

# South Florida History

M A G A Z I N E

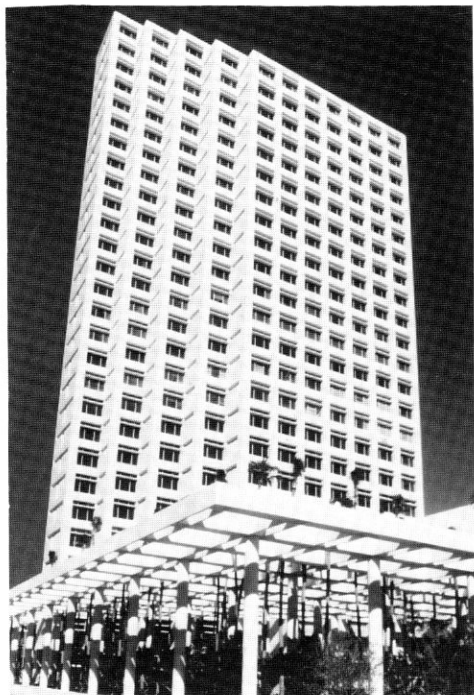
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**THE HISTORICAL MUSEUM OF SOUTHERN FLORIDA**

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## M A G A Z I N E

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## Guest Editor's Notes

by Dr. Tina Bucuvalas, Folklife Curator

What do a 38-foot model of a Florida lobster, African American braided hairstyles, and Cuban *guajira* music all have in common? They are all examples of the remarkably rich and diverse folklife found in south Florida. Beginning with this special issue of *South Florida History Magazine*, we will regularly publish articles that examine the traditional culture of south Florida.

Folklore is traditional knowledge that is passed from person to person. This type of learning takes place outside of formal institutions as a result of our participation in folk groups such as families, ethnic, religious, regional, or occupational groups. Folklife is the manifestation of traditional knowledge and includes such diverse categories as belief, custom, art, craft, music, foodways, dance, drama, play, occupational or technical skill, architecture, and oral literature. Such expressions often acquire a distinctly local character through the influences of geography, history, or talented individuals within the folk group.

Folklife is deeply rooted in the history and heritage of each community, yet it is always changing in response to the needs of the folk group. South Florida folklife consists of the entire, complex body of traditions practiced by its residents. The Historical Museum of Southern Florida believes that our unique folk culture requires a serious effort at documentation, preservation, interpretation, and presentation.

Since 1986, when the Museum established its Folklife Program, the folklife staff has pursued a program of research, collecting, publications, and public presentations. Their strategy is to document the major

folk groups in south Florida and to present the results of that research to the widest possible audience. To date, the folklife staff and other contracted professional folklorists have explored such diverse topics as Hispanic folklife, maritime traditions, Jewish folklife, Latin and Caribbean music, ranching, Haitian sign painting, the traditional arts of the African diaspora, and the folk arts of the Florida Keys.

The Museum's folklife presentations are diverse. The keystone is a series of annual festivals called Traditions. Other public presentations have included workshops, lectures, publications, and the Folk Arts in the Schools Program. Exhibits, such as "Tropical Traditions: The Folklife of Southeast Florida," and "Sign of the Times: Folk Art in Miami's Little Haiti," are another important focus.

The essays presented in this issue of *SFHM* represent only a small portion of the Folklife Program's research. Dr. Laurie Kay Sommers is a folklorist/ethnomusicologist who specializes in Latin and Caribbean music. She was part of the team which conducted an initial folklife survey of the Miami area in 1985, and in the next year she will return to document Nicaraguan traditions. Folklorist/ethnomusicologist Dr. Joyce M. Jackson teaches at Louisiana State University, but lent her expertise in African American and Afro-Caribbean folk arts to a research project on the "Traditional Arts of the African Diaspora," funded by the National Endowment for the Arts. Brent Cantrell, a staff folklorist with the Museum, has only recently surfaced from months of fieldwork in the Florida Keys. His essay here on the Upper and Middle Keys will be followed in a subsequent issue with one devoted to folklife in Key West and the nearby islands.



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# Caribbean Music in South Florida

by Dr. Laurie Kay Sommers

South Florida always has had a close relationship with the peoples of the Caribbean, but the unprecedented migrations of the past three decades have made Metropolitan Miami the most Caribbean city in the United States as well as one of the most important cities in the Caribbean. Between 1979 and 1981 alone an estimated 120,000 Cubans and 80,000 Haitians entered South Florida. The Caribbean population of Dade County currently numbers over 800,000, including more than 550,000 Cubans, 90,000 Haitians, 52,000 Puerto Ricans, 40,000 Jamaicans, and 28,000 Dominicans. Such huge population growth has dramatically affected Miami's cultural life, including music. The sounds emanating from radios, nightclubs, restaurants, hotels, community festivals, and family gatherings pulsate with the diverse beats of Jamaican reggae, Puerto Rican *jibaro* and *salsa* music, French Antillean *zouk*, Cuban *punto guajiro*, *son*, and *charanga*, Trinidadian calypso and soca, Haitian *compa*, and Dominican *merengue*. Practitioners of Afro-Caribbean religions such as *Vodoun*, *Santería*, and Rastafarianism incorporate aspects of West African worldviews, drumming, and vocal styles first introduced by black slaves and adapted to the New World context.

Although the commercially successful Miami Sound Machine probably has the greatest name recognition in the United States, many other outstanding musicians of Caribbean descent now live and perform in Miami. Some interact with the diverse musical cultures found in Dade County; others attempt to preserve their national musics, a process aided by the constant ebb and flow of immigrants who crave the sounds of home. The music of the Caribbean thus has become a dominant force in Miami, serving variously as a cultural buffer, source of

entertainment, catalyst to dance, part of religious worship, and marker of cultural identity. The following paragraphs highlight a few of the folk and popular music genres performed within three of South Florida's Caribbean communities.

## Cuba

The fusion of West African and European based traditions has shaped much of Cuban musical culture. Beginning in the 16th century, Spanish colonizers, like their French and English counterparts, imported West African blacks to work in sugar plantations or to be sold in the profitable slave trade. The cultures of West Africa thus left a lasting im-



print on the New World. Of the pre-contact Indian populations who were destroyed during colonization, only two musical legacies endure: the *maracas* or gourd rattles, and *guiros* or calabash scrapers--instruments which survived due to their functional similarity to those of West Africa and their subsequent adoption by the black slaves. The Spanish and African based cultures which remained produced a rich variety of traditional musics.

## The Spanish Heritage: Punto Guajiro

Wherever the Spanish settled in the Americas, they brought with them musical styles, poetic forms, and instrument types -- including the guitar -- which were adopted and creolized by subsequent generations. The heritage of Renaissance Spain lives on in the *punto guajiro*, one of the many Latin American musical verse



Fiesta Guajira performs *punto de guajiro* at the 1988 Traditions Festival.

forms derivative of Spain's ten-line, octosyllabic *decima*. In the *punto guajiro*, a singer/poet improvises themes of love, comic double entendre, and episodes of daily life, often preserving the classical Spanish rhyme scheme of ABBAACCDDC. Occasionally, singers may engage in song duels, or competitions of improvisatory skill. The repeated melodic pattern which accompanies the lyrics traditionally is performed on the *tres* (a small six-to-nine-string guitar-like instrument, today often replaced by the true guitar), *laud* (Spanish lute), *claves* (struck wooden sticks), and *guiro* (scraper)

Although the *punto guajiro* arose in a rural context associated with *guajiros*, or Cuban peasants, the style gained national popularity via Cuban radio, television, recordings, and the printed poetry anthologies of some of the great interpreters. In Miami, nostalgia for the radio broadcasts has led to the popularity of "Fiesta Guajira," a weekly live radio show on Miami's WQBA AM, "La Cubanísima." Since 1979, a group of musicians has produced hour-long programs of traditional *punto guajiro* interspersed with written and phoned-in greetings from listeners throughout South Florida. The *decima* lyrics often incorporate themes from letters received. The members of Fiesta Guajira view themselves as conservers of a vital Cuban folk tradition and their program -- which is said to be the single most popular one for its time slot of all Miami stations -- as a vehicle for sustaining ties between friends and relatives in Florida and Cuba. The group performs widely throughout the Cuban community and is particularly sought out during celebrations in honor of Cuban independence and the Cuban patron saint, the *Caridad del Cobre*.

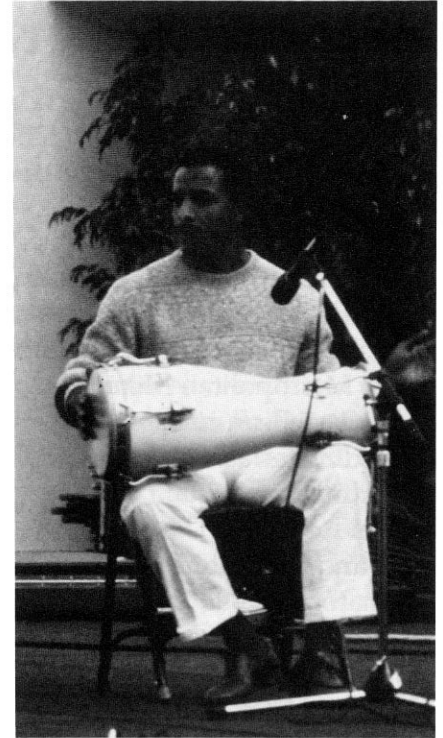
### The Afro-Cuban Tradition: Santería Ensembles

The African slave trade had a profound effect on musical traditions in Cuba and throughout the Americas. Despite the blending of African and European

cultural elements, the social discrimination and isolation of blacks fostered the growth of many African traditions as well. Especially in the religious practices of secret societies and voluntary organizations, slaves preserved African beliefs thinly disguised with a veneer of Spanish Catholicism.

The "African-ness" of certain traditional religions still is evident today. For example, the *Lucumí* religion of the Yoruba people of Nigeria and Dahomey is widely practiced today among Miami Cubans, other Latinos, and increasing numbers of other North Americans. The Spanish word for the religion is *Santería*. The religion features a complex symbolism, spirit possession, animal sacrifices, divination, beliefs about the forces of nature, the use of some Catholic religious elements such as candles, and a pantheon of deities called *orishas* (a Yoruba word). Each *orisha* is identified with a Catholic saint with similar characteristics. For example, African Chango is identified with Catholic Santa Barbara, as well as with various West African myths, herbs, stones, colors, animals and musical forms. *Lucumí* ceremonies are characterized by complex musical organization, as well as ritual dance, objects, and clothing.

