

TODAY

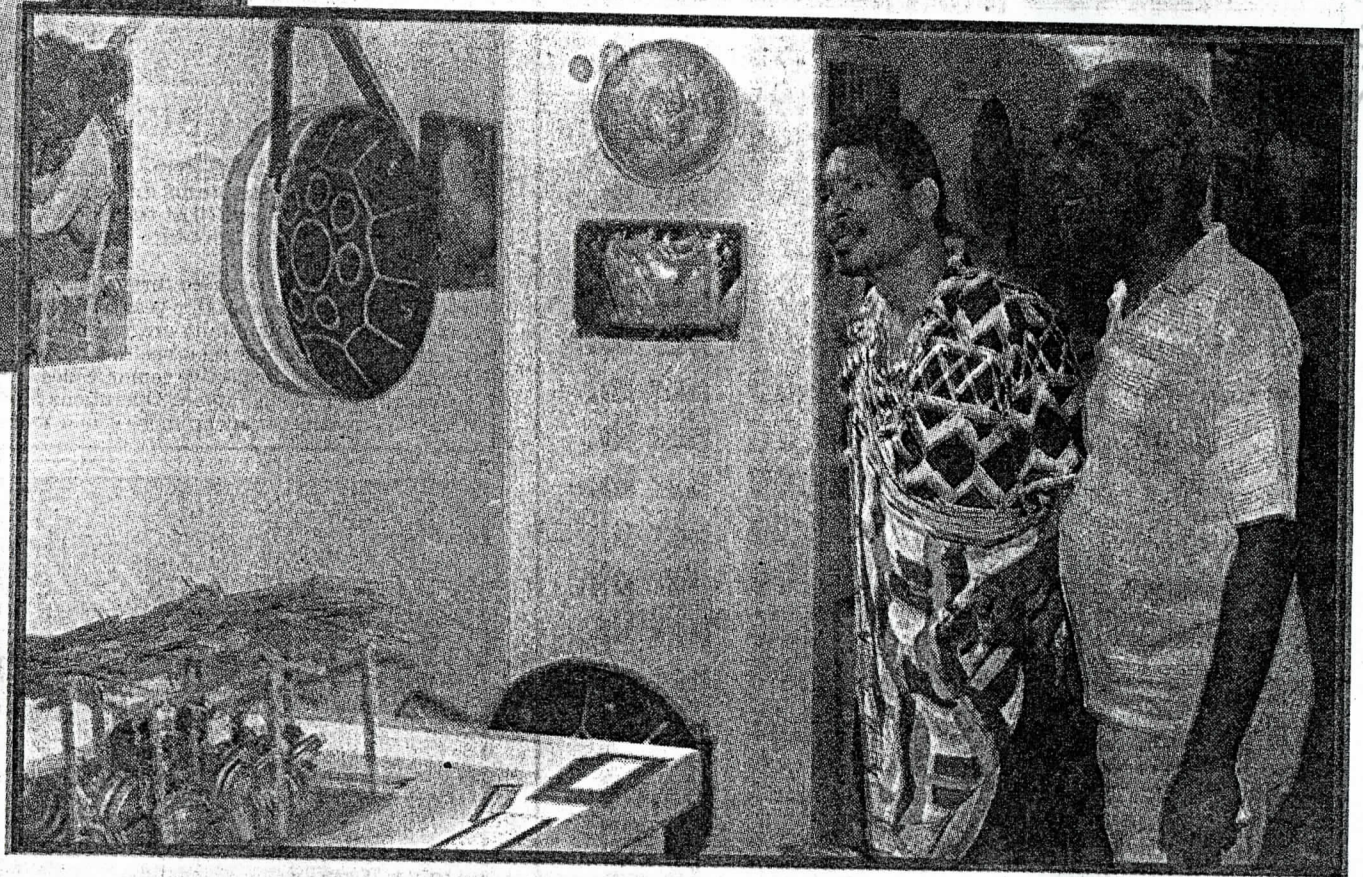
NEWS. VIEWS & INTERVIEWS



ABOVE: This 81 year old woman, Pearl Jones, from Gloster Lodge Belmont remembers the days when steelband just used to make noise. "I'da never think they'da come to this nuh," she say as she looks at the exhibition.

