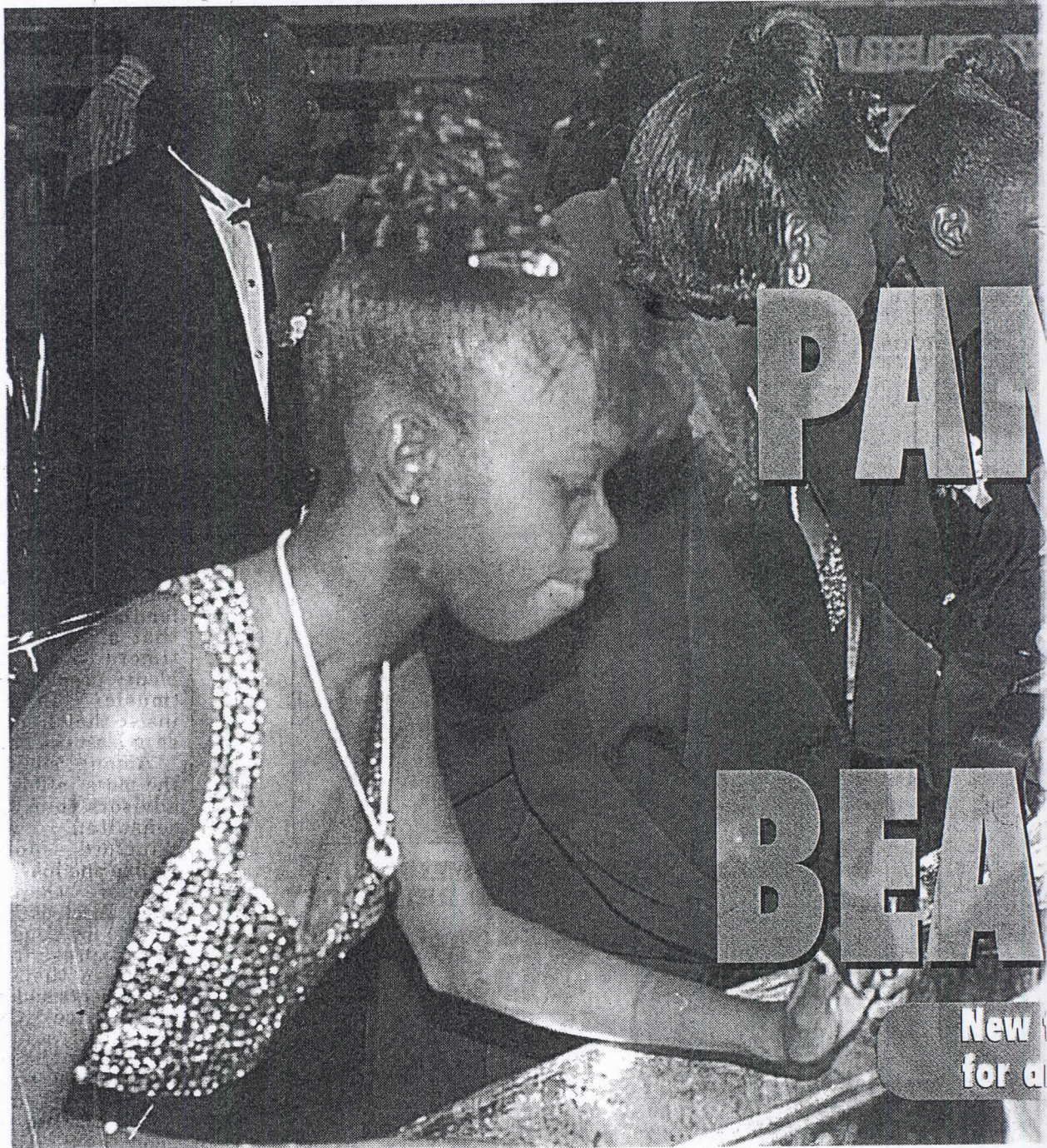


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By FRANKA PHILIP
 Features Desk

ALL OVER the country, pan yards have been busy as bands prepare for the 1998 Pan is Beautiful Steelband Music Festival which begins tonight at the Hotel Normandie.

One major feature of the festival is the new format which decentralises the preliminary round instead of bringing all bands to the Jean Pierre Complex from the first phase. The prelims will now take place at four venues—Hotel Normandie, St Ann's; Shaw Park, Tobago; Naparima Bowl, San Fernando and the Centre of Excellence, Macoya.

This plan has been on the drawing board since earlier this year, and if the increase in the number of entrants is any gauge, Pan Trinbago is already seeing some success

from the change.

Instead of the two regular categories—soloist and orchestra—there are now six categories, soloist, duet, quartet, ensemble, single pan band and orchestra.

In an interview with the *Express*, Pan Trinbago president Patrick Arnold said this change will now make it possible for the smaller ensembles and ramajay-type groups to be a part of the festival.

"We are committed to bringing pan to the people as far as possible," Arnold said.

Another major change in the festival's format, is the absence of a test piece. The bands will perform one tune by a Caribbean composer and a contrasting piece. This change is a plus for the pan lovers who will hear more variety in the music as some bands have opted to perform pieces by musicians like Andre Tanker.



PATRICK ARNOLD
 Pan Trinbago President
 ...wider participation in
 the event this year.

Nineteen conventional bands will challenge reigning champions Neal and Massy

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New format, increase in bands to make for an exciting Pan is Beautiful festival

the change. Instead of the two regular categories—soloist and orchestra—there are now six categories, soloist, duet, set, ensemble, single pan and orchestra. In an interview with the press, Pan Trinidad president Patrick Arnold said this change will now make it possible for the smaller ensemble and ramajay-type bands to be a part of the festival.

"We are committed to bringing pan to the people as much as possible," Arnold said. Another major change in the festival's format, is the inclusion of a test piece. The bands will perform one tune. Caribbean composer [Name] a contrasting piece. This change is a plus for the pan players who will hear more variety in the music as some bands have opted to perform pieces by musicians like [Name] Tanker.

PAN FESTIVAL champs Neal and Massy Trinidad All Stars during their winning performance at the '96 event. *Photo: KENROY AMBRIS*



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All Stars. All Stars, who won the last two festivals, is going all out to complete the hattrick and equal the record set by Witco Desperadoes. This task should be somewhat easier for All Stars, as Desperadoes will not be competing this year.

Also among those bands not competing are Amoco Renegades and Phase II Pan Groove. Some of the bands who will be competing are this year's Panorama champions Nu Tones, Invaders, White Oak Harmonites, Courts Laventille Sound Specialists and Solo Pan Knights.

This year's event is also being seen as a preliminary activity to the World Steelband Festival scheduled for the year 2000.

"Our feedback from the

various countries where steelband music is popular has been encouraging," Arnold said.

"Many of them, in particular the United States, are planning to run off their preliminaries over the next two years, so that their entrants can be determined well in advance of the World Festival."

The format for the World Steelband Festival 2000 has not yet been finalised, but Arnold indicated that bands in foreign countries may be allowed to send music videos of their performances for adjudication in the early rounds.

This year's Steelband Music Festival will run for the following three weekends until the night of the finals on October 25.