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Excitement of Panazz Live captured on CD

By KIM JOHNSON

WHEN Panazz held their concert last April in the Central Bank auditorium, the show was a smash success. For a few hours on those Friday and Saturday nights the audience was treated to the tempo and style which won Panazz four consecutive Pan Ramajay trophies.

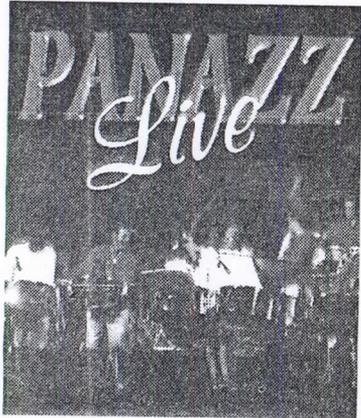
Now the excitement of that show is available on the CD *Panazz Live*, a recording which is one of the finest so far in reproducing the sound of a small steelband, and what's more, one that has captured some of the charisma with which the band has entertained audiences both here and abroad.

Music in Trinidad is an interactive event, and that's what comes across so clearly on the CD that as you listen you can close your eyes and see it. There's the hooting and clapping of the audience and, of course, the music which has never failed to evoke them. And there's Panazz leader Barry

Bartholomew introducing the players and the songs in his awkward, diffident way.

The small ensemble has long been hailed as the way forward for pan, or at least one of the ways forward.

Now there's a CD to point the direction, or rather, the directions, for there are different possibilities.



PANAZZ LIVE...the CD.

There's the first route of a small, 12-man ensemble, full of the musical flexibility that allows them to develop a relationship with an audience. No one who's seen Panazz can forget the charm of prodigy bassist Donnell Thomas, or the sheer *joie de vivre* of the band's front line players on the tenor and double seconds.

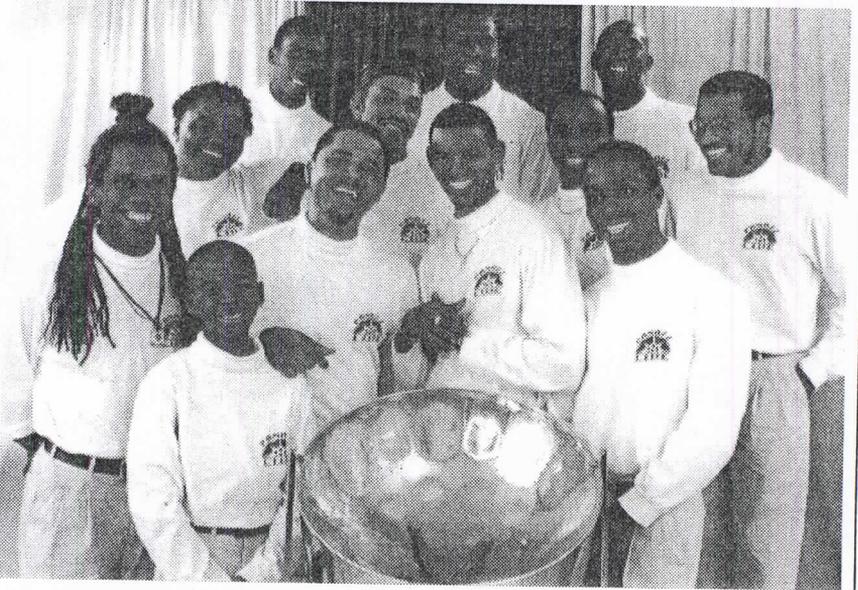
Stony-hearted an audience would have to be not to fall for Dane Gulston's charm, as you can hear on *Panazz Live*, and that's regardless of whether they're playing old standard ballads such as "Somewhere Over the Rainbow" or "Summertime", Latin standards such as "Passion Fruit" or kaisos such as Andre Tanker's "Pull the Bull".

There's also the route which virtuosos such as Rudy "Two Left" Smith or Robert Greenidge take, and that is to mix pan with other conventional instruments.

And here Panazz is again a pioneer, because at their concert they included saxophonist Curtis Lewis, and cuatrista Robert Munro. This isn't a pan with conventional instruments but a small steelband with which another instrument joins forces. The steelband still dominates, and it works beautifully, providing a marvelously swinging backdrop to Curtis Lewis's soprano sax on "Take Five".

After that the band and saxophonist tackle a straightforward "Girl from Ipanima", and again the contrast between the timbres of the different instruments emerge, just as when Munro brings his virtuosity on the cuatro into the band for "Tico Tico". Indeed, so well do the other instruments fit in with the band, that one wishes the front line players didn't step aside, but remained to play counterpoint to Lewis or Munro.

That, I suppose, is the value of what these young pannists are doing, however cautiously—that is, trying a thing. On *Panazz Live*, it's begun to bear fruit.



The Panazz pannists.