

I found my niche as a tenor pannist

behind the
Mas

By LISA GUICHARD

THIS petite, 28 year old, Bank of Commerce employee, discovered her love for the steel drums while she was still a child. Karen Granderson, currently a member of In-Focus and Amoco Renegades Steel Orchestra, confessed that her love of pan began way back in school. "Since I was a very young child my mother would encourage me to participate in music. I was practising piano with Jacqueline Ash, until I joined the St. Francois Girls' College Steel Orchestra and discovered this deep passion for pan.

"While initially I didn't like the playing part of it, I've always enjoyed the theory behind the different bars and chords that help to create this magical sound. Of course, my mother was overjoyed and said it was the best thing I ever did," she laughed.

Truth be told, Granderson admits that her mother was right. Soon after joining the school band, she participated in her first ever School Music Festival and the band won first place.

"The band played at many social gatherings, and as time went on Annette Griffith, who



IN FOCUS now the centre of Granderson's attention. Photo by ARTHUR EDWARDS

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was the Economics teacher at that time, played a major role in procuring these engagements and thus kept my interest from waning."

Granderson added, "But once I had started, I realised that I had found my niche by becoming a pannist and enjoyed it." Granderson acknowledged the fact that teachers didn't take too kindly to pan playing at that time, figuring it would interfere with the students' school work. "Not for me!" she countered, "I was strictly a 70% average student, with foreign languages as my strong point.

All things considered, life was really good. Not only did I play pan, but I continued piano lessons and even did some ballet. I had a full schedule every week."

After leaving school

in 1984, Granderson joined Iscott Casablanca as a tenor player and started playing and practising conventional music for 'Pan Is Beautiful'.

"That was my first festival and I was petrified," she admitted smiling, "but because of my inexperience, together with being intimidated by the largely male contingent that surrounded me, I was driven to prove myself."

So said, so done. Under Superintendent Anthony Prospect, Granderson did a lot of classical music, loving the 1812 Overture with which Casablanca won the 1982 festival.

"It is such an intricate piece of music," she mused. "I adore the serenity of classical pieces. It almost makes you feel spiritual... And I can appreciate that."

The classical songs that she played assisted her in phrasing the music properly and developing what is known as 'lounds and softs' - the levels of the music.

Granderson stayed with Casablanca until 1986, when, due to the separation in the band and her own thirst for knowledge, she joined Fertrin Pandemonium. "I wanted to get into different musical experiences. Pandemonium had more pop and soca and other upbeat rhythms that I wanted to try.

"I had my first Panorama experience with them, playing Clive Bradley arrangement of 'She Want Meh To Sing In De Party'. I made a lot of friends in that band, a group of respectable down-to-earth people that I really enjoyed working with." But after staying with them for almost two years, Granderson stopped playing for stage-side bands for a while and concentrated on her career.

Unable to resist the pan jumble, she joined up with Amoco Renegades in 1991, playing Tambu's 'Rant and Rave' for Panorama.

"It was the first time I had ever played music and did my part." Having first met Alyson Dyer (Head Honcho in In-Focus) in school, Dyer made her an offer in 1994, but Granderson was unable to use the opportunity until the following year.



KAREN GRANDERSON... looking forward to the hectic Carnival season. Photo by Shirley Bahadur

amazing! There aren't words to describe his music - So I did get the opportunity and enjoyed it to the fullest.

"Each section has a solo to play, and this is where you are required to execute most of your skill. However it's only in the final stages of the practice sessions, when everything meshes and you hear the final product that it hits you - what colossal talent it takes to do such arrangements. I admire the 'guys' in the band and respect the great skill that they possess, pan can be very tiring on your wrists."

Granderson, though still with Renegades, plays with them only for Panorama. When she joined the all-female band, In-Focus, in 1995, they were only a year old and were heading toward their first 'Pan Ramajay'.

"They needed a double second, so I switched from tenor and did my part." Having first met Alyson Dyer (Head Honcho in In-Focus) in school, Dyer made her an offer in 1994, but Granderson was unable to use the opportunity until the following year.

"It's a different kind

of music, a lot simpler and sometimes arrangers try to complicate the songs, when it's much more effective simplified. You see, learning music is all about finding the pattern, and once you find yours - you're okay."

"In-Focus plays mainly for cocktail parties and social gatherings," she continued. "We've recently started hosting a 'Pan Fiesta', that has grown by leaps and bounds including performances by Panazz Players, Renegades, Scrunter's Pan Groove, Laventille Rhythm Section, Skiffle Bunch, Invaders etc. - but I definitely think this year was the biggest."

Does practising for the two bands coincide or intrude on her private time? "Once I decided to dedicate my life to music, there wasn't any time set aside for socialising really, but I enjoy a good party as much as the next girl. And the practices are conveniently scheduled - but because this season is very short, I know it will be exhausting. But inconveniences aside, I'm looking forward to it, like a child to Christmas."