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# More to pan than just Panorama and Ramajay

By DAVID CUFFY

THE STEELBAND usually receives public attention and scrutiny only for the duration of a particular national competition.

After Panorama, there is hardly another occasion on which the steelband attracts the kind of public support that it deserves and which is its entitlement by virtue of it being the national musical instrument of the nation.

Public support for the popular annual Pan Ramajay competition and biannual Steelband Music Festival falls far below the expectations of organisers and pales into insignificance when compared with the audience turnout each year at the Panorama competition. In addition, Steelband Week is yet to receive widespread recognition and given committed national and community support.

## Public's Attitude

"To continue to treat the steelband as a toy with which to play is to continue to think and behave as children ourselves," is how a noted pan enthusiast describes the public's attitude to the steelband.

An opportunity to prove all of what is written above to be harsh and totally inaccurate, as well as demonstrate support for the steelband and the steelpan player, will be had when a special concert with the title "A Generation of Pan" is staged at the Upper Level Club in West Mall, Westmoorings on Sunday September 15, from 7.30 pm.

Featured performer is the 1996 Pan



JASON BAPTISTE ... featured performer  
in "A Generation of Pan."

Ramajay soloist champion, Jason Baptiste, accompanied by super-talented musicians, the Ruiz Brothers.

British music critic, Benny Green, is quoted as saying: "The liberating of an instrument from its own structural limitations is one of the most profound feats any

musician can perform."

One could easily construe Green's eloquent comment to be in relation to the concert's star performers, for any follower of music in this country will know that Baptiste and the Ruiz brothers, by their contributions over the years on the instruments of their choice, can confidently lay claim to having performed profound feats as musicians.

Special guest artistes on the programme are some of Baptiste's equally talented pan colleagues. They are: former winner of the soloists category of Pan Ramajay, Dennis Smith, the ever versatile Sidney Joseph, and legendary pannist and arranger Earl Rodney.

Our musical development still centres around cultural traditions which dictate that there are seasons to appreciate pan music, as well as other indigenous art forms.

We have developed a sort of plural culture which affords everyone a space of its own and sometimes a given time period where one form must take precedence.

The steelpan has spread to many countries, not as culture, but as music. The North Americans, Europeans, and Japanese are willing to explore all its possibilities, and are not restricted like us by having a steelband culture.

The time has surely passed for us to break with tradition and give full, year-round support to the steelband and the efforts of its exponents.

Baptiste, Smith, Joseph, Rodney, the Ruiz brothers, and all the other pannists out there deserve nothing less.