

Pan — the musical instrument of the century



The steelpan the new musical instrument of the century:

BLACK PEOPLE scattered in many parts of the New World have lost much of their traditional culture, but none of their ability to make music.

Isn't it amazing out of the deprivation in the Black Ghettos of the United States was born the music of Black America, life Jazz and the Blues?

Then there is the Samba in Brazil, and the music of Haiti, Afro Cuba — in fact wherever they went, black people have developed their own music.

Here in Trinidad and Tobago too, we have added a new dimension to this Black musicality, and

have created a new musical instrument possibly the only new musical instrument this century — the steelpan.

Africa's descendants in Trinidad beat out their rhythms, first on the bamboo creating the 'Tamboo Bamboo', and then a few inspired men resorted to the biscuit tin or any other available pan.

In fact many an angry housewife awoke on Carnival Day to discover the loss of her dustbin — all in the cause of creativity.

Undoubtedly these proto-panmen have been pardoned if only by the mellowing effects of time and the national and international acceptance of pan.

The first pan, aptly called the (Melody Pan) lacked musical sophistication — it was a simple eight note pan.

Today we have many more pans with diverse ranges, for example, the Tenor Pan, Double Tenor, Guitar Pan, Six Bass, Eight Bass, Seconds and Rocket.

These are all now combined into huge steelband orchestras which have passed the acid test of acceptability as musical instruments by their capacity to play Classical Music.

A further indication of this acceptance is the fact that music is now being composed for the steelpan as an instrument and for the steelband orchestras.

Today pan also finds itself alongside other instruments in so called Brass bands, for the first time in this year's Brassorama, Steelpans are now manufactured in factories even while the debate about a standard pan continues.

Pan, the early means of creative expression by the dispossessed, has come a long way from the discarded dustbin to an internationally accepted instrument holding its own anywhere in the world.

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TOGETHERNESS
IS THE ANSWER**