During some *Santería* rituals, singers through their texts and drummers through sacred drummed "speech" communicate with the *orishas* in the Yoruba ritual dialect which is still intelligible to *Lucumí* priests on both sides of the Atlantic. The type of "call and response" between the lead singer and chorus or between instruments found here also appears in many other African-influenced styles. The interlocking rhythmic patterns are an African-derived feature as well, organized around a five-note time line known as *clave*. Finally, the instruments themselves -- the *guiro* ensemble, the *bembe* drum ensemble, and the *bata* drum ensemble -- all have roots or counterparts in West Africa.

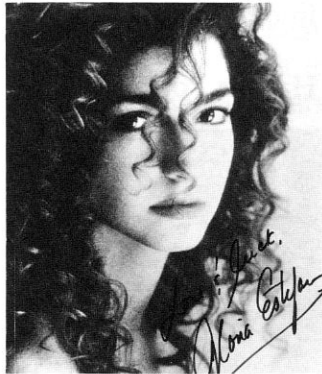


Afro-Cuban bata drummer at 1986 Traditions Festival at the Metro-Dade Cultural Center.



## Cuban Popular Music

Throughout the 20th century, Cuba has been the seminal force in Latin popular music. Watered-down Cuban rhythms are familiar to many North Americans thanks to the big bands, Hollywood musicals of the 1940s and 50s, and the proliferation of Arthur Murray and other dance schools which teach the *rumba*, *cha-cha*, and *mambo*. Within urban Latino populations in the United States, however, various kinds of Cuban-derived dance music, as well as other musical styles, always have been at the heart of community life. Miami is no exception. The affluent, white upper- and middle-class Cubans who fled Castro's regime during the late 1950s and early 60s recreated the musical culture of Old Havana, much as they did other aspects of social and cultural life. The *zarzuelas*, or Spanish light operas, are still performed. Spanish-language radio broadcasts music, news, and community announcements under station names identical to those found in Cuba. The cabarets and supper clubs which attract international and local artists emulate the fabulous establishments of pre-revolutionary Havana. With the Mariel boatlifts of 1980, many more black Cubans arrived in Miami, bringing forms of traditional rumba, and more recent styles of popular music and dance.



Miami Sound Machine's  
Gloria Estafan.

Perhaps due to the lack of a large Latin recording industry, Miami has yet to become associated with a particular Latin "sound," such as the salsa emanating from New York City. Indeed, some younger Caribbean-born musicians started their musical careers in New York and later moved to Miami, where there are fewer bands and less competition. Despite this, the Cuban influence remains powerful and unmistakable. Even the commercially successful Miami Sound Machine drew on their Cuban heritage in their first national hit, "Conga" (1985), which combined English lyrics, Cuban carnival rhythms, and a disco beat into a cross-over sound which expresses the bicultural identity of many young Miami Cuban-Americans.

## Haiti

Although the Haitian population is scattered throughout Dade County, the heart of the community centers around Northeast 2nd Avenue from Northeast 85th to 45th Streets, an area known as Little Haiti. Since immigrants first began settling this neighborhood a decade ago, the area has taken on a distinctive Haitian ambience with restaurants specializing in *lambi* (conch stew) and tropical milkshakes, grocery stores with Haitian products, *botanicas* selling supplies for Vodoun ceremonies, the Notre Dame d'Haiti Catholic Church, sound systems blaring Haitian music with lyrics in Creole, and numerous social agencies serving the Haitian community.



Shops like the Amede Botanica in Little Haiti not only sell religious artifacts and herbal medicine, but also dispense advice on health and religion.

Haitian music in Miami is not nearly as widespread nor well known as that of Cuba. Even within the Haitian community, many youths adopt American fads, suppressing or ignoring their heritage in reaction to negative stereotyping of Haitians. Nonetheless, Miami is second only to New York and Haiti itself as a center for Haitian music and musicians. Music is everywhere: at the weekend dances at Le Chateau Club, Aux Palmistes, and other locations, in the folk liturgy of Notre Dame d'Haiti, on the airwaves of community radio, at Edison Senior High's Creole Day, at the newly created Haitian Festival, at political gatherings, and in the rented rooms where Vodoun ceremonies are held.

### The Rhythms of Vodoun

The origins and beliefs of Vodoun parallel those of Santería and other Afro-Caribbean religions. Like Santería, the practice of Vodoun encompasses rituals and worldviews which fuse Catholic baptism and iconography with a complex of African-derived concepts



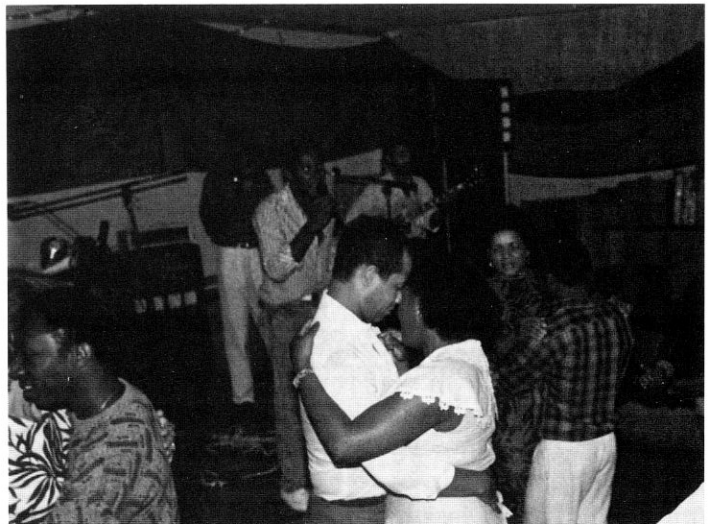
Haitian rara band, Kombo Guinen International, playing in Martin Luther King Park. The band is based on Haiti's post-Carnival Rara performance societies. Miami area Rara bands use a number of homemade instruments including the *vaccine*, or bamboo flute, and the *graje*, a piece of perforated sheet metal struck with a coat hanger.

about the afterlife, sickness and healing, and one's relationship to nature and other human beings.

During the first century of slavery, blacks from different West African tribes and language groups merged their various beliefs into a loosely organized religious system that came to be called Vodoun (originally the African Fon people's word for deity). Vodoun survived, despite the enforcement of the *Code Noir* which prescribed Catholic baptism and teaching for all "heathen" slaves as a rationalization for slavery. The *Code Noir* prohibited slave gatherings, but Haitian blacks, like their counterparts elsewhere in the Caribbean, were able to circumvent the law and meet secretly. Vodoun became such a powerful force in the lives of the transplanted Africans that, during the 18th century wars for independence, rebel leaders used Vodoun belief and ritual to incite slaves to insurrection. Throughout Haitian history, government authorities alternately have banned and encouraged its practice. Ambivalent feelings persist in Miami, as evidenced by sensationalist coverage in the media, and by irate letters and phone calls from Protestant fundamentalists over a series of Haitian radio programs on Vodoun.

Vodoun in Miami occurs on several levels. First is the level of ritual practice, apparent to the outsider only through the presence of botanicas on the streets of Little Haiti. Vodoun ceremonies share with Santería the prominent use of music, especially drumming, as an integral organizational component, as a means of communicating with the *loa*, or deities of the spirit world, and as an inducement to trance and spirit possession. On a second level, aspects of Vodoun imagery and practice are included in folkloric dance groups, protest songs, and literary/artistic works by Haitian intellectuals. Finally, the rhythms of Vodoun and other Haitian traditional musics have been incorporated into the folk liturgy at Notre Dame d'Haiti. Although the official Catholic Church always has been prone to syncretisms, or fusions, with non-Christian religions, since Vatican II Catholics have been encouraged to incorporate local traditional music into the Catholic Mass. The choir and drum/keyboard/guitar ensemble at Notre Dame d'Haiti exemplifies this trend. The rhythms of French *contradanse*, Afro-Cuban *yenvalu* and *congo*, Trinidadian calypso, and Cuban cha-cha accompany tunes learned and sung by ear. Despite objections by a few church members over using "heathen" rhythms in church, the folk liturgy draws standing room crowds. In the words of one choir member, "It's part of our culture. We believe we should bring it into the church."

### Haitian Popular Music



Haitian compa band inspires dancers at Aux Palmistes nightclub in Little Haiti.

The popular music of contemporary Haiti is a fusion of diverse influences from U.S. popular musics (especially jazz and big bands), Caribbean rhythms, and the European and African-derived folk musics of Haiti. The single dance music which is viewed as "the Haitian

national music," much like reggae in Jamaica and calypso in Trinidad, is the meringue. Part European, part African in origin, the meringue has shifted between written and oral traditions throughout its history. During the 20th century, it developed variously as a salon music of piano, violins, and flutes, a concert music for virtuosic piano, and more recently as a jazz idiom influenced by American bands and innovators.

Vestiges of the original meringue survive amidst the individual styles of jazz bandleaders who have plied the hotels and night clubs of Port-au-Prince since the 1940s. During the 1950s the influential Haitian big band, Ensemble Nemours Jean-Baptiste, named and helped popularize a new musical style called *compa* (literally "beat") which fused jazz, meringue, the horn sounds of Cuban dance bands, Creole lyrics, and Voodoo rhythms. Instrumentation for *compa* may include trumpet, trombone, sax, guitar, bass, keyboard, conga, drum-set, and vocals.

Many *compa* musicians now reside in Miami, forming groups such as The Islanders, Top Vice, Magnum Band, Kaskad, Universal Band, and others. Weekend dances featuring *compa* bands are important social outlets for the Haitian community. An Haitian clientele alone cannot support the *compa* musicians, however, and as a result significant changes are occurring in the music. Band leaders such as Wagner Lalanne of The Islanders (himself a veteran of Ensemble Nemours Jean-Baptiste) are incorporating other Caribbean rhythms such as reggae, calypso, soca, and salsa in order to attract a broader audience. Some bands are singing in English or Spanish in addition to or instead of Creole. Others are trying to remain commercially viable by streamlining their instrumentation through the use of synthesizers, drum machines, and other state-of-the-art technologies, much like working bands in many other traditions.

## Jamaica

Most of the city's large Jamaican population lives in the northwest sector of Miami, where the sounds of Jamaican patois, the smells of foods such as spicy meat patties, sweet potato pud-

ding, and savory curried goat, and stores featuring Jamaican products line N.W. 183rd Street. Though the population center is there, the music most associated with Jamaica -- reggae -- is found throughout the city. Although reggae has become an international phenomenon, popularized by performers such as the late legendary Bob Marley, Miami's Jamaicans affirm its role as a symbol of national identity by holding one of the largest annual reggae festivals in the U.S. in honor of Jamaican independence.

