

By LENNOX  
GRANT

# It's a race to catch the panman's ear

THE short-lived controversy on the question of payment to steelbands of performing rights fees to calypsonian-composers provided only an inaccurate picture of the relationship between calypso and pan.

The fact is that only once in the last 20 years - 1957 - did a non-calypso prove so popular at Carnival as to win the title "Road March". That song was "The Happy Wanderer" (Valerie).

The selection for Road March honours is the most democratic one in Carnival, and this is perhaps what

accounts for its importance. For the steelbands must actually vote by proxy for the people's choice.

And as every calypsonian-composer wants his to be the song that everybody is singing - the ultimate glory -

it is in the interest of calypsonians to cultivate panmen.

The importance of the Road March could be related to the arrival on the scene in the early 1960s of the Lord Kitchener. The growth in significance of the Road March reflects the determination of a great calypsonian to carve out an area of focus in which he could be the predominant figure.

Last year was the first time in the last 20 years that Kitchener won the Calypso King crown. But in the years between 1963 and 1975 he won the Road March nine times out of 13.

## UNCLAIMED

And a look at these nine Road Marches shows that a certain kind of song, usually in celebration of the glory and wonder of Carnival and the excitement of Carnival music, has become established as a standard.

Observe the variety in themes in the years 1956-61: 1956 Jean and Dinah (Sparrow); 1957 Valerie (foreign); 1958 Pay as You Earn (Sparrow); 1959 Run the Gunslingers (Caruso); 1960 Mae Mae (Sparrow); 1961 Royal Jail (Sparrow); and 1962 Maria (Blakie).

In the period since, the Road Marches have been: 1963 The Road (Kitchener); 1964 Mama Dis is Mas (Kitchener); 1965 My Pussin (Kitchener); 1966 Obeah Wedding (Sparrow); 1967 Sixty Seven (Kitchener); 1968



KITCHENER



SPARROW

Miss Tourist (Kitchener); 1969 Sa Sa Ay (Sparrow); 1970 Margie (Kitchener); 1971 Mas in Madison Square Garden (Kitchener); 1972 Drunk and Disorderly (Sparrow); 1973 Rainorama (Kitchener); 1974 Baseman Shadow; and 1975 Tribute to Spree Simon (Kitchener).

It is no accident that the panmen have found Kitchener's music irresistibly attractive. He has concentrated on Carnival themes, perfecting a technique for Road Marches,

the highest praise of which is that it has been elaborately copied by other calypsonians, both consciously and unconsciously.

What Kitchener has succeeded in doing is gripping the imagination of panmen, the ones who determine the Road March. Of course, a parallel thrust in public relations has helped to establish the Kitch 'charisma'; it has become standard practice, for example, to distribute music scores in advance of the

publication of his records.

In addition, it has been suggested by musically knowledgeable people that Kitchener's Road Marches have been based on a shrewd understanding of the limitations and potential of the steelbands.

Sparrow who won the road March four times in the seven years between '56 and '62, could win it only three

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Operations will extend in an East-West direction from

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and in a North-South direction from

Latitude 10° 49 mins.  
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# IT'S A RACE TO CATCH THE PANMAN'S EAR

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times in the 13 years between '63 and '75.

Interviewed in the 1973 Key Caribbean Carnival Magazine, Sparrow explained that within the steelbands the choice of Road March is determined by the fact that there are mostly seasonal and unskilled players at Carnival time. The tune to be chosen must necessarily, then be a fairly simple one which could be easily learnt in the limited time.

"I could cater for road march a lot more, but this is not really my speed. My speed is to put down something that people would really appreciate and see some sort of class in it as far as music is concerned," Sparrow said.

So much for Sparrow. But many other calypsonians have been actively trying to reach the panman in the same way as Kitchener.

And the view that so much of such music offers little challenge to the prowess of competent panmen seems to be borne out at the fact that there has been among forward-looking panmen a desire to compose their own music.

So we have had Ray Holman's "Pan On The Move" and "Pan On The Run" and "Superpan". Last Phase Two played a panman's composition, "Rock it to Pan".

