

KEN'S CHOICE # 16

20TH.September. 2006

GAYELLE TV

&

PRITHA SINGH and the RAJKUMARIE CULTURAL CENTER



Back in the early 70's the Caribbean Broadcasting Union was being forged by a small group of visionary broadcasters. A recurrent question was whether there ever could be a television station that would reflect more of the Caribbean, and even perhaps 100% content. Since then the CBU has been feeding the islands' stations with programs that center around the people of the region, but it was until 2001 that a small privately owned start up television station had the gumption to actually answer the question with a "definitely, yes".

Two people launched the impossible in Trinidad – TV director/producer Christopher Laird and actor/comedian Errol Fabien – and just like that, "GAYELLE the people TV" was born. However, it's gestation period lasted almost thirty years with Banyan Studios run by Laird and two of his friends Bruce Paddington and Tony Hall producing videos mainly for the Trinidad television market. Their vision and action slowly moved into the Caribbean searching for material, producing thirteen half hour documentaries of the arts and cultures of the region (Caribbean Eye), eventually going their separate ways, and then in 2001 out popped GAYELLE THE CHANNEL.

I had the good fortune of walking into the studio during it's first faltering months and was awestruck – here were announcers talking like normal people, a "drawing room" size studio that housed working staff, two almost handheld cameras, the off camera sounds and bustle of a working office, a studio the size of a kitchen, and a visible and palpable vibrancy and optimism.

Now we're at the end of 2006 – and GAYELLE the Channel is still up and running! A modern Caribbean marvel if ever there was one. What 17 or more official Government stations throughout the region could not do, was being done by a handful of Trinidadians bouncing up with each other in the studio and stamp sized office rooms.



Banyan Mural by Lari Richardson (1987)

It illustrates the regional diversity that Banyan, and now Gayelle TV emphasize.

The huge advantage Gayelle has over competitors is the vast Banyan archives of Caribbean material acquired over the nearly thirty years of progressive production, and the vigor of adventure and unabashed exploration. It also has Christopher Laird, Errol Fabien and now a host of same minded Trinidadians with the flair and panache that Trinidadians do so exclusively well.

And here's the best part for the entire diaspora – you can watch GAYELLE THE CHANNEL by going to www.homeviewtnt.com paying .99 cts (you seeing right!) for a one month trial run. Just downright remarkable. Thank you Laird, Paddington, Hall, Fabien and the dozens of Gayelle on and behind the camera dynamos. That's Errol with the biggest smile top center, and thoughtful Chris bottom right. incidentally, the Gayelle logo below was my quick scrawl during the very first of Banyan's Gayelle programs in which I was somehow involved, two decades ago.

Gayelle
THE CHANNEL



And now from one successful adventure story to a next one.....

First there was Rajkumari (means Princess) Singh herself. I remember her in the 60's coming to almost every play or event at the Theatre Guild's Playhouse in Georgetown, wheelchaired in by one of her gracious and 5 genetically talented sons - Karna (author/cultural historian), Gora, Kathak dance exponent, Varuna (singer/actor), Shiva (Martial Artist), Vishwamitra (painter), and 3 daughters, Pritha (multi-disciplinary artist), Chitra and Radha (both composers/musicians/singers). Fruit don't fall far from de tree.. guava tree don't bear mango.. so was Rajkumari so are her progeny. Time longer dan rope.. so now here is the **RAJKUMARI CULTURAL CENTER** for the development and propagation of Indo-Caribbean cultural forms, particularly the dance in both traditional and contemporary styles. The Rajkumari Center is right in the heart of the Richmond Hill area of Queens. It's a class act by any standards. I was elegantly reminded of the center and thus my CHOICE for Nr. 16, by this flyer I received yesterday....



Rajkumari Center is holding its 9th ANNUAL KITCHRIE FESTIVAL in collaboration with COMMUNITY DAY IN FOREST PARK

Kitchrie Festival is a splendid pageant of a traditional East Indian village wedding in a live outdoor concert with Indo-Caribbean folk artists performing long-established and time-honored styles of singing, drumming, dancing, costume and decoration - customs that continue to flourish today in New York neighborhoods that are home to Indo-Caribbean people of Asian Indian ancestry from countries like Trinidad, Guyana, Suriname, and Jamaica. Kitchrie in Forest Park takes place on September 30, 2006 from 11am to 2 pm. (Park Lane South & Myrtle Ave) Richmond Hill, Queens 11418.

Kitchrie is just a single creative and daring event in a myriad of others the center produces every year. There are year-round multi-arts workshops and classes, shows, and folk arts festivals; and through it all, Pritha is at its creative core. It is interesting to see that the center not only honors the past in dance and theatre but looks to the present and future with new creative works. An outstanding example of the "nowness" of the new Indian generation is the socially loaded beat/rap poetry of Taj Moteelall, and contemporary choreographies by Romanee Kalicharrana and Denyse Baboolal. .. and other under 30's Guyanese and Trinidadian artists that are part of the center's young 'uns.

(Top L clockwise)

Bamboo Dancers - Ramona Singh, Amrita Persaud, Romanee Kalicharran. Gora-Dance Guyana. Rajkumari Singh receives national award. Pritha & Romanee perform in Women of the Mahabarata.



KEN'S CHOICE is a series of tidbits about the arts of the Caribbean and it's diaspora – unique and interesting people and events that get very limited broadcast. CHOICE is emailed to about 110 of my associates and friends who I think may be interested in them. For back issues see www.bourdamarketplace.com or www.caribarts.org

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