

# No money in Pan

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By LISA GUICHARD

EXCITING and challenging, is how Ken Philmore describes his work with his beloved steel drums. "I have been a musician since birth," he says. "For the past 28 years that's all I've known and loved. Chrome comes to life beneath my hands, and I enjoy the music that I make."

Philmore operates his own band in Washington DC using American musicians, producers and managers. "But I represent Trinidad and Tobago to the fullest," contended Philmore. "It's because jazz is my mainstream that I cannot use Trini pan men; that would be like bringing a reggae artiste to do soca."

Philmore has toured with the famous Duke Ellington Orchestra for five years having been to Holland, Denmark and playing the pan at the jazz level, he shows the world what T&T is made of.

Philmore has played at the Budweiser and Capital Jazz Festivals, while also providing various universities across the USA with pan symposiums, workshops and courses so that they may learn besides the art of playing pan, the history behind it. "Basically, Carnival is just two months out of the year, so as pan men we must

look for work outside, similar to the calypsonians, because after February, there is no real forum for it at home. So musicians do tend to suffer a bit here in Trinidad."

However, Philmore is not to be excluded from the biggest festival on earth. "During Carnival, pan is highlighted and I'm looking at doing arrangements for three or four bands, which I'd prefer not to mention, as year to year contracts change and things are still very much up in the air. I'm also doing a bit of writing for a surprise artiste, who does not want his name revealed either, but secrets aside, 1997 is shaping up quite nicely."

Admitting to a love of writing, Philmore confessed that his involvement with the jazz side of pan has kept him from exploring the writing of soca which he has already begun to concentrate on for '97.

"The thing with calypso is that we need to concentrate on in depth marketing the way huge organisations do for Coca Cola or KFC. The world doesn't know about calypso really.

"We need to start loving our own! start paying more respect to our local artistes and heroes". Although Philmore believes that Trinidad and Tobago is the land of Steelband



**KEN PHILMORE...**  
devoted to his pans

and Calypso, he maintains a deep respect for the combination of ethnic cultures that exists. "Due to the fact that we are such a cosmopolitan Republic, we don't really concentrate on the marketing of any one specific thing - there are too many," he admitted laughingly. Philmore's CD 'Graduation' is due for release shortly, featuring John Stoddard and other famous American producers.

Does he think that his use of an all American band is unpatriotic? "No, I do not think so, not when I see men like Andy Narell and others making tons of money by marketing my art form. I'm not saying that Trinidadians are not good musicians, on the contrary they are some of the best in the world, having an ear for chords and rhythms that surpass many. But that level I want to attain, that urban contemporary sound of jazz, is a whole different story. I have hired men who were

doing this since age four, who have their Masters and Bachelor Degrees in this specific sound - they can't play calypso."

His advice to the pan men is to seek the proper training, "I believe BWIA is starting a programme where you can attain a musical degree which will be extremely good for the country and the pan men in particular. But I still believe that marketing the product is the key to our success that we're holding but for some reason not turning.

"The instrument can do much more than play soca for a period of two months. For instance, the Music Festival is around the corner, not much people know when and where. And another is that given the sixty odd steel bands that we have in the country, why are only six participating?" he asked ruefully.

Philmore acknowledged that to him, pan festivals have died a natural death a long time ago and the public is no longer interested due to lack of proper marketing. "We need to get the Public Relations personnel of the big organisations in on this, get them to do what they do best, what they are trained for - they can be contracted to Pan Trinbago.

"Not even Panorama is what is used to be, to me it has become monotonous." He believes that

incentives for the Pan men and the public is imperative to regain peoples' interest.

"I love my pan. I love my music. I love my Panorama, but we are losing the urge to participate. Even the two or three bands that go off tour return home to a mere pittance - again incentive plays a minor role. Most of these pan men do it for the love and now that is dying. It has to become a business and needs to be marketed as such. This is why I had to leave Trini shores to follow my dream and fulfil my quest," he reiterated.

Funding? "Pan men have no money! From the executive levels in Pan Trinbago to the lowest Pan man money is a rare commodity." He declared hotly, "Money needs to be spent in order to be made

"We need to start contracting professional Human Resource personnel to interact with professional Public Relations people, who represent all the corporate giants and let the corporate citizens run the pan industry for us.

"I truly believe we will fare better if it is high time we move away from the negative reputation that surrounds pan, the territorial attitudes and the old way of thinking. Pan is a marketable commodity."