AT LEFT: Surinamese actor director Henk Tjon and Mervyn Williams, curator of the exhibition, take in the display.

Photos: NIGEL DOWNER



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PAN COMES OF AGE

But still remains homeless

By KIM JOHNSON

NOW THAT the evolution of pan exhibition "Coming of Age" has itself come of age, it's high time it found its own home.

Born in 1993 to mark the graduation of the one-year Pan Technology course at Exodus Panyard, the exhibition was held at the La Joya complex. Since then it has grown more comprehensive and has been on display at Mille Fleurs, at the Central Bank, and it was mounted yesterday on the walkway around the Culture Ministry on Jerningham Avenue.

COMPRISED of artifacts and photographs, the exhibition is divided into four sections: the Pre-pan era; the Pre-Taspo (Trinidad All Steel Percussion Orchestra, 1951) era; the Pre-Independence era, and the Panorama era.

So it begins with two three-piece sets of skin drums, one secular and one sacred. "The tall ones are used for things like kalinda stickfighting, and the other three are for Orisha ceremonies," explains musicologist Mervyn Williams, the curator of the exhibition.

Accordingly, there are also a conch shell, a cow horn, shak shaks and two photographs of stickfighters, one of whom the late George Yeates used to proudly tell me was his uncle, Ben Yeates.

"Uncle Benny Tie-Pin".

Separating the skin drums from the bamboo bamboo is the 1884 *Ordinance for the better preservation of the peace*, which outlawed for Carnival "the carrying of any lighted torch; the beating of any drum, the blowing of any horn or the use of any noisy instrument; any dance or procession; any assemblage of collection of persons armed with sticks or other weapons of offence and numbering ten or more."

Then there are the bamboo instruments in the various sizes and the motley assortment of items that were pounded to accompany the bamboo bamboo: kerosene tins, motor car hubs, dustbins, smoke herring box, scratcher, gin bottle and grater.

A photograph of the late Carlton "Zigilee" Barrow and a newspaper clipping of a magistrate denying bail to a panyard man lead to the early pan section of the

exhibition: ping pongs of four, six, nine, and 20 notes, some with convex faces, others concave. After that the main artifacts which would interest the foreigner are related to making pans — the hammers and so forth

— modern instruments, and two model steelbands — an old pan around the neck side and a modern big band, both fabricated by Youth Training Camp boys.

"In addition to financing, we need a permanent place because every time we pack and unpack we lose things, artifacts get damaged, and it has to be redesigned to suit a different space," says Williams in explaining how an open space had to be left to allow in light, so they turned it into a model old time panyard with its breadfruit and coconuts on the ground and a pan being burnt.

"The Museum is too small; we need a space almost the size of the entire museum to project pan as a culture."

To prove his point one of the men assembling the exhibition complains that the posie was missing. "Somebody must be throw it away nuh," said Williams. "They musta thought it was a true true posie."

According to Williams, whose MSc ethnomusicology course work was precisely on mounting such an exhibition, "My orientation is to music as a human activity, not sound phenomena, so we try to show the entire cultural heritage, the traditions and folklore."

The exhibition also has photographs of the various stages in making a modern pan, the sinking, cutting, grooving, burning, tuning and chroming a pan.

BUT MOST interesting for me are the silent, unadorned photographs of the old veteran panyard men the Fisheyes and Patcheyes, our Coreys and Zigilees, Guppys and Ellies and Sprees and Birdies. The women are there too, from Daisy James who played with Hill 60 in the forties, to Girl Pat who played in the fifties. (Yvonne "Bubulups" Smith and Mayfield Camps aren't there, but the massive Ethel is.) There is Carlton "Lord Humbucker" Forde, who led the first ever steelband, Alexander's Ragtime Band. There are the great trinity of Ellie Mannelle, Neville Jules and Tony Williams.

The photographs of these men to me are awe-inspiring, heroes whose names resonate with courage and determination and genius. These are the builders of our monuments and if this society cannot find a home for them it is because we as yet have not come of age.

