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Steelband movement marks 30 years of Panorama

By SELWYN TARRADATH

PANORAMA celebrates its 30th anniversary this year. In 1963 the National Association of Trinidad and Tobago Steelbandmen took a decision to host a national steelband competition as part of the Dimanche Gras show.

This Panorama competition re-

placed another Carnival steelband show. Ten bands took the stage on the final night and set off the first spark that ignited the steelband movement and has all but consumed it in its flames.

The first competition was not without controversy. Invaders played first before one of the judges had arrived and lost its protest, as

it was ruled that they started to play before instructions were given to do so. The competition was won by the Pan Am North Stars doing Anthony Williams's arrangement of Sparrow's "Dan is the Man in the Van".

Most of the big bands were in the final but there was also a Cinderella. Aldwyn "Mad Man" Jordan, the late pan maestro of Tunapuna, joined two of his bands, Fascinators of Tunapuna and Nocturne of D'Abadie, together.

They played a racy version of Blakie's "Morning Cock ah Crow" and while it was registered that they placed tenth, the fact that they reached the finals was sufficient inspiration for other country bands.

The competition has expanded beyond the wildest dreams of its originators and has become the most highly focused of all the Carnival shows.

In fact it has developed into a monster that often threatens to devour the entire steelband movement. There is no visible alternative in sight however, so the panman must remain content to be king for a night and forgotten for the rest of the year.

Panorama fever is with us again and 32 steelbands passed across the stage at Independence Square, Port of Spain, as the pan-around-the-neck category kicked off its preliminary round last Fridays.



PHASE II PAN GROOVE, playing "Birthday Party" was really swinging.



Strange to say that at the inception of the competition this mode of pan playing was thought to be extinct.

The impact that this competition had on the public was very inspiring to steelband lovers as thousands of revellers took to the streets that night. There is no doubt that the

same scenario will be repeated when the semis take place in Arima and the finals on the streets of St James on Carnival Friday night.

The preliminaries have evolved into the biggest picnic a Trini can aspire to.

This year despite the depression and the two days in the big yard, it was mas again in the North Stand and down the track. The action on Saturday started off with the once mighty N&M Trinidad All Stars trying to raise some dust.

But, the big band that night was

undoubtedly Phase II Pan Groove, which will be hoping to go one up on last year's second placing. The combination of Boogie and SuperBlue is working wonders and the "Birthday Party" was really swinging.

Vat 19 Fonclaire was the other big band on that night but internal problems appear to have weakened its chances.

TCL Skiffle Bunch appeared in the conventional category for the first time with young arranger Wayne Bruno doing the chores. Pepsi Humming Birds, trying its best to prove that last year's hurrah was not a flash in the pan, was up there with the front runners.

On Sunday Jay Notes started the ball arolling but patrons did not have to wait long for action. Witco Desperadoes came in at number five playing Robert Greenidge's "Street Party" and at once sounded a warning that it will not be taken lightly. Perennial favourites Amoco Renegades, on at number eight, rocked the stands and showed the vengeance with which it is taking last year's disappointing placing.

The expected big clash in the middle of the draw failed to materialise as Pamperi playing at number 13, did not succeed in raising dust in the face of Solo Harmonites, who was the only band playing the controversial "Paul" and did not get his mother angry. Defending champions Exodus followed with all the confidence in the world but the Fire Services had done a good job in wetting down the savannah and no dust was raised.

The zonal finals which take place this weekend will surely separate the sheep from the goats.