

Pan arrangers getting greedy

THE EDITOR: I would like to express my disgust at an ugly situation developing in the steelband movement. The win-at-all-costs syndrome has allowed our most talented and creative arrangers to degenerate into mere mercenaries, the steelband version of the dogs of war. The 1988 Panorama competition will see three top arrangers Len "Boogsie" Sharpe, Clive Bradley and Jit Samaroo working for 14 bands between them. This situation has made a total farce of the Panorama competition. The bands that can afford to spend an average of \$10,000 for a Panorama tune from one of the big noise arrangers, stands not only a better chance to reach the finals based on the credibility of the arranger, but also draws pan players who are lured by the attraction of playing under a master arranger.

I have no quarrel with a very creative arranger doing two Panorama tunes for the season, providing the bands are in different zones. Jit Samaroo and Boogsie Sharpe did this successfully for a few years and they were even prolific enough to also do justice to a pan-round-neck band at the same time. Even in those days Jit was at his creative best only with Renegades, while Boogsie's masterpiece was always reserved for his own composition arranged for Phase II. All the other tunes were just mediocre pieces put together by a good arranger as quickly as possible; if the band could muster a strong playing force with a good performance, they had an even chance to make it to winners' row, at least in their zone.

A Panorama masterpiece needs time, it must be painstakingly built up by its creator and sometimes broken down and reshaped. The tune must have a distinct flavour and should include at least one innovation. I wonder if the administrators of the bands who are running down the successful arrangers believe they are getting their money's worth?

We just have to take a look at some of the masterpieces that have been created in the history of the Panorama competition. Pieces which were carved out of love, devotion and artistic delight, within a time-consuming framework not motivated by greed. The love of money could never have inspired such treasures as Anthony Williams' *Mama Dis is Mas*, Beverly Griffith's *Melda*, Earl Rodney's *Wrecker*, Clive Bradley's *Pan in Harmony*, Boogsie Sharpe's *I Music*, Ray Holman's *Queen of the Bands*, Jit Samaroo's *More Pan*, Leon "Smooth" Edwards' *Woman on the Bass* or Bobby Mohammed's *Play Mas*.

The recent Schools' Steelband Festival brought home the point that we are well-endowed with unexploited talent. Must Clarence Morris, Trevor Valentine, Ardin Herbert and other young promising pan musicians wait until Bradley and company die of old age or other causes before they can get a chance to win their spurs?

Give those greedy arrangers a chance and they will each take 12 bands next year. Pan Trinbago must do something about this situation if they are really serious about having 10,000 flowers bloom. The present crop of arrangers are smothering the young blossoms in their quest for gold.

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