

PLAYERS SYMPHONY THE UNKNOWN BAND TO WATCH

PLAYERS SYMPHONY, a relatively unknown band from Belmont, is making a strong bid for Panorama '84. Not that the band has illusions about winning the contest, but according to captain Neale Greaves the ensemble is getting better than ever.

Rejuvenated more than five years ago, Players Symphony has been going through a series of trials and changes. It started off as Amboys and was once known as Textel Amboys, but that sponsorship soon ceased. Since 1979 the band has been struggling on its own totally dependent on the mercy of well-wishers.

Players Symphony pan yard is on Belmont Valley Road but because of the inaccessibility of this location the band has been forced to make a yearly "pilgrimage" to the St. Francis Church yard on Belmont Circular Road, reassemble their pans to prepare for Panorama, and then return to their base after the Carnival season. This has been the routine for the past three years, according to Greaves.

To add to the dilemma, no trucks can reach the pan yard easily, so the players have to carry their instruments and stands uphill and downhill.

However the members' fighting spirit have seen them through five Panoramas and this year they certainly think that their chances are musically good.

Under the hands of new arranger Brian "Bean" Griffith, the band has been transformed to a unit resembling its name. So much so that people of Belmont, whose sympathy

By EXPRESS REPORTER

was never with the players, are now taking the band seriously and complimenting members on their progress.

For Griffith, a panman of 20 years, it is his first effort at arranging music for a major competition.

"I did a little arranging for Phase II Pan Groove of which I have had close ties for the last 10 years, but I always wanted to do my own thing," he said.

"I was delighted when Greaves asked me to arrange for the band, it was the start of a lifelong dream come true."

The band's choice for panorama is Kitchener's "Soca Corruption."

Griffith describes the response from band members as "very encouraging" and public feedback is very good.

"It is a small band with a big sound," he says about the 40-member Symphony, "and I would like to see it grow into a big band with a sponsor who could help the band to achieve its goal."

Naturally Griffith says his musical styling has been influenced by master pannist Len "Boogsie" Sharpe. He also credits Carl Newallo, former keyboardist of Kalyan as his "source of inspiration as well as (his) tutor."

Griffith feels that the musical competence of the band will soon be established and sees this as one way that the band will win back a lot of panmen in the area who have gone on to the bigger bands.

Band Captain Greaves has seen new hope in Griffith and echoes his feelings on the band's accomplishments.

"Musically the band is fit," Greaves said, "we are ready for '84 and I feel we have a good chance to conquer the big stage."

The pans are tuned by Norman James of

"Nu Tones" fame.

In spite of the poor placings his band has made in past Panoramas, Greaves' spirit remains undaunted. He said the band's real interest in the Panorama competition is "getting home after Carnival."

To explain his point Greaves said that the band's panyard was moved from a convenient location on the Belmont Circular Road to give way to a school, (Belmont Junior Secondary) and has been stashed away on an incline almost atop the Lady Young Road but

accessible only through the Belmont Valley Road.

"What I really want," said Greaves, "is for the band to roll home after Panorama. It is very frustrating, the amount of instruments being lost and damaged every year after performing."

"Since 1975," he said, "the pan shed is 'still finishing' and we have no lights or water."

Greaves said he even appealed to Minister of National Security and representative for the area John Donaldson for help, and he has promised to look into the matter



ABOVE left, Neale Greaves, captain of Players Symphony and band member