



SCRUNTERS PAN GROOVE, one of the more entertaining pan-round-neck steelbands

How ^{ML1040} great thine art

By **TERRY JOSEPH**

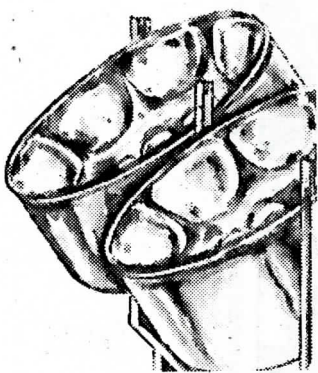
THERE IS SOMETHING morbid about the ease with which pan-round-the-neck groups are steadily increasing their share of the dwindling steelband money pie, while research geared toward development of the conventional instrument is stymied by a lack of funding.

Last week Sunday, of the ten bands participating in the St Peter's Day Pan Jam in Carenage, at least five were guilty of aggravated assault on the aesthetic and two others played what is fast becoming the test piece for this annual event "How Great Thou Art?"

But exactly how great is this art? It seems that any ten novices can now sling pans around their necks and get two conspirators to hold up a banner

claiming that they are representative of this great music form. That, simply put, comprises a traditional steelband, which has to play simple songs like "How Great Thou Art", because the self-imposed limitations of the band debars it from doing even a Fifth of Beethoven.

Full chords are not attainable on any of the support instruments and no one wants to carry even one bass drum on his shoulders in this day and time, so



the doo-doop returns to provide the basic low frequency noise at the bottom end of the band, instead of anchoring the already incomplete chords.

Surely, this is a kick in the tired shins of those who ran that first lap in the race to develop this novel instrument. Instead of taking the baton and continuing the race, pan round the neck continues to regurgitate the celebration of that inaugural leg.

Pan Trinbago President Owen Serrette, in his address at the Panorama prize giving function at City Hall Port of Spain on March 27, lamented the rise in the number of pan round the neck groups, but stopped just shy of telling the progenitors of this retrogressive form that they were holding up progress, all for the quick bucks, so encouragingly disbursed by Mr Serrette's own organisation.

"One of the more striking (sic) features of Panorama", says Serrette. "has been the phenomenal growth of the pan round the neck category. It must be admitted that while there are many legitimate bands of this kind who play throughout the year, far too many are pick-up sides, using the opportunity to make a quick dollar but not providing any serious or lasting contribution to pan music on the whole.

