



# Starlift

Starlift has a very colourful history, which is steeped in mas as well as pan. Contrary to the near 50-year-old myth, Starlift Steel Orchestra was not spawned from the loins of its fellow Woodbrook band Invaders.

Starlift was formed in 1956 when the members of three small bands from Woodbrook namely Nightingale, Saigon and Green Eyes came together to start their own orchestra.

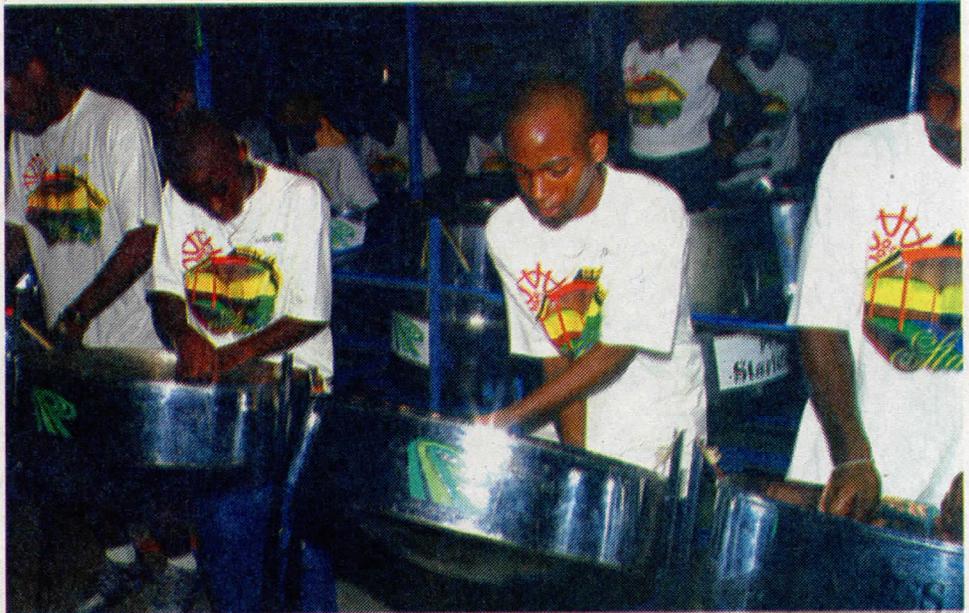
Among the founding members of the band were Natsie and Bambie Contante, Albert "Philo" James, Ernest Greaves, Hugh "Hi-Lo" Wellington and Jene "Ginny" Peters who served as its first captain.

The band first took to the streets for Carnival in 1956, immediately establishing itself as a force to be reckoned with.

The musicianship of the pannists more than matched up against the likes of the veterans such as Desperadoes, Hell Yard, which would later become All Stars, and Invaders. The orchestra's tuners, the Contante brothers and Wellington, wrought their notes to perfection.

So impressive was the music produced by the orchestra that it managed to attract major corporate sponsorship early in its existence, beginning with Old Oak, as the 1950s came to a close.

From there it has managed over the years to form relationships with other high-profile corporate entities such as Angostura: 1964 – 1969, Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce: 1969 –



1977, Trinidad Tesoro: 1977 – 1983, Trintopec: 1983 – 1992 and PCS Nitrogen Trinidad Ltd: 1997 – present.

Starlift captain, Gerard Clarke said the relationship between PCS Nitrogen and Starlift is very good.

The year 1960 was a quiet one for Starlift, as the band failed to make it to the road for Carnival that year.

It was, however, back in action the following year with both its pan music and popular mas presentations. In fact, Starlift has been producing mas from its birth and has won several Band of the Year titles over the years. The band has also successfully presented Carnival kings and queens of the bands over the years.

Starlift's impressive record in relation to its participation in mas includes 1957, when its portrayal "Undersea Kingdom" placed fifth in the Band

of the Year competition.

The following year the band placed fourth with the presentation "Nursery Rhymes". Starlift went on to place in the top ten of the Band of the Year competition between 1968 and 1971.

In the 1970s the band enjoyed much success with Alva Maund's memorable presentations "Shindig, Ceremony of the Red Men", "Splendour among the Himalayas", "Of Fest and Festivals, Feather Fantasy", and "Teenage Millionaires".

As for Panorama, to date Starlift has won three national championships, the first in 1969 when it presented "The Bull", as arranged by Holman.

The band again stood in winners row in 1971 when it again won Panorama in 1971 with "Queen of the Bands". Then in 1972 inter-

national conflict caused the band to fall apart and lay dormant for several years, but it bounced back in 1978, winning its third Panorama title with a Holman arrangement of Sparrow's classic, "Du Du Yemi".

Although it has not had a Panorama victory since, Starlift continues to stand out as one of the most revered steel orchestras not only in north Trinidad, but the world over.

The orchestra's CD release of 1999 entitled "I Wanna Hear Some Pan", recorded on the SANCH label, has proved to be a very popular item locally as well as on the Internet.

During the Carnival period, thousands, including tourists, flock to the band's panyard off the Roxy Flyover on Tragarete Road, Woodbrook to take in its rehearsals.