

ML1040

Pan... Judging the judges

By TERRY JOSEPH

AT THE LAUNCH of Pan Ramajay, the question was raised again: "Are we going to see the same set of judges for yet another pan event?"

IT IS A DILEMMA that now squarely confronts Pan Trinbago. Clearly pannists, musical arrangers and the public are growing tired of predictable results from every competition, but no new jurists seem anxious to come forward and replace the erring few.

At last week's launch of Pan Ramajay, chairman of the proceedings Desmond Waithe told a tale of how difficult it was to get new people onto the bench. Naming Clive Zanda as one person who declined, but who they felt would be a natural choice for this event, Waithe said that none of their hopes had materialised.

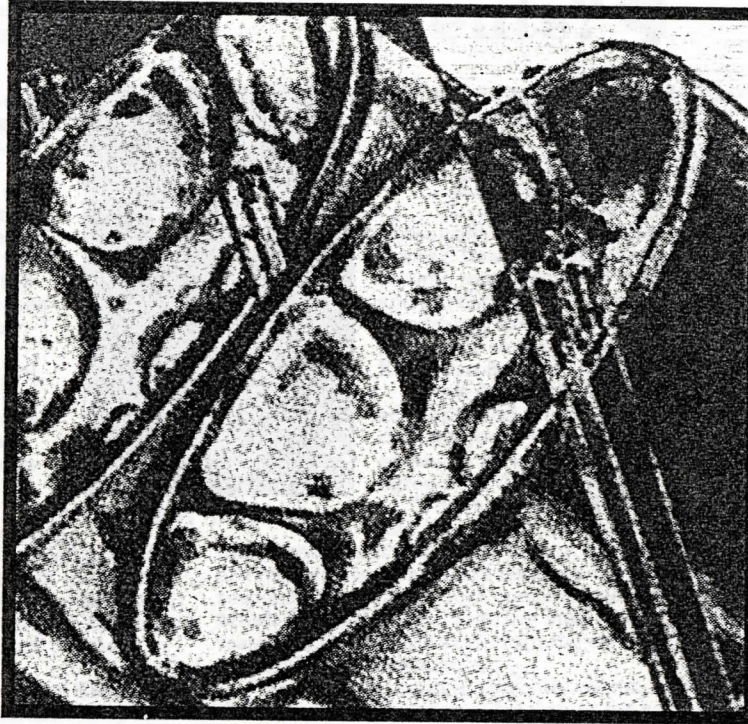
Last year at Jouvert, members of Pamberi Steel Orchestra dragged an effigy of respected musician Leston Paul all the way through Port of Spain, presumably because they did not like his judging at the Panorama finals. This year, members of Carib Tokyo stormed the offices of Pan Trinbago for much the same reason.

Pan Trinbago President Owen Serrette told the *Sunday Express* that it was not an easy problem to solve.

"We at Pan Trinbago have discussed this matter at both the executive and general membership levels and are now considering inviting comments from the public on this matter.

"We were there. We heard the public outcry when the placings for the Hydro Agri Skiffle Bunch and the Courts Laventille Sounds Specialists were announced at the Panorama finals. It was clear to us that the opinions of the judges were some distance from the feeling of the audience.

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Listen to Bach's 'Jesu Joy of Man's Desiring' and you will know the Jit style, there is no breathing, no rest between the notes, they travel on relentlessly. That is Jit Samaroo for you. Who can say that this style is right or wrong?

"Few of the arrangers may be as meticulous as Jit. You get to know the work, the style, perhaps, but that does not determine the points on the actual night of performance.

"THOSE WHO argue that we who learnt music back in the fifties do not understand today's chords are silly and uninformed. There are no new chords and no new music. It is nothing more than a whole lot of rubbish. Only in the classical format have any changes occurred. Godwin Bowen is an innovative musician, Boogie is always worth listening to and Bradley, of course, is a genius.

