

Pied Panmen from Wood- brook

ONE OF Trinidad and Tobago unique contribution to music and an inalienable part of its culture is the steelband and one of the original and most popular among steelband to the forefront today is the Shell Invaders Steel Orchestra now called Trintoc Invaders.

Shell Invaders, the pied panmen from Woodbrook, a suburb of Port-of-Spain the country's capital, was founded in 1942 in a back yard on Tragarete Road opposite the Queen's Park Oval.

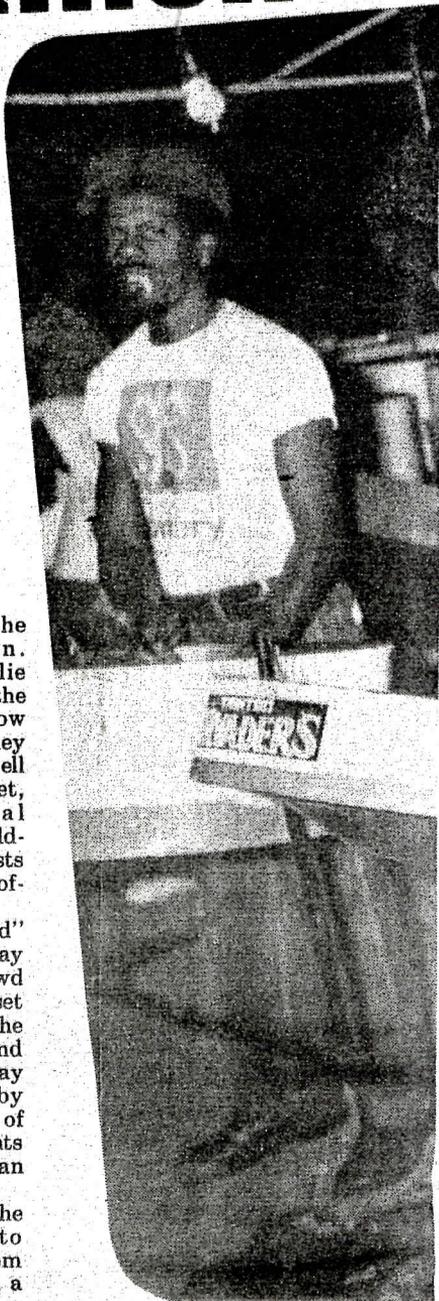
It still remains the headquarters of the band. Shell Invaders started as the Oval Boys and was led by Stanley Hunte until 1947, when Ellie Mannette took over.

The history of Shell Invaders goes back to the

very roots of the steelband tradition. According to Ellie Mannette, one of the original members now resident in the U.S., they started in 1938 in "Hell Yard" Charlotte Street, the traditional headquarters of the old-time Tamboo-bamboosts of downtown Port-of-Spain.

It was in "Hell Yard" that on VE Day — 6 May 1945 — a huge crowd gathered and finally set off down the streets to the tune of "Five years and eight months we ent play no mas" accompanied by a haphazard assembly of percussion instruments ranging from garbage can lids to pieces of old iron.

From then on the steelband started to develop rapidly. From a piece of steel, through a



SAMMY PHELPS
SOUND SPECIALIST
CAPTAIN

It was Ellie who first wrapped his drumstick with strips of rubber, devised the spider web tuning, the cello bass and the guitar (pronounced "Gitter") pans and made other important contributions to the development of the steel orchestras it is known today. As his technique developed he gathered a group around him, taught them and launched the Invaders Steelband.

Under the quiet effective and inspired leadership of Ellie Mannette, the father of the modern steelband, Invaders have experimented and intoned until their music has become an experience to hear and a magic potion which has lent feathers to the most leaden footed of revellers.

As a pan tuner, Ellie has been without par in Trinidad and Tobago. It was he who gave Invaders their golden sound.

A facet of his remarkable gift was the manner in which he walked quietly amidst the music on Carnival days, and listened and listened to the beat, and created new rhythms and new styles and combinations in his head while people jumped up around him.

After taking Invaders to the peak of perfection, Ellie Mannette left for the United States in 1967 to teach Americans to beat 'pan.' His brother Vernon 'Birdie' Mannette took over and is carrying on the tradition with the same success.

With a hundred of some of the best pan-beaters in the country and powerful arrangements by the great Junior Pouchet, one

can picture the entire audience at the Queen's Park Savannah going wild with the "sweet pan from Invaders".

The tune they have chosen for this year's Championship is Sparrow's "Wanted Dead or Alive".

Those of us who have been fortunate to hear this rendition at their Panyard in Woodbrook can predict that when all their 200-odd pans start ringing come Panorama, all hell will break loose.

Down in the deep south, the pride of Point Fortin — Trintoc Sun Valley, is busy with preparations for Panorama 1980. The band has been practising hard night and day to get everything right for the Championship in Point Fortin, San Fernando and hopefully in Port-of-Spain.

The arranger for Sun Valley is Michael George and he has taken Kitchener's "Jean Pierre" and created a very compelling piece of steelband music for Panorama 1980.

Big plans are in store for Trintoc Sun Valley during this year as they expect to move into their new "Panyard" towards the end of 1980. Until then, they intend to keep South and North Trinidad dancing and prancing to the music of their 200 pans.

For Carnival they will be providing music for the Band "Capricorn" one of the best bands in the Point Fortin celebrations.

In the sister isle, the Trintoc Tobago All Stars are keeping things very warm as they gear for the Tobago Panorama Championship.



sophisticated percussion musical instruments.

"The man who brought the steelband from social ostracism to the threshold

and finally from sawed off biscuit tin, a paint pan drums have evolved

of respectability was Ellie Mannette' wrote W.A. Simmonds in a booklet published to accompany an exhibition of 'Pan' in cement sculpture by Raphael Samuel.