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# ... AND ELLIE MANETTE



## 'Sweet Pans'

**T**AKE a walk along Tragarete Road any night this week, and from a distance you will hear the rhythmic sounds of the steelband. Walk inside the big yard opposite the Queen's Park Oval, and you see a large crowd around the young men beating out zippy tunes on their "pans." At once you are impressed with the quality of the first pans.

The steelband you are listening to is the Shell Invaders, reputed as having the "sweetest pans" in the Territory, and the man you see conducting the band is Ellie Manette. The rise of the Invaders steelband is very interesting. Its birth came shortly after the death of the then famous band of the area, which was named after the musical movie hit, "Alexander's Ragtime Band".

Ellie had heard of the Ragtime Boys, and touched by their rhythm, decided to start his own band.

By this time, Western "jazz" tunes (remember him?) had already made his early discovery about "pan"

music: beat out the bottom of the "pan" to tune it. Everyone accepted this — except Ellie. He felt much more could be done to improve "pan" music and so he began his experiments.

Ellie's method was the opposite. Thus he decided to separate the notes by making small indentations between them with a pointed piece of steel.

This gave tremendous lift to the tonal quality of the notes. The "pan" in those days were much smaller in circumference so when he decided to use bigger ones and told the other bands about it, they felt he was just "crazy".

But Ellie went on with his experiments and soon had everybody following him. His contribution to Trinidad's unique form of music is invaluable.



EXPERIMENTING

This year, the Shell Invaders are playing after an absence. Playing member should be around 200, possibly hitting the 1,000.

**ELLIE MANETTE**, leader of the Shell Invaders Steelband, of Woodbrook (first from right, with pan), whose "contribution to Trinidad's unique form of music is invaluable." He gave "tremendous lift to the tonal quality of the notes."

# NEVILLE JULES

— The Man Who Started It All . . . .

Ask the next person you meet on the street to name you five of the biggest tourist attractions in Trinidad and Tobago, and you probably will have listed among them THE STEELBAND.

Ask the same person: Who is Neville Jules? Chances are, nine out of ten, that he will reply: "Never heard the name before." The answer is not strange, for few people know the steelband is Neville Jules, and Neville Jules is the modern steelband.

It was through the keen observation of this soft-spoken dock worker that the shrobbing, haunting music can now be produced from an ordinary drum.

And partly because of the music thousands of people come from all parts of the world to see hundreds of other people sing and dance to the same melodies of the steelband and hear for themselves the contagious rhythm of which it is made.

## Leads Top Band

If there is one thing made in Trinidad's history, it is that its carnival has grown with its steelbands.

## He Was The Best 'Tamboo Bamboo' Man In Those Days

Besides being an accomplished "pan" beater, Jules leads one of the best organised steelbands in the Territory — Trinidad All Stars — the band which causes so much excitement on Carnival days with its 1,000 member-strong "Sea Bees."

This year, however, the Stars will stray from their usual "Sea Bees", "Guanabano Bay," is the Stars' presentation this year, with the US blockade of Cuba the theme.

Said Jules: "My boys are sweating it out night after night to bring to the public some new tunes this carnival.

I am catering for 2,000 members, but I believe we will be 3,000 strong this year."

Jules is history. So the first question I asked him was about the old days. The days when, if you said "steelband," it was as good as saying "bottle." He recalled the Tamboo Bamboo days, "when I was still in short pants." At that time his band was known as "Hell Yard." The boys came from the Dry River area, between Duke Street and Park Street.

## He Has Rhythm

Rhythm is in Jules, although his appearance does not suggest it, and so it was he became one of the best Tamboo Bamboo beaters.

Some time later, the boys turned to pan — snatching up any old pan — biscuit pan or dustbin — to beat out their tunes.

Then while beating out his tunes on his pan, a fellow found that the spot on which he was beating became soft, and that he could not get the noisy effect, so he just turned to a harder spot.



● NEVILLE JULES tunes a new pan with the aid of an old one.

"Those were the years when we played tunes like 'Mary Had a Little Lamb,' 'Three Blind Mice,' etc." said Jules. "It was from this I discovered that by beating out parts of a "

produce different sounds. And so I sat in the 'Yard' and with a stone, pounded out different parts. I got four distinct notes. From these notes I played little variations."

The war ended, there was a carnival celebration, people jumped and sang and caught on to Jules' idea, and so the steelband was formed, from those four notes to what it is today.