

Rocking the Tempo

Frederick Morton Jr has a vision for Caribbean empowerment

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MEMORIES of Carnival 2016 are fading, the so-called urban radio stations have returned to playing mainly Jamaican dancehall, with some hip-hop thrown in, and the self-professed local, all-music television channel is synergising its viewers with everything but soca. So what's a calypso/soca music lover to do?

Well, one solution is to check out the Tempo cable network where you will not only see calypso and soca music videos on 24/7 rotation but also classic reggae, zouk, cadence and other Caribbean music forms, as well as pop, rock, funk, jazz and other genres created and performed by Caribbean people from across the region and those living in North America, Europe and other places.

Tempo was started by Frederick Morton Jr a decade ago (the channel turned ten years old in November last year), and it has grown from being a television music channel into a multifaceted company that offers a myriad of products and services to Caribbean peoples the world over.

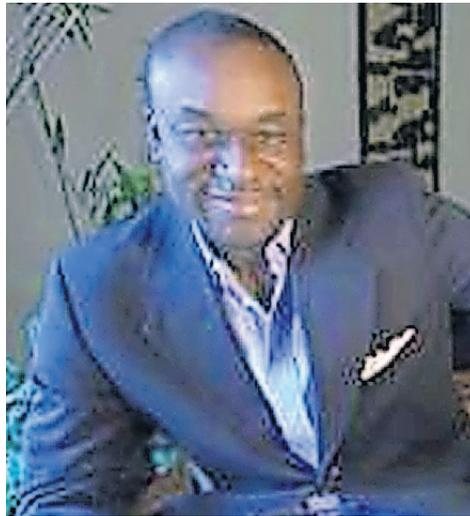
Morton's vision is to one day see the people of the Caribbean come together as one people and be an economic force that can sustain itself, independent of the rest of the world, while being capable of making major contributions towards the wider world as a whole, towards saving this planet from environmental, social and economic destruction.

While working his way to this, however, Morton is playing his part in building the Caribbean islands in whatever way he can. Here, in Trinidad and Tobago, Morton is seeking to assist in taking our music to the world, as well as promoting T&T as a premium tourist destination. One of his projects to this end is selling T&T to the world through Tempo's *Cross Caribbean Countdown*.

The popular weekly music countdown show will be shot in Trinidad and Tobago for at least the next two years, and it will be hosted by singer/songwriter/musician Arita Edmund from Tobago. Each week, the show will feature various locations across the twin-island state and highlight either local cuisine, cultural expressions, places of interest, festivals, local artistes, celebrities and more.

"The idea is to basically place Tempo on the ground here in Trinidad and Tobago and later on other islands. We want people to not just feel but know that Tempo is theirs and that we are here to serve them. After ten years, I had to do a lot of reflection and introspection, looking at where we have come and then towards where Tempo is going. We have to move beyond just producing and playing music videos and presenting shows.

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SELLING T&T TO THE WORLD:
Tempo founder Frederick Morton Jr.

We have to begin to build the region.

"In the case of Trinidad, for example. You now have a country manager, Arita Edmund, who you can call to get business done. We are registered as Tempo Trinidad and Tobago Ltd, and we are going to be working with people here, including the Government ministries, to create local content for right here, the region and the world.

We will sell Trinidad and Tobago to the world.

"The vision for where the network moves from this stage is in place. We are now working on creating a platform for artistes here in Trinidad and Tobago to move their careers from the local sphere to the regional level and from there, the international circuit, in a real way and not just in the pockets of Caribbean communities in America, Canada and Europe. We have a long way to go, but we are working hard to develop the content and also the people to make this happen," Morton said.

The attorney, with a passion for people and culture, said he is also working on advancing industries in the Caribbean that are outside of his comfort zone, music. Morton said tourism is a very important component in economic development for the islands, and through Tempo, he is seeking to advance tourism throughout the Caribbean. Morton said it is about identifying the strengths of each island as far as what they can offer tourists and then selling that, hard.

"We have to be creative and innovative. We had a promotion with Steve Harvey, in which 55 couples were married on his show. They received a trip to Trinidad

and we are building a reality show around this trip. Remember the V Bozeman recording and video shoot with Ziggy Rankin? That was done with your Ministry of Culture here and received 60,000 views in two weeks. People around the world saw exotic parts of your islands.

"We held with Music TT a workshop on music video development with Russell Santos and Ron Elliott, which led to music videos being produced for the band Lujoe and Arita Edmund. Out of all of this, we now have established Tempo Records and the FAM Jr Management Group. We are producing the music of Caribbean artistes and providing A&R development. We've already signed Arita (Edmund) and Ziggy (Rankin), who really have the potential to break through internationally. We are focusing on artiste management and brand development so that when the Caribbean artistes go out there, they are at the level necessary to compete against everyone else," Morton said.



TOBAGO BEAUTY: Tempo's country manager for Trinidad and Tobago Arita Edmund.