

## PANORAMA 2002:

# NATIONAL SEMIS A TWO PART AFFAIR

By SEAN NERO

**THERE WILL** be two semi-final rounds of conventional competition at next year's National Panorama series.

One in the north, at the Queen's Park Savannah, in Port-of-Spain and the south at Skinner's Park, San Fernando according to Pan Trinidad president Patrick Arnold.

In an interview with Sunday Newsday, he said: "While at this time I cannot say where the preliminaries would be held - whether it would be in the pan yards of the competing bands or at the established venue, the Queen's Park Savannah - I can say the semi-final stage, at which 33 qualifying bands would appear would be divided into to groups," he said.

Arnold explained that this move is in keeping the governing body's cost effective measures.

The proposed preliminary format for Panorama 2002 suggested that ten bands from three zones - north, east and south/central - and three qualifiers from Tobago (the fourth zone) would move to the second stage of the contest.

Eleven contestants will qualify for the final, where they will meet and seek to dethrone the defending champion Exodus Steel Orchestra.

"We have put forward the idea of judging bands in their respective pan yards, but that is proving to be quite a battle between Pan Trinidad and its membership. This idea came about in an effort to reduce the exorbitant transportation cost associated with staging the Panorama event. It is not realistic for us to be spending \$1,000,000 in transport. That money could be put to better use. Un-sponsored bands would get help towards building their pan yards and other areas of assistance," stated Arnold.

The steelband body president noted that competing bands would be better judged as the adjudication panel would have a shorter time to execute their duties.

He continued: "But the issue relating to amount of money spent on transportation cost must be addressed in a timely fashion. Other benefits to this move include additional perks for participating steelbands while the producers of the show would generate increased advertising revenue."

However, Ainsworth Mohammed, manager of reigning National Panorama champion Exodus Steel Orchestra is of the view that if Pan Trinidad took this approach at the semi-final stage of the competition its cost cutting efforts would be futile.

"In the absence of the preliminary round taking its original form, the semi-final is the next big thing for the public to attend. They expect at

least 25 bands to perform on that day. That Panorama Sunday serves as a launch pad for the Carnival season. It is a big revenue day for Pan Trinidad and should not be fooled around with. If that decision is final it does not make sense," he said.

Mohammed stated that the judging of the Panorama preliminary in the pan yard - an idea which he supports fully -

was already a cost cutting measure.

Furthermore, he expressed concern about the judging.

"We are used to the idea of bands being judged at different venues during the preliminaries in the north, south/central and Tobago. But the semi-final was a different ball game and everyone wanted to be placed on a level playing field," the steelband leader said.