Over the past decade, Miami has become a major reggae town. Indeed, the Miami-based *Reggae Report*, an international promotional and feature magazine begun in 1983, focused on "the new Miami reggae scene" in a recent issue (Vol 7, #7, 1989). Most major international reggae bands now perform regularly in Miami, and some have made it their second home. Reggae tours frequently begin or end in South Florida. Local performers such as Zero Crew, Ti-Shan, Spice Roots, Benaiah, Bigga, Annette Brissette and Sistren, Jr. Biggs and Massive Crew -- to name just a few -- play major night spots along with touring groups. Reggae has become so pervasive that it can be heard somewhere in town every night of the week. The city is also home to a growing recording industry, with a number of studios devoted predominantly to reggae. For example, Jimmy Cliff, made famous in the movie "The Harder They Come," recently recorded his latest LP "Images" in Miami's Vision Studio.

The history of reggae is linked closely with Rastafarianism. This religious philosophy and lifestyle emerged in Jamaica during the 1930s, sparked by the



Ti-Shan reggae band performing at the 1988 Traditions Festival.



Musician with Ti-Shan reggae band.

coronation of Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selasse and Jamaican black nationalist Marcus Garvey's "Back to Africa" Movement. These two historical events provided a powerful boost to nascent Rastafarianism, building on longstanding Biblically based notions of an African homeland, a black king, and the glory of Ethiopia. In 1940, Leonard Howell set up an independent commune at Pinnacle, Jamaica. It was supported by cottage industries and ganja (marijuana) cultivation, and unified in its belief in the divinity of Ethiopian emperor Ras Tafari (Haile Selassie) and eventual repatriation to Africa. In 1954, police raided Pinnacle. Displaced leaders and members were set loose among the slums of West Kingston, where Rastafarianism gained a large following.

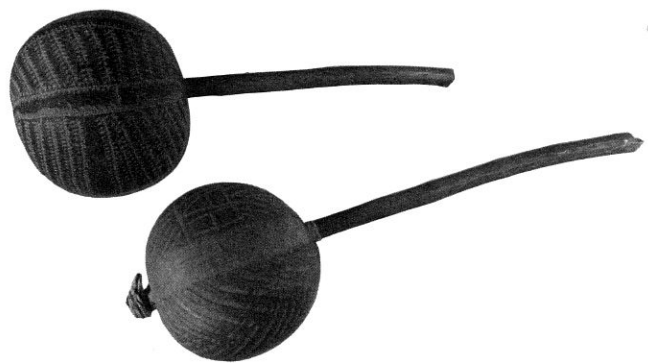
By that time, Rastas had developed a lifestyle and religious philosophy which incorporated the ritual use of ganja, dreadlock hairstyles, an emergent folk speech, vegetarianism, origin myths, Ethiopianism, a doctrine of black supremacy, and a belief in Jamaica as a contemporary Babylon. What the Rastas lacked, however, was a distinctive music. In the Kingston shantytowns they mingled with performers of burru music, whose virtuoso drumming on a trio of akete drums represented a striking African tradition which appealed to the Rastafarians' back-to-Africa sentiments.

Rasta drumming brotherhoods began to play on the streets and camp sites of Kingston. The late rastaman Oswald "Count Ossie" Williams is among those credited with introducing rasta/burra drumming into Jamaican popular music, then dominated by ska, one of various precursors to reggae. As Vera Reckford noted in *Jamaica Report* (#46, 1982), "In time, the patterns of the three rasta drums (bass, fundeh, repeater) were distributed to the bass, rhythm guitar, keyboards and added percussion." Superstars such as Bob Marley, (whose mother, Cedella Booker, lives in Miami) created biting reggae texts which became a folk poetry of the urban poor:

If you are a big tree  
We are the small ax  
Sharpened to cut you down  
(from "Small Ax")

Them belly full but we hungry  
A hungry man is an angry man  
(from "Them Belly Full")

With its driving beat and texts of social critique and black liberation, reggae soon gained a wide following in Jamaica and abroad. As reggae continues to draw international attention, musicians in Miami and elsewhere are struggling to balance commercial success with reggae's history as a music with a message.



### Conclusion

Caribbean musics in Miami today represent a fusion of traditional, popular, sacred, secular, African, European, and North American idioms, all of which continue to be influenced by contacts with the U.S. music industry and musicians of other countries and cultures. Often performed in native languages and dialects, these distinctive rhythms, textures, and instrumentations symbolize the culture of lands left behind as well as the emerging musical syntheses of generations born and raised in Dade County.

# African American and West Indian Folklife in South Florida

by Dr. Joyce M. Jackson

Present day metropolitan Miami, which encompasses most of Dade County, is an evolving environment which illustrates the historical flow of cultural ideas between diverse populations. The black population provides an excellent example of this diversity. Although the *1980 Census Summary of the General Population Characteristics* reported that there were 280,434 blacks in the county, it did not mention that they came not only from the United States, but also from the Caribbean, Latin America, and Africa. In this essay, I will examine some aspects of the folk culture of two African diaspora groups in Miami -- African Americans and West Indians.

## The African American Presence

Since they first came to the Miami area in the early 19th century, African Americans have responded to a broad range of experiences--slavery, urban migration, disenfranchisement during the Jim Crow era, the struggle for civil rights and economic freedom, and today, a new political activism. Throughout the episodes of their history, African Americans have found ways to educate, strengthen, comfort, inspire, motivate, and entertain their minds and spirits, thereby making it possible to survive and grow beyond the external circumstances of their lives.

A rich and immense body of tradition has emerged from this struggle for survival. African American folk culture includes the songs, verbal lore, crafts and occupational skills that African Americans brought from both rural agricultural areas and other urban centers. These traditions are composed of more than skills that can be learned by example, such as improvising the lead in a gospel song, piecing a quilt, or break dancing. They also include the concepts, cultural values, aesthetics, and world views that make African American folk expression unique. Many of these emerged directly from the values shared by various African societies.

When Africans were transported to the sugar plantations of the Caribbean, then to the cotton plantations

and farms in the southern United States, they brought their traditional ways of thinking and living with them. Since many Africans had lived in close and prolonged proximity with European-derived culture, they were able to exercise a cultural selectivity by tenaciously retaining those elements of their African heritage which were most valuable to them. This selective process and subsequent synthesis of African and European elements defines the evolution of a distinct African American culture. In African American folk traditions, however, the African elements are usually more prevalent.

## Religion

The culture of urban African Americans reveals much about the boom, bust, and subsequent redevelopment of their communities. Throughout the process of community change, African Americans have selectively chosen to hold on to long cherished ways of doing things. The rhythm and flavor of African American urban community life takes one in many directions. The church is a good place to begin, for it serves as the most important community institution for newly arrived families. It is also one of the strongest and most enduring transplants to urban life. For



**Malissia Horn,**  
lead singer for  
the **Voices of Joy**  
gospel group  
from the Home-  
stead area.

many African Americans, the church family replaces to a substantial degree parts of the extended family that were left behind.

African American migration patterns follow well-travelled corridors. People from rural areas leave some relatives and move to urban areas with other branches of their families; over time, others may follow. In this manner, entire communities can be gradu-

ally transplanted. Many of the African American churches in Miami were organized with memberships based on rural congregations. Some of the smaller churches are still shaped by members arriving from rural areas in Florida or other southern states. In the early 1920s, some residents of Calvin, Georgia, moved into the West Perrine community and founded the church that became Mt. Moriah Baptist Church. Families from Perry, Georgia, moved into the Goulds community in the mid-1920s, and some still have their church membership at Mt. Carmel Unity Baptist Church.

The church is the place where the raw edges of migrational change are softened, where old flavors and sounds from home are not discarded, but blend in comforting ways in a new urban gospel pot. There you can find the elders who perform black sacred songs and prayers holding on to a tradition which surely represents continuity not just from the rural South, but from older African roots as well.

One can go to the Church of Christ in the Goulds community and still find a strong traditional unaccompanied song service led by elders who maintain the old, rich pattern of singing a song phrase followed by the congregation repeating that same phrase, a practice which is known as lining-out. One also hears the old patterns with "amen corners" (i.e., a group within the congregation that responds verbally to the sermons and songs) and general congregational singing in unison and heterophony. The call-and-response structure, which is a common performance practice in West African music, is prevalent not only in this folk church setting, but in most African American traditional music. Call-and-response is an alternation between a leader and a chorus, purposefully done so all can join in. Many West African, and thus African American, musical events are of a participatory nature. Their songs — spirituals, hymns, and jubilees — are accompanied by handclapping, footstamping, and interjection of a shout, cry, or holler from someone who "feels the spirit."

In many churches, especially the larger ones, old gospel songs led by the elders in the traditional way have been supplanted by the newer sounds of songs accompanied by electric organs and/or instrumental combos. New songs which serve new needs evolved from traditional ones. Many of them combined the musical structure and poetic forms of old secular and religious songs with new musical and textual ideas. These gospel songs can be heard in Mt. Carmel Missionary Baptist Church and New Macedonia Baptist Church in Liberty City or Glendale Missionary Baptist Church in Richmond Heights.

The highly emotional and spirit-filled music called *gospel* evolved from the Holiness and Pentecostal Churches, and first penetrated more established denominations through the "storefront" Baptist and Methodist churches which permeate areas where African Americans have lived in Miami. Today, denomination is not a determining factor, and one finds gospel music in Baptist, Methodist, Catholic, and Episcopal congregations throughout the communities.

Going out to a "singing" is another urban-based Christian sociocultural event which takes place in churches, schools, community centers, and auditoriums. "Singings," "gospel extravaganzas," and "gospelfests" are programs of gospel music, with between two and ten vocal groups performing a few songs each. A minister usually opens the program, and many times it is closed as the "doors of the church" are opened in an invitation to accept Christ as one's personal savior.

Smaller community-based vocal groups often perform along with choirs at singings. These groups are organized in churches, schools, and among occupational, community, and family groups. The Calvary Travelers (mixed group) is an example of a family group that continues to perform in the unaccompanied, or a cappella, style. The emphasis is on blended ensemble singing, with group harmonies serving as the only needed arrangements for the solo singing of the lead. Their arrangements include the whole group singing choruses in harmony, with the lead performing words and melody over repeated, harmonized, rhythmic phrases sung by the group. Performances by the Heavenly Jewels and the Disciple Travelers have remained a cappella. However, some quartets and other smaller groups who performed unaccompanied for many years, such as the Stars of Harmony, have added instruments. Although it is not the norm, Miami also has its share of female a cappella quartets, including the Gospel Lyrics, the Goldenaires, and the Wimberly Sisters.

