



FLAG WEVERS

STEEL BAND FLAG WEVERS – FLAG MAN – FLAG WOMAN

It's Carnival Tuesday morning in Trinidad in the 1960's and you are standing at the corner of Cawnpore Street and the Western Main Road, St James. You see the black flag carrying the famous skull and the crossed bones logo being waved energetically in the bright sunlight, announcing the coming of the Crossfire Steel Orchestra. Your heart starts beating frantically as the flag waver gets closer and the sounds of sweet steel captivates your spirit.

Deeply rooted in tradition and history is the role of the steel band flag carrier. It is a special time-honoured position that requires confidence, grace and skill. The flag woman does her enthusiastic flag-waving choreographed dance during her steel band's live performance. This energetic task was formerly performed by a man. In 1976, it was the late Lord Kitchener's calypso, Flag Woman that won road march honours. "Flag Woman", a bright and flashy "lawway", light in content, but full of rhythm sent the early morning, Jouvert celebrations, crowds wild. In fact, it could be said that the 1976 Trinidad Carnival could be termed as the 'Flag Women Carnival'.

Each band has a dancer with a flag doing an elaborate flag dance. It was Lord Kitchener who highlighted that a 'Flag Woman' was essential in a steel band on carnival day. His calypso 'Flag Woman' opens by stating "You have no band unless you have a flag woman." A fitting tribute to the role of the flag woman and her importance is told throughout the calypso.

Today, this tradition carries on as flag women and men are highly visible during steel band performances notably at global Panorama competitions.

Extract of Lyrics to Flag Woman by Aldwyn Roberts (Lord Kitchener)

**You have no band without a beautiful flag woman
You have no band without an experienced flag woman
The band will have no control, the music will have no soul
The revelers wouldn't play, their usual mas on carnival day**

(Chorus)

**A woman really have the touches to send you bumping
Sure to make the rhythm touch you when she start waving
When you see she get that fever, is plenty trouble
Whether you sink or swim, you bound to waiver
Aye yi yi yi yi yi yi yi, wave it baby
Get them moving, yes, honey – Do your duty, wave it sexy
– Send them crazy
Woman, woman, move your hand**



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