

# OUR OPINION

## The end and a new beginning

THE INAUGURAL World Steelband Festival reaches its grand finale tonight and even before the overall winners are announced we extend congratulations to the bands which made it to the finals as well as all who participated in this historic event.

It is true that only two foreign bands took part, Femenino de Venezuela and Guyana's BIDCO Invaders, but they gave the competition a new dimension and set the competition on a course that is bound to draw wider foreign participation in the years ahead.

As it is, BIDCO Invaders managed to reach the semi-final stage of the competition, an indication that "pan" continues to rise not only in Trinidad and Tobago, the land of its birth, but also in the wider Caribbean region.

In fact, the names chosen by Caribbean bands reflect the Trinidad and Tobago influence—most of them take their names from existing Trinidad steelbands in much the same way that football teams here name themselves after Brazilian and British soccer teams.

The wider steelband world will eventually come knocking at the Festival door although the problem of transporting large numbers of players and instruments from Europe and North America will continue to pose problems in the short-term.

It is a pity that the standardisation of pan is not yet a reality. Had that been the case, it would have been a relatively simple matter for the players to come and play instruments so readily available here. For one thing, transportation costs would be considerably lower and, for another, foreign bands would be guaranteed properly-tuned

pan, a major weakness of the two foreign bands that played in *Pan is Beautiful V* and perhaps the one area with which the international pan movement still has to come to terms.

Indeed, there may be a message here for the government and Pan Trinbago. Quite understandably, our marketing has tended to focus on parading our players in the countries of the world but there is a case for marketing the tuning technicians who have brought the tonal quality of the instrument to the level it is today.

The old fear that in so doing we expose unique secrets is quite groundless. Once you open your steelband competitions to the world you invite their participation in all elements of the art. Moreover, some of our leading tuners already either reside abroad or go abroad frequently, making at least a part of their livelihood in different countries, so the steelband cat has long been let out of the Trinidad bag. No matter. If Trinidad and Tobago is to be the springboard of the international development of steelband, it cannot be afraid to send its people out to spread the technique.

Tonight, the 1990 Festival will be launched, and by February next year the test piece will be available. This means that foreign competitors, as well as our own bands, will have access to it much earlier than in the past. We suggest, as well, that Pan Trinbago should enlist the help of our various embassies and high commissions to draw up a complete list of every single steelband in the world.

It is high time we know the full extent of the steelband movement and, indeed, where future competition is likely to come from.



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