### Secular Music

Music, sacred and secular, is a powerful force in all communities, but is perhaps even more so in the African American tradition, since it was something that could be held on to under the most adverse circumstances. When the blues, which is traditionally African American, rural, and southern, came to the urban areas, it immediately took root and became the main song form used for entertainment. The blues of the country fields and small "jukejoints" became urban

when musicians employed amplified instruments in the 1940s. During that era many such bands could be heard while strolling down N.W. 2nd Avenue in Overtown — then Miami's "Little Broadway." Today you still hear the familiar sounds of the blues bands in clubs such as Tobacco Road (Miami's oldest extant nightclub), Sensations, and Studio 183. Singers like Charles Wright and Alice Daye have also carried on the tradition. Blues and many other African American folk traditions have survived largely by oral transmission from senior members of the community to the younger generation.

The blues performer provided music for dancing in clubs, at barbecues, house parties, and other social gatherings. His music also served as a means for passing time and making social statements. The solitary, transient lifestyle of many bluesmen did not deter them from making use of the call-and-response performance tradition. In the twelve-bar blues, a singer makes a statement or asks a question related to some circumstances of life. The comment or response at the end of the phrase comes not from a chorus of other singers, but from his guitar.

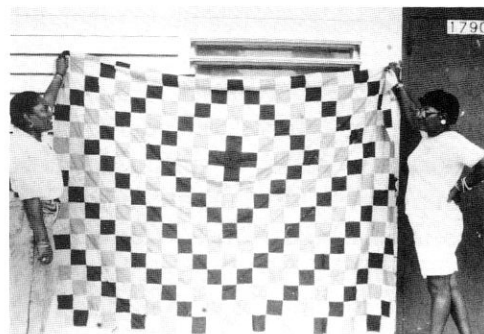


Native Floridian Tommy Walton sings the blues at the 1988 Harvest Festival.

Miami bluesman W.C. Baker was born in the rural outskirts of Live Oak, Florida, between Jacksonville and Tallahassee. At age six, he began to sing the blues while plucking chicken wire strung across an old box made from scrap lumber — his first guitar. Like many country bluesmen who made their first instruments, this was his rite of passage into the blues world.

Mr. Baker's first professional engagement as an adult came 46 years ago at the Big House club in Brownsville. His early life was very transient, and he had to deal with many adverse circumstances caused by discrimination, financial strain, and lost love. Nevertheless, through discipline and cooperation, Baker gradually moved from the lonely life of a transient bluesman to the leader of a well-known Miami blues band called W. C. Baker and the Cooperatives.

## Domestic Arts



Two members of the West Perrine Community Center show one of their quilts.

Neighborhood community centers are another significant place in Miami's African American communities where many aspects of traditional culture can be seen. For many generations African American women in the South have made patchwork quilts for utilitarian purposes. Although quilt making is not a specifically African tradition, it is possible that both the tradition and styles of African American quilts are related to the African tradition of decorative textiles. The quilts made by members of other cultures are more formal and unyielding in design and color than African American quilts.

At the Goulds Senior Citizen Center and the Perrine Neighborhood Community Center, elderly women gather to work on quilts. Not only do they make new quilts, but they also frequently repair or restore older quilts for others. For them quilting remains a social event, during which they talk about things that interest them. Because of this social function, it is likely that quilting will survive in African American neighborhoods for a long time.

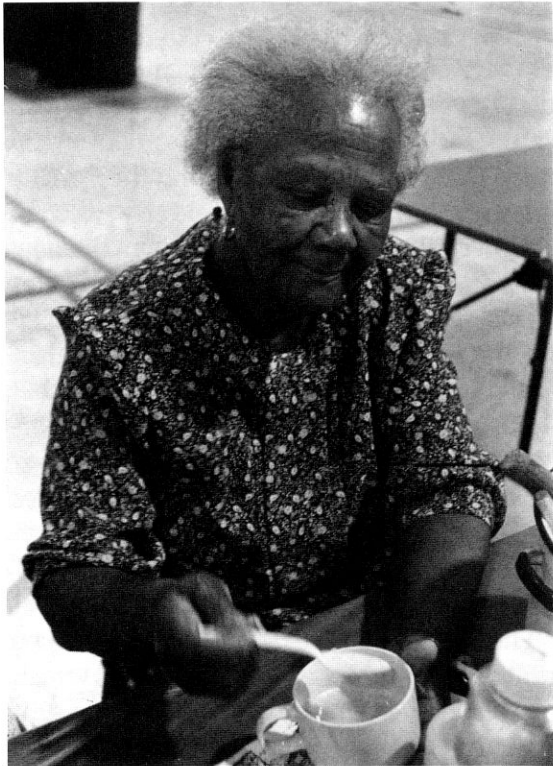
Pattern names are a part of quilt folklore. The ladies at the West Perrine Neighborhood Center have quilted the "Flower Garden," "Star," "Little and Big Bow Tie," "Square" or "Nine Patches," "Around the World," and "Stove Eye." The ties to West African textile art can be seen in the quilts they refer to as "String" quilts, which strongly resemble the woven fabric and designs of West African cloth.

Virginia Barrel came to the community of West Perrine from Atlanta, Georgia thirty-nine years ago. She has quilted since the age of twelve, when she learned the craft from her grandmother and mother. Mrs. Barrel comments:

I held the lamp at night, so they could see how to quilt.... They used a frame that hung from the ceiling by a cord or string.... I made my first quilt at age fourteen with strings left over from other quilts.

Some of the women hate to discard anything, and these leftover items provide materials for other crafts. For instance, some use the fabric left from the quilts to fashion rag dolls, as well as dresses for dolls they have made from plastic bleach and detergent bottles. They create yo-yo pillows, pin cushions, fabric flowers, and rugs out of old stockings. In addition, they make items from plastic soft drink can holders, aluminum can pop tops, and egg cartons. The impetus to make these things comes from the strategy of survival which arose when people had to "make do" by making use of everything.

Doretha Carter, who moved to Miami in 1924 from White Springs, Florida, utilizes many old things. She continues to make her own lye soap because she does not like to throw away her leftover cooking fat and she prefers doing things the old fashioned way. Mrs. Carter also preserves fruits such as guavas, mangoes, and oranges when they are in season.



**Doretha Carter of Goulds, Florida, demonstrates her method of making lye soap.**

Several women in the community still employ home remedies to cure various illnesses. They gave several examples of remedies for fever, such as drinking fever grass tea or an alcohol, mustard, and turpentine mixture. For the common cold, they recommended a mixture of castor oil, cod liver oil, and honey. If children have worms, they might chew a piece of asafetida. Sores or burns may be treated by rubbing them with aloe vera or tobacco juice.

## The West Indian Presence



**Representatives of Coconut Grove's Bahamian Community in the 1890s.**

In the 1890s, Coconut Grove became the first major settlement by people of African descent, most of whom were Bahamian. Since that time, thousands of Caribbeans have made Dade County their home. They continue to add a new and vital dimension to this city by the sea. No official count for each island nation represented has been taken recently, but there are several visible communities.

Even though many Caribbean groups have assimilated to the mainstream Miami culture to a certain extent, they maintain very strong sense of shared identity through several strategies. First, a large number of Caribbean organizations or voluntary associations plan cultural activities and address social, political, and cultural issues. One example of this is the Miami Caribbean Carnival Association. In addition, there are newspapers, tabloids, journals, and magazines that keep the Caribbean community informed about issues and activities concerning them and their respective island nations. Furthermore, just as African Americans continued selected cultural practices when they moved from the country to the city, Afro-Caribbeans have bridged the gap from the island to the mainland by preserving some forms of their home land's cultural practices which have become symbolic of their ethnic identity.

The West Indian sense of ethnic identity is also reflected in home interiors, which make important statements about the identity of their residents and the way they want others to perceive them. Home interiors often encompass vital aspects of family and homeland history, and reflect aesthetic patterns and values that are reiterated in other spheres of life. Far from remain-



ing fixed and unchanging, arts and crafts displayed in the home always incorporate both continuity and change by reflecting their owner's travels to the home country. For example, in a Trinidadian home I observed beautiful embroidery done by the mother and the headdress of an old Carnival costume juxtaposed with a commercial wooden replica of the island of Trinidad, obviously made for tourists. The value of these objects, then, is not found in their function and aesthetic form alone. Clearly, the process of creating the items and the act of possessing them carry significance for community members and make important statements about how they perceive their identity.

Another strategy for reinforcing the traditional culture is the frequent journey home to the mother country. Since a large number of people frequently fly to the islands, a number of West Indian-owned travel agencies have been established in the North Dade vicinity. Many travel to their home island several times a year, depending on factors such as family, business, or vacation.

### Music and Song

One of the most noticeable aspects of West Indian culture in Miami is the music. The remarkable richness of West Indian musical life is partly the product of its multi-layered complexity and diversity, which reflects the encounter between European and African musical traditions. European folk music practices, whether of Spanish, French, British, or Dutch origin, have for centuries been coming into contact and fusing with the musical traditions carried by slaves from West and Central Africa to the Americas. The various practices and the way they have combined have differed from place to place. However, the fundamental cultural elements in the different colonies paved the way for a creative process of blending and fusion (sometimes referred to as "Creolization") that had similar results throughout the Caribbean.

In Miami, parties and other social events are held in peoples' homes or in rented halls, and generally in-

volve a deejay who spins reggae, calypso, and soca (an invigorating musical synthesis of calypso with soul and funk elements) records. Occasionally, live reggae bands such as Zero Crew or Spice Roots, and live steelbands, such as Burt Reyes Steel Orchestra or Rising Star Steelband, perform at the events. Staged dance performances, such as calypso and limbo, may also be featured along with informal social dancing.

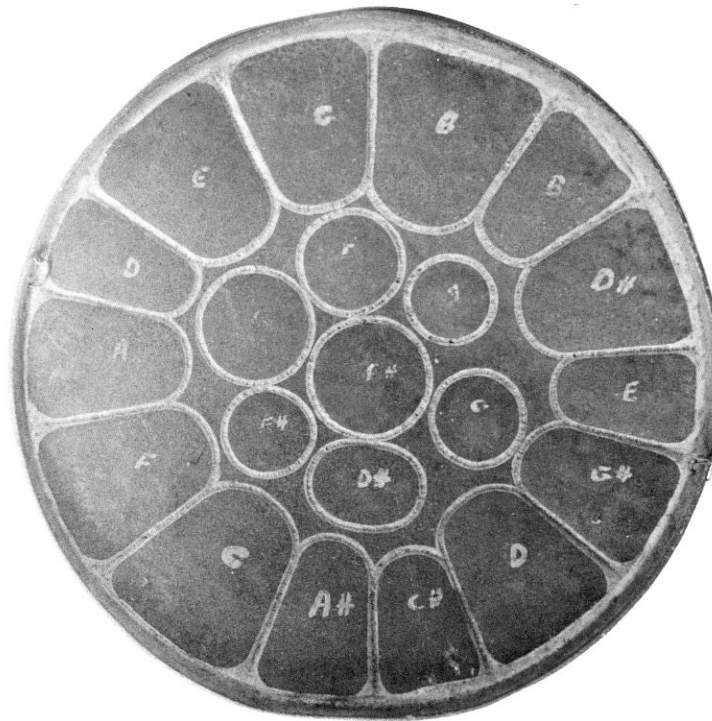
In addition to local entertainers, major calypsonians, soca, and reggae stars, including David Rudder, Baron, Mighty Sparrow, Calypso Rose, Steel Pulse, and others, usually appear in concert several times during the year. These social events are usually sponsored by a West Indian organization to raise funds for a cause or

by a promoter for pure entertainment and monetary profit. West Indians flock to these events. The concerts are a medium wherein they can experience their common bonds, as well as express and solidify their West Indian heritage.

