

**Dave Martins of Guyana, from
'The Tradewinds' band - Now 88 years old
and is still playing and singing his songs**

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Edition 1

***From 'The Latins' to the Debonairs'
and then the famous 'Tradewind' band with hit after hit***

Disclaimer: The researcher/writer of this article is not offering any advice, but is only providing information that's available to the public, along with some of his opinions and views. Reports may get updated, and links may change. If there are errors, once the writer becomes aware of them, he will carry out further research on the topics and make necessary updates and or clarifications. The writer noticed that many articles on Martins had different information. There will most likely be a 2nd Edition to this article to make clarifications.

Dave Martins of Guyana formed a band in late 1966 while he had already migrated to Toronto and was living in Toronto where there were already many people from Guyana and the Caribbean. He called the band 'Tradewinds' which became famous with hit after hit.

Most would have thought that The Tradewinds was formed in Guyana or in the Caribbean, but although the music was geared towards Guyanese and people from the Caribbean, this band was formed in Toronto, Canada in the late 1966.

In the 1950s, Dave Martins sister 'who had migrated to Canada suggested that he join her there. He studied some music theory and made friends with a musician from the Bahamas and another from Toronto. The three friends started a group called The Debonairs' (Ref 3). At the time they were just playing for fun and they were recognized as being good musicians. They auditioned and got some gigs. "...and before we knew it we were having enough work to play music full time," Martins said (Ref 3). He said, "I formed the Tradewinds in late 1966, which was a kind of an oddity. We were living in Canada, and I had formed a band aimed at Caribbean people."

Dave Anthony Martins was born and grew up in West Coast, Guyana, South America in a place called Hague. 'He attended the Sacred Heart Primary School and later St. Stanislaus College, travelling the long journey by bus and ferry'(ref 3). According to an interview last year he stated that he was 89 years old and thus in 2023 his age would now be 90 this year. However, that may be incorrect. In the article 'Guyanese icon Dave Martins is enjoying the simplicity of life' by Cindy Parkinson which was published on April 16, 2023, states that the legend is now 88 year old (ref 5). His ancestry goes back to Portugal, where his ancestors came from the Portuguese island of Madeira to work on the sugarcane plantations in the small South American country as indentured laborers, in the way the East Indians and Chinese and others had done.

Martins had three sisters, and him being the fourth child and then another sister after him; he does not have any brothers. From Hague, his family moved to Vreed-en-hoop where he attended St. Stanislaus High School. During this time, he became friends with the Henry brothers that lived down the road from him. In an interview Martins said that the Henry brothers were douglas, meaning they come from a mixed background of Indian (East Indian) and black (African). In Guyana, there's a lot of mixed heritage, and thus we often try to explain our mixed heritage to identify ourselves and our ancestry. He stated that they are still friends today..." (Ref 1). The two brothers were Joe and Jack Henry. Joe and Jack knew to play box guitars, and 'around the age of 14, Dave Martin was captivated by their playing that he became more interested in music, which would lead him on a long journey of music. "I started hearing these guys. They would go around the village playing music. I fell in love with the sound and that drew me to them." (Ref 3)

They formed an instrumental band; it was five of them. "We played a lot of Latin music, a few calypsos. We used to go to people's houses just for fun...(Ref 3)

While in Guyana, he 'worked at Atkinson Airport for four years' (Ref 4). In 1956 he arrived in Canada where 'he became exposed to Trinidadians that had a good record collection and the music wrapped him and held him in awe. Dave says that some of his early songs were influenced by that era' (Ref 4).

It was a long and gradual process - it didn't happen overnight

For Martins, 'it was a long gradual process' referring to music. He said, 'it didn't happen overnight.' In Guyana he listened 'to all kinds of music, jazz, rock and roll, classical.' He said, "I became interested in classical music because I was drawn by the long structures..." While he was in Toronto, he started a little band. 'I named it the Latins - that was a business move. I knew from living in Guyana, Latin music, unlike now, Latin music was very popular in Guyana at that point ("Ref 1).

Guyana was home to Martins until he left for Toronto, but later Martins returned to live in Guyana, as Guyana is really home for many who leave and then return because of the love for the place. To understand how Martins' music evolved from playing Latin and then to a blend of music of Guyana and the Caribbean, you must understand the Guyanese culture.

Guyana is very diverse due to having six main races, which are the American Indians (Amerindians), Africans where many arrived during the days of slavery, but also during the days of indentureship from plantations that were closing down in the Caribbean, and the Portuguese, East Indians and Chinese that arrived as indentured laborers to work in the sugarcane fields, and also in general Europeans such as some Germans, Scottish, Irish, English that worked in the fields and also as managers, and also laborers from Malta that also worked in the fields. Many of the indentured laborers had died due to the work conditions. There were also Syrian/Lebanese that began arriving in Guyana during the 1880s and worked as merchants in Guyana selling items such as cloths and thread. Before the British taking control of the colonies of Demerara, Essequibo and Berbice, the French were also in Guyana and began the development of Georgetown, and the

Dutch were the first to be granted an area for development from the Spaniards and where they had enslaved the Amerindians. Thus you will find names of places in Guyana called Georgetown, Richmond, Anna Regina, La Penitence, La Bonne Intension, New Amsterdam, Vreed-en-stein etc... Guyana being in South America and having people of many backgrounds are actually in a Latin American / Caribbean region, and not only does Guyana have many ethnicities, but also many dishes and music. There's Reggae, Calypso, Latin, Bollywood and others, and a blend of music also. Guyana is also spelled as Guayana, Guiana, Guianna. Guyana with the various spellings is actually a land that spans through part of Venezuela, Brazil and the three Guyana (Br., Fr, and Dutch Guyana).

