

# New format for steelband festival

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WRITING as Holden Caulfield 18 years ago, *Sunday Guardian* columnist George John came up with the title Pan is Beautiful Too. At the time he was responding to the management of the National Stadium refusing Pan Trinbago usage of the sporting facility to stage the inaugural steelband festival.

In his column, John challenged the stadium management's previous

approval for promoters to use the facility for a beauty pageant (*Solid Gold*). He galvanised public debate on the issue, suggesting that "Pan is beautiful too."

With the Kirpalani Group of Companies being executive producer of the festival, co-ordinator Roy Boyke sought John's permission to use the headline as the title for the festival series. John obliged, telling Boyke that he wanted no payment for the slogan, as he regarded it as his

contribution to the national instrument, and the steelband movement.

While this premier music festival has matured since its inception in 1980, particularly in the areas of panmanship and musicianship, its appeal has diminished. The first edition of the series attracted a large participation, and created much excitement in the steelband world. From 60 registered conventional and pan 'round neck bands in the 1982 festival, this

year's competition has attracted 31.

With Arnim Smith at its helm in 1980, a dynamic and bold Pan Trinbago executive aggressively pulled out all stops to ensure that *Pan is Beautiful Too* would be a steelband event to remember.

The 1980 festival saw the participation of traditional bands at this level for the first time. Playing the Test Piece *The Anvil Chorus*, by Verdi, and *Elizabethan Serenade* as its Tune of Choice, this category

was won by San Fernando's Hoytonians.

Playing the Test Piece *The Arrival of the Queen of Sheba*, by Handel, and Von Suppe's *Morning, Noon and Night in Vienna*, Catelli Trinidad All Stars won the first *Pan is Beautiful* title in the series, as well as the Best Tune of Choice Award.

The ninth edition of the biennial *Pan is Beautiful* steelband festival series premieres on Friday, at The Normandie, St Ann's.

Twenty conventional steel orchestras are registered to participate, including 1973 champion Nutones, and 1980 winner Neal & Massy Trinidad All Stars.

Unlike previous festivals, there will be no Test Piece for *Pan is Beautiful IX*. Instead, bands are required to perform a Caribbean piece, which could be a calypso, as well as a Tune of Choice. Bands will not be permitted to perform their Panorama selections of 1998.

This year's festival has also been decentralised, with bands in the Tobago, Eastern and South/Central zones performing at venues in their respective regions for the preliminary round of competition.