

The making of a Panorama tune — Part IV

ML1040

No jitters for Jit

Starting January 2, Marcia Noel has been witnessing the creative process by which arranger Jit Samaroo and Amoco Renegades have been putting together the pieces of their Panorama '96 tune. In this fourth and final part, she reports on Renegades' winning performance at the Panorama finals on Saturday.



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OPERATIONS MANAGER, Miguel Rodriguez, is gulping down champagne straight from the bottle and the jubilant posse surrounding him is bubbling over with chat and excitement.

Renegades delivered the final, fatal blow tonight to the 11 pretenders who thought they could beat the boys behind the Bridge. Now the boys are celebrating with adoring fans and family, and the bar is bustling, the yard littered with discarded plates of leftover peas and rice. The pretenders have gone home, dejected.

Outside, players, loved ones and fans are drinking, talking and shouting at the tops of their voices.

"Oh gaaawd!..... Rengaaaades!...." (one drunk player is cursing into the wind) and the du-dup and bottle and spoon brigade take up positions and an impromptu procession starts with the Renegades banner, back to front in their haste, leading the way up Charlotte Street, and a blow torch spewing wild — and dangerous! — flames overhead into the early morning sky.

Around the block, along Oxford Street (Renegades have a small panyard there where Jit does a lot of his arranging and where the stage side practice), down Observatory Street and back onto Charlotte Street they wine and ship, and it doesn't matter that they are holding up traffic because he car horns are honking for not against them and anyway who could be vex at a time like this?

Where's Jit, the man with the golden sticks?

This is his band's eighth win

which means they are tied with Witco Desperadoes for the most Panorama wins in the competition's history. "Jit won't be coming to the yard" says band captain, George Duncan. "He usually goes straight home and by sun up the

guys go up by him and lime for the whole day." Jit hates the limelight and giving interviews.

But earlier on, after Renegades' electrifying performance, he conceded that it was "a nice performance" before disappearing into the sea of people.

Some voices have been calling for Renegades to bow out of the competition as contestants. They should appear as guests only, they say, to give the other bands a chance.

Duncan is indignant at the suggestion: Why should they quit competing just because the band is on a winning streak? "Renegades didn't win a Panorama until 1982", (19 years after their first appearance in the shoot-out) — "nobody said 'oh gosh give Renegades a chance' then!"

Those within earshot also scoff at the notion: "they should just try harder" says one young woman.

She probably does not know what she is saying.

Since 1982 only three other bands have even got close to the crown (Despers, Neal and Massy Trinidad All Stars and Phase II).

Though others have tried — and tried — using gimmicks, big-name arrangers and spectacular designs, it is Jit who seems to hold the key to the judges' hearts.

Tonight was no exception.

Playing The Original De Fosto Himsel's "Pan in a Rage", Renegades threw in some chutney, dub and even some samba, mixed the brew and gave it to the adjudicators to drink.

They swallowed it and pointed them straight to the top.

The chutney and dub were included in the tune from the preliminary and semi-final rounds,

but the samba is new and the jam towards the end has been lengthened.

Jit usually makes few changes to the tune once he has completed it, although it depends on the outcome of the feedback meeting the band has at the end of the preliminary stage.

But Renegades' "Pan in a Rage" led the crop of contenders from the off, and the samba was simply added for more flavour, and the jam lengthened because they played the tune faster (125 beats per minute) than they did for the prelims or semis (121 and 123 b.p.ms respectively) which made the tune slightly shorter.

Nothing more was needed. 25-year-old American, Kelly Gilpatrick — the band's only white player — is euphoric.

Coming all the way from Maine and a six-piece pan side by the name of "Atlantic Clarion", Gilpatrick still can't get over the win:

"Jit has the best music and Renegades is the best band!" she gushes. Gilpatrick plays a double seconds pan. She wasn't even sure she would make the team but her brother, Aaron, came down and made the squad last year. At the time she was merely rack-pushing. Kelly had to play.

Desmond Thomas from London flew into Trinidad on January 25 and was playing in prelims on February 4. He played last year too.

Desmond has won the respect of many of the players who, up until the arrival of people like him, never believed anybody from London could even hold a stick properly much less play Renegades' music at lightning speed.

It's a big thing for foreign pan-men/women to play with a top band in Trinidad — the mecca of pan. Once they can play here, it

tells them they can play anywhere. Desmond is going back to London's chilly climes on February 29.

He has gone nowhere beyond the panyard and only now will he get time to take in the rest of Trinidad.

You get the impression that it doesn't really matter.

The Original De Fosto Himself is liming by the gate and Dr Rat, pan ace "Mannish", and assorted characters are outside debating the second and third round results — "Skiffle Bunch shoulda come third!" declares the Dr; others say All Stars (who were

excellent) should have won. But they whisper it because this is the winning band's yard and though Renegades aren't given to beating people, you don't rub a Renegades man up the wrong way.

And as you walk away from the yard, you can still hear their voices, shouting and laughing even among the music blasting and the cars whizzing by.

It's Carnival Sunday and the people are coming or staying out to play.

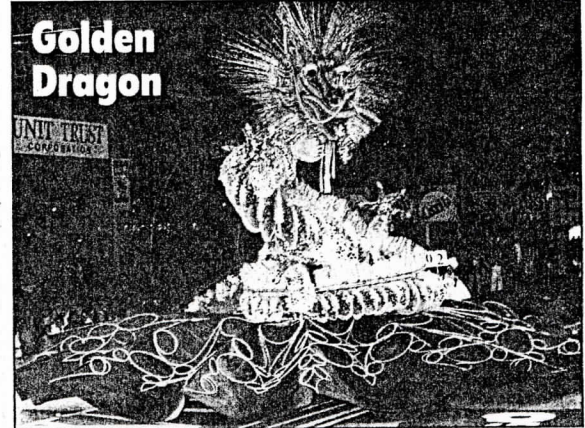
Renegades will drink and make merry until Ash Wednesday morning because at last the strain is over and the hard work has paid off.

But Jit will be thinking and planning for next year because they want the hatrick. No band has ever done it; no judge has ever allowed it.

Could Amoco Renegades be the exception?



JIT SAMAROO



ANTHONY PAUL portrayed "Camioung - Golden Dragon" from the band "Hunli-The Wedding" at the semi finals of the King and Queen of Carnival Competition at the Grand Stand, Queen's Park Savannah

Photo: STEVE MCPHIE

JUBILANT MEMBERS and fans of Renegades celebrate early Sunday morning after the band's victory at the finals of this year's Panorama

