

THE CARIBBEAN SUNSHINE AWARDS

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NEWS RELEASE

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Radio and Gryner of Barbados, and Guyana's Comedian, Habeeb Khan For Caribbean Sunshine Awards

Teaneck, New Jersey, USA ----- The Caribbean Sunshine Awards organization announced earlier today that Oliver Broome (Lord Radio), McDonald Blenman (Gryner) of Barbados and Habeeb Khan of Guyana are nominated for **2005 Caribbean Sunshine Awards** for their contribution to Caribbean music and comedy.

Calypsonian, Oliver Broomes (Lord Radio), known in Barbados as the "King of the Hotel Circuit" has been performing calypso for the past 55 years. He has performed with pioneers such as Spoiler, Roaring Lion, Viking and Director. Radio is often described by his peers as the man who took calypso to the tourists who visited Barbados. During his career, he toured the Caribbean islands, Canada and Europe, and performed calypso, as well as ballads and country western music. Contacted by telephone at his home in Barbados, Lord Radio said, "*I feel particularly honored to be nominated for a 2005 Caribbean Sunshine Award. I have spent so many years promoting my country, and today I am grateful to the Caribbean Sunshine Awards organization for recognizing my contribution to Barbados and the artform. I will be there in person to accept this tribute and to say thanks to Gil Figaro and his organization for bringing to the forefront the veterans and pioneers of Caribbean artforms.*" Calypsonian, Mighty Gabby, who strongly supported Radio's nomination said, "*Lord Radio is one of my heroes in the calypso business. I have learnt a lot from him. It is people like him who paved the way for people like me to earn a living from this artform.*"

Leo McDonald Blenman, better known as the Mighty Gryner have spent over 40 years performing calypso music. In the early 1960s he did vocals in the Charlie Austin Combo, playing the hotels in Barbados. In 1968 he entered his first calypso competition. In 1976 he won the calypso monarch title, and has won the Road March title in Barbados seven times. Gryner is a founding member of the Battle Ground Tent. He has also toured Europe, Canada and the United States. Diana Clarke, Business Development Manager of the Barbados Tourism Authority said, *“This recognition for Gryner is long overdue. He is one of the pioneers of Bajan authentic calypso. He has made a very valuable contribution to Caribbean music and I am very proud of him.”*

Habeeb Khan, Guyana’s most popular comedian, is better known as “Guyana’s Ambassador of Comedy, and star of the movie, “If Wishes were Horses.” Habeeb began his career as Guyana’s only stand-up comedian some five decades ago. He has shared the stage with world-renowned artists such as Ben E. King, Percy Sledge, Count Basie, The Mighty Sparrow and Bob Marley.

During the sixties, he formed a Latino band, “The Four B’s” and imitated all the great singers of that era. To this day he is still a singer with everyone’s voice, although unrecorded. His regular side-kick during the seventies and eighties was Johnny Braf, Guyana’s famous crooner.

Habeeb is a household name in his native Guyana and the Caribbean where he usually leaves his audiences bent over in laughter with his unique style of stand-up comedy. His political jibes were so biting that he was once instructed by the late President Burnham to submit his jokes to the Ministry of Culture for censorship before he performs them anywhere in the country – Habeeb then left the city and went into the gold fields as a bahir (cook) for a few years, before taking to the stage again after the President’s demise.

In a recent interview, the iconic comedian declared, *“They say I have the dubious stature of being Guyana’s only stand-up comedian - that is, if you exclude politicians, because they are always competing with me for this lonely job, but the only difference between me and them is when I give a joke, everybody can afford to laugh – but when they give a joke you can only afford to cry. Now I don’t mean only Guyanese politicians, because in my travels I notice the politicians are all the same – like they have a “school of lies” they must attend before they get the job. Look, a lot of people tell me - Run for President of Guyana – they say “at least we will have a professional comedian in Parliament”. But on a serious note, I have always said that laughter is the safety valve of piled-up emotions, so I will stick to tickling those valves – and you know what – the spontaneous laughter really energizes me and I love it.”*

Today, Habeeb Khan is the most celebrated advertising pitchman for radio and TV commercials in Guyana. He is also famous for having a securely chained and padlocked gate in the front of his home – without a fence. When questioned about the reason for that type of security, Habeeb grinned and responded, *“Because I want people to think I’m defenseless.”*

The Seventeenth Annual Caribbean Sunshine Awards is scheduled for Saturday, October 29, 2005 at the New York Sheraton Hotel, 811 Seventh Avenue, New York, New York. The program will begin at 6:00 p.m and will include a two-hour cocktail reception, presentation of awards, live show and dancing. Reservations and tickets can be purchased online at www.sunshineawards.com or by calling **201-836-0799** or by fax **201-8364440**.

The Seventeenth Annual Caribbean Sunshine Awards is sponsored in part by *Hennessy, Continental Airlines, Barbados Tourism Authority, BWIA, Travel Span Vacations and the New York Carib News.*



