

ONE OF HARLEM'S FAMOUS SONS, THREE-TIME GRAMMY AWARD WINNER RALPH MACDONALD, IS OF TRINIDADIAN PARENTAGE AND GREW UP IN THE 'BLACK CAPITAL OF THE WORLD.'

Born in March 1944, MacDonald found his New York and Caribbean heritages juxtaposed during his youth in Harlem. Appearing with his father Patrick MacDonald - aka calypsonian The Great Macbeth - from very young, he charmed audiences who heard him play drums with his father's 12-piece orchestra.

MacDonald easily embraced his Trinidadian/Caribbean and New York/African American cultures against the backdrop of the Harlem Renaissance. When acts like the Three Degrees and the Four Tops wowed audiences at the Apollo, MacDonald was there. Simultaneously his observations and experiences were being codified as he absorbed his surroundings which were being impacted with such as the charismatic, empathetic and militant Malcolm X who regularly schooled the disenfranchised Harlem masses adjacent to the subway at 116th Street and Lexington Avenue. He noted goings-on in the



## The 'Mixty Motions' of RALPH MACDONALD



entertainment world, such as the flow of white comedians coming up to Harlem and catching all the famed black acts, like Red Foxx et al, and stealing their acts/routines, taking them downtown to their white audiences, where black acts were disallowed.

Ralph MacDonald has journeyed much since those days - from his fledgling career with Harry Belafonte at age seventeen, to today's super-successful songwriter, producer, performer and businessman. And his music along the way has been filled with Mixty Motions, reflected in the name and feel of his latest CD. "My heart lies in two places - New York, and the Caribbean - so my music is always filled with Mixty Motions ['Mixed [E]motions']" MacDonald says simply. His

enduring friendship and musical collaboration with pannist extraordinaire Robert Greenidge (his favorite band is the mighty Desperadoes Steel Orchestra from the hills of Laventille) once again surfaces as Greenidge's incomparable talent is featured on several of the CD's twelve tracks.

*Rhythm of the Drum* was written by MacDonald's eldest son Anthony, while [Nicholas] Ashford and [Valerie] Simpson did lyrics and vocals. Second is the title track, *Mixty Motions*, the first of seven instrumentals, followed by Simpson vocalizing the R&B-tinged, *unapologetic Love Finds You*.

*My Space* already wowed those attending the 2007 Lincoln Center Steelpan Jazz Father's Day Concert;

the clarion call: *You Need More Calypso* sounds next, featuring Greenidge on steelpan, Etienne Charles on trumpet and, making the first of three appearances on the album, Trinidadian vocalist Roger George.

"It's just one bridge, to another bridge...just connecting feelings, - and that's what MacDonald set about illustrating in track six, the musical tapestry - *Bridges*. He describes *Man Dance* with David Espinoza on guitar as a 'take-off' of Steely Dan and Carlos Santana, while *Julian* is named for the late jazz saxophonist Julian 'Cannonball' Adderley.

A Brazilian trip birthed *Little Black Samba*, featuring Roger George and Greenidge. Up next is the sensuous, soulful *You Leave Me Breathless*, the only ballad on the CD. Sentiment is key in the final tracks - *Mayaro Drive* and *Lord, Don't Stop The Carnival*. The former evokes a drive through Mayaro, Trinidad where MacDonald met Grace, his present wife. The latter was originally penned by his father and MacDonald later added verses. His father's orchestra always closed with that song; now he selected it as both his tribute to his late father and to close his latest album.

Master percussionist that he is, MacDonald surrounds himself with people of comparative genius on his projects. He tells of pannist

Robert Greenidge, in Japan, stunning Tom Scott (world-renowned saxophonist, and musical director for the Academy and Emmy Awards), with his signature "Stardust." Impressed, Scott asked, "Who is that cat", later saying to Greenidge, "That song was nice, man, but you only played in one key." Greenidge said nothing. Next night he took the stage and literally blew Scott away. Greenidge's genius became crystal clear to Scott as he listened. Says MacDonald, "He was like 'Oh my God!'" Stardust unfolded with completely 'new stuff' - and in a different key. All Scott could say was "Ralph, tell me to shut up; remind me to keep my mouth shut the next time!"

By choice, MacDonald's CDs are available only online, not in record stores. Experience Mixty Motions at [www.RalphMacDonald.com](http://www.RalphMacDonald.com), and MacDonald's seventy-minute plus interview at [www.Panonthenet.com](http://www.Panonthenet.com).

