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Pan is not in danger

By WILLIAM DOYLE-MARSHALL

"IT'S really a nice feeling which I obviously enjoy quietly, but every-time this happens, I realise that it is so possible that it would become an international success and I sometimes think of the things that would come with that," says Leroy Williams.

The Trinidad-born manufacturer of steelband instruments is the proud inventor of a tuned cymbal for music bands already being used by musicians in the United States of America and Japan.

Williams returned to Trinidad earlier this year and took the opportunity to present the instruments to veteran drummer Anthony Tobas. He describes the cymbals as a perfectly tuned instrument which has "octaves and orderly harmonics, all fifth or fourths or thirds."

As one who makes his livelihood manufacturing instruments for steelbands around Ft. Lauderdale, Williams says his new instrument does not really tax him physically.

Really Very Easy

"There is not very much sinking. There are only 12 notes and because of the quality that I have to get, it's really very easy. I could knock off a lot of these in one day as opposed to a regular steeldrum which takes me a week or two weeks," Williams explains.

In Miami, Leroy Williams, formerly of Laventille, works with the Board of Education and many solo musicians in the area. He has been there since 1968 and returns home every six years.

Acknowledging the opportunities to make "a lot of money" in Trinidad and Tobago, Williams is not motivated by that thought.

"It doesn't seem to be the thing

It's alive and well says Miami-based Leroy Williams

that I wanted to do because outside I've been getting into people who are newcomers to steelband, who were not even musicians but who had a great interest," he says.

For the soft-spoken inventor, working with Americans is an opportunity to "welcome new blood" into the steelband movement.

John Buzzet, a real estate broker, and several other Americans have been assisting Williams with his work. Buzzet, for instance, bought six 65 gallon drums for him. Because of the close association, Buzzet knew Williams had been searching for these units for quite sometime.

Cause For Concern

Expressing his gratitude — a scarce commodity in this jet-age of modern science and technology — Williams admits, "I put great value on that little contribution."

The talk which was once popular in Trinidad and Tobago about steelband being a danger of extinction has given Williams cause for concern. He believes his colleagues at home are misunderstanding the actions of people like himself who live abroad.

With the production of instruments and spreading the art around the world by individuals like Ellie

Manette, Earl La Pierre, Hugh Borde, Pepe Francis and himself, Williams is aware that progress is not always visible.

He regrets the misrepresentation of steelbandmen's work in foreign countries by people at home. Williams says it is the result of a parochial view by some Pan Trinbago officials.

When steelband instruments are truly accepted internationally, Williams say, "we are going to be gaining a whole lot of friends. Trinidad and Tobago will then be a place that people would be focussing on because this is where it's really flourishing."

However, his experience with last Carnival's steelband activities proves that the movement is far from being in danger.