

THE TEST OF STEEL

11 in battle for Panorama honours

BY PETER BLOOD

ELEVEN steelbands will tonight challenge reigning National Panorama champions, Renegades, in what must be considered the most fiercely contested battle for pan supremacy in the history of this competition.

Starting at odds-on favourites to dethrone Renegades is Desperadoes, who have won the National title in 1966, '70, '76, '77. So far for this year's contest Desperadoes has topped the field in the preliminaries and the semi-finals, but placed second to Catelli All Stars, in the North Zonal Final. Desperadoes, led by Rudolph Charles, will play Clive Bradley's arrangement of Blue Boy's "Rebecca."

The incumbent Renegades have not been on the greens since the preliminaries, two weeks ago, and may be a little cold tonight. This band boasts one of the best arrangers in the land, in the person of Jit Samaroo, as well as being blessed with some of the finest panmen. Taking these two attributes into consideration, plus the fact that they have already been in winner's row, enhances their chances of retaining the title. With their odds set at 9-4 Renegades will play Kitchener's "50 Years of Steel."

PREVIOUS OCCASIONS

Also in at 9-4 odds are Trinidad All Stars, winners of the national title on three previous occasions (1973, '80, '81). These guys from Hell Yard, playing Leon "Smooth" Edwards' arrangement of "Rebecca," have already clinched this year's North Zonal Final, and are confident that they can notch their fourth lien on the national title.

Joining Renegades and All Stars at 9-4 odds is this year's South zonal champs Fonclaire. Fonclaire is the only steelband in the world with the distinction of winning a steelband title on seven occasions. They were Southern champs in 1971, 1973, 1976, 1977, 1980, and last year. With a record as impressive as theirs they must be considered very serious contenders in any competition. Like Desperadoes and All Stars, Fonclaire will play "Rebecca," arranged by Rudin Austin.

In at 3-1 odds is the 1982 Steelband Festival winner,



The ecstatic bassman is from Tornadoes

Casablanca. At the national semis they played an improved "Ash Wednesday Jail," arranged by Anthony Prospect. I can't remember another steelband which has a record of tied places as Casablanca has. They were joint North Zone champs last year, and joint

second place winners in this year's preliminaries and semi-finals. We'll have to wait and see whether Mr. Prospect can pull something out of the hat tonight to help "Blanca" break its partnership syndrome.

This year's East Zone champions, Nutones, seem to be lacking that extra "zing" needed to win at National level. The band's arranger, Desmond Waithe, has done everything possible to make its version of Becket's "Ooh La La," a winner. Some pan aficionados believe, that Nutones problem lies in the paucity of the band's tonal quality and not with its selection. I have given them 8-1 odds at winning.

Tied in at 10-1 odds are the 1977 North Panorama winners, Phase II Pan Groove, Tokyo, and Siparia Deltones. I have found Phase II rendition of Boogie Sharpe's "Pan Rebels," wanting. They need to put some more muscle into their playing if they wish to be taken seriously.

When I heard Tokyo playing Gerald Charles' arrangement of Blue Boy's "Pan In The Air" at Thursday's national semis I was impressed by the vast improvement these guys had made in contrast to their preliminary performance, so much so that I pegged them at second place. Apparently the judges were not as impressed as I was and placed them seventh. I am at a lost to offer a suggestion as to what Gerald can do to make an impression on the judges. I consider them the dark horse in tonight's contest and wish them the best of luck.