Martins formed a group called 'The Latins', and then formed the 'Debonairs' where they played less Latin music and more Caribbean style such as Calypso. 'He would play only on weekends but the music kept calling him...The hectic schedule took its toll on Martins' life and he gave up the weekly gig in 1963 (Ref 4). His life was about to make a big turn when he saw 'an advertisement in a Toronto newspaper from someone that wanted to start a Caribbean band' (Ref 4). After following up on the AD, a group of four musicians was born. The band sounded good and soon they began playing six nights a week in a club that accommodates about 200 people. He completely drifted from Latin music and more into a new style that reflected the culture and music of his home country, Guyana, and of the Caribbean style music.

Thus it was in 1966 when Martin formed an all-Caribbean band and called it 'Tradewinds.' Martin said that a metamorphosis occurred. "I discovered and appreciated Caribbean music by being away from it" (Ref 4). In other words, you don't know what you have, until it's gone, but he managed to later return to Guyana to live.

'He exposed the new band to the Caribbean and after writing four songs he decided to go to the Trinidad carnival. In three months, one of the songs topped the charts and by 1967 the Tradewinds was a household name in the Caribbean. The band toured Guyana and played at the Astor cinema to sold out crowds' (Ref 4). The Tradewinds became a part of the Guyanese and Caribbeans, as this talented group continued to write song after song that brought them many hits.

He said that 'when stardom came, it arrived quickly. The Tradewinds, which included two Trinidadians, decided to make a trip to the birthplace of calypso music. By then, Dave Martins had written and recorded four songs, including "Meet me in Port of Spain" and "Honeymooning Couple." "We...thought 'Meet me in Port of Spain' would be a big hit, but nobody paid any attention to it," Martins remembered with a laugh. "Then we went back to Canada, played a lot of free shows, and we thought that was that. But about two months later I started getting calls from Trinidad. "Honeymooning Couple" was a big hit; all the stations were playing it. "In the space of six months we went from being a nonentity to a chart-leading band in the Caribbean" (Ref 3). The group was on a roll followed by many hits: Mr. Rooster, You Can't Get, Copy Cats, Cricket in the Jungle. His songwriting continued. Some of his other famous songs are: Not a blade, Is we own, A long time ago in Guyana, **Chanderpaul**, Boyhood days. In an interview Martins explained how he came up with the hit song 'Not a blade of grass.' He said 'the

idea came from Pat Cameron, a broadcaster at Radio Demerara. She suggested to Dave that he should write a song about the Guyana-Venezuela border dispute' (Ref 4).

Back home Guyana is now home for Martinss

Dave Martins has relocated back in Guyana around 2008, and continues his songwriting journey along with live performances.

'Dave Martins and the Tradewinds have performed at venues such as Madison Square Garden and Vancouver's Queen Elizabeth Theatre. His country has shown its appreciation for his contributions by awarding Martins the Golden Arrowhead of Achievement. In 2002, the Guyana Folk festival Committee presented him with the Wordsworth Mc Andrew Award' (Ref 3).

In an interview last year, Dave stated that he was 89 years old, therefore this year he will be 90 years old.

A songwriter

Anyone can write a song, but it takes practice and dedication when it comes to writing song after song. 'Martins said, 'To be a good songwriter, you have to have alot of interest in alot of things, you have to see in a song alot of things most people will pass over not pay no attention to. Honeymooning Couple is a joke, my brother-in-law told me this joke...I ain't tell e notin but I tink to myself this is a song...the music is generally you, it's part of what the songwriter is, the song writer is a guy who is dissecting, opening up and looking...you probing and sometimes you probe and boy you think this is a hit and it turns out its not, and sometimes you're probing and you say this is no good - that's the hit - it's mysterious.' He's produced over 100 songs, several advertising jingles, and an award-wining play' (Ref 3).

The creative person

Martins said, "The creative person whether he is a painter, or a musician or a novelist, or a composer, whatever it is, he's a different head, he's a different soul, he is seeing stuff and being caught by stuff, that other people don't even notice, so its hard to say how it actually works ... you have to want to do that, that is something that is often missing, because you just can't force it, it comes to certain people... the vast majority said ah it's gone - once you become interested in it, once you see...you can't find a song about anything...nobody will say it the way you say it, or see it the way you see it...'

Martin - just me and my guitar

Dave Martins, who has five children, had returned to Guyana about a year ago and insists that he's there to stay. He has no problem with playing at age 75? "I am active. I like to plant...I like to fix things.' He has produced about 100 songs, and he's not short of ideas for writing new songs. He has taken some new directions. He said, "but what I enjoy doing now is one-man shows where I weave the comedy and the music about Caribbean life and all its forms, just me and my guitar."

Family life

The love of Dave Martins life is his wife, Annette Arjoon-Martins. According to one of his interview, he said that he has five children. He said, "I never got interested in liquor, or drugs. I have seen very talented people in the Caribbean and North America who have been wrecked ...They are walking around practically begging, or they are dead" (Ref 3). He 'cares deeply about the welfare of young people. He said that their success is influenced by their upbringing and they must not forget their roots' (Ref 4)'. Martins enjoys doing lots of things. He 'makes furniture and plant trees in his spare time and he is a good handyman as well' (Ref 4). He said that 'the Caribbean should honor its artists and heroes in a big way. Dave makes furniture and plant trees in his spare time and he is a good handyman as well (Ref 4).

References:

Reference 1

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Below info came from the link below, by F. Ally on June 18, 2023...interview in Guyana The Gildarie - Freddie Kisson Show. GUEST: Dave Martins - Legendary International singer/songwriter

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