In all the previously mentioned West Indian musical styles--calypso, reggae, and soca--one can hear the synthesis of European and African elements along with indigenous island characteristics. For example, each style is performed on instruments of European origin and uses the European harmonic system

based on the diatonic scale, but the African elements are very strong. They include the presence of the call-and-response structure, syncopated rhythms, improvisation, strong percussion, the relationship of music and dance, and the music's political as well as collective social nature. While all three styles are dance and party music, reggae and calypso also function as media for social and political commentary.

Musical and extra-musical affinities link the various styles with the individual characteristics of their island nations. Although calypso is performed today on European instruments, it is traditionally performed on steeldrums, or "pans" as they are referred to by Trinidadians. The rhythm of the Trinidadian and Jamaican dialects tends to exert a powerful influence



A Trinidadian steel pan, with paint marking individual notes.

on the music and the manner in which it is performed. It does not matter how urban or international these styles have become, they still retain a strong indigenous character.



The Bert Reyes Steel Band performing at the Historical Museum's Harvest Festival.

Although currently a popular style, reggae has its roots in traditional styles of Jamaican music. Elements from the Kumina tradition (religious ceremonies of drumming and dancing, held for the purpose of communion with the spirits of ancestors) are evident in the rhythmic layering of the guitar and keyboards in many reggae songs. Reggae also has an "off-beat" phrasing of the rhythm guitar that strongly resembles that of mento songs. Jamaican mento music is similar to the calypso of Trinidad and Tobago in that it is sometimes comical while still making historical, political, and social comments. However, mento consists of a different combination of instruments than calypso. In addition to guitar and banjo, a rumba box is the percussive instrument instead of a drum. Mento phrasing can also be heard in the accents of reggae trap drummers, although their individual styles vary. Even the dance movements of reggae are similar to that used in mento dancing. This similarity is noted by Louise Bennett-Coverly, a Jamaican folklorist, poet, storyteller, and newspaper columnist. She refers to the dance movements as an "old African step," the "weak knee" or "dipping motion."

Carol Pratt has resided in Miami since 1980, but she still plays mento and other more traditional songs on her guitar, and sings the lyrics she learned during her childhood in Jamaica. Pratt has returned to some of the rural areas where people still practice the old folk songs of Jamaica in order to collect and learn more. She performs them at her church and other cultural events in the West Indian community.

Lucille Ranger-Brown, who has lived in Miami since 1971, is a celebrated Jamaican performer. She performs many traditional Jamaican songs and dances, includ-

ing work songs that portray typical marketplace scenes, women washing their clothes at the riverside, men working on the railroad, and other aspects of "the old culture like it used to be." Ranger-Brown also recites stories in Jamaican dialect or patois, and intersperses songs and dances in the midst of them. She comments:

We tell stories through folksongs. You see everyday living and we'd make a song or dance out of it. We don't go to school for this.

### Narrative

Narrative tradition is another vital aspect of the influence of African traditions on West Indian culture. Storytelling--expressing a concept, moral lesson, or day-to-day experience in dramatic imagery -- is one of the strongest retentions of African narrative forms in the diaspora. As in African communities, it is an important means of recordkeeping and transmitting information. Telling stories about animals who exhibit human behavior in familiar situations was a common



Jamaican storyteller Lucille Fuller pauses during an Anansi story.

method of instruction in West African society. A prevalent theme was the confrontation between a small animal, such as a spider or a rabbit, and a large animal, like a lion or fox. The weaker animal prevailed by using its wit or cunning. Within the context of the oppressed lives of the slaves, the tales took on another connotation--that of the slaves outwitting their masters.

Lucille Fuller, also from Jamaica, has a large repertoire of animal folktales, particularly those about the Anansi (spider) character. She is a very animated and dramatic storyteller who tells tales in Jamaican dialect and uses voice changes to represent each animal. Fuller learned her stories from her grandmother, mother, and father. Now, she recites the stories in schools and on church and community programs.

### Foodways

One can see the expression of West Indian identity in Miami through foodways. There are presently many authentic West Indian restaurants, such as the Pantry Restaurant, the Pepper Pot, and Pauline's. Taken as a group, they offer a considerable variety of foods, with the repetition of some dishes which are universally popular in the Caribbean, such as rice and peas. Other popular dishes include curried goat, oxtail stew, "jerk" chicken or pork, Escovich fish, fried plantains, codfish and oiled bananas, conch fritters or salads, callalou, and ackee with saltfish.

Shirley Sutherland of Tobago is proud of her heritage and traditional cooking. She still prepares the traditional foods of her island home for her family, friends, and West Indian community functions. For example, she cooks bigi, which has spinach as its main ingredient, and coo-coo, which is made from cornmeal, okra, and coconut milk. For special occasions, she prepares a main dish like callalou, made from dashing leaves, okra, green peppers, pigtails and crabs.

Sutherland, and other West Indians need certain basic ingredients to maintain the authenticity of traditional dishes. Therefore Miami has many grocery stores that specialize in the essentials for West Indian dishes. Some businesses serve a triple purpose, such as Jamaica Products, Inc., which is a wholesale warehouse, grocery, and retail restaurant. Don Linton and his wife sell cases of canned goods, fresh produce, medicinal herbs, spices, pharmaceuticals, and other Jamaican products to clients in Miami and other parts of the United States.

Smaller West Indian grocery stores and bakeries may also provide more than one service. Tai's Bakery, run by a Chinese Jamaican family, also serves hot lunches. The bakery abounds with West Indian breads and sweet treats, like sourdough and coconut breads, fry bake, plantain and coconut pastries, currant rolls, and fruit cakes. Two of the more popular items are the spicy lobster patties and meat pies.

### Celebrations

Many Trinidadians from Miami make the annual journey home for Carnival. It is recognized that no single event in the English-speaking Caribbean engenders as much ethnic unity and comradeship among West Indians abroad as the Carnival celebration. Not only do they make the annual pilgrimage back for Carnival, but wherever they happen to be domiciled in large numbers, bands of masqueraders parade in imitation of the event.

Masquerading (mas for short in Trinidad) is an almost universal feature of the widely distributed pre-Lenten festivals, which culminate on Mardi Gras (Fat Tuesday), the day before Ash Wednesday, and the beginning of the Lenten fast. Trinidad is no exception. Early descriptions of the restrained European Carnival celebrations in Trinidad prior to emancipation mention maskers, and the custom was carried and elaborated by freed slaves. In recent years, many of the older traditional Carnival characters have disappeared, and the hundreds of Mas bands that participate in Carnival usually construct costumes on a new and original theme each year.

Llewellyn Roberts, who remembers following old sailor bands around as a child in Trinidad, and who, like most Trinidadians, has participated in Carnival all his life, is committed to continuing similar celebrations through Miami's West Indian Carnival. Roberts, who is a master craftsman, has been designing and building costume headaddresses for many years. His specialty is wire bending -- the painstaking task of constructing frames of wire that can be shaped with foam rubber, cloth, paper foil, sequins, and paint into a finished costume. Jesse Lampkin, also a wire bender from Trinidad, designs and builds full costumes. He lived in New York for many years and always participated in the West Indian Carnival on Labor Day.

On Columbus Day, Miami's West Indian community turns out to "Jump Up" and "Play Mas," dancing through the streets of downtown Miami to calypso and soca music. The Carnival combines African rhythms, colors, and sensuous movement, with the West Indians' unique flair for hospitality, entertainment, and bacchanal.

Just as Llewellyn Roberts and Jesse Lampkin persistently endeavor to preserve and celebrate their Trinidadian culture, Billy Rolle and Bruce Beneby have played similar roles in the Bahamian community. Billy Rolle is the Executive Director of the Miami/Bahamas Goombay Festival Celebration, which takes place in early June. His grandfather was one of the first settlers

## Summary

Traditional culture continues to pervade the lives of African Americans and West Indians in Miami. Many traditions, such as those mentioned here, not only provide an enduring basis for family and community life, but also serve as a source of aesthetic satisfaction for generations of participants.

to come from the Bahamas in the 1890s, and his father emigrated around the turn of the century from the family island of Exuma.

Since it began in 1978, the festival has evolved into a large and celebrated event during which Coconut Grove's Grand Avenue turns into Nassau's Bay Street. The internationally acclaimed Royal Bahamas Police Band performs at Goombay events and marches in the parade. In 1989 close to 800,000 residents and visitors packed the Grove for the festival, feasting on traditional Bahamian treats, viewing the arts and crafts, and enjoying the music of Miami's Sunshine Junkanoo band.

Bruce Beneby was the leader of the Sunshine Junkanoo band, which consists primarily of his family and friends. He was born in Nassau, but lived in Miami since 1956. There are various theories on the origin of the term Junkanoo. Beneby believed that the term and the celebration of Junkanoo,

All began in Africa with a gentleman named 'Johnny Enew,' leader of a band that traveled from house to house, from street to street during certain holidays like Christmas and New Years, which is when Junkanoo is celebrated in the Bahamas.

Every year during the holidays, Beneby returned to Nassau, to participate in his country's traditional celebration, marching in parade and beating drums.

The Sunshine Junkanoo Band members play horns, drums, whistles, and cowbells. Each year they create a new array of vividly colored costumes with headdresses based on a specific theme. The band has performed at the Goombay festival in the Grove since its inception, and also performs at other festivals and events throughout the state.

Bruce Beneby was tragically killed this spring in a hit and run accident, but his family and friends are continuing the tradition.

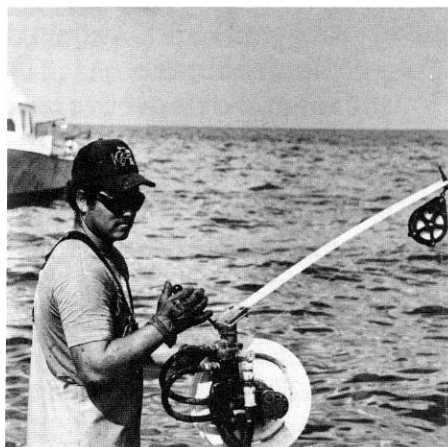


**Bruce Beneby performing with the Sunshine Junkanoo Band at the 1990 Pan-African Bookfest.**

# Key Largo to Marathon: A Report on the Folklife of the Upper and Middle Keys.

by Brent Cantrell

The Historical Museum Folklife Program recently began a project to survey the folklife of the Florida Keys. The last general survey of Keys culture was conducted in the 1930s when the WPA Writer's Project documented folk arts throughout Florida, including the Keys. Since then, there have been only limited and sporadic efforts to research Keys folk arts.



