

PANORAMA IN THE SOUTH

By SHANE BICKRAM

THE SOUTHERN leg of the Panorama Competition is but days away at Skinner Park in San Fernando, the competition has over the years pulled bands from Central, the San Fernando area itself and the rural surroundings-Fyzabad, Siparia, Princess Town and Pt. Fortin.

Although Panorama is native to Trinidad and Tobago, it is fascinating to note the ways the South Zone Competition differs from the North Zone.

The Southern leg of the Panorama has a glamour of its own, it is held on the intermittently slanting cycle track at Skinner Park, which often gives a spectator a scare as to whether certain ramps would be overturned. It does not have that strong spectator following as the competition held at the Queen's Park Savannah, one does not get the feeling of amicable rivalry but rather it is a straight case of serious musicianship in order to make it to the big yard for the semi-finals.

I would like now to speculate on who are going to make it to the semi-finals, as there is that wealth of talent in South; or rather who will make it to the south zone finals.

Perhaps the best example of an unsponsored band with a cause to keep this artform alive is the Siparia Deltones; this south band has made it to the finals in 80, 82, 83 and 84 at the Queens Park Savannah.

ARRANGER

Adopting Len 'Boogie' Sharpe as its arranger, they have often won the hearts of many pap lovers with their biggest feat coming in 1984 when they ran off with the South Panorama title with their very progressive sound.

I believe their best year was 1983 when they played Kitchener's '200 Years Of Mas'. But the competition is very strong in South this year when one looks at the manner in which the Dunlop Tornados have erupted onto the Panorama scene after some very docile years making it to the National finals for the last two years.

The Tornados has become involved with the politics of Panorama and increased in size, outlook and sound, the band has also adopted an arranger outside the San Fernando area-Jit Samaroo, who gave them a very intense arrangement of Blue Boy's Lucy last year.

One can always reminisce of the storm on the track last year in Skinner Park which brought the crowd onto its feet, when the opening bars were heard of 'Lucy'.

Or is this the year of the Fonclaire Steel Orchestra, this band has often had good years in the competi-

tion but never fortunate enough to win a national title.

They won the southern competition in 1982 and 1983, with arrangers Rudin and Milton Austin; one can only anticipate a soulful arrangement which has become associated with the beautifully tuned pans of the Fonclaire.

Whilst still in the Coffee Street area, one comes to the panyard of the Antillean All Stars, a good band which last made it to the Panorama finals in 1980; this year however seems to be a promising year for them as their arranger is the incomparable Ray Holman who gave Panorama a new twist in the early 1970s.

ROUGH DAYS

The Antillean All Stars band seems to have gone through some rough days but it is always a pleasure to hear them on Jour Ouvert morning in the bomb competition. Only a stone throw away one can find the panyard theatre of the 'Hillside Symphony'.

'Hillside' as they are more popularly called has made it to the South finals on many occasions going on to the semis in 80, 81 and 84; this band is of no more than 75 players but has a very attractive sound and an arranger-Jamille Whiby, who has a lot of ideas and novelties for nostalgia in his arrangements for panorama.

'Hillside' remains one of the more popular bands in San Fernando and one can recall their mind-blowing arrangement of Kitchener's 'More Pan' in 1981 to wish them the best in 1985.

Perhaps the best example of a jinxed San Fernando band is the one time Panorama champs. The Hatters Steel Orchestra of Broadway,

Who will take the crown?

who had the last taste of some success in 1981 making it to the south zone finals and have been out of the limelight.

They went through some hectic changes with sponsors in the 80s and in 1984 gained Ken 'Pro' Philmore as their arrange; a young a dynamic man who I believe will put the Hatters back in winners row.

While still in the Broadway area, the controversial South Stars led by Steve Achaiba would not be on the Panorama stage; this is a band the crowd at Skinner Park will certainly miss!

Moving further down South we find the Panyards of Trintoc Sun Valley, The Silver Harps and The Fyzabad Third World, which are all forces in their own right and have all made it to the big times in the early 80s.

The Sun Valley is a band I particularly favour as they are one of the smaller bands to make it to the big times. A very small band with a big sound. Another small band from

the south which has played its way to my heart is the West Stars Steel Orchestra of Chacon Street.

This band seems to be struggling for survival but has progressed slowly to chromed tenors and elevated bass drums and a sound which left me speechless after hearing their rendition of 'Tourist Elsie'. A great deal of credit must go to the arranger Dave Achong whom I predict will have big years in Panoramias to come if his strength as an arranger continues in this trend.

BOBBY MOHAMMED

Amel Harps of Chaguana's have always greeted me with some disappointment, Panorama does not seem to be their forte especially when one recalls their triumphant rendition in the 1982 Music Festival playing Dvorak's 4th Movement, Symphony no. 9.

From the central dark horse is definitely the Wunpey Joylanders who has won as their arranger the old wizard of pan-Bobby Mohammed, one can only anticipate the return of one of the greatest arrangers the pan world has known with an anxiety only pan lovers can appreciate.

Last but not least one cannot leave out the Starland of Pt Fortin and the Panasonic Connection of Victoria Village San Fernando, the latter appears to be having the struggle of existence despite a charismatic arranger as Edsel McCaskie while the Starland remains a band with a powerful sound.

Will it be a fight between The Fonclaire, The Tornados and the Siparia Deltones? Or will the smaller sized band be given a chance? I hope I don't have to eat my words but I predict big things for The Antillean All Stars! I await this musical battle impatiently.