

# US honours Ellie Mannette for his contribution to pan

By SEAN NERO Newsday  
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PAN pioneer Elliot "Ellie" Mannette yesterday received his award from the US-based National Endowment for The Arts.

At noon on Capitol Hill in Washington DC yesterday, the man hailed as "the father of the modern pan" was bestowed with his latest accolade at the Gold Room of the Rayburn Building.

Apart from the recognition given to Mannette via the award, he will receive a grant to continue his work at West Virginia University.

Mannette was among 13 practitioners in various spheres of the arts honoured for their contribution to the development of the arts in the United States.

Chairman of the National Endowment For The Arts (NEA) Bill Ivy said, "By giving these artists from a world in which they are honoured by those who have come in contact with them, to a larger world in which their work can be recognised by a much bigger audience would enhance their careers and ability to carry out their work."

Before receiving his award Mannette was described as the pioneering musician and instrument maker who came to the US, from Trinidad and is known as "the father of the modern steeldrum" for his contribution to excellence in the arts steeldrum making and playing.

Speaking with Power 102FM's Dale Enoch and Jerome Lewis in Washington, DC, Mannette said he felt privileged being "honoured" by the US National Endowment for The Arts, and noted that his award should not be seen as something for him alone, but for the steelband movement.

"Right now I feel a lot of satisfaction - and I feel proud to be able to demonstrate what

we have in the island of Trinidad (and Tobago) - steelband - and happy to the magnitude which the Endowment could accept it," an elated Mannette said.

He continued, "It is not only a step for Ellie Mannette, but a step for the steelband."

He also chided the TT Government for not including pan on the curriculum in the schools.

US First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, delivering a very brief feature address said she wanted to be there in person to wish the honourees best wishes from US President Bill Clinton. She was thankful for the lifetime which brought them to the award, and the contributions they have made to the communities and their countries.

"You are us," she said, "You are the great American us."

"You represent the traditions, the cultures, the diversity of who we are as Americans. Whether they cross the earth's great ocean's, or were born on the great plains, the traditions and the artists we celebrate today tell us the story of America," Mrs Clinton continued.

The First Lady said the American story is heard in the drums of Haiti, of India, of Trinidad and in the jigs and reels of Ireland, and the soulful songs of gospel and the syncopated rhythms of taps to name a few.

Mannette lamented that the American people really accepted the steelband as a fine culture and they make use of it all year round. "While it is heard at Carnival and laid low for the rest of the year in Trinidad and Tobago, the US makes a big thing about pan every day of every year."