

Pan is Beautiful VIII

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All Stars outshines the rest

By KIM JOHNSON

THE victory of Neal and Massy Trinidad All Stars with 541 points in Saturday night's Pan is Beautiful VIII Steelband Festival came as no surprise, insofar as the Duke Street band was far ahead since the preliminary rounds.

All Stars also won best tune of choice with 274 points for their rendition of Wagner's "Overture to Tannhauser". Nelson Villafana conducted them.

Placing second and third were Exodus and the Defence Force Steel Orchestra with 526 and 523 points, respectively. Exodus's calypso, David Rudder's "Bahia Girl", almost had the crowd moving, but it was the army band's performance of Ray Holman's "Pan on the Run" which earned them 270 points and the Best Calypso title.

The show, which began at 7 p.m.,

ended 15 minutes before midnight when the last prizes were given out by Prime Minister Basdeo Panday and the audience was already on their way home wards.

"This is the first time in history of any competition organised by Pan Trinbago that the show is over before 12," said the announcer joyfully. "The should receive a gold medal."

Nevertheless, the final round of the biennial Steelband Festival had opened on an elegiac note. "We can't allow pan to die," said Hubert Alleyne of sponsor Royal Bank, followed by Pat Bishop, in whose honour the Festival was held and who felt obliged to thank the audience for coming out to three-quarter fill the Complex.

"In my day all the seats would have been full," she said. "I'd also like to thank the netballers who never asked

to leave because we have nowhere else to make our music."

Bishop also lamented the need to amplify the pans because it belied the beauty of their sound.

And to maintain a concert-hall atmosphere in the open-air arena, PA announcers repeatedly called on the audience and vendors not to move during performances. "You are disturbing patrons and distracting the players," the announcer cautioned.

However the eight bands that each performed a tune of choice and a calypso were enthusiastically received by the predominantly middle-aged, middle-class audience. In contrast, a near-majority of the pannists, except for those in the Defence Force steelband, were teenaged girls.

Also greatly appreciated were performances by traditional bands winner,

Trinidad Nostalgic, top soloist Brent Holder, calypsonian Mighty Terror, and especially guest artiste Robbie Greenidge, who "test drove" with dizzying speed and grace a pair of double seconds presented to Pat Bishop.

Ironically, the band which finished lowest with 499 points, Courts Laventille Sound

Specialists, was the only one to receive a standing ovation (from the slightly more plebeian East Stand) for their variation of Kitchener's "Pan in Harmony". Uniformed in the brightest of colours to represent various ethnic "cosquelities", Sound Specialists adapted the calypso to include passages with a Middle East flavour, Chinese, African, bossa-nova, Panorama-soca, parang and R&B.

Cary Codrington conducted them with energetic gestures worthy of the best modern choreography, and the announcement of their last place was met with sporadic boos.

The Swiss National Steel Orchestra, although eliminated in the preliminary rounds, made a guest appearance, as a way of thanking Trinidad and Tobago for allowing them to participate in Pan is Beautiful VIII. Appropriately, they played a calypso written by pan veteran Sterling Betancourt in recognition of the appreciation in Switzerland of our national instrument.

Two Swiss flagwomen chipped awkwardly with the Swiss and Trinidad and Tobago flags during the performance, but a cowbell player managed some convincing breakaway gyrations.

Medals of excellence were also given out to Pat Bishop as well as several other individuals and organisations for their contribution to the Festival. These were: Royal Bank, National Gas Company, Colonial Life Insurance Company, Unit Trust, BWIA, the Tourism and Industrial Development Corporation (TIDCO), and TSTT.

Results:

Conventional Bands:
1. Neal & Massy Trinidad All Stars 541 points; 2. Exodus 526; 3. Defence Force 523; 4. Invaders 515; 5. Buccaneers 505; 6. Pan Knights 503; 7. Moods 501; 8. Laventille Sound Specialists 499.

Best Test Piece: Neal & Massy Trinidad All Stars
Best Tune of Choice: Neal & Massy Trinidad All Stars

Best Calypso: Defence Force Steel Orchestra



PAT BISHOP