

View from the Grand Stand...

Pan, antics and bling



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Close to 30,000 online viewers witnessed the Panorama finals Saturday night and into the wee hours of Sunday morning—all nine hours of pan, antics and bling.

Distant audiences saw and heard much more than patrons in the purportedly "sold out" Grand and North Stands.

There were many seats in the expanded "VIP" area that remained empty throughout the show—the North Stand was never full and scalpers' prices for the Grand Stand fell to \$100 lower than the advertised entrance fee of \$300.

Online viewers got more, not only because people here are capable of paying high sums of money in order to talk loudly and order peanuts through the performances of the world's best steelbands, but because audio from some splendidly shot and edited features on the participating bands was denied those interested in hearing more about preparations for the steelpan spectacle.

The video features were the work of Carnival TV—a collaboration of Beach House Productions and Advanced Dynamics scripted by writer, Barbara-Anne Look Loy.

Screens throughout the Queen's Park Savannah venue showed the silent videos.

Had Pan Trinbago used its imagination, the live audience would have been able to listen to arrangers, bandleaders and players and how they felt about what, to many, is the leading Carnival event—Panorama. Tens of thousands of online viewers from Antarctica to South Africa visited the Carnival TV site.

Back on location, a 30-minute late start was blamed on an "emergency" confronted by a member of the (later to become unpopular) panel of judges.

Some Grand Stand patrons were, in any event—depending on which newspaper they read—surprised that 7:30 pm marked a "late" start.

House announcer Sharon Pitt also earned a collective gasp from the Grand Stand when, at about 10.10 pm, she announced there would be a "door prize" to be drawn against "ticket stubs."



Pan Trinbago president Keith Diaz, left, presents President Max Richards with a plaque in commemoration of the organisation's Diamond Jubilee on stage at the National Panorama finals, Queen's Park Savannah on Saturday night.



Valley Harps playing Do Something For Pan at the National Panorama finals. PHOTOS: KARLA RAMOO

When the winning numbers were eventually called, people looked at their yellow wrist bands to see whether such numbers were printed there or whether they remained on the thickly laminated tickets that were taken away from them intact when they entered the compound.

The one thing the house announcers, who were ignored by at least half the crowd at the semis earning Pan Trinbago a date in court, seemed absolutely certain of was the fact that the first prize winners would earn themselves \$2 million, courtesy Prime Minister Kamla-Perasad Bissessar, in particular. The announcers never allowed patrons to forget.

So great was Pan Trinbago's gratitude, the entire 75th anniversary edition of the competition was dedicated to the Prime Minister.

The organisation also later returned \$75,000 to the Children's Fund column of the state coffers during a brief ceremony in which Persad-Bissessar promised that the Grand Stand would remain as a permanent structure on what used to be the 19th century Peschier Estate later conditionally bequeathed to the Port-of-Spain City Council.

By the time the Prime Minister and her entourage had got to the Grand Stand, most of the best performances of the evening had long passed.

Joint winners, Katzenjammers and Valley Harps had already rendered virtually



Sagior Exodus players go through their paces playing Calling Meh at the National Panorama finals. PHOTO: KEITH MATTHEWS

flawless renditions of Wake Up and Do Something for Pan, respectively, and the crowd had had a kick out of the antics of Sangre Grande Cordettes' Danish arranger, Anders Kappel Ovre's exaggerated on-stage antics.

Cordettes' solid performance ought to have silenced those who questioned the St Joseph's Convent music teacher's bona fides, though some in the Grand Stand, who won't mind seeing a Trinidadian or Tobagonian conduct the London Philharmonic some day, still wondered

what Kappel was doing on a Panorama stage.

But more bling and antics were to come as the large bands entered the stage.

The disturbingly loud bang of fireworks at the end of All Stars' winning performance would have raised the hairs of the security detail accompanying the Prime Minister as she made her way down the Grand Stand stairs toward the stage as the performance drew to a close.

One Grand Stand regular wondered whether walking around during a performance

was permitted at equally prestigious concert venues internationally.

Bling, some wondered, might have led to the demise of third-placed PCS Silver Stars whose black and silver standards, serving as a mobile curtain, kept the crowd and the judges waiting several minutes after the house announcer introduced the band and as jittery pan players looked on.

Desperadoes' Chinese, Indian and African musical interludes during its rendition of Trini—wildly applauded at

the semis—could also possibly have been stifled by a huge, claustrophobic roof-patterned canopy.

In the end, All Stars won an unpopular \$2 million victory among the small crowd that remained after the performance of Silver Stars.

For the thousands who left after Silver Stars to brave the chaotic parking arrangements on the Queen's Park Savannah, the show would have marked a night of excellence, antics of various flavours and no shortage of bling and fanfare.