

Phase Two fails to make hat-trick

BY PETER RAY BLOOD

SOMEBODY doused the *Fire Down Below* at last Saturday's National Panorama Final. That "somebody" was Amoco Renegades.

The eagerly expected "pan shoot-out" between defending champions and 1989 North Zone winner Phase II Pan Groove and 1989 South/Central Zone victor Vat 19 Fonclaire was defused by Renegades playing Jit Samaroo's arrangement of Baron's *Somebody*.

At the end of the evening (make that morning), the judges were unable to separate Phase II and Fonclaire; awarded both bands 461 points and made them joint second place winner.

While Len "Boogie" Sharpe, in search of Panorama's first hat-trick, failed to achieve this elusive feat, his arch-rival (Ken "Professor" Philmore) accomplished some degree of satisfaction when his arrangement of *Somebody* won Hoytonians the Old Time Steelband championship. In this category, Sharpe had to settle for fourth place with his arrangement of *Fire Down Below* for TCL Skiffle Bunch.

In true-to-form fashion, the grand final started late. Scheduled to begin at 7 p.m., proceedings never got underway until some 40 minutes later.

Opening the night's proceedings was the final of the Old Time Steelband category. Seven bands participated in this category and all performances were of a high quality.

Skiffle Bunch evoked some degree of nostalgia when its players performed wearing white masks, very much in the fashion of Carnival of yesteryear. The performance of Hi-Larks also served to excite the audience when, within Oscar Williams' arrangement of *Innocent Jimmy*, there were insertions of the hymns *What a Friend we Have in Jesus* and *Amazing Grace*.

Having parted ways with Trinidad All Stars, and having not been selected to arrange for Solo Harmonites, Leon "Smooth" Edwards salvaged some dignity when his arrangement of Swallow's *Fire in the Backseat* earned Trinidad Nostalgic the third placing among the pan-round-neck bands.

The Old Time Steelband category ended at 9.25 p.m. and a 15-minute intermission was called. The show resumed at 9.57 p.m. with Pandemonium playing Clive Bradley's arrangement of *Somebody*.

After three rounds of competition, Pandemonium was finally given what I felt was the right count for its performance. Although the wind blowing through the sensitive microphones on stage made a harsh and discordant sound through the sound system, which must have been a distracting factor for both band and judges, the Belmont rose above this irritation and established a high standard for its rivals to follow. The Pandemonium selection was 51 seconds short of the allotted performance time of 10 minutes.

The most improved band between the semi-final and final was Pamberi, with the San Juan band adding 30.5 points to its semi-final score. Playing Godwin Bowen's arrangement of Denise Phillips' *Posse*, the

band maintained the power and impact of its previous performances. Pamberi's performance comprised all of the exciting elements and dynamics one associates with a successful Panorama rendition.

From its first note, Vat 19 Fonclaire excited the audience. Philmore's arrangement of *Fire Down Below* was a beautiful one, with every section of the orchestra fully utilised.

Carib, the sponsor of Tokyo, obviously spent a tidy sum of money on the band this year. While setting up, masked skaters with yellow and blue boards spelling out C.A.R.I.B.—T.O.K.Y.O. went through a routine. Suzanne Wallace-Romeo, who recorded the band's selection — *Carnival is fuu Woman* — was the band's flag woman, and was accompanied by six lovely additional flag women. Tokyo had a beautiful, full-bodied sound and excellent balance. While their's was a neat, tidy performance in which I could find no fault, in contrast, it lacked the combusive quality of Fonclaire's performance that preceded it. Tokyo also played for 92 extra seconds.

Also extending its allotted 10 minutes of performance, by some 87 seconds, was Solo Harmonites. Earl Rodney gave *Somebody* a very musical arrangement. However, the tenors were too prominent, perhaps to the detriment of the lower instruments in the orchestra.

Even before a note was struck, Amoco Renegades had the audience on its side. Once more, the zouk and samba features



AMOCO RENEGADES as they performed Saturday night. Photo: OSSIE CORDNER

lifted what was an exhilarating performance overall. Arranger Jit Samaroo also introduced some unique phrasing for the two last lines of the song's chorus which proved to be quite dynamic and effective.

There was lots of fire in Potential Symphony's performance of Sharpe's arrangement of Crazy's *Nani Wine*. While there was an assortment of distractions, ranging from Crazy (in person) and costumed mascots to the effigy of an old East Indian woman, Potential kept the audience at a peak of excitement throughout. Unfortunately, there was a lack of cohesion as far as holding the various parts of the arrangement together was concerned.

The oldest band in the final, Trintoc Invaders was sweet, accurate and enticing with its performance of Wallace-Romeo's *Life's too Short*. Holman's arrangement of this piece never strayed from the original melodic line and the rendition was free of any encumbrances of gimmicks or special effects. I thoroughly enjoyed this band's music.

As proven so many times before, WITCO

Desperadoes showed that it is perhaps the most resilient and formidable steel orchestras in the Panorama business. Scraping into the semi-final, the band rose from strength to strength as the competition progressed. Robert Greenidge's arrangement of *Somebody* will serve to place him among the best in this area. Desperadoes had excellent tone, balance and co-ordination.

The little band with the big sound in the final, Panasonic Connection made its presence felt with a delightful performance of Philmore's arrangement of Denyse Plummer's *The Champ*. For an orchestra with just 74 players, the band managed to produce a clean, full-bodied sound. I found the Connection's arrangement to be one of the sweetest and most compelling for the evening but, as with Pandemonium, the strong wind wrecked havoc with the performance. The band also presented just 8-minutes, 55-seconds of music of its 10 minutes.

Playing Samaroo's arrangement of *Toronto*, Sangre Grande Cordettes seemed overwhelmed by the occasion and failed to give a final night performance.

Excitement was at its highest when Boogie Sharpe led Phase II Pan Groove on stage at 3.15 a.m. With hundreds impeding the expedient setting up of the instruments, multi-coloured flares, fireworks and sparklers were propelled from amongst the pan racks. Ann Marie Inniss was all smiles as she stood proudly among the tenor musicians on the tallest rack and it took all of 25 minutes before Phase II was able to begin its performance.

With good balance, interpretation, phrasing and a steady tempo, Phase II gave a sizzling and awesome performance, but the steady drizzle which fell throughout the performance seemed to dampen the judges opinion of *Fire Down Below*.

Almost all of the night's participants performed as though their only objective was to deny Sharpe and Phase II the opportunity of creating Panorama history by achieving the hat-trick. But, only one band was successful in this quest. When house announcer Tony Williams revealed the results at 4.15 a.m., they revealed that Sharpe and Phase II failed in their bid for glory and Samaroo and Renegades had achieved their fourth national Panorama title.

Saturday's results are:

OLD TIME STEELBAND FINAL:

1. Hoytonians—270
2. Pan Jammers—262.5
3. Trinidad Nostalgic—260.5
4. TCL Skiffle Bunch—256
5. Chord Masters—247
6. Scrunters Pan Groove—239
7. Hi-Larks—237.

CONVENTIONAL ORCHESTRAS:

1. Amoco Renegades —464
2. Vat 19 Fonclaire —461
- Phase II Pan Groove —461
4. WITCO Desperadoes — 458
5. Pamberi — 454
6. Fertrin Pandemonium — 447
7. Carib Tokyo — 444
- Trintoc Invaders — 444
9. Panasonic Connection — 438
10. Solo Harmonites —435
11. Potential Symphony — 433.5
12. Sangre Grande Cordettes — 431.