



PEPE FRANCIS, leader of England's Ebony Steel Orchestra, holds the plaque his band received for its victory at last weekend's European Pan Festival, an event that doubled as the qualifying round for bands

from that region. Twelve bands performed for the judges in a bid to earn places in the World Steelband Music Festival, which takes place in Trinidad from October 12 to 21.

Europeans flock to Paris pan festival

By **TERRY JOSEPH**
who was in France for the event

MORE than 15,000 persons from the host country and neighbouring nations on the European continent converged on Paris, France last weekend to witness the region's first pan festival.

The two-day event, which doubled as that region's qualifying round for next October's World Steelband Music Festival, took place on the grounds of the 140-acre Parc de la Villette, situated in the middle of Paris.

Billed as Le Premier Festival European du Steelpan and organised by Pan European, the event comprised a seven-hour concert on Saturday, performed sequentially by all but one of the orchestras who swung into the competitive mode on the following day.

Beginning shortly before noon Sunday, each of the 12 steelbands selected from countries across Europe put in its best effort at securing one of three positions set aside for the region, in the final round of the World Steelband Music Festival. The finals will be held from October 12 to 21 at the Jean Pierre Complex in Port of Spain.

At the end of the evening, three international judges, including Trinidad's Dr Ann Marion Osbourne, declared Britain's Ebony Steelband the overall winner for its rendition of David Rudder's "High Mas" and Franz von Suppe's "Morning, Noon and Night in Vienna". Switzerland's Panch 2000 got the nod in the Tune of Choice category for its rendition of another von Suppe work, "Poet and Peasant".

Steel Pan Lovers, a 55-member band from Finland, exclusively comprising blonde-haired, blue eyed, white people, stunned the crowd with its presentation of Jean Sibelius's "Finlandia";

RESULTS

1. Britain's Ebony Steelband (545 points)
2. France's Calypsoassociation (532)
3. Finland's Steel Pan Lovers (531)
4. Switzerland's Panch 2000 (523)
5. Britain's Eclipse Steel Orchestra (499)
6. France's Pan Am Atlantic (472)
7. Switzerland's 21st Century Steel (441)
8. France's Steelband de Montagnac (437)
9. Britain's Southside Harmonics (436)
10. Denmark's All Stars (421)
2. Britain's Mangrove Steelband (417)
3. Germany's Pan Kultur (382)

was arranged and conducted by Ari Vitonen. Also playing Vitonen's arrangement of Kitchener's "Pan in A Minor", the band secured third place in the overall contest, earning it a space at the October finals.

France's Calypsoassociation (pronounced *Calypso-ah-see-ah-cyon*), one of three steelbands that represented the host country, came in second overall for its performance of "Pan Y Problem", a calypso by Frenchman Mathieu Borgne and their classical interpretation of Johan Sebastian Bach's "Contra-ponnctus 5 BMV 1080", the band's tune of choice.

Sunday's contest took some eight hours (there were 45-minute breaks for lunch and tea), at the end of which the names of the three winning bands were announced. Arrangers and captains of the successful groups were hoisted shoulder-high by supporters, as celebrations began and congratulations poured from members of other orchestras and officials of the European pan fraternity.

The results were well received. Apart from Dr Osbourne, England's Dr Richard Murphy and Dr Eugene Novotney from the US comprised the panel of adjudicators, all of whom were equally high in praise for the standard of performances by the bands. All three have prior experience in the adjudication of pan festivals held in Trinidad.

Co-ordination of the scores was done by Alvin Daniell, pres-

ident of the World Steelband Festival Committee who, along with former Pan Trinbago president (and festival committee member) Arnim Smith acted as observers of the European qualifier.

Early morning rain and foreboding skies forced a slight delay to the start of Sunday's contest, but the outdoor event proceeded smoothly through the afternoon, coming to an end at about 8.30 p.m. The sunshine that blessed the performance period of Sunday's event did little to alleviate a lingering chill in the air, which required members of the audience to wear sweaters or light coats.

But the thousands who came never left the space in front of Le Grand Halle (the Grand Hall) for the duration of the event, staying put even through two short periods of light afternoon drizzle that came conveniently during the breaks. And quite unlike the staid behaviour of audiences at pan festivals held here, the Europeans waved large flags and cheered along their favourite performances, sometimes sustaining applause for several minutes after the end of preferred pieces.

Media from all across the continent and two journalists from the US covered the event. Highlights of the Saturday concert were aired on the very night by French television to stations to sets across Europe and in places as far afield as Martinique and Guadeloupe in the west and Tahiti in the South Pacific. The *Express* was the only media house from this country present at the festival.

In the audience on both days were several *Trinidadians* resident in the region and some, like Gascon Maloney, who flew to Paris from the Cayman Islands for the festival.

T&T Charge d'Affaires at the Brussels embassy, Susan Gordon also stayed through the two days of pan and at the end of Sunday's night's contest, hosted a reception on site for the media, officials of Pan European, special guests and pannists.