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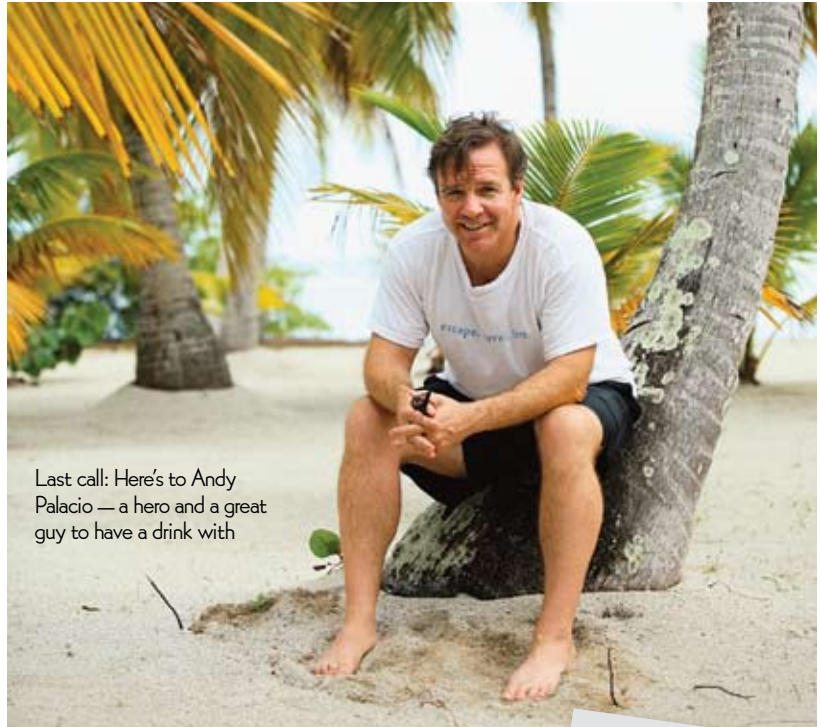
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Last call: Here's to Andy Palacio — a hero and a great guy to have a drink with

Andy Palacio's Grand Finale

IF YOU CAME OVER FOR A COOKOUT AT my house last summer, you were sure to be subjected to a listening test: I'd play some music and challenge you to guess not what country it was from — too hard — but what *hemisphere*. It sounded recognizably Caribbean, yes, but also African, and the unfamiliar language provided no clue.



The album was *Watina*, by Andy Palacio and the Garifuna Collective, and it was so intriguing that I knew the magazine's readers would be happy to learn about where this astonishing music comes from. So I put out a feeler to Palacio himself, asking how travelers could experience Garifuna culture in Belize. A few weeks later came an invitation to join him on a tour that would include concerts and culminate in Garifuna Settlement Day festivities.

The trip felt epic even while it was happening, and tragically, its events only gained drama in their aftermath; Palacio died suddenly two months later, on January 19. I hope the account that begins on page 80 does its subject a measure of justice and captures the uplifting spirit of Palacio's grand finale.

Andy Palacio leaves in his wake a shattering sense of loss, but it helps that the man went out a winner: He succeeded beyond probably even his own wildest expectations in boosting Garifuna culture. And in a final act of activist generosity, he personally escorted the likes of photographer Zach Stovall and me — as proxies for our readers — deep into his soulful world.

"If he knew he would've died, he would've done exactly what he did," said his sidekick and producer Ivan Duran. "Andy went out with a bang."

Cheers,
Dave Herndon
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ZACH STOVALL