



Caribbean Summer 2008 in Dortmund

Imagine nine bands from Europe and the USA getting together for two days in a flourishing park, performing steeldrum in a colorful variety of musical styles and most culturally inspiring way and you will understand why the centre of steel drum music was in Dortmund, Germany for a weekend in early July.

➤ Pankultur in Dortmund, the ambitious and courageous non-profit German music school, co-founded by panplayer/composers Martin Buschmann and Juergen Lesker, had taken the annual Caribbean Night one step further. They put together a two

day festival in the Westfalenpark of Dortmund (on the same scale like Hyde Park in London or Central Park in New York) where steelpan music was to be heard in every corner. By bringing together bands from all over Europe, the program was made spicy with

the top acts "Ebony" from the UK and "Delaware Steel" from the US, and the music mixed with Caribbean foods and drinks (along with gorgeous weather) – Pankultur brought the Caribbean cocktail to steelpan lovers in North Rhine Westphalia. This festival found

an enthusiastic public. More than 2000 spectators gathered around the main stage on Saturday night, where the local band BAENG BAENG started the 3 course menu with a kaleidoscope of original compositions, Latin pop songs, and Caribbean music. The large band of more than 40 players ranging from young people to those in their 60s demonstrated a constant evolution in their technical and musical performance, and their fun-loving presentation set the mood for other acts to follow.

Delaware Steel, directed by Harvey Price, has grown out of the University band to be one of the top acts in the USA. The band is sought after in places like Bastard (Sweden) where the group recently played at a week long chamber music festival and in Israel with Zubin Mehta and the Netanyahu Philharmonic Orchestra. In Dortmund, Delaware Steel played a mix of traditional and modern steel pan music ranging from the late great Lord Kitchener to Andy Narell. Their mint-quality presentation was greatly appreciated by the Dortmund public. Their jubilant players encouraged a hip swinging group of young women in their grass skirts celebrating a hen-party to kick it up a notch.

Next to perform was Ebony; their repertoire of popular songs including Trinidadian hits really touched the nerve of all steelpan lovers. Ebony's, (dubbed 'Europe's finest') musicality had the audience lapping up every note even through the slight drizzle of rain that

left the dance floor wet. **At the end of their performance they swapped their band-T-shirts with Delaware Steel like you would see after a football game, bringing the curtains down on a very entertaining first day of the festival filled with infectious steel band music.**

The second day of the festival was just as hectic and entertaining with Steely Wonder from Finland taking turns on stage in the park with Swedish pan players from Caribbean Hotline. Tropical Steelpan from the Netherlands opened the Calypso tent for Calypsocation from Paris and easily raised the temperature in the tent by 20 degrees. Cadillac Steelband from Oldenburg and Tin Pan Alley welcomed the public at the main entrance of the park. Whilst hands-on-workshops for kids, steel drum manufacturing and tuning clinics were run by Eckhard C. Schultz. The local Pankultur band presented their young children to adult programs, while BIMA and his jazz ensemble led the audience to a different sphere of steelpan music and to add to the Caribbean ambience, Son de Colonia offered Latin music that went down really well with mojitos and pina colodas.

Steelpan novices and the hard-core enthusiasts coming to the Pankultur events for years were thoroughly impressed by the wide range of performances. Spectators loved the open atmosphere whilst pan players mingled and interacted with each other without thinking about competition or rehearsing for hours on end. A familiar statement heard was, "Where do I get

the chance to meet a pan player from Finland, UK, Paris, the US, Berlin or Amsterdam and just talk pan – this is great! And we are all part of the pan family!"

The junkaroo parade finally gathered the pan-around-the-neck-players together in a long queue and they marched from one venue to another, while the flag girls led the way, the crowd of more than 3000 followed in an endless stream, stopping and listening to every band perform till the parade eventually made its way to the main stage where Delaware Steel started the Grand Finale. From "Under the Sea" to honour the kids among the spectators to "Mozart's Magic Flute – Overture", "Sea of Stories" to "Sahra" by Len Boogsie



Sharpe - a colorful musical mix. **Thanks to Pankultur and its hard-working team for putting together this wonderful Festival, for hosting and feeding more than 350 pan players and making them feel welcomed at all times. Thanks to the tourist office of the Islands of the Bahamas for being a main sponsor and bringing Antonius Roberts, a renowned sculptor from the islands. Mr. Roberts wooden sculpture, "Bahama-Mama with a rose" carved on site will be permanently placed in the Westfalenpark to be a reminder of this cultural music event.**

Pan players did not feel like leaving after the last note was played by Delaware Steel. "This needs to become an annual event", they agreed unanimously, "like a family getting together for a reunion". Well, we will think about that.....

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