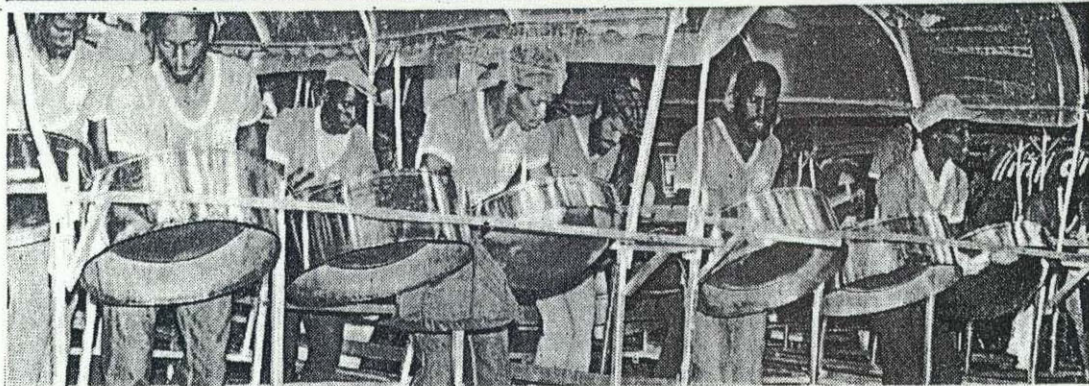


THE STORY OF PAN — THE FINAL CHAPTER



Out of one many bands were formed

"UP TO present time, there is nothing documented about the drums. Everything that you will hear today is what somebody else told them. But this is the bottom line right there. I am the only person still alive, having started in '37, and still functioning today."

ELLIE MANNETTE concludes what has turned out to be a most controversial interview with American pannist ANDY NARELL on the birth and evolution of pan. This interview was conducted at Mannette's pan laboratory in New York where the former Invaders pannist now lives.

Q: Desperadoes is from the war days?

A: Yeh. Yeh. Man there were a lot of crazy names and those bands were not really the original bands....And then we had one band behind the hill they called Marabuntas. That was the John John band. And out of the Marabuntas came Tokyo, as well as Fascinators. Several other names could be found which derived out of the Marabuntas.

And on the hill, there was one band they called Hill 60 which became a whole lot of bands whose names I don't remember exactly, but Desperadoes became one of those bands.

Then, a band like Renegades; they wasn't Renegades, they were Bar 20. From Bar 20 you got Casablanca, and you got the same Renegades, plus Syncopators.

Then, there is a band like Trinidad All Stars and all those bands from around central Port of Spain. They all derived from one band; a band called Hell Yard — that was one band in the centre of town. Then came Red Army, then All Stars.

And in the St James area they had Tripoli and Sun Valley, and North Stars. They all came out of one band called St James Sufferers.

So there was one band in St James called St James Sufferers; one band in the Woodbrook area called Alexander Ragtime Band; one band on the Hill which was Hill 60; another behind the bridge called Bar 20; one in the centre of Port of Spain called Hell Yard; and Marabuntas on the south side of the city.

From all those bands, sections broke off and started to grow like that. Those original bands are names the youngsters never heard about. If I call the names those bands to the youngsters they wouldn't know what I'm talking about.

Q: Before you began making pans, did you ever march in the streets at carnival time, with a frying pan, or one of your mom's pots or something like that?

A: No! I never did that. The first time I jumped in the streets, I jumped with a small paint tin. The paint tin started in '35 and grew into all kinds of grease barrels, or whatever. When I came in, I had a grease barrel under my hand like this, as a little boy, 11-years-old. I had the bottom knocked out and I was

playing like crazy on top of it.

Q: How many guys were there in the band?

A: We had about 14 or 15 guys. I could remember the names of some of the guys who started with me very well.

Q: Did everybody pretty much play what they wanted to play?

A: Yeh, everybody. About six different things going on at the same time...in those days was rhythm. When it grew, between '37 and '41, we started getting melodies, and Spree Simon started playing "River Vine Vine."

Between '41 and '45, melodies were playing like crazy now because we had as many as nine playing notes on one drum. When we played for Carnival there was no particular song playing. Everybody was going up the street playing their own melody, so you could imagine the riot that was taking place at the time.

You have several people playing things. Just imagine, a bass skittle is playing, the slap boom is playing, the tune boom is playing, and you have ten melodies going at the same time.

Q: Who was the first guy who said, "let's do this?"

A: Well, let me see; who decided to play a straight melody? It was a group of us really. One of my brothers, the one they called Ossie, had quite a significant part in it. There was this guy, I think that his name was Ellis, who said let's play a tune together, so we decided to practise a melody line together, putting it in different ways.

I can't remember exactly what Ellis' surname was, but I could remember him very well. He started helping us; I mean putting things together, like an arranger for the group at the time.

Now, the story I gave you here about the art form, you might go to Trinidad tomorrow, the following day, or whenever, and you might get a lot of people to tell you; 'oh, the steeldrum started in 1935, this, or that, was done to it and so on,' but there is no one person living today that has more authentic information about the art form.

That is because all the people that have been involved with it from '35 have faded out, and never had anything documented. Up to the present time, there is nothing documented about the drums.

Everything that you will hear today is what somebody else told them. You will get a lot of information from a lot of youngsters, around 25-years-old — they don't know anything about the steeldrum. Steeldrum started 45 years ago, they weren't even born but they heard what they heard from somebody else.

Of course, you can go and listen to what they have to say, but regardless of how they tell it to you it will amount to what I will tell you today. The wording might be different in a million ways but the substance of it would be the same. As a result of what I said to you, we should have, at some time, sat down, took some more time, and even had it documented. But, this is the basis of the steeldrum in a nutshell.