

Recording the Festival

By FRANKLIN AGARRAT

WHEN Multi-Media Ltd took on the project for the recording of *Pan is Beautiful V*, Managing Director Kelvin Scoon first contacted Robin Foster and myself to function as Assistant Engineer and Recording Engineer for the project. We had collaborated before with John Affoon on another successful Multi-Media live recording project — the Stag/Vat 19 25th Anniversary Calypso Contest.

We tried to find a way to record the Festival to get the best possible quality sound recording without in any way disturbing the keen contest within the Festival itself, and to do this at an affordable cost. After a lot of discussion on the merits of analog and digital recording formats, it was finally decided that the recording should be digitally mastered — a relatively new technology that was being used worldwide to produce top quality recording. Naturally, microphones, cables, mixing consoles and monitors to superior quality would have to be sourced for use during the recording.

The equipment was then sourced and priced. Price had by this time become an important factor, as some of the equipment to be used had to be imported from the USA and this meant that duty, in some instances, in excess of 150 per cent would have been incurred. We thought about renting equipment, but large customs bonds proved to be a hurdle.

We eventually selected the following equipment: Two (92) Neuman U27 Microphones (obtained locally, but which had been recently serviced); Two AKG Acoustic C12 Microphones (used, but obtained from a reputable source in the USA) Mogami Quad Star

Microphone Cable; one D.D.A. Series Sound Mixing Console (obtained locally from Rent-Amp Ltd.); and one Digital Recorder; a Sony Stereo R-DAT #2501, which was brought in from the USA. The back up recorder was a DBX 700 digital processor and JVC VHS 2650 VCR both of which are owned by Multi-Media.

We started our test recordings from the first preliminary round. Thanks to TTT we were able to set up our remote station in a TTT mobile van.

In spite of our preliminary selections of microphones, we tested a number of other microphone combinations.

Needless to say, problems were now starting to surface. For instance, one could hear the sound of the wind, as it passed through the Jean Pierre Complex. The normal foam rubber windscreens were inadequate and we constructed our own windscreen, but in such a way that it would not affect the quality of sound coming into the microphone. We did so by using a six inch diameter screen, wire mesh covered with nylon stockings. It proved to be quite effective, and the noise of wind was reduced to well below the noise from the audience.

We still had one other major problem. This was a large standby generator which was being used to supply power to the Complex after the heavy rains had blown out the transformer rooms. To get around this problem, a four-inch diameter armoured cable was installed between the Jean Pierre Complex and the main power supply at the National Stadium, in order to provide the necessary power. Throughout the preliminaries and semi finals we were plagued by extraneous sounds

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Thank you

Our thanks go out to:

- Trinidad and Tobago Television; especially Chief Engineer Dayanand Dhani, Vice La Guerre.
- Margaret Walcott, Manager, Queen's Hall.
- The Government Broadcasting Unit.
- Gold Sounds Ltd; especially Beaver Henderson, John Affoon.
- Kyle Young, Multi-Media Staff.



Frank Agarrat adjusting the stereo microphone pair. Dillon Browne looks on.

Recording equipment

THE recording of Pan is still in a developmental stage because of the relative newness of the instrument.

Here is a list of the equipment used in the recording of Pan is Beautiful V on November 5, 1988.

Microphones: 2 AKG The Tube in Stereo Pattern

2 — Newman U-47 — Condenser

Recorder: Sony DAT — PCM 2 500

Tape: TDK-DA A-120

Mixer: DDA

Cable: Mogami 2534

Digital Mastering: Sony PCM 1630 at the studios of North Eastern Digit Recording Inc.

Massachusetts, USA by Dr Toby Mountain, PhD Music

Mothers and Stampers: Direct Metal Mastering at Europadisk Ltd, New York.

Capturing the true sound of the pan

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especially loud music from the entertainment centres. Thanks to Pan Tringago on the final night we did not have this disturbance.

The positioning of microphones had to be uniform for all the bands: the microphones also had to be put in place quickly and efficiently. The AKG acoustic microphones were placed behind the adjudicators, in line with the conductor. This was as close to the conductor as we could possibly get. This positioning was of prime importance, since the conductor is possibly the only person who hears the orchestra properly, which is necessary since he controls each section. The orchestra does however play for the adjudicators as well, hence the positioning of microphones close to the judges.

In our efforts to get as pure a recording as possible, only one stereo coincident microphone pair was used, and this provided the main recording

source for the Digital two track. The two Neuman U47 microphones were used closer to the back of the orchestra. They were used as "fills", and kept low in volume in comparison to the main (stereo) pair.

As a result of this, no phasing problems were encountered. In switching from mono to stereo, therefore, no loss of frequency response can be noticed. Also, in spite of the fact that a 40hz filter had to be used on the vinyl LP, a full bass sound can still be heard. The compact disc however, will be full range down to 25hz. You will not only be able to feel the vibration of the lower pans, but also the clarity of the higher pans.

You now have therefore, a truly "live" stereo recording of pan, which has been accomplished by making full use of the best that technology currently has to offer, as well as the expertise of all the personnel involved in this project.