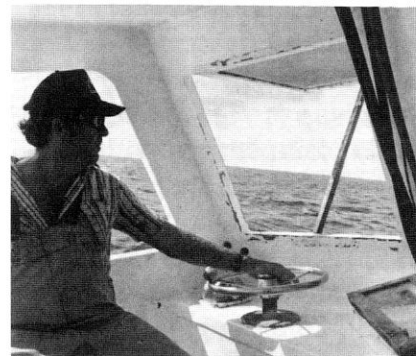
The First Mate of *Take It Or Leave It*, operating a hydraulic reel while fishing for Amberjack off Islamorada.

Long periods of isolation had a formative effect on the people of the Keys, often called "Conchs." Many never left the islands until the completion of the railroad in 1912. The Conchs made their livelihood through the harvest of the land and sea, sometimes supplemented by smuggling and tourism. The isolated nature of the Keys, combined with the mixture of Anglo, Bahamian, and Cuban set-

tlers, produced a traditional life unique to the area. Rapid development of the Keys in recent decades and the influx of outsiders have added new forms to Keys folklife.

Many of the oldest and most developed of the traditional arts found in the Keys are associated with maritime industries and occupations. Maritime commerce, fishing, sponging and trapping have always been central elements of life in the Keys, and the arts, skills and craftsmanship of the maritime occupations are held in high esteem by both long-time residents and newer arrivals. Even those residents who have little to do with the sea recognize the preeminence of the fishing captains and the people who supply them.

At the center of activity are the fishermen and trappers. There are two distinct types of professional fishermen in the Keys: commercial fishermen and fishing guides. The former make their living by catching fish or crustaceans in large quantity and selling them to local fish houses; they work with a crew and often go out with several other boats. Guides, on the other hand, work



Captain Gary Sands at the helm of his boat *Take It Or Leave It*, after a long successful day of fishing.

alone, taking sport fishermen to likely spots and instructing them in technique.

Fishermen carry tremendous traditional knowledge. Boat captains who catch fish must have knowledge of their equipment, weather, the topography of the sea bed, and the behavior of their quarry. This knowledge is gained over years, or even decades, of apprenticeship. In the case of commercial fishermen, most work first as a deck hand and then as a mate on a successful captain's boat. Some of the most capable fishermen are from families who have been fishing in the Keys for several generations. Techniques and knowledge are passed from one generation to another and at any given time there may be several family members earning a living by fishing.

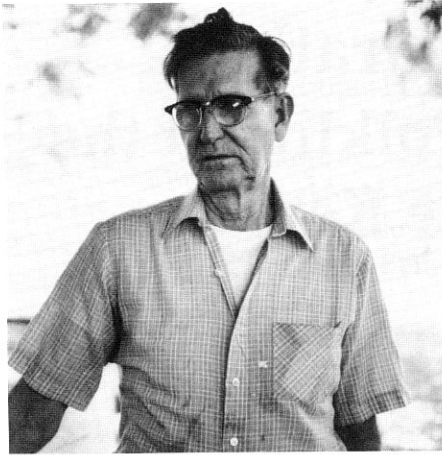


The crews of the *Take It Or Leave It*, and the *Zaida Rosa*, take a break and compare notes on the day's work.

Fish are notoriously capricious, and successful fishermen rely on friends and family for tips, pointers and help at sea. While nominally in competition with each other, captains will share information about location, tackle, and techniques. There is often a great sense of comradeship and friendly competition among commercial fishermen, though it is governed by a complex etiquette system. Successful fishermen seem to feel an obligation to pass on information to others; in return, they receive respect and recognition from their peers.

Commercial fishing as practiced for generations in the Keys may be ending. The recent influx of new residents has brought pressures on the environment that have in turn resulted in an ensemble of new laws governing fishing and boating. These new regulations are forcing men whose families have fished the Keys for a century to give up the profession. Sport fishing, conversely, is doing well. Sport fishing guides rely on the thriving tourist industry which seems in no danger of collapse.

Besides the fishermen themselves, there is a host of related occupations dependent on the sea. Foremost is boat building. Boat



**Willie Roberts, a third generation boat builder, at his shop in Tavernier.**

building technology has changed considerably since World War II. Before the war, boats built in the Keys were of wood. Their construction required an intimate knowledge of woods and the properties of timber. After the war, plywood became widely available and builders switched from planks to that strong, relatively lightweight material. Finally in the sixties, craftsmen began shifting to fiberglass and resins, which are not only lightweight and strong, but also resist decay. Some of the older boat builders in the Keys have worked with all three methods.

William Roberts of Tavernier, a third generation boat builder, began working in his father's shop in the thirties and, over the years,

has built scores of wood, plywood and fiberglass boats. Though he has built boats for many different purposes, he is well known for his back country skiff, a small, shallow draft boat designed for use in Florida Bay. Mr. Roberts and most other commercial boat builders have worked primarily with fiberglass for the last several years, but the art of wood and plywood boat building is not dead, and wooden boats may be glimpsed under construction in back yards throughout the Keys.

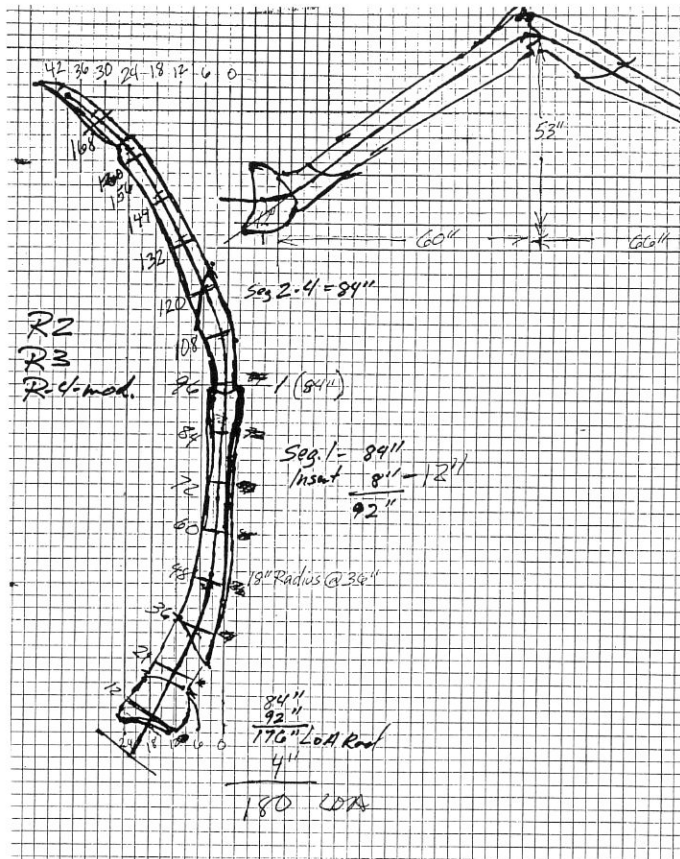
Sail making, an allied craft, supports four or five businesses in the Keys. Today most sail makers use a synthetic sail cloth and a computer generated pattern to make new sails, but older tools and techniques are used in the repair and alteration of sails. Setting grommets and rope work are still done by hand, and sails may also be sewn using techniques acquired through apprenticeship.

Utilitarian and decorative rope work is one of the traditional arts associated with sailing practiced today as much for pleasure as for practicality. George King of Windward Sails in Marathon has mastered scores of knots, bends, and splices, including the decorative "Turk's head" and "crown knot," as well as the more practical but complex long splice and rope to wire splice.

Although at least one net maker works in Key West, hand net tying seems to be largely a thing of the past in the Upper and Middle Keys. Several people who tied nets in the past are still alive but inexpensive, commercially available nets of monofilament line have put most net makers out of business. Some still repair nets, retying ripped and torn sections. One such veteran of net fishing is Mr. R.R. Brawner. Now in retirement, Brawner has



**Willie Roberts working in his father's boat yard in 1932.**



The 38 foot crawfish was built to scale from detailed plans drawn in the manner of boat and ship construction drawings.

spent his life seining and netting fish, and still occasionally repairs nets for friends in Marathon.

Making traps, particularly those for the Florida lobster, or crawfish, is also a thriving commercial concern in the Keys. Traps are made by both large lumberyards and individuals. Crawfish traps are of a standard design: a rectangular box made of wooden slats about

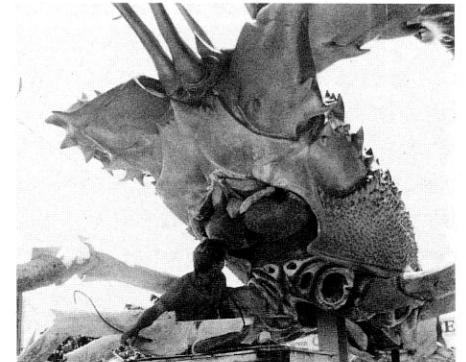
two feet square and a foot high with an entrance hole on top. Two of the more accessible trap makers are José and Eugene Garcia; they make traps for their own use and to sell to the public at a roadside stand in Tavernier.

The Garcia brothers participate in two other traditional conch occupations, sponging and scavenging. At their roadside stand

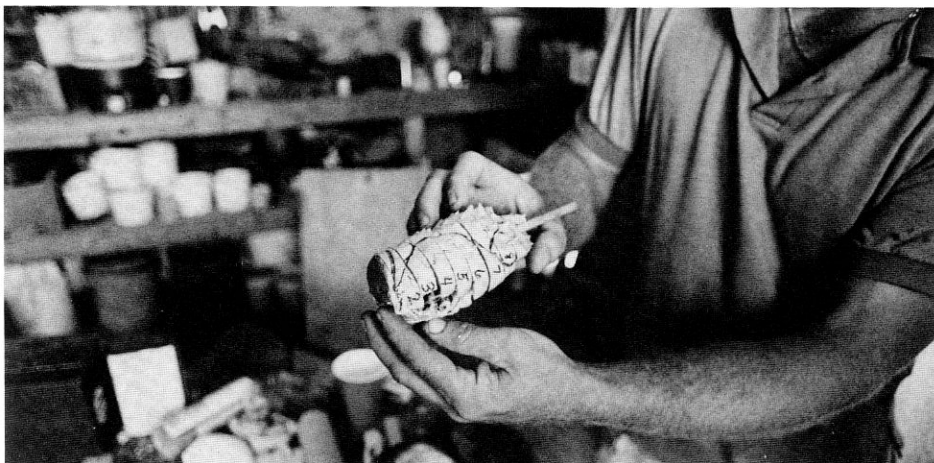
one may buy sponges hooked by the brothers, as well as driftwood, bamboo, buoys, rope and other items which have washed ashore or that they find while trapping and sponging.

