

ML1040

Local News

Pan Festival was not so beautiful

By TERRY JOSEPH

N&M Trinidad All Stars changes its tune

IN A COMPLETE turnaround from the position adopted by the band just three months ago, the Neal & Massy Trinidad All Stars Steel Orchestra last week slammed the national executive of Pan Trinbago, for what it called "Making a mockery of this year's Steelband Music Festival."

In a swift response to an *Express* article ("Pan Trinbago Faces Revolt") published on August 5, which told of a clandestine meeting between representatives of bands who feared for the outcome of the festival; the Neal & Massy Trinidad All Stars publicly distanced itself from the anxieties expressed by the group.

But at a news conference held on Wednesday last at the band's Duke Street panyard, All Stars captain Beresford Hunte expressed a radically different view. He admitted, however, that his con-

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The Neal & Massy Trinidad All Stars has been in the finals of all festivals, since the inception of the competition in 1980. As outright winners in both 1994 and 1996, the band was on a hat-trick, but was uncharacteristically eliminated at the preliminary stage of this year's *Pan is Beautiful IX*.

Asked to explain the surprise omission, Hunte said the band's performance may have been adversely affected by circumstances not under its control

called the news conference not to complain about being left out, but to bring to the attention of the public, the way in which Pan Trinbago handled the festival. Remember, these are the same people who are talking about staging a World Steelband Festival as

part of the millennium celebrations in the year 2000, so we think this matter is something for the country to be concerned about."

But Pan Trinbago is suggesting that the All Stars band is simply peevish, having been knocked out of

the finals of the competition.

President Patrick Arnold says the band is only raising these issues after they failed to get past the preliminary round. "They should have concentrated on their performance instead," he said.



THE Neal & Massy Trinidad All Stars

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But at a news conference held on Wednesday last at the band's Duke Street panyard, All Stars captain Beresford Hunte expressed a radically different view. He admitted, however, that his confidence had been reduced since the launch of the festival on September 3, when Pan Trinbago officials appeared unable to answer simple questions about the prizes or the festival budget.

Hunte said: "As the festival got under way, the whole system virtually collapsed and in the final analysis Pan Trinbago has disrespected, insulted and scandalised not only pan players, but the people of Trinidad and Tobago by the manner in which it conducted itself in the administration of the festival."

Calling on Pan Trinbago "to get its act together", Hunte cited several inconsistencies in the administration of the festival, which was scheduled to conclude last night at the Jean Pierre Complex in Port of Spain. "All along the way, Pan Trinbago condoned serious violations of the competition rules, reducing the festival to a mockery and a farce," Hunte said.

"Bands had sought and obtained private agreements to play well over the stipulated time, while we were wrestling with our selection to stay inside the limit,"

Hunte said. He also listed groups that won certain categories, although flagrantly breaking the relevant rules and he lamented the general standard of the music selected by bands, saying that if simple pieces were to be allowed, then points should be awarded for degree of difficulty to those who attempted more intricate works.

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Asked to explain the surprise omission, Hunte said the band's performance may have been adversely affected by circumstances not under its control. "When we got to the venue we even had to insist on getting proper lighting, just to be able to read our music scores," Hunte said, adding that the judges were picked up late and other administrative aspects of that evening were left to chance.

"We were the first band to play after the intermission," Hunte said.

"The show started more than one hour late, then the 30-minute intermission lasted for more than one hour and this upset the patrons, who began a slow hand-clap and then booed the judges when they returned to their positions. Immediately before we performed, there was even a loud argument about All Stars, taking place between one judge and members of the audience," Hunte said.

Emphasising that it was "not a matter of sour grapes", he made it clear that the band made no attempt to disrupt the rest of the festival or force its way into the finals. "We have a policy of abiding by the decision of the judges," Hunte said. "We

called the news conference not to complain about being left out, but to bring to the attention of the public, the way in which Pan Trinbago handled the festival. Remember, these are the same people who are talking about staging a World Steelband Festival as

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