

JOHN BABB

ONE week ago today the panmen — outcast of the 1940s — climbed onto his pedestal of glory where he will reign as the "bossman" until midnight, Carnival Tuesday.

For just over 12 hours last Sunday, he had everyone eating Savannah dust — from upper class to the grassroots.

But they did not seem to mind, for everyone was caught in the magic spell of "sweet pan."

The competition was keen. There were 52 bands, all of which had the same goal — to play themselves into the semi-finalists' row next Friday night.

It was a question of now or never. And this is when the panman excels.

Unfortunately, however, the bands fell short in this year's Panorama preliminaries.

There was some disappointment over the lack of the kind of pan-playing versatility we are accustomed to when it comes to calypso music.

MY CONNIE

The big question was — who to blame? The calypsonians for offering scope for very limited musical arrangements? Or should the blame fall on the arrangers for really not doing their job well?

How we longed for the 'Cobo' Jack, Zephyrine, Pouchet and the Curtis Pierre stylings.

Carib Toyko — Northern winners — which played Sparrow's "My Connie", was the only band that had that particular tune in its full grasp, and did justice to it.

Likewise Catelli All Stars' handling of Kitchener's "Rain-O-Rama." They brought out that Carnival zip in their music, which was lacking for most of the day, and had patrons jumping in true Carnival-style.

Catelli also served notice, too — that Kitch's "Rain-O-Rama" could well surpass any of Sparrow's selections to become the 1973 Road March.

The proliferation of Sparrow's tunes was quite

noticeable on Sunday — Same Time, Same Place; My Connie, Pussy Quarrelling, Mas in May, and Happy Days.

Simple reason for this, was because the "Birdie", businessman that he is, had released his tunes on wax early. Music sheets were also out in good time for panmen to make their pick.

But musically, "Rain-O-Rama" has what the panman looks for in his mas' music — scope for arrangement, and a chorus participation by revellers.

If Catelli's handling of it can be used as a guide, Kitchener is well on the way to grab the Road March title.

REGULATIONS

There is nothing in the rules and regulations that debar a band from playing a different tune to the one it played at the preliminaries.

As a result, quite a few of them are expected to come up with changes next Friday night — that is, if they want to consider themselves high in the running for the coveted title of Panorama champions and a first cash prize of \$2,500.

First and foremost of the recommended changes is CIBC Starlift, which played its leader's own composition — Ray Holman's "Pan on the Run."

Starlift did not click as their many supporters hoped they would have done. Starlift must learn that they start at a disadvantage playing a strange tune.

This has its bad psychological effects. There is a time and place for everything. And this should not be taken as a criticism of



Pan in the 1940s—Tripolians play it like it was.

Holman. He deserves high praise. But I say Festival time — yes; Carnival time — no.

The other band whose reputation is threatened is Solo Harmonites, the 1972 Champions.

Solo's handling of Sparrow's "My Connie" was not a creditable performance

And the judges' comment about limited musical arrangements, must have emanated from Solo's performance. In short, Solo had not collared that tune, as we know they are

capable of doing.

One of the smart ones was WITCO Gay Desperadoes, who, for the first time spared us the ordeal of a mile-long musical introduction.

This, of course, was evidence that they did not have much time for practice.

Despers went straight into the tune — "Rain-O-Rama" — pulling out just more than half their stops — enough to get them into the semi-finals.

But the band which gen-

erated the highest interest and will continue to be the talking point for the season, was Tripolians, who depicted a steelband in the rioting 40s.

They were original. Unlike their sophisticated counterparts, they threw pan-stands to the wind to

hand the instruments where they originally belonged — around the neck — from the tenor right down to "tune boom."

And how the crowd loved it.

As band member Michael Kernahan said: "We did it just for fun."

And that was real fun, for Tripolians — an offshoot of the former Esso Tripoli from St. James — caught the thousands of Savannah patrons by storm, sending them into side-splitting laughter with their "Kaiser Wilhelm" rendition.

The Carnival Development Committee would be well advised to bring in Tripolians as guest performers on Dimanche Gras night.

This would afford patrons — local and foreign — the opportunity to see and hear the steelband in its crude old as well as its new sophisticated form.

Pan enthusiasts can expect much improved performances from each of the

their time — if they wish to come up with a better performance than last Sunday's.

It is the homestretch turn and no band wants to run No. 9, because only the first eight go into the finals.

After Sunday night and the winners have been declared, the art of the panman would come into full bloom for two days.

But take a hint. The best time to hear the panman 'ramajay' is Jour Ouvert.

That is when the pans sound the sweetest; they are irresistible — enough to make you walk 100 miles or jump around and shout "yaaaaaah."

79.4
Sunday Guardian
Feb. 25, 1973