



CUMBANCHA ANNOUNCES NEW ALBUM FROM KOBOTOWN

JUMBIE IN THE JUKEBOX

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“Kobo Town brings Neil Young's angst and Jerry Dammers' instincts to traditional calypso themes.” -- *The Village Voice*

Merging calypso, roots reggae, acoustic performance, dub studio techniques and Trinidadian / Jamaican cultures, Kobo Town is a unique, stylistic, trans-national composite of rhythm, poetry and activist journalism. Kobo Town resurrects, reinvigorates and redefines calypso for the new millennium.

Founded by emigré Trinidadian songwriter Drew Gonsalves, **Kobo Town** takes the intricate wordplay of classic Caribbean music and runs it through a 21st Century filter. In the world of Kobo Town calypso, roots reggae, and acoustic instrumentation meet innovative production techniques, social commentary and indie rock attitude. Stonetree and Cumbancha will release Kobo Town's second album ***Jumbie in the Jukebox*** in Spring.

Gonsalves was raised in a middle class suburban town outside Port-of-Spain but his family relocated to Canada when he was 13 years old. Even though he was exposed to a lot of music growing up on the island, the local folklore tradition of calypso music wasn't his main interest back then. Like most of his peers, he was mostly influenced by American and British rock music...and even admits to a passion for heavy metal in his early teens.

It wasn't until he relocated to Canada that the prism of nostalgia and a deepening interest in his country's history led him to explore the rich traditions of calypso music, mostly by digging through bins of old records in second-hand stores. “Calypso is the folk music of urban Trinidad,” explains Gonsalves, “it was the music that spoke, not only to us, but like us. It was full of gossip and innuendo and addressed every topic under the sun from every possible angle. And it delivered its ideas with wit and humor. Political song-writing can get so self-righteous and dour, and it was always refreshing to hear it done with a laugh and a smile.”

With that in mind, Gonsalves formed Kobo Town (the name references the neighborhood where calypso is said to have been born) who released an acclaimed debut album in 2007. Their 2013 release, *Jumbie in the Jukebox*, refers to the *jumbie*, a spirit in Trinidadian folklore. According to Gonsalves, “A jumbie fulfills many roles. Its used to frighten children, sort of like boogie man. It evokes a sense of mystery about the world and all of the strange forces that influence its course.”

For *Jumbie in the Jukebox*, Kobo Town teamed up with producer **Ivan Duran** who brought to the recording a new perspective and inspiration. “I brought the words and tunes, Ivan brought the dirt and the depth,” remembers Gonsalves, “and during our first session at his studio, he placed an old barely-playable electric guitar in my hands and it changed our sound completely. In the sessions, he was always pushing for us to find

the right intent for the songs, to create the right mood and to veer off in unintended musical directions.” **Ivan Duran** is well known for his masterful work on the now classic album *Wátina* from **Andy Palacio & the Garifuna Collective** that earned a 2007 WOMEX Award and was selected by *Amazon.com* as “The Greatest World Music Album of All Time.” The result of his collaboration with Kobo Town is a striking recording that reflects their mutual commitment to “stick to the roots and do the unexpected at the same time.” The album was recorded between Montreal, Trinidad, Belize and the band's home base in Toronto.

“The recording was like a songwriting session,” Gonsalves says. “Some things came in a flash of inspiration, some came drip by drip, with a lot of crafting and rethinking before the final result. Ivan has a lot of old equipment. Guitars with that twangy 1930s sound, horns with a monophonic quality, stuff that matched the sounds of the calypso albums of the 50s and 60s. It made me think of a jukebox haunted by a jumbie that spits forth various sounds from different eras of Trinidadian music.”

Jumbie in the Jukebox strikes the perfect balance between tradition and innovation, with a sound that is both timely and timeless. The band’s sizzling musicianship compliments Gonsalves’ remarkable lyrics, arch observations of the best and worst aspects of human nature. “Kaiso Newscast” opens the album with a tribute to calypso’s ability to deliver the news with a cynical smirk. Kaleidoscopic percussion tracks, Latin horn stabs and chattering wah wah guitars support Gonsalves’ droll delivery of the barbed lyrics. Boozy, funky horns, and a beat halfway between soca and dancehall, underpin the supernatural vision of “The Call,” a reminder that love is all that matters in this life. “Postcard Poverty” rides a mellow ska groove, augmented by chiming Congolese-style guitar lines to deride the tourists who find the impoverished lifestyles of others to be quaint and picturesque.

“Mr. Monday” and “Joe the Paranoiac” are old-fashioned calypsos with a contemporary twist. The first is the portrait of a victim of a mental illness forced to recycle bottles to make ends meet, while the second is the story of a man paralyzed by his inability to deal with the stress engendered by 24-hour newscasts and constant terror alerts. “Tic Toc Goes the Clock” ends the album on an exuberant note, with a complex genre-scrambling arrangement full of unexpected stops and starts and sounds that range from Edison’s cylinders to ska, with a mind twisting lyric drawing from many sources, from Linton Kwesi Johnson to the King James Bible. “This song was included on the assumption that every album needs to finish off with a long-winded apocalyptic diatribe, peppered with muted trombones and allusions to dead English poets,” Gonsalves quips.

“Ivan and I wanted this album to be a statement about our Caribbean musical heritage and its enduring relevance... and we wanted to find a new voice for our music which could draw and depart from tradition,” he continues. “We made a conscious effort, but one that was quite natural in its own way, to make the music different, a bit more intense. This album is a small, heartfelt tribute to the spirits – both remembered and forgotten – who have gone before us, whose songs and sounds have never lost their power to enchant.”

Even before the album’s release, Kobo Town has earned attention for its unique sound. After a performance in New York in January 2013, the *The Village Voice* described Kobo Town’s music as “a pithy combination of social commentary, dubwise soca, and calypsonian wit.” The CBC, Canada’s national radio broadcaster, selected Kobo Town as one of 5 “world music artists to watch in 2013.”

Kobo Town will be touring Europe in June presenting their sizzling live show.

Visit <http://www.cumbancha.com/kobotown/resources> or www.kobotown.com for bios, tour dates, photos, and more.