"People like Junior Regrello only argue when the judgement comes out against them. When he won in San Fernando, bet he didn't come running to you to give you a story then!" she fumed.

Still, there will be a predictable roar when the pannists play arrangements containing chromatic scales and crescendos, whether

or not the arranger has managed to integrate those musical manoeuvres into the structure of the song.

Owen Serrette maintains that: "These judges are competent musicians and are the best people that we can get at present. Loud and sometimes violent objections from unsuccessful bands make it even more difficult to source new judges.

"We do not mind if people question their abilities, but we cannot stand by and hear people questioning the integrity of our judges.

"Those who feel that things like 'spirit of Carnival' or some other nebulous concept like that should be included in the criteria, really ought to tell us how we could possibly judge such an absolutely intangible area."



MERLE ALBINO DE COTEAU

Serrette also wants the public to write in its views.

His problems and those of Pan Trinbago may have been exacerbated by this exchange, as Merle Albino de Coteau concluded: "All these complainers may have done me a favour, yes. They may very well have made up my mind for me. I feel it is time that I stop subjecting myself to all of this ridicule."

Now, even if they leave most of the panel exactly as it has been for the last 15 years, it seems, they have to look for at least one new judge.



RAY HOLMAN

were some distance from the feeling of the audience. "But there are a lot of questions to be considered in these matters. Should we look at crowd response, when we have already agreed upon a set of musical criteria for judging these events?"

Last month, a fresh attack on the pan judiciary came when lead-

ers of several bands expressed disappointment with the results of the Pan Chutney Competition.

In addition, there is the spectre of a pre-Carnival protest over Carib Tokyo's omission from the Panorama finals. In this case, the band's arranger, Ray Holman, stepped completely out of character and made a number of scathing comments about the judges' abilities.

While Holman's was hardly the first post-Panorama call for a review of the adjudication system, this time representatives of several other bands appear ready to support his position.

At a meeting at City Hall last April, Pan Trinidad officials argued that the criteria for adjudication are laid out and are based on musical values, not the razzmatazz and gimmicks which move the crowd to cheer for their favourite band.

The problem is that at those meetings, which are invariably held weeks after Carnival, the arrangers no longer have any links with the bands. Some may have returned to their foreign bases and the meetings end up comprising musically illiterate people who just happen to hold official positions in the bands.

Junior Regrello, captain of Hydro Agri Skiffle Bunch, which audiences at the Panorama competition felt should have done better than eighth in the finals, feels that the whole group of judges should retire.

"Officials of several bands feel that the judges have become a law unto themselves," says Regrello. "Their criteria certainly seem out of sync with what the band members and the rest of the public thinks. Their criteria are simply too tough and do not take into consideration what Carnival is all about."

Regrello felt that the judges only wanted to discuss technical points, and some appeared disappointed



JUNIOR REGRELLO

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ed at the feelings expressed by pan-nists at the meeting.

"ANY INDISCRETION in judging could have a backlash on the entire community from which the band comes," he said. "The judges have to become more sensitive to the social and psychological aspects of Panorama, rather than this strict adherence to the dictates of European musical values."

Merle Albino de Coteau, an accomplished musician and perhaps the only judge who has actually arranged for a steelband, does not agree with the criticisms.

"I have studied all kinds of music and it is only in the realm of pan music and Panorama in particular, it seems, that we are required to look at and listen to the crowd response. There is no such consideration at the Music Festival, where aspiring musicians are being tested for their skills at performing on other types of conventional instruments.

"We cannot remain in this silly cocoon, thinking that there must be special treatment for pan because it was invented here. If it is a musical instrument, then it must have its own integrity, just like any other instrument.

"Sure, some of the music is predictable, and that is not because it is Trinidadian. There are times I can predict Kitchener, even, but I can never predict even the next note in a Shadow calypso at first hearing. Boogie Sharpe is not predictable either. Jit Samaroo utilises the baroque style, such as you would discover in the music of Bach or Handel. If you know music you will understand these things

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