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# Steel pan scholars stun local tuners

By TERRY JOSEPH

DAY ONE of the First International Conference on the Science and Technology of the Steelpan (ICSTS), left veteran tuners in awe at the body of research work presented by a number of engineering scholars.

Nor was the bewilderment of the pan-tuners limited to the complexity of quadratic equations and principles of physics used to explain what was hitherto seen at street-level as little more than a jealously guarded indigenous art.

Some 100 scholars, tuners, students (from as young as 11 years old), plus a slew of foreigners, including Su Su Mu from Japan, Guyanese, Jamaican, European and North American registrants, remained glued to the podium and overhead projection screen from 9.30 a.m. to sundown yesterday, as presenters detailed their research findings.

There were those at the conference held at Crowne Plaza Hotel in Port of Spain who felt that the language of the conference sailed over the heads of practitioners.

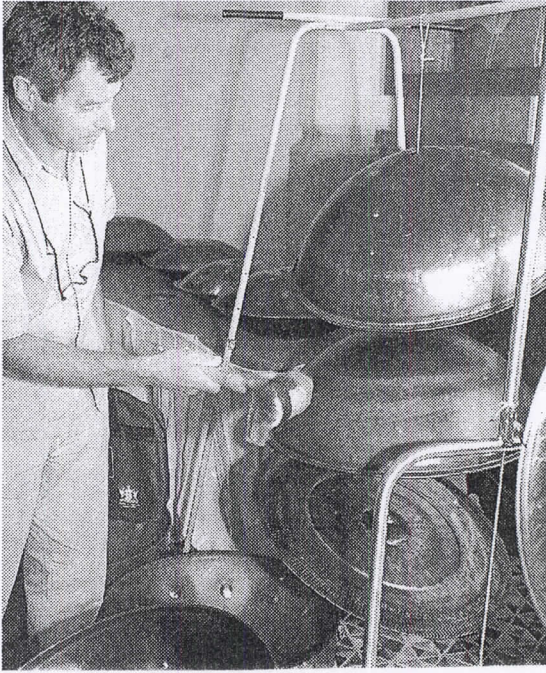
Former Pan Trinbago public relations officer, Selwyn Tarradath, argued that the information would be of little use to locals, as the technology was unavailable here for continuing research initiatives outlined by the visiting scholars.

Fasil Muddeen of the University of the West Indies (UWI), confessed that no anechoic chamber was accessible for his experiments with the tenor pan.

But for the most part, members of the audience agreed that the information disseminated was priceless and that the ICSTS was long overdue.

They found out at first base that the words "steelpan" and steel drum" were not interchangeable. They also discovered that the positioning of a microphone to pick up pan sounds need not be a luck and chance exercise.

Those were the relatively easy lessons. The more intricate examples involved



FELIX ROHNER of Panart in Switzerland demonstrates the new line of pan "Ping Pang Peng" at the first international conference on the Science and Technology of the Steelpan at Crowne Plaza yesterday.

Photo: STEVE MC PHIE

explanations of a conspiracy of forces, linear, quadratic and cubic, which affect the vibrations of notes and descriptions of pictures of holographic interferometry as support visuals for arguments relating to

modal analysis.

Engineers were talking music to pan-nists and tuners, in a language sometimes steeped in trigonometry.

"This may be complex at times, but it was just too historic to

miss," is how cultural researcher John Cupid described the morning session. Fazal "Moosh" Mohammed said he was going back to his school, El Dorado Senior Comprehensive, to press for a closer alliance between the music teachers and the physics lab.

"Clearly, this is what should have been taking place all the while and at least from the high school level," he opined.

The brunt of local research has been going on at UWI, thanks to the determination of Dr Andrew Achong, Dr Derek Gay and others attached to the engineering and natural sciences departments; many of whom pursue their experiments at personal expense.

Mounted by Dr Anthony Achong and professional colleagues at UWI and co-sponsored by the National Institute for Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology (Niherst) and Pan Trinbago, the ISCTS enters its second day today.