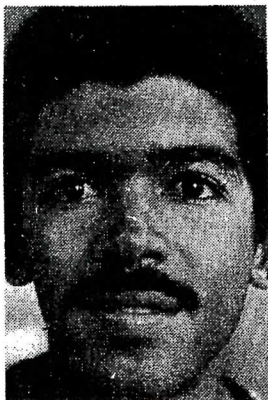
## SUGGESTED

panman's constant pre-occupation the calypsonians. There have been direct appeals to rationality: Superior's "Road March Dictatorship" of 1973 which urged that tunes be played on merit regardless of who composed them.

There have been threats and demands like Shadow's in the years previous to 1974. Chalkdust in 1974 cynically suggested to panmen that they had no reason not to play his tune since "ah tief it from Lord Kitchener."

But increasingly the approach has become more subtle. Lavish praise for the musical artistry of the panmen like Terror's "Pan Talent", "Tribute to Solo Harmonites" and this year "Steelband Dictionary".

Another advancing trend is the real simulation of pan notes, something done with distinction by Kitchener himself several years ago: "The dominant notes from the guitar-man/The prominent notes on the tenor pan/Music in the place, but is hell to keep up the pace,



HOLMAN

With the bass: Boom-ti, boom-ti, budum-ti."

The classic of these must certainly be Shadow's 1974 "Bassman". But there have been vigorous offerings like Wellington's "Beat Dem Pan" and this year Tallish with "Pan Does Make Me Jump So".

Maestro's popular "Tempo" of '75 called on the panmen to keep the pace hot: "we want a constant jam". This year Shadow sings "Constant Jamming" with a pan note simulations, and Chalkdust makes an appeal to panmen: to slow down so as to express a true old-time sweetness.

If calypsonians are good reflections of current attitudes to panmen, then it must be that people generally regard them as superfine musicians who could provide "tempo" and "jamming" equal to any.

But it wasn't always so. Several of the early calypsoes on panmen were violently in condemnation of them, then "Never me steelband in Port of Spain," sang Blakie in the mid-50s.

## SYMBOL

"The bull in mih hand ah sang Kitchener a decade later. Again: "if any steelband man only venture to break this band, is a long funeral from the general hospital".

Sparrow sang on "Renegades": Ah band mih jaw, ah make up mih mind for them/Me alone could wreck the band/Except for the captain, that's the man."

The panman comes through in some calypsoes as a figure of sex appeal. The pan-stick as a phallic symbol is an image employed by at least one poet, Abdul Malik, the "Bad Poet" in his "Pan Run".

We ent want no man if he can't beat pan," Sparrow put into the mouths of wailing young girls in 1970. "Ah want a man, a man who could jam iron" - Squibby in '73;

Rosita leggo mih stick," was another Sparrow chorus.

Whatever the motives behind these portrayals, they have had the effect of crystallising this new image of the panman as an attractive figure of current folklore, a living symbol of national pride and talent.

This tendency found noted expression in the last few years. It is expressed in the nostalgia for the old - the revival of "pan-rong-neck" sides; the participation of women in pan-beating; the rehabilitation (attempted) of Winston Spree Simon. Simon was led up with his crutches to declare open the Regal Tent in December 1974.

That year there had been a campaign to build a Spree Simon benefit fund. The following Calypso season heard Kitchener's Road March and Calypso King-winning "Tribute to Spree" and a similar tribute by Chalkdust.

Certainly not all calypsoes about panmen are self-interested attempts to mamaguy brother artists. No doubt calypsonians have keenly felt and given powerful expression to the still-depressed social and economic status of the people in pan.

## DELIGHT

Perhaps the most trenchant calypso like this has been Stalin's "Panman" of 1974: "What going on with the steelband...Is the art doing good/. The artist ketching hell."

Some calypsonians have gone as far as to use steelband instruments to accompany them in both live and recorded performances.

Last year Earl Rodeny, an extraordinarily accomplished panman and musician composed "Steelband Music" which was recorded by the Mighty Sparrow. The song... painted a realistic steelband today, contrasting the rapturous delight which the sound of pan evokes at Carnival with the indifference throughout the rest of the year.

It turned out that Sparrow who years ago had sung the epoch-making "Outcast" which recorded the then growing social acceptance of pan, was prevented by High Court writfiled by Rodney's publishers from singing the song anywhere.

The event was significant and historic, signalling as it did the arrival on the stage of a new kind of panman - a musician militantly conscious of his rights and watchful for the least sign of exploitation.

It is a message, one hopes, that has not been lost on calypsonians.