

Read the
STOCK
EXCHANGE
report daily in
the TRINIDAD
GUARDIAN,
the newspaper
that educates.

Sunday

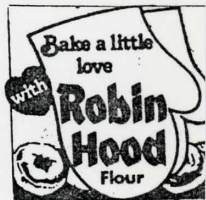


Guardian

FEATURES

SPORTS

CLASSIFIED



people

Pushing our steel band on the world stage

By CLEON RAPHAEL

PAN MAN par excellence. That's a fitting accolade for Trinidad-born Winston Graham, who has been pushing the steelpan on the international market — not only as a beater, but as an arranger, tuner and entrepreneur.

Apart from being arguably the only person in the Steelband export business, Mr Graham is responsible for a number of firsts in this field.

Secondary Schools

Through his instrumentality, Steel Orchestras were introduced in secondary schools in Barbados, London and our own School for the Blind in Santa Cruz some years ago.

San Fernando-born Graham, 44, has lectured on the steelpan at most of our embassies abroad and has been honoured in several countries for his work.

How has he been able to successfully market the steelpan over seas?

"Apart from knowing and playing the instrument, I took several business management courses, so I am able to put some business acumen to work."

So successful is he in this field that he spends eight months out of the country each year in North America, Europe and elsewhere.

His latest achievement is the creation of a completely portable steelpan — with case and collapsible stand.

He went with the design to Carri and a prototype was developed with their assistance.

"This is expected to be on the market in 1989. This will interest mainly professional pan players and those involved in playing at festivals. It is not for the conventional Steelband s you find at Carnival time.

"Nevertheless, it is another step in the forward march in the evolution of the Steelband."

Mr Graham, who hails from Lewis Street, San Fernando, and had his primary schooling at San Fernando Boys Government, before moving on



WINSTON GRAHAM

to high school, played with the then Rogues Regiment Steel Orchestra.

Crediting San Fernando with whatever success he has achieved in his chosen field, the former insurance underwriter, who is unable to count how many pans he has exported so far, said:

"One thing is certain. Every one came from Trinidad and Tobago. Right now I have some orders from London and North America.

Made Very Clear

"And when I deliver my pans, I just don't hand them over like that. It is made very clear that the Steelband came from Trinidad and Tobago.

"And this is another way of putting my country on the world map."

His pans have a life span of at least 25 years and he also advises on the care of the instrument to ensure their longevity.

One of the "success stories" of which he is extremely proud, is the complete acceptance of Steelband and Calypso

by the population of the US Virgin Islands.

He added:

"They accept it as part of their culture, but make it absolutely clear that these art forms came from Trinidad and Tobago.

"So impressed are they with Trinidad and Tobago that their leading youth Steelbands came to Trinidad and Tobago for Carnival this year to play and learn more on the Steelband from the land of its birth."

Always thinking of new innovations, Mr Graham leaves this week for another of his eight-month sojourn abroad.

He heads for Texas to continue experimenting on a new sound using modern technology.

Does he think Trinidad and Tobago is about to lose its reputation as the land of the Steelband?

"Not at all. Ridiculous. The more our Steelband is known abroad, the more the international community will come to recognise Trinidad and Tobago as the birth place of the instrument.

"That is the reason why there is apparent confusion about the origin of the Calypso. We did not go out and market the Calypso, letting it known where it came from.

"Fortunately, some of our pans went out there years ago popularising this unique instrument, like Ru Henderson and Gerry Forsyth, who now the co-ordinator of schools S bands in London."

Modest Gentleman

Quite a modest gentleman Graham, who was honoured in 1987 of Spain on Ash Wednesday, by Chief Judge of the US Virgin Islands for his work in that country developing the Steelband said:

"I consider what I am doing as leg of the relay in the race to develop the Steelband way on top of the international community.

"I would like to feel that when I over the baton to another runner, lap would have been well run."