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Top Steelbands Skip Pan 'Bacchanal'

By ALOY MARK
Guardian Staff Writer

Indications are that the Road March (this title will fall to one person) — the Mighty Sparrow. That is, if the road march tunes played by 12 steelbands taking part in the "Carnival Bacchanal" put on by the Trinidad and Tobago Steelband Association in conjunction with the Carnival Development Committee can be considered a

And this is accepted, the race is on between Mighty Sparrow and "Sweetness". And as 'bell scene of the hyper of years' that 'Rich Man, Poor Man' (placed twice), "Jeremiah" (once) or "Fantasy" (not played at all) would be close in the running.

Admittedly, Friday night's show could have been better. There was, at times, a certain lack of cohesion in the whole production which remained without reasonable excuse.

There was the totally inexplicable onus thrown on the audience (and the judges) of having to divide their attention between the "Queens" and the bands in the road march contest, the "Queens" of the particular band on stage and the funnyman (who ever so often succeeded in stealing the show).

Then too, there was lack of organisation in the course of the "Queens" and funnymen were to follow in their parade with their respective bands.

But all these things are trivial in comparison with the two big failures which were plainly shown up—and show up to more than a few visitors in Trinidad for Carnival.

The fact is that while the Trinidadian plunge for the steelband with its mouth, he does nothing to put that backing into action.

Throughout the show, I got the impression that there were more performers in the audience than patrons. Since it is rarely claimed that the steelband is native to Trinidad, a creation of Trinidad's people, surely a tribute to Trinidad's undying love for anything musical.

But what happened? Lots of half the seats were taken up, a fact which become all the more noticeable whenever there was cause for applause.

Now, that matter, should all the blame be put on the public. What happened to the bands? Where were the

MONICA CEDRON
(Miss Spotch)
Queen of the Steelbands

girlfriend giants? Invaders, All Stars, Starland, Starlift, Dixieland, Silver Stars, Ebonites, Kin Tops. Where were they?

After the show, I was offered explanations on behalf of two of them, Dixieland and Starland. Dixieland's excuse can hold the band is out on the road for Carnival. Rather they are concentrating on preparation for the coming Music Festival.

The second excuse, concerning Starland cannot; they have no calypsos prepared and it was a calypso contest. Why have they no calypsos prepared? Is it that Starland's music has now become too highbrow to accommodate calypsos? — Or have they forgotten that calypso is the backbone of Carnival?

And if make contact more, all these bands are members of the Steelband Association. What the president of the association, if what should be one of the big Carnival reasons is so nonchalantly bypassed simply because some people believe, probably, they are too big?...

To come down to the show itself, perhaps the most significant feature of the night was the continual "argument" which went on between the pan beaters and the iron beaters—or better, perhaps, between the pans and the iron.

One would have thought that steelbands had realised what the exact effect of iron on their performance is. The fact remains that while iron is a good and useful link with the past as well as a fillip on the road, with steelband music at the stage it is now, iron can also be very embarrassing.

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On Friday night there was more than enough evidence of whole sections of bands losing their timing and of good arrangements being wasted—all because of too energetic iron beaters.

Then too, there was co-ordination missing lots of times. It was noticeable with the Casablanca band that the music, from the time they began coming on stage until they went off, was clean-cut almost to the point of regimentation and extremely pleasant to listen to. And with subdued iron in the background, the audience was given every opportunity to fully appreciate the skill of the performers. It should benefit the medium as a whole if more of this were encouraged.

The "queens" were really off course. While spontaneity is an intrinsic feature in Carnival, the queens seemed to overdo it. Maybe they were attacked by stage fright (though it did not seem so). Maybe they did not know better. But whatever the reason, their could all do with some lessons in the art of presenting themselves to judges and audiences alike.

As for the funnymen, with [illegible] year [illegible] funny.

[illegible] announced last night were:

BEST ROAD MARCH: 1. Tripoli, Desperadoes, 2. Starlift, Desperadoes.

BEST DISCUSSED BAND: 1. Starland Desperadoes, 2. Tiger Woodpeckers, 3. Desperadoes, The Frozen Bodies, 3. North Stars.

BEST FUNNYMAN: 1. M. Wilson, of Sun Valley, 2. C. Cadogan, of Tripoli, 3. D. Alexander of Spotlight.

Queen of the Tents title went to Monica Cedron of Jeylands Syncopators with Pearl Charles of Desperadoes and Lizzy Thomas of Spotlights as runners-up.

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