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# Vaughnette Bigford dug into musical treasure trove to celebrate us

Her Red, White and Black concert reprised long-forgotten songs

Laura Dowrich-Phillips | December 8, 2022 11:32 AM ET



Vaughnette Bigford. Photo: Look Into My Eyes

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In the 1970s, Trinidad and Tobago had a vibrant pop music scene. Back then radio played mainly foreign pop songs so to get on the airwaves, our singers had to produce similar content.

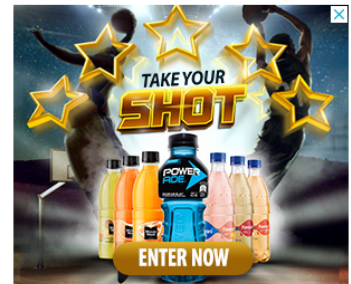
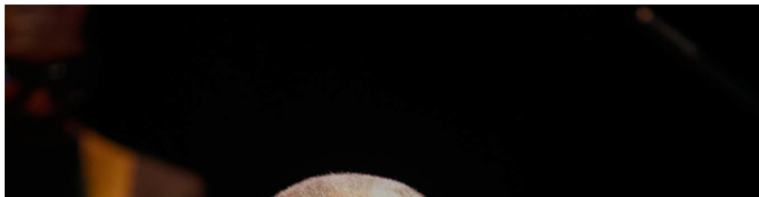
Mavis John, Ella Andall, Carol Addison, Denyse Plummer, Oliver Chapman and many more released a plethora of songs that still stand the test of time.

Those songs do not grace our airwaves today but on Saturday night, Vaughnette Bigford reminded us why they should.

Her show was entitled Red, Black and White, a celebration of us and the immense musical talent that resides in these twin islands.

Bigford, who started her career singing jazz covers but found a niche in reprising our own, long-forgotten music cleverly re-arranged by Michael Low Chew Tung, dug deep into the archives for RWB.

She confessed that it was no easy task selecting songs to fit the two-hour schedule from the treasure trove, but what she did choose took patrons down the rabbit hole of yesteryear, invoking nostalgia for the voices so many of us sitting in Central Bank auditorium grew up listening to when radio and TTT dedicated space for local artistes.



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Ray Holman

Her set included Carol Addison's "Take me Back", Nadie LaFond's "I Wanna Make Love to You", Ella Andall's "Different People", Denyse Plummer's reggae-infused "Sweetest Thing", and Carl and Carols Jacob's "From Now On", a duet with the versatile and super talented Neval Chatelal.

Bigford also paid tribute to those sons of the soil who made their mark globally. Tony Wilson's "Only What You Steal", Billy Ocean's "Love Zone" and Mac and Katie Kissoon's "Dream of Me" took me right back to my school bazaar days.

The legendary Ray Holman singing "Sweet Island Memories" was the cherry atop the musical flavours that included Andre Tanker's "Here and Now", Nappy Myers "Old Time Days" and Clive Zanda's "Fancy Sailor".

Bigford didn't forget the calypsonians and soca artistes.

She connected the dots between the past and present with Lord Kitchener's "Brooklyn Woman", the basis for Voice's "Out and Bad" which she also sang and did the same for Ras Shorty I's Cory Iron, which his granddaughter Nailah Blackman remade into "Iron Love".





Vaughnette Bigford

Shadow's "Looking for Horn", Machel Montano's "Play Harder" and Kes the Band's "Love It" took on new shapes thanks to expert arrangements.

Bigford had solid guidance from her band members who arranged many of the songs. Guitarist Theron Shaw (Looking for Horn, Iron Love, Here and Now, Make Love to You), bassist Rodney Alexander (Old Time Days) and Low Chew Tung (Opening Medley, Play Harder, Only What you Steal, Different People and Rudder Medley) stamped their presence all over the set.

Anyone who has participated in Bigford's Friday night singalongs on Facebook knows she has an eclectic taste in music so it wasn't really surprising when she dropped Orange Sky's "Real Love" into her repertoire, softening it into a heartfelt ballad.

The night wound down with a touch of patriotism with Portrait of Trinidad and Nah leaving, David Rudder's "Song for a Lonely Soul" and "Permission to mash up the Place". For the last song, Lord Nelson's "Meh Lover" patrons were on their feet doing what they yearned to do all night, get up and dance.

The auditorium may not have been the best space for dancing but the intimacy delivered a vibe that worked for Bigford, who engages the audience as if she is everyone's chatty girlfriend. She hailed out her family, confided that she put shoe polish on her earring because she needed black stubs and almost got derailed with an ugly cry when she was told Addison was in the audience.

It felt like a true family affair and her guests, Chatelal, seven-year-old author Coryn Anaya Clarke, who opened the show with a poem and poet Roger Bonaire Agard who opened the second half with his Panifesto monologue, were all embraced.

Bigford was backed by her band – Low Chew Tung on Keyboard, Theron Shaw on guitar, Rodney Alexander on bass, Anthony Woodruffe on saxophone, Sheena Richardson, percussion and newcomer Mikael Forde on drums – and backup singers Anessa Paul, Sade Byers and Afiya Gookool.

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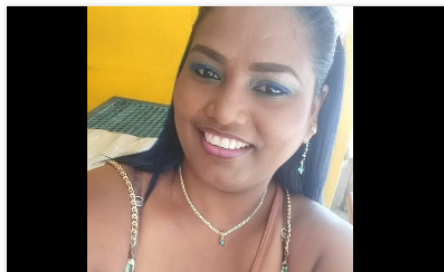


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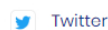
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