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Pan Trinbago honours two

Kristy Ramnarine

THIS YEAR'S Panorama competition will pay tribute to Earl Rodney and Allan Gervais posthumously.

Pan Trinbago president Patrick Arnold yesterday confirmed that the two southerners will be honoured.

"We are in south for the finals and these are two southerners who have contributed greatly to the steelband music. Allan Gervais was a top tuner and Earl Rodney was one of the top arrangers", Arnold said.

The form of the tribute has not yet been decided on.

Pan Trinbago public relations officer Angela Fox said that the organisation has been paying tribute to past pan men for over 10 years.

"These include Earl Bradley, Arnim Smith, Merchant and Kitchener," she said, adding that since the finals were being held in San Fernando "we decided to honour two pioneers from south".

Earl Rodney, who was born in Point Fortin, started playing the steelpan at age four.

Between 1948-1950 he was a member of the Intruders Steelband of Egypt Village. This band started off being called Morning Stars. By age seven, Rodney was playing on the streets of Point Fortin and at age 12, he co-founded Tropical Harmony with his friend Allan Gervais, who was around the same age.

Tropical Harmony got contracted in 1961 to play at the Naval Base in

Posthumous tribute for Southern duo

Chaguaramas. In 1962 at the Penthouse Nightclub, Rodney mastered every pan and percussion instrument. He also learned to play the acoustic bass with the help of Gervais' brother Ali, a guitarist.

Rodney joined the Dutchy Brothers the following year and remained with them for three years as a bassist/arranger.

He had a short stint with the National Steelband of Trinidad and Tobago in 1962 and it was in 1967 that he first took the task of working with Harmonites who, under his direction, won the Panorama title in 1968, 1971 and 1972.

Rodney's close friend Allan Gervais, who is also being honoured by Pan Trinbago, died in 1977.

In the 1960s, Gervais revolutionised the sound of the pan with his unique tuning methods, which he used to create a new tone.

He was able to transform the previously flat tone of the pan, particularly the lower tenor pan, into a ringing tone, which greatly enhanced the sound, and transformed the pan into a world class instrument.

Gervais was known to be the wizard of pan tuning with his speed and accuracy. An example is when he tuned eight pans in one afternoon for the National Steelband on tour in Michigan in the 1960s.