

Message From Frank Minaya



I came to the Bahamas in 1960 and purchased the Chantel Night Club's lease from the former owners. With lots of observation, planning and creativity, I was successful in transforming the then bleak cafe into a thriving nightly extravaganza. Aiming for a complete change, and not comfortable with the nightclub's name and reputation, I made the name change to The Banana Boat.

The new name was suggested to me by a teller in the Bank of Nova Scotia, Rawson Square Branch, and it would be good to know her and say thanks again.

Following the first few weeks into the Banana Boat operation, American calypsonian Johnny Baracuda and Bahamian calypsonian Count Bernadino had a musical duel that rocked the Boat for many nights! The newspapers gave rave reviews.

The Banana Boat was one of the most successful nightclubs this side of Havana. It was the rendezvous for the beautiful people of that era. Club policies were set up and we demonstrated positive social behavior and respect for all. Basically what I did was reinforce the pride that Bahamians already possessed. Rules such as no swearing, no fighting and no soliciting were implemented.

The first all-Bahamian movie "Banana Boat Beat" was a story about a night club owner who was operating a club that the authorities wanted to shut down because of a new music sound that was too different. When the authorities came to close the club, they found that the Banana Boat Beat music was intoxicating and full of joy! The Nassau police allowed the Banana Boat to remain open! All the customers in the film, were delighted and danced all night to the new musical beat of the Banana Boat: "Banana Boat Beat! Aye! Yi! Yi!"

Added publicity came in the form of the viewing of the completed "Banana Boat" movie in the Nassau Theaters, and also the excitement for the Bahamians that witnessed or were in the on-going production around New Providence during the 21 days of filming. The publicity which the production provided for the Banana Boat club was priceless!

I received great publicity with the recording of "Exodus" and "Ghost Riders in the Sky" along with the then Upsetters. ZNS played the songs for a long time. The record sold at record and gift shops around the Bahamas.

Sidney Poitier, the Upsetters and I, sang the song "Amen" from the movie Lilies of the Fields on stage at the Banana Boat, and then Sidney and I led a packed house of customers around the Banana Boat Club and into the street in a Junkanoo line. This event was featured in an American magazine called The Saturday Evening Post.

The Boat was booked free of charge every Monday for charity fund raising. Out of appreciation, the customers usually returned during the weekends.

The rest is history....

Today there is a fine team of special individuals who have managed to keep the Banana Boat legend alive for twenty years.

Congratulations on a job well done.

Frank Minaya