The Garcia brothers' roadside stand brings us to a second important Keys industry -- tourism. Although many of the objects sold at tourist shops are mass-produced or imported items, some are the work of talented local artists working within a community tradition. Most notably, shell sculpture and the decorative use of shells must be recognized as an indigenous South Florida art form. Surprisingly, the number of locally produced shell sculptures for sale in shops is rather small; most are now imported from the Philippines.

There is at least one exceptional quilter, Ida Wellborn, who



Richard Blaes installing mandibles on his giant crawfish.



Mr. Blaes holding the real crawfish he used as a model for his steel, fiberglass, and resin version.

sells to the tourist trade in Key Largo. Ms. Wellborn sells her own quilts, which she sews in the Keys, as well as quilts made by members of her family in other parts of the country.

The wealth of monumental sculpture associated primarily with roadside attractions is particularly striking in the Keys. Whaler's Plaza in Marathon displays examples of this genre of folk sculpture, including a reinforced concrete conch shell and a whale tail. Massive sculpture of

Elgie Brown of Tavernier plays the saw by striking it with a screwdriver while controlling the pitch with his left hand.

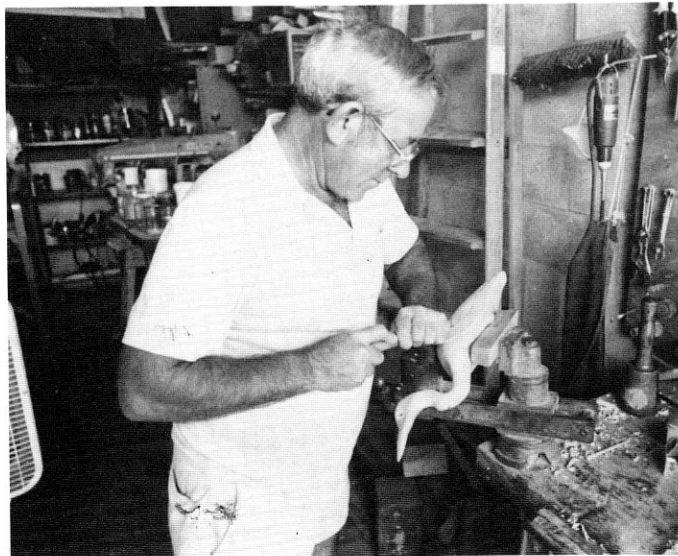


this sort also marks public buildings, especially public schools.

One of the most remarkable examples of monumental sculpture is in Marathon on Coco Plum Road. Over the past four and one half years, Richard Blaes constructed a scale model of a crawfish twenty-four times the size of the original. Mr. Blaes used his knowledge of materials acquired as a fisherman, boat builder and boat repairman to sculpt this thirty-eight foot long resin and fiberglass model, which is an extraordinary example of occupational folk art. Other types of monumental sculpture may also be seen marking schools, souvenir shops, and malls.

Foodways, in the Keys as else-

where, is a conservative genre. Because of the limited resources and the physical isolation of the Florida Keys, a unique cuisine developed. Seafood, of course, plays an important role in Keys foodways, and the conch is especially associated with old-time cooking. Conch chowder and conch fritters are two mainstays of island cuisine. A second peculiarity of Keys foodways is its reliance on sweetened condensed milk. Sweetening and canning milk was one of the first methods devised for the preservation of milk. Its use became popular in the Keys, where limited pasture and fresh water made fresh milk unavailable. Key lime pie is one of the most famous condensed milk recipes;



Wood carver Joe Cella demonstrates carving techniques at his workshop on Key Largo.

others include Queen of All Puddings, a bread pudding with guava paste, and custards. Tropical fruits also feature high in Keys cooking: calamondin, guava and sea grape jellies are common, and key limes are used for desserts and "old sour," a piquant sauce to which salt and sometimes hot peppers are added.

Music in the Upper and Middle Keys is not as well-developed as in Key West. Several accomplished musicians of modern popular forms like rock and country & western perform in clubs in Marathon and Key Largo, and at least one group of musicians plays popular songs from the big band era at the retirement home in Tavernier. One notable musician, Elgie Brown, learned to play bones and saw about 60 years ago in Illinois. He still maintains those genres in Tavernier, but older forms of secular music are rare north of Key West.

Several people, particularly retirees who have made their home in the Upper and Middle Keys, have turned to wood carving, especially the carving of birds. Some of their efforts are spectacular. Nancy Quinn operates a private bird sanctuary in the Upper Keys and carves native birds from live models. Sales of the carved birds support the operation of her sanctuary. Other carvers produce statuary for sale and to decorate their homes.

In the Keys, as elsewhere, forms of folklore are constantly evolving. While we may bemoan the loss of many of the old ways, we may be confident that new ways are developing which will become the old ways of the future. Documenting this process of change is one of the most exciting aspects of folklife research, and the speed of change in recent years in the Florida Keys gives us an excellent opportunity to record the rapid evolution of folklife forms.



