

Friday 3rd December, 2004

Godfather of rapsoul on a mission

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News
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Sports
Finance

Editorial
Commentary
Opinion

Features
Entertainment
Photo Gallery

Business Guardian

Letters
Online Community
Death Notices

Advertising
Classified Ads
Jobs in T&T
Contact Us

Archives
Privacy Policy



EVERARD ROMANY sits with his Swedish wife ANNA at the Guardian's office last week. Romany, a founding father of the rapso movement, says he has further evolved the art form into what he calls "rapsoul" and has returned to T&T to promote a message of peace and love through his music.

Photo: Karla Ramoo

BY MICHAEL MONDEZIE

Everard Romany is a man on a mission. Romany, a founding member of the popular Laventille-based Network Riddum Rapso Band, has returned to local shores, after spending the last decade abroad, to spread his message of peace and love.

For Romany it's an old message under a new banner and, together with his Swedish wife, Anna, he thinks he has found the right musical formula to transmit those thoughts.

He calls it rapsoul.

"Rapsoul is really the soul of rapso. It's a new vision with an old soul to remind people about who they are," a smiling Romany said, with his wife seated at his side.

"It's really rapso music with added melody, creating a refined sound. I call it evolution of music," he said.

The music he helped create on the streets of Laventille in the 1970s and its co-creator Lutalo Massimba (Brother Resistance) have both become household names in T&T.

He remembers a very different time, however, when rapso music and its practitioners were not as readily accepted.

"People used to say we talking and we not singing and we were often ridiculed, but that never stopped us. To tell you I knew rapso would have been popular one day would be to lie, but it is a good feeling to see it's getting the recognition it deserves," he said.

Wisely, Romany has chosen to marry his two loves and has included his wife, Anna, who is the other side of the rapsoul duo, in his music project.

Fittingly enough, the two met at a dance in Sweden some years ago and not surprisingly hit it off immediately.

"We both love music and we love each other, so yeah we get on pretty well," Anna said, exchanging glances with her husband.

Together they bring two tracks to the table, Aum Shanti and Wanna Be, both produced in Sweden.

Aum Shanti is a prayerful reflection while Wanna Be refers to a society where everyone wants to be someone else.

In a time when crime has overridden the once-quiet East Dry River area where he grew up, Romany firmly believes his voice will be heard.

"The pen is mightier than the sword and they can't stop the power of the word," Romany said.

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