

ML 10440

The making of a Panorama tune — Part III

Can Jit hold the lead?

Starting on January 2, **Marcia Noel** has been witnessing the creative process by which arranger **Jit Samaroo**



and **Amoco Renegades** are putting together the pieces of their **Panoram 96** tune. In this third part, she reports on Renegades' winning performance at the preliminaries/North Zone last Sunday.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 4

RENEGADES, band number 28, are on the "drag", and one of the metal posts at the back of the rack where "Crawl" (Winston Downs), the guitar section leader, plays, is on the verge of snapping off.

If the bar breaks, it'll spell the end of the prelims/zonal final for him. Disasters are always imminent at times like these. It's 9.15 p.m. and Renegades are setting up their instruments, ready to run through the tune at least two or three times before they hit the stage.

The setting-up — pans passing over your head, bodies getting in your way, friends/family hailing you, captain trying to hurry you, drummer attempting to get comfortable, those who have already set their pans up "coasting" (running over the tune), trying to perfect their runs or a part they've never been totally comfortable with — is always chaotic, nerve-racking or plain annoying.

It's the waiting that presents the problem. When you've been psyched up to "attack" in the panyard, and you hit the drag with the crowd pushing and shoving and the DJ blasting, there's a rush of adrenalin and the acknowledgement that you've made it.

For a panman or pan woman there's no feeling like



JIT SAMAROO

it — the preparation for impending battle and the lights and the "fame" of being on that stage where the cameras and all eyes are on you.

And the bell or the iron sounds once. And then one...two... three...four... and the explosion of "sweet pan" and the "engine room" swinging, pulsating, and it's your time of glory, if only for ten minutes.

But when you have to hang around on the drag, as you invariably have to, your hands get cold and you begin to get bored and impatient. Usually it takes at least an hour.

The band has finally set up. Somebody counts them in and a slow jam starts.

THE PACE helps to make the wrists supple and everybody comfortable with the music and the position of their instruments.

Renegades added the end to the tune last night (which is probably another reason for the pace), and now the tune is virtually unrecognisable compared with last week's version.

The bridges are all in place, so too the introduction, and six minutes of disjointed parts have become ten minutes of flowing music achieved by burning the mid-night oil.

Standing in between the band you get to hear all the minor mistakes that you never associate with Renegades, and you wonder if they have as many "skaters" (people whose pan sticks brush over the notes and the parts instead of playing them fully) as some of the other bands.

But when, not long after, the tempo steps up and you stand at the head of the band, the mistakes disappear and it's vintage Renegades.

The band is playing "Pan in a Rage" composed by The Original DeFosto Himself and arranged by Jit Samaroo,

Samaroo has put in some chutney and dub this year and the drag crowd like it but you expect them to be more enthusiastic about it.

Nor is the tune as intricate as previous Panorama arrangements. But it's still only the preliminary round.

Still, Jit, as everyone calls him, does have a tendency not to change too much of his music.



RENEGADES woman on the bass last weekend

The Renegades squad are seasoned players who can stand the pace: in essence they're "crackshots".

A drunken man is winning ridiculously in the middle of the band and Miguel Rodriguez, the operations leader (he runs practice sessions), is ready to burst a blood vessel.

Some boys want to climb over the back of the rack where Crawl's breaking post is situated. Rodriguez gets so annoyed, you expect him to fire a cuff at them any minute, but a player intervenes, and the boys scramble off without sustaining any injuries.

When you're a leader at a time like this, the tension can be unbearable if you're not level-headed.

An hour or so later, after inching up the drag, Renegades are rolling their racks up the ramp onto the stage and the crowd accompanying them is tremendous.

The recording of "Pan in a Rage" starts up to herald the band.

The North Stand is "sizzling", bottle and spoon and du-dup beating, iron "ricki-ting-ting" and people dancing and watching expectantly.

When the racks are in place, all the players are facing the judges in the Grand Stand with their backs to the North Stand. (Most bands face west so that their racks run alongside the Grand and North Stands, and they can see the audience to their left or to their right).

And when the count starts and the "bram" begins, the people turn wild even before the verse and chorus

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The rasta who is playing the four-pan cellos is whizzing around them, effortlessly. So too the Indian man with the cap on who is playing at the front and whose hands are so nimble, and the dancing quadrophonics man in the red, yellow and green T-shirt.

Jit, as usual, has given the middle section some long and intricate runs to play and they're rattling them off, flawlessly.

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And when the count starts and the "bram" begins, the people turn wild even before the verse and chorus is over. But they quieten for a while, awaiting that special touch that every band must include for the crowd.

The runs begin. Though they are not as lengthy or formulaic as in years past, the audience cheers in appreciation.

BUT WHEN Renegades reach the chutney and dub parts, people break away and the uproar is tremendous.

By now, the players are jiggling and swaying and using their bodies to phrase with the music, and the stage is a mass of shaking and jumping racks and people as the crowd down there throw their hands in the air, chanting the band's name and singing the parts.

When the last note strikes at approximately 1 a.m., the people are ecstatic. As Renegades roll off the other side of the stage, they roll, en masse, out of the Savannah.

Of the big bands, only Desperadoes have yet to play and it takes a diehard Despers fan to stick around after a performance like this.

When you hear the results later on, Renegades have retained their North Zone title, and have won an additional \$10,000 (sponsored by TruValu) for scoring the highest points (453).

Exodus retain their East zone title (448) and get \$5,000 for the highest-scoring unsponsored pan side. Hydro Skiffle Bunch (427) snatch the South/Central zonal title from Tropical Angel Harps.

Though Renegades will be back for the semi-finals today, as reigning Panorama champions they're automatically in the finals.

But winning Panorama for yet another year may not be a walk-over after all.

Phase II's Boogie is back in town, and Desperadoes are only two points behind them (451). Even Exodus and All Stars (440) threaten their lead position (All Stars has a reputation for sneaking up on you), while bands like Nutones (435) and Invaders (431) are, surprisingly, being lauded this season.

Renegades may have won this battle but can they win the war?

Jit says it's not such a big deal if they don't. If he loses, he'll go away and "lick his wounds and come back again".

But having won seven Panoramas from 1982 till now, Jit is used to winning.

On Saturday night (February 17) we'll know whether he can keep the enemy at bay.