

Solo: We'd have beaten Guinness too

"MY only regret now is that Guinness Cavaliers did not defend their Panorama title at the Queen's Park Savannah on Sunday night."

This is the only flicker of dimness in the otherwise highly illuminated mind of Winston Flemming - captain of the 1968 pan champions Solo Harmonites Steel Orchestra.

And now, after beating their way past the other six finalists Flemming can only say: "But Cavaliers or not I still think we would have won."

Flemmings, 23, remembers the days when as the original Harmonites Steel Orchestra - 15 men and 40 steel drums - they started playing dance music "the way the people liked it."

UNIQUE

"And now, thanks mainly to our sponsors, we now have about 320 pans, and about 150 men on the road.

Falling by the wayside were top names in the steelband world - WITCO Gay Desperadoes, Angostura Starlift, Shell Invaders Texaco Dixieland, Sandbach Syncopators to mention a few.

Five years ago, the Harmonites were formed with Flemming as leader, and even through sponsorship by Joseph Charles Bottling Works (Solo), he has remained at the helm.

Since January 2 this year, residents of South Caledonia have had to "put up" with the unique sound of our new pan champions.

TASK

Together with arranger Earl Rodney and tuner Allan Xavier, Flemming got down to the serious task of producing a task force to overcome the threat of rival panmen.

"We have been practising every night since then," he said drowsily - not having slept for three nights in a row, and the boys have stood up to it well - and look at the results."

So now Solo have succeeded after two failures - making the final in 1966, repeating the feat in '67 to take the "Is Paris Burning" Contest, third in the "Bomb" competition with "Mozart's 29th Symphony", third in the "Best Dressed", and fourth in the "People's Choice".

"Well this year we picked a 'strange' tune - another Kitchener tune, but not the 'Miss Tourist' that everyone was talking about."

HECTIC

Tonality has always been a virtue of Solo Harmonites, and the roofing over their pans has seemed to give their tunes more life.

In all their selections, bass has always been outstanding and this was a great asset to them when they "Wrecked" the Savannah on Sunday night. Now finding it almost

falling asleep on his feet

- "It's been a hectic last three weeks for me" - Flemming was just alert enough to give me the name of some of the men responsible for the band's success.

"Our kind sponsors must undoubtedly take most of the credit, Manager Vincent Yip Young, our arranger, tuner, Fitzroy McMillan, and Gary Harris."

Today, Solo Harmonites will hit the town 2,000-plus strong with their presentation "Invasion of France."



The triumphant four who helped to make Solo Harmonites the winning band. (L to r): Winston Flemming, captain; George Phillip, flag-waver; Vernon Charles sponsor, and Vincent Phillip Yip Young, manager.



Tokyo win the 'Bomb Trophy'

CARIB Tokyo Steel Orchestra are winners of the Citibank "Bomb Trophy" this year

The Laventille pan side played as their "Bomb" Jan Sibelius' "Finlandia".

Their rendition was musically close to perfection and they were easy winners over two-time "Bomb" champions, For-syth Hilanders, who were second.

Hilanders chose a movement from Mozart's "Eine Kline Nacht Musak" for their "Bomb".

Paramount Renegades edged out Esso Tripoli and Chase Manhattan Savoy's for third place.

Renegades scored with revellers and the crowds, with an up-tempo arrangement of "My Heart and I".

The "Bomb" contest was once again a dud.

at Independence Square, less than twenty appeared.

The competing steelbands alternated with bands appearing out of competition, improvised cocophonic aggregations and various ole 'mas' bands and stragglers. Many of the more prominent steelbands failed to make it to the stage in time.

Solo Harmonites, winners of "Panorama", met an empty stand when they got on stage. The competition had been declared closed when the mammoth "America" ole mas' band went off. At that time Solo Harmonites were next in line and just off-stage.

FORMAT

So this year's champion Steelband did not get a chance to explode their "Bomb".

Nor did West Indian Tobacco Gay Desperadoes, who were immediately behind Harmonites. If the "Bomb" contest is to continue, another format will have

realistic to attempt such an exercise during the Jour Ouvert period. The position therefore is that Tokyo are champs among only one quarter of the bands who had prepared Bombs but were excluded from a chance to set them off.

Let's not ban the bomb but we must find some means of controlling the thing.

The tunes in the "Bomb" competition provide the only respite from the current Road March contenders.

The top calypsoes are usually heard all during the season and are played all during the two days of Carnival. They must necessarily become repetitious.

The "Bomb" classic is a welcome departure and

gives the tourist his only exposure to a familiar melody on the pans. Perhaps the "Bomb" can be a part of the overall Carnival programme at the CDC Carnival centres.

Yesterday's happenings must mark the last of the fizzing "Bombs".

Picture above shows Tokyo beating out "Finlandia".