

The story of St James and the pan

By MICHELE-MILLS

WHAT do St James, the town which never sleeps, and the steelband movement have in common? Quite a lot, according to Norman Darway who has done extensive research on the tremendous contribution of the western suburbs of St James and Woodbrook to the development of the steelpan in Trinidad and Tobago. Darway is well respected for his knowledge on the history of pan. It was this wealth of knowledge that led calypsonian, Eddie Yearwood (sobriquet: D'Guna) to Darway's door when he decided to write and compose a calypso on the role of St James in the story of the pan movement.

Both men are St James born and bred and are eager to set the record straight on the history of the steelband. One of Yearwood's offerings for the calypso season of 2000 attempts to do just that.

Entitled *St James Jam*, it relates the story of the history of pan specifically as it relates to St James and surrounding areas. Both Yearwood and Darway believe that these suburbs have not been

given their rightful place in the halls of steelband history and are seeking to rectify this imbalance in information.

"St James Jam" recalls the names of well known bands of the forties and fifties in and around the area. For example, it hails the efforts of respected pan tuners Birdie and Ellie Mannette. Norman Darway's close association with many steelbands in his native St James led to his knowledge of the fact that the role of the Mannette brothers was pivotal to pan tuning as we know it today.

Darway who now lectures to schools in his hometown on the story of pan, spent his young days in the panyards of such bands as Sun Valley Tripoli, Crossroads, Katz and Jammers and of course, Invaders which was his base for some time. He was also a founding member of Stargazers at Upper Bourne Road, a band which played at private engagements.

Darway's interest in the history of the steelband began during his years as a worker on the port when he and fellow workers would discuss pan. His "quest for the truth" which is how he refers to his research has often led him to Na-



AT LEFT, former panman and researcher, Norman Darway and Eddie Yearwood (displaying his new CD, *St James Jam*) discuss steelbands in their hometown.

tional Archives for the facts. He has also been closely associated with many of the well known figures involved in pan over the years. Darway is a true citizen of St James; besides his love for the steel he has been involved in many important community and sporting activities in his area.

Eddie Yearwood's CD, "St James Jam" owes his extensive

historical content to the research and knowledge of Norman Darway. Yearwood, whose sobriquet D'Guna is a philosophical term meaning: the balance of mind, sees this new composition as part of his continuing protest over the neglect of the steelpan in T&T. He hopes to sing it for the upcoming Carnival season in the North Zone Tent (Classic Russo)

where he has performed for the last three years. This is the first time he has been able to record one of his calypsos. Arrangement on the CD was done by Ken Booker Hutchinson, keyboardist for Blue Ventures.

St James Jam celebrates the many bands of the area. Darway reveals that there were at one time some 22 steelbands in St James and surrounding areas. Yearwood's calypso makes reference to such illustrious names as: Hell's Kitchen; Five Graves to Cairo; Nob Hill; Silver Stars; West Side; North Stars and Blue Stars to name a few. This new recording also refers to the contribution of such great panmen as the Mannette brothers; Sonny Roach; Tony Williams; Victor (Sufferer) Hercules; Daddy Cole and "Mouse" Hope all of whom called these suburbs, home.

Yearwood has also written a social commentary piece on domestic violence for the Carnival season; it is entitled "Leave him out."

Some of his other hits, though not recorded, have been, "No Pan in de party" and "Monica and the big truck."