BEAUTIFUL ARRANGEMENT

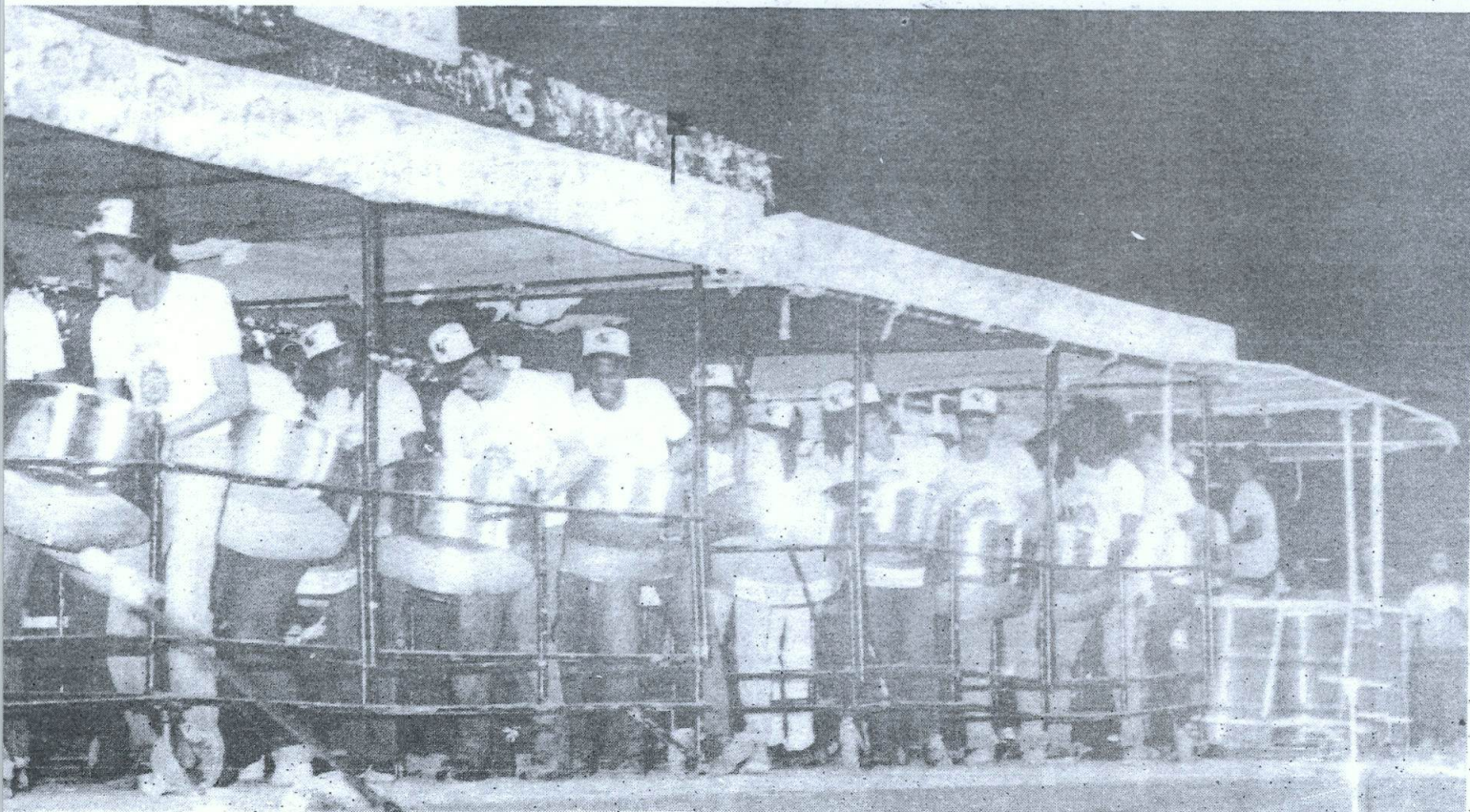
Siparia Deltones have a lot of work to do with its pans' tonal quality should they ever want to make it in the big yard. Boogie Sharpe's beautiful arrangement compliments the band's beautiful selection, Kitchener's "200 Years of Mas."

Harmonites, starting tonight at 15-1 odds, seems to have jumped from the proverbial frying pan into the fire by opting to play Melody's "Musicians" instead of Kitchener's "50 Years of Steel," which they played up to the National Semi-final. Had I been arranger Earl Rodney and wanted to try another tune, I would have selected Squibby's "Masqueraders." Harmonites cannot be easily written off, for they have won the nationals no fewer than four times (1968, 1971, 1972, 1974), and are usually "a horse of a different colour" on final night.

Pamberi and Tornadoes, quoted at 30-1 odds, are the relative novices to this level of competition and only a miracle can see either of them upsetting the veterans in this "A" class race. Tornadoes will play Jit Samaroo's arrangement of "200 Years of Mas" while Pamberi will play Sparrow's "100th Anniversary," arranged by Godwin Bowen.

The draw for positions in tonight's contest was conducted last night and up to Press time was not available.

does



Vat 19, Fonclaire

CHALLENGE FROM THE SOUTH

in's Dunlop Tornadoes also played well included among the 11 steelbands that will OCO Renegades for the national title

also impressed the huge crowd in the North and, with International Trust Nu-Armonites, and Pamberi finding a place alists. Hundreds of fans from South and

East came to see and hear their bands play, but it was only when Desperadoes came on that Pan Trinbago's new crowd control measures broke down. Hundreds of Despers fans stormed onto the stage as the band's chrome, silver and orange pans were wheeled on, and only stern measures on the part of Pan Trinbago officials and the police got them away from the stage area after the band had performed.

The following bands have qualified for the Panorama national finals, and are listed together with the points they were awarded in the semi-final: WITCO Desperadoes 464, Vat 19 Fonclaire and ISCOTT Casablanca 461, Catelli Trinidad All Stars 454 International Trust Nu-Tones 450, Phase 11 Pan-Groove 446, Carib Tokyo 436, Solo Harmonites 435, Siparia Deltones 432, Dunlop Tornadoes 418, and Pamberi 417.