

The final note, not the end of the show

THE Organising Committee of *Pan is Beautiful Five*, comprising personnel from the Royal Bank of Trinidad and Tobago and Pan Trinbago, decided that *Pan is Beautiful Six*, scheduled for 1990, would be launched last night. And, in addition, the competition to select the Test Piece for the second World Steelband Festival would be launched simultaneously.

It was explained that the piece elected would be announced by the end of February 1989, so that arrangements at home, and more so their international counterparts, would have more than sufficient time to have full command of the score and the execution of the piece.

These are just two of the

improvements which emerged out of *Pan is Beautiful Five*, the final of which was staged

last night at Jean Pierre Complex. Another innovation which immediately springs to mind was the decision to stage the preliminary of the Solo category on a separate evening, at Spektakula Forum. At the intermission break, I counted 93 patrons in attendance that evening, an indication that the Complex was indeed the inappropriate venue for this aspect of the Festival.

While on this topic, for the third consecutive Festival, I feel compelled to voice my strong disagreement with Festival organisers to stage the finals of the Solo and pan-round-the-neck categories, on the same night as the final for the conventional orchestras.

I also feel that enough thought did not go into the decision to select a mere five pannists, out of 33 participants, for the Solo final. Based on the performances I heard at the preliminary, it was obvious that these pannists, the majority of them still in their teens, worked very hard to prepare their skills for this test of "panmanship." To select 15 per cent of the competitors, without a semi-final, seemed a bit unfair to me.

Due to a late launch of the Festival, a mere six months prior to the event, just two international orchestras—Femenino de Venezuela and Guyana BIDCO Invaders—participated in this World Steelband Festival. Bands from the United Kingdom, Sweden and Germany had earlier indicated their intention to participate but, insufficient time to prepare themselves caused a number of cancellations.

Nonetheless, the historic international festival commenced on October 20, witnessed by the largest audience to attend a *Pan is Beautiful* opening ceremony. Originally scheduled to run for four nights, the preliminaries eventually occupied five evenings when rain forced a postponement to proceedings on the penultimate evening.

One of the most salient facts to emerge out of the preliminaries was the dire need for the steelband movement to acquire its own concert hall.

This complex must be a multi-faceted, all purpose facility, with the capacity to accommodate at least 5,000 patrons. It was some time around 1980, when calypsonian Manchild sang *Pan in Crisis* in its native land, at the Revue tent. Like Shadow's *Bassman*, the refrain from that calypso keeps beating in my head each time I've attended a *Pan is Beautiful* competition at Jean Pierre Complex.

While this sporting complex may be suitable, in terms of its capacity, centralised location, parking facilities and performance floor space, it is just about the worst venue one can stage a music festival. Adjudicators, musicians and audience have to put up with traffic noises, airplanes passing overhead, and car alarms being triggered in the carpark. And, that is not to mention the worst intrusion of all, the noise which emanates from functions at neighbouring buildings. And, of



A DESPERS CRY: Crowd's reaction to Desperadoes' final night performance in 1986.

course, there are the elements of the weather, and nutsmen walking around during performances, mashing your corns and making alien utterances, as though they just arrived with ALF from Melmac.

At each Festival, promises are made to Pan Trinbago that land has been allocated for the erection of a pan complex. In 1984, for *Pan is Beautiful Three*, a parcel of land, located west of the Uriah Butler Highway (in the vicinity of the Mt Hope Medical Sciences Complex).

Then, in 1986, another parcel of land was cited, with even blue prints thrown in as well. There was talk about a site in the vicinity of the former Chest and Heart facilities on Wrightson Road. Two years ago, during the month of October, at the prize-giving ceremony for *Pan is Beautiful Four*, Pan Trinbago president Arnim Smith said that the steelband theatre will be built, "with or without the assistance of government." It was also revealed that architect and prominent Carnival official Clyde Bacchus, "had volunteered to design the pan theatre on its proposed Wrightson Road site."

Subsequently, another site, along the Audrey Jeffers Foreshore was announced. After eight years of promises, don't the authorities think that it's time to stop the "impising" and give our national instrument the home it deserves? Festivals have come, and festivals have gone, but the promises seem to live on and on.

Looking closely at this festival, in retrospect, the spirit of creativity and motivation seen in the '86 competition seemed to be subdued. For example, at the '84 Festival, three bands played original compositions in the Tune of Choice category. This was increased to six original pieces in

1986. Noticeably, in 1988, for what was being billed as the biggest of all the festivals, just two bands offered original pieces in the area of the competition. Skiffle Bunch played Len "Boogie" Sharpe's *Seasons*, and Arima Golden Symphony chose Terrance B.J. Marcelle's *Symphony in 'E' Major*.

In the '86 Festival, there were 10 brand new calypso compositions, compared to just four presented this year.

In this regard, Terrance B.J. Marcelle, the captain/arranger of Arima Golden Symphony, deserves to be singled out for providing *Pan is Beautiful Five* with a total of three new pieces of music. Also contributing new music were Paul Campbell and Winston Davis.

When will the government stop using pan as a political football?

Speaking of new things, at *Pan is Beautiful Four*, I singled out Moods' tuner Leroy Thomas for mention when he presented a tenor pan which simulated a sound akin the violin. This time around, Thomas came up with another tenor instrument, this time sounding like a harpsichord. The instrument, a Bore Pan, was played by Sean Thomas at the preliminary of the Solo competition, assisting him to place amongst last night's five finalists.

On the other hand though, *Pan is Beautiful Five* attracted an increased number of participants overall. In comparison to the fig-

ures of the '86 Festival, the number of soloists increased by eight; the pan-round-the-neck bands by two; and, there were six more conventional orchestras, with two foreign participants.

Yet another significant fact observed was the increase in the number of young participants, and female musicians. Almost all of the bands comprised a large percentage of pre-teen and teenaged pannists. This was most noticeable of Pamberi, Invaders, Laven-tille Sound Specialists, Motown, Hummingbirds Pan Groove, Harmonites, Tropical Angel Harps, Pandemonium, Desperadoes and Simple Song, with Simple Song having some of the best looking females in the Festival. The participation by the young people augurs well for the development and longevity of pan.

With yet another chapter now closed on the ongoing saga of the steelband festival, we look to the future, specifically 1990. The biggest questions remaining are: Would the steelband movement eventually acquire its own performing complex? Would plans for *Pan is Beautiful Six* be implemented early enough to woo more than two foreign orchestras?

Would the headquarters of Pan Trinbago be resited, from the fire trap it now occupies?

Would Pan Trinbago come up with more successful fund-raising ideas which would ensure real independence for the organisation?

Would the government cease using pan as a political football, and seriously assess, and exploit the numerous revenue-earning qualities of this resource?

If the answers to these questions are all in the affirmative, then pan would certainly be considerably more beautiful than it is at present.

