden aunts.

The true calypsonian, master of the craft, makes up the words as he goes along. Second in the hierarchy is the West Indian who sings the rhymed ditties a calypsonian invents.



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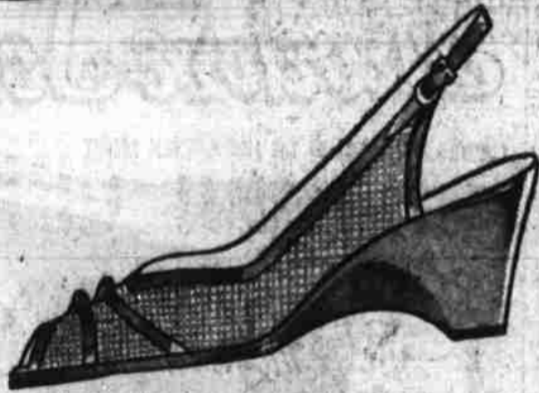
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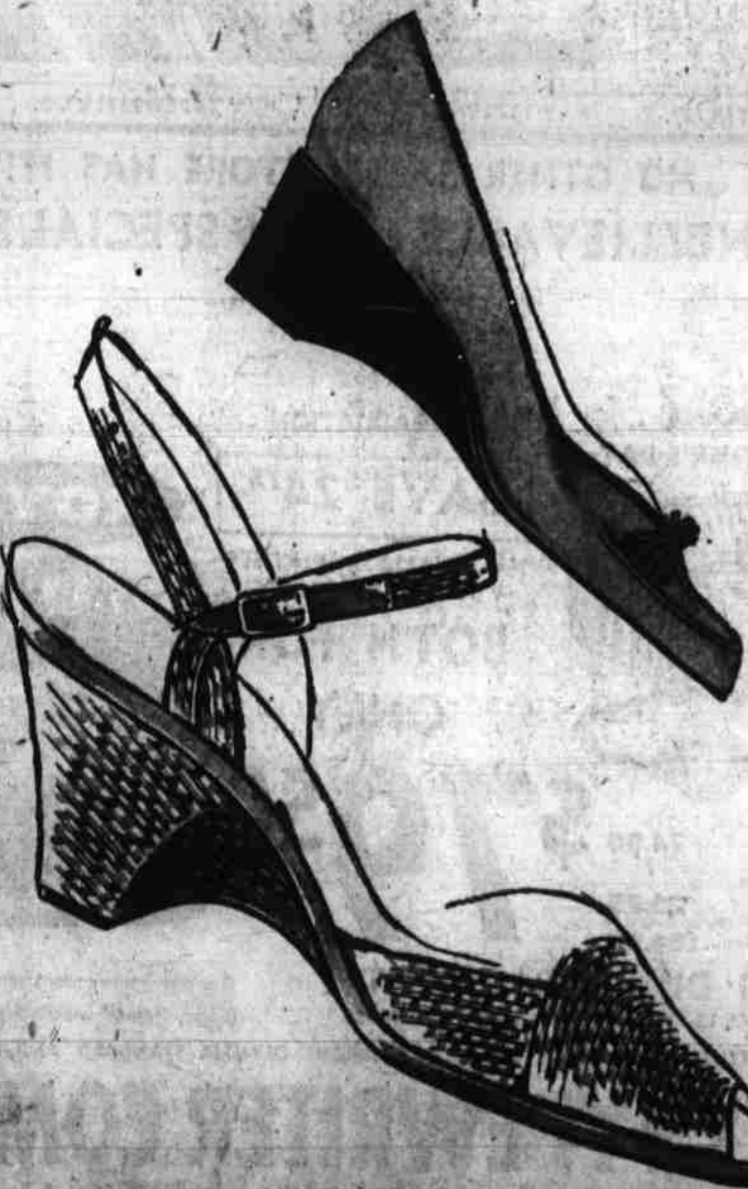
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