



Desperadoes

From the hills of Laventille comes one of the most popular bands, Desperadoes. The band was first known as "Dead End Kids" after a film of the same name. In the early 1940's they were known not for the movies but for their actions.

Members, because of the state that the steelbandsmen were at the time, fought many battles with the police and other members of the movement. Around this time the chief men at the helm of the band were "Benyeh" and "Brains" Wilfred "Speaker" Harrison as well as Donald Steadman and came to the fore around 1959 with the express purpose of getting their talented men to put their time and energies to productive use.

The involvement of Desperadoes with the production of Carnival brought this Laventille community together which up to today exists. It is a close knit community. In days gone by the entire area stood head and shoulders whenever parades were kept in defiance of the police. Scouts stood at vantage points informing those below of the movements of the law.

By 1955 Desperadoes were taking part in Carnival and really came into prominence.

In 1962 a contract was signed with Coca Cola Company and this had the effect of changing the attitudes and temperament of the members. The band was renamed the Coca Cola Gay Desperadoes. In his changing of scenario, George Yeates played no small part.

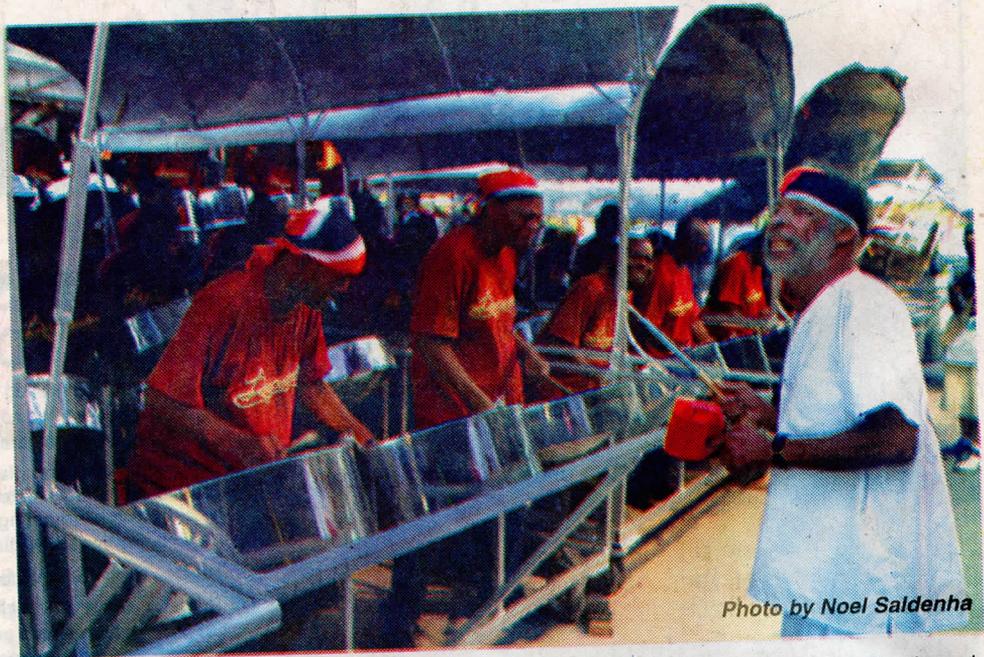


Photo by Noel Saldanha

He literally guided the members of Desperadoes and by extension the community of Laventille to become more involved. A Community Centre was built and was able to quell any untoward behaviour with neighboring bands.

The emergence of Rudolph Charles, who was immortalized in song by David Rudder after his passing in 1985, added the energy and further authority to put the band in the ascendancy. His innovative method of administration being the leader coupled with a sometimes crude process, saw move the band forefront. He was able to get some of the leading tuners such as Bertie Marshall and Ellie Mannette to tune the pans.

There have been a string of successes of Desperadoes, the first of which was 1965 when it won the Prime Ministers Best Village trophy.

In 1966 the band won its first Panorama title with the selection "Obeah Wedding" arranged by Beverly Griffith. In this said year the band also took the Bomb title and Best Beating Band on the Road.

Desperadoes is the only band to have won the national title of the Steelband Music Festival on three consecutive occasions - 1986, 1988 and 1992. The band has also won to date eleven Panorama titles. The band has also been named Steelband of the Century by Pantrintago for its continued excellence.

Desperadoes has traveled extensively. Trips have been made to Dacca Africa, USA, England, Canada and throughout the West Indies. They have played in all the leading concert halls, including Carnegie, Royal Albert and the Lincoln Center. Re-

cently the band played alongside Luciano Pavarotti at a concert in Barbados. The band is a band of firsts, and became the first band to accompany a major artiste when in 2002, the show "Kings Hold Court" was held with the Mighty Sparrow in Trinidad, Washington and Philadelphia, USA.

The band has been the recipient of a Chaconia, Medal of Merit. Desperadoes and steelband are household names in Trinidad and Tobago and no other band epitomises the steelband culture more than the Desperadoes. They can represent this country at any level of culture.

Some part of their success is owed to the band's corporate partner, the West Indian Tobacco Company Limited who over the years assisted the band to reach the zenith of its ability.