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**DAILY NEWS**

New York

## Career of singer Calyso Rose subject of AfroPoP documentary series on WORLD

**'Calyso Rose: Lioness of the Jungle' examines her triumph in 'man's domain'**

Published: Sunday, February 5, 2012, 6:00 AM

Updated: Sunday, February 5, 2012, 6:00 AM



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Calyso Rose is subject of the documentary "Calyso Rose: Lioness of the Jungle," part of AfroPoP series on public television channel WORLD.

Looking back over her pioneering career, internationally acclaimed calypsonian Calypso Rose recalls a time in the 1960s, when her critics were singing loudly that the music is a man's domain.

But Rose (aka McArtha Linda Sandy-Lewis), whose life and career are examined in the documentary "Calypso Rose: Lioness of the Jungle," stuck to her calling to write and sing calypsos.

"The church groups tried to stop me; they called me to meeting upon meeting. 'Why are you signing calypso with all these men? Calypso is man's domain' they said."

Her response was: "The Lord God give me the inspiration to create the lyrics and the melody and I am going to continue to do what the Lord wants me to do."

"Calypso Rose: Lioness of the Jungle," airs next Sunday at 9 p.m. as part of the 2012 "AfroPoP: The Ultimate Cultural Exchange" series on the public television channel WORLD. Comedian and The Daily Show correspondent [Wyatt Cenac](#) is hosting the fourth season of AfroPoP.

In the documentary filmmaker [Pascale Obolo](#) explores Rose's childhood in tiny Bethel, Tobago, her growing up in the Caribbean and her successes in the male-dominated calypso world.

"I knew I would be taking my music internationally and in 2012 Calypso Rose is on the international scale," said the 70-year-old music star last week from her home in New York.

Rose was recognized for her major contributions to the calypso art form at the 2011 [Trinidad Carnival](#). She ranks among her highest achievements an array of awards from Germany, Canada, U.S. Congress, Britain and other nations .

In Trinidad, the birthplace of calypso, she's won the highest honors — the coveted Calypso Monarch, Road March titles and many Calypso Queen titles.

"When I won the Road March in 1977 with 'Gimme More Tempo' or 'I going down San Fernando,' I told them 'I'm like a river overflowing its banks, you try and stop me, I'm going to find room to pass.' They tried to stop me . . . but hell, in 1977 I overflowed the bank!"

The composer of more than 800 songs, she started as a teenager and got her first break by singing a tune she wrote called "Glass Thief" for [Eric Williams](#), the first prime minister of Trinidad and Tobago. The song, about a man who stole a vendor's eyeglasses in Trinidad market, was written as a lyrical warning for men in

rural Tobago to beware of the evils in bustling Trinidad.

With encouragement from Williams, her aunt took her to the original calypso club in Trinidad where the Mighty Spolier ([Theophilus Philip](#)) and other calypso music legends used to hang out.

“And that’s where I met Spoiler for the first time,” said Rose, adding that she also met the mangers of the famous Trinidad calypso tent.

“They asked ‘What you got,’ and said ‘sing one for me.’ At this time I had defected speech, I used to shutter a lot,” said Rose who performed one of her songs in the impromptu audition.

She said they liked what they heard and asked what her calypso name was.

“Being I came from Tobago, I said ‘Crusoe Kid,’ identifying Robinson Crusoe and the history of Tobago. So they said no, ‘we are going to change you name from today, we are going to call you Calypso Rose, ‘cause the rose is the mother of all flowers.’ The Mighty Spoiler and the tent mangers took me under their wing as their little sister and that is how I started.”

In the film, Rose delves into her rich family history.

“I told them about the history of my ancestors. Tobago is 99½% African. My great-grand mother — my mother’s grand mother — came to Tobago as a slave from Guinea, Africa.

She added that her great-great-great grandfather was the slave Sandy that led the first slave revolt in Tobago.

“So on my father’s side I have history as an African and on my mother’s side I have history as an African. And that’s the reason, as I say in the film, I wrote the calypso ‘Back to Africa.’ My great-grand mother never went back to Africa, so I wrote this reggae-calypso in the honor of my great-grand mother.”

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