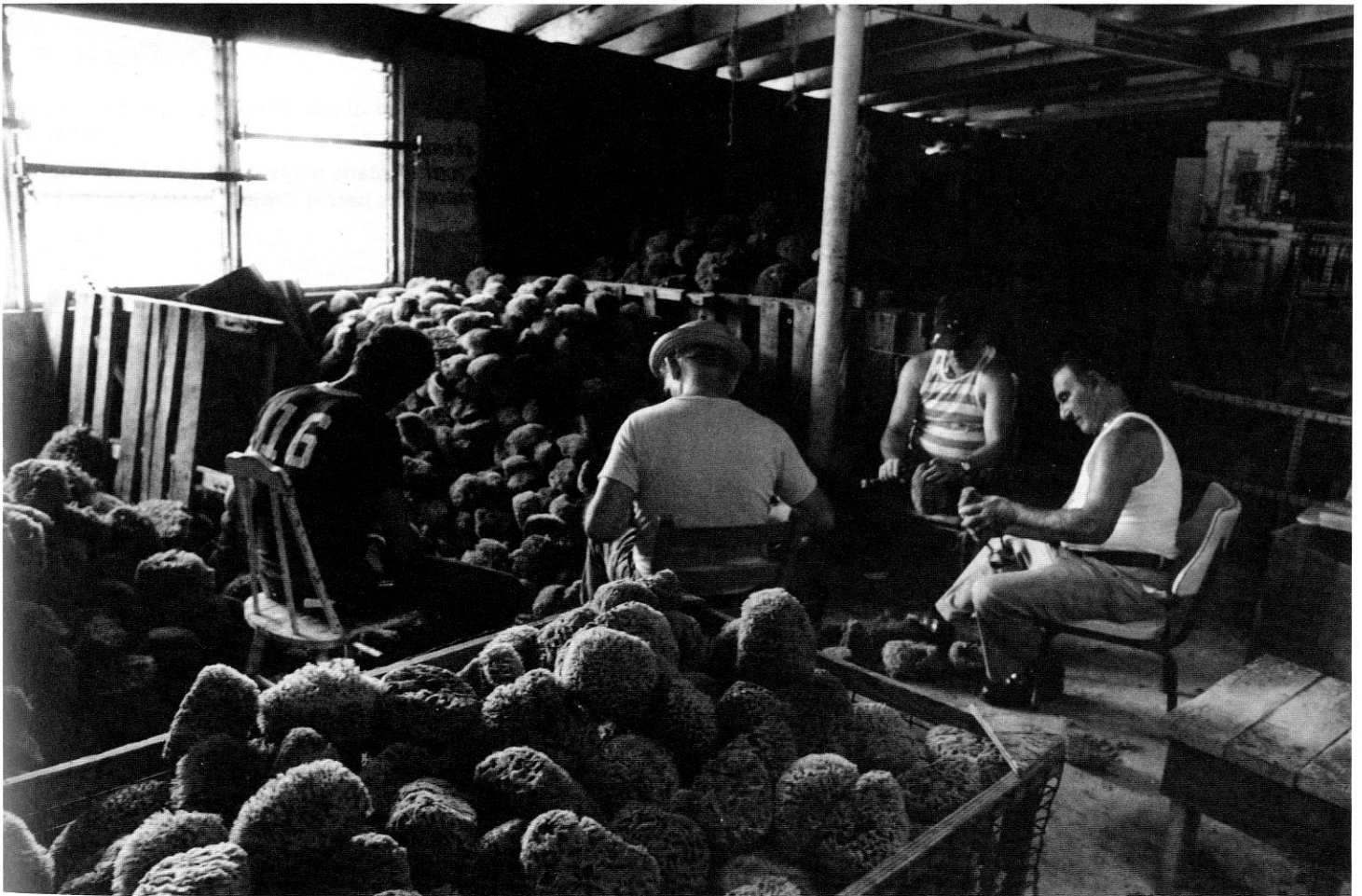
# Through the Lens

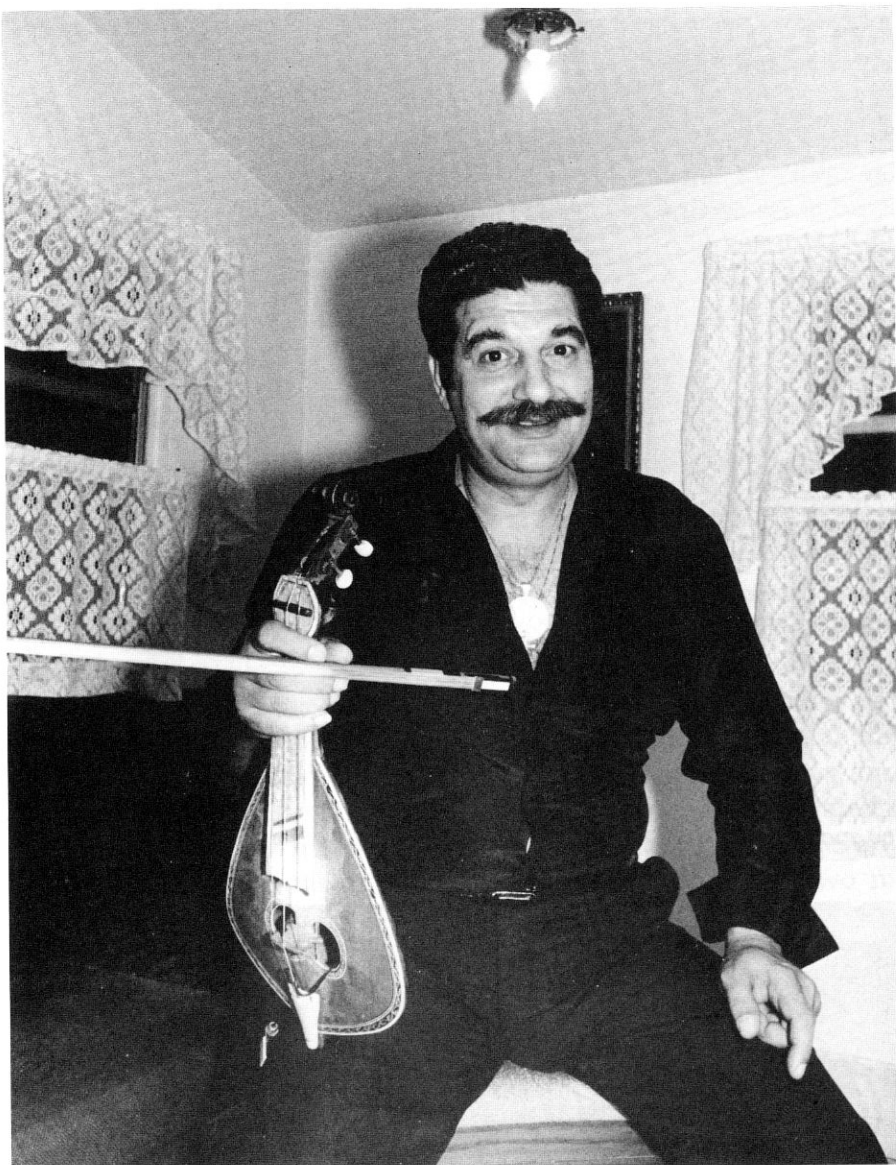
Since this issue of *SFHM* is devoted to the folklife of south Florida, the photographs here represent a broad cross-section of the rich and diverse traditional culture found in the area. Most of these photographs were taken by Michele Edelson for the Historical Museum of Southern Florida's ongoing Folklife Program.

Finishing a pair of jockey's boots at Merlano's Saddle Shop in Miramar.



Trimming sponges at the Arellano Brothers, Inc. sponge processing warehouse on the Miami River.





Gus Maris plays *lyra* and sings the songs of his native Crete.



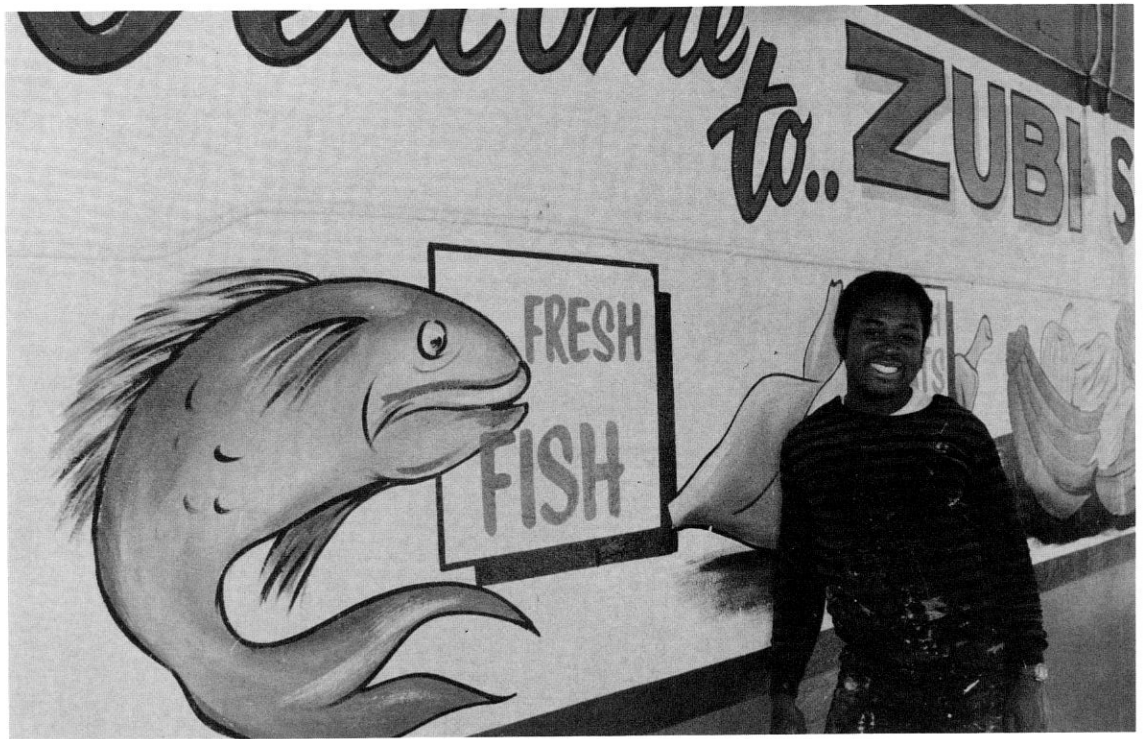
Women sorting tobacco leaves at El Credito Cigars in Little Havana.



Farzana Kalvert applies henna to her sister's hand to create *mehendi*, the beautiful designs worn by East Indians on festive occasions.



Rabbi Rami Shapiro narrates Jewish folktales for the younger members of his congregation.



Haitian sign painter Rodrigue Gilbert at work.

Glen Simmons with his glades skiff and dogs in the yard of his Florida City home.





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# WTMI Gets Into Some Rowdy Bars

The image displays a page of a musical score for the final movement of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony, 'Allegro con brio'. The score is arranged in two columns of staves. The left column includes parts for Flauti, Oboi, Clarinetti in A and La, Fagotti, Corni in A and La, Trombe in D and Re, Timpani in A, E, and La, Mi, Violino I, Violino II, Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabbasso. The right column includes parts for Flauto, Oboe, Clarinetto, Fagotto, Coro, Tromba, Timpani, Violino I, Violino II, Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabbasso. The tempo marking 'Allegro con brio (♩ = 72)' is visible above the string parts. The music is written in 2/4 time and features a variety of rhythmic patterns and dynamics.

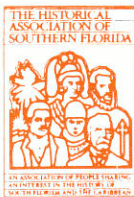
These bars open the last movement of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony. Aaron Copland called it "the apotheosis of the dance." We don't seriously suggest you can dance to it. But the way it rollicks along, you may not be able to sit still to it. WTMI broadcasts this rowdy music in a variety of interpretations. One month it may be Mr. Ormandy's; at other times those of Bernstein, Boult, von Karajan, Monteux, Reiner, Steinberg, Stokowski or Toscanini.

(PSSST! There are some bars in Richard Strauss' *Salome* we wouldn't dare print anywhere.)



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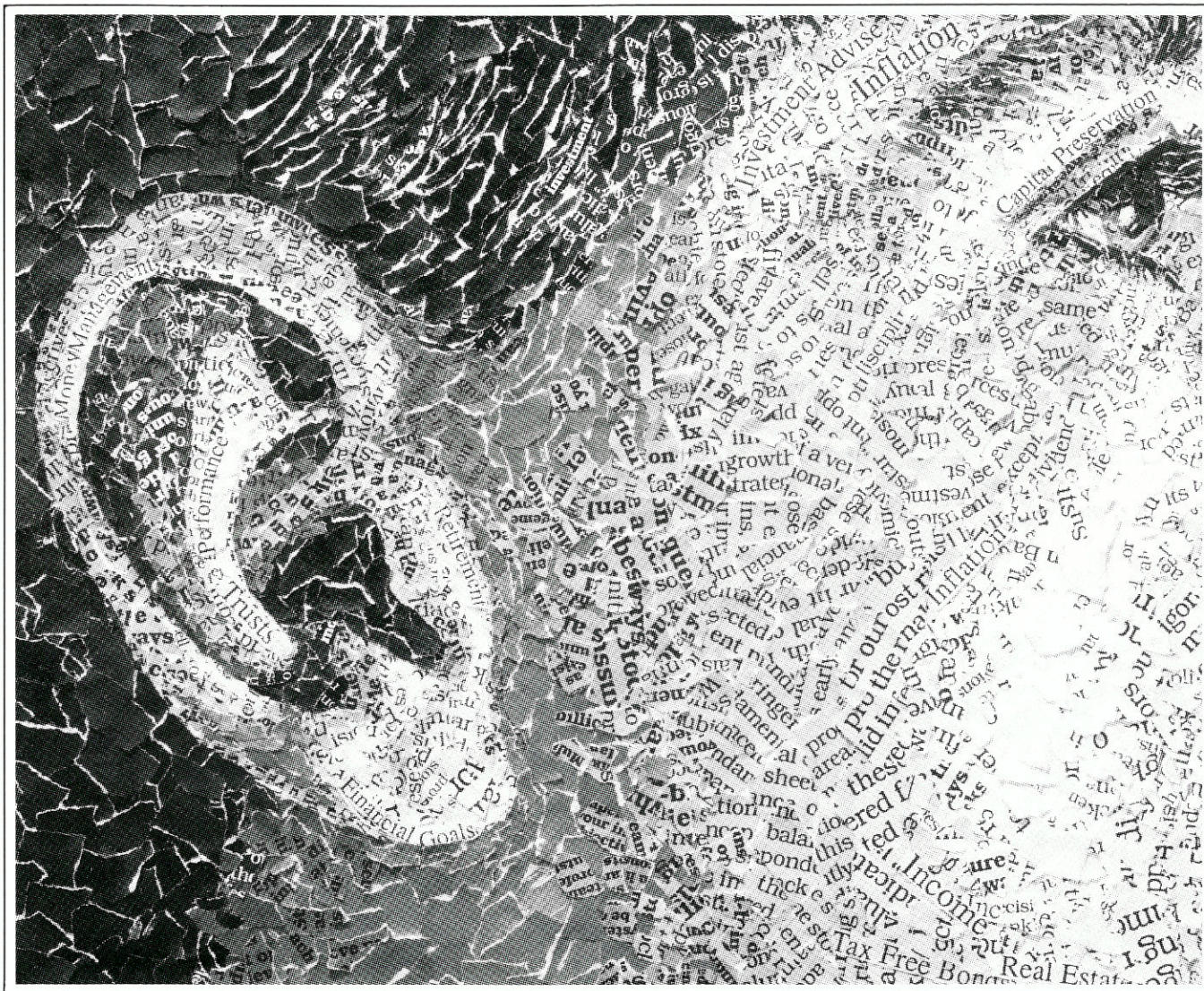
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