



Eviction from a National Steelband Heritage Landmark... ...THE INVADERS STORY

➔ **The original architectural design and ambience of the Invaders pan yard then, was a high wood and galvanize shed, nestled under a towering, forever laden breadfruit tree, next to a large outhouse in the backyard of # 147 Tragarete Rd.** To get inside the pan yard, one had to walk through a passageway between two wooden houses, whose front doors and windows literally opened onto the pavement. The ping, ping, pong, pong, bang, bang sound of the sticks and hammers tuning and blending, could be heard from the street, as one negotiated a mossy drain trailing from a stand pipe, hooked up to a galvanize enclosed open air bathroom, refreshed with the lingering semi controlled stench of the cesspit. Big business and urban development has, and is remodeling the original landscape of Woodbrook, including the location of the many pan

yards. A popular Carnival strip and thoroughfare to and from downtown Port of Spain, Tragarete road, hosts four [4] yards, Silver Stars, Playboyz, Modernaires, and Invaders. The posh high rise apartment buildings of One Woodbrook Place, has already relocated Starlift whilst the removal of Phase 11 remains a work in progress. Invaders, the mother and grand mother of many west bands, has experienced the heaviest ordeal from these wealthy and ambitious developers.

Born as De Oval Boys in 1937, because of the proximity to the Queen's Park Oval, and renamed after the war movie Invaders in 1940, the occupation of this historic and valuable piece of real estate, is some 68 years and counting. When the houses were eventually cleared to allow for a total pan yard, one wondered how a steel

band did fit into such a small area. It is apparent that the developers have no cultural ties or loyalties, and it is obviously another page in the saga of the disrespect and unimportance of our grass root heritage, and by extension the national instrument. Invaders has been faced with eviction twice in these 68 yrs, in 1979 and again in 2007, and whether the steelband's administration is culpable or not for pussyfooting with the acquisition of the property, something has to be done very soon with respect to proclaiming and preserving our steelband heritage, especially historic panyard locations. Anything that age and as deeply associated with the evolution and invention of the only acoustic musical instrument of the 20th century, has to be deemed as significant as the magnificent 7 around the Grand Savannah, and other historic landmarks throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

INVADERS SOUNDING SWEET

...THE ROARING 40's, 50's, 60's

Invaders was the Woodbrook force to be reckoned with as far as rioting, progressive pan tuning and design, playing Mas, sweet music and the best chip coming out of Port of Spain's west side. A Road March of 1950's, Lord Blakie's Steelband Clash, is a commentary on a battle between Invaders and Tokyo, in the heights of steelband riots and musical rivalry. Breaking news in the 1940's was the issue of Dr. Ellie Mannette's creation of the [concave as against convex] sunken pan as it is today. Nicknamed the Barracuda Pan, and simply because of the superior and clearer musical sound, it was stolen and strung up on a tree 'behind de bridge'. The might of Invaders was challenged to enter this area to reclaim the instrument. Nevertheless, even amidst the violence, the rank and file of west Port of Spain could be seen jumping with Invaders in differing roles of badjohns, rioters, pan beaters and revelers. The affluent folks, doctors, lawyers, politicians, intellectuals, college students all supported this band, and if you need proof, check Invaders any J'ouvert morning and witness the cross section of adults and senior citizens still yearning for that nostalgic chip up Tragarete road.

Several steelband icons and other worthy individuals have contributed to painting the timeless mural that is

Invaders. Ellie and Birdie Mannette, Cobo Jack, Ray Holman, Earl La Pierre and Happy Williams, are just the tip of the iceberg of talented products of this steelband. The children and grandchildren include Starlift, Modernaires, Playboyz, Phase 11, Third World and Brimblers. Invaders undoubtedly became a leader in the early times of pan tuning, playing and innovativeness, especially Bomb tunes, from Pan round de neck, to wheels and on stage. Unlucky is the easiest word to describe this band's achievements in National Panorama or the Music Festival. They have always been in and around the finals of these and other major Pan events, but, unfortunately, winning remains elusive to date. However, they held for a considerable time, the title of the biggest west band, accompanying thousands of costumed masqueraders back in the day when Pan ruled the Carnival scene. The legendary George Bailey, another notable icon and Invaders mas man from the wire bending era, contributed to their mas presentations before he went solo and won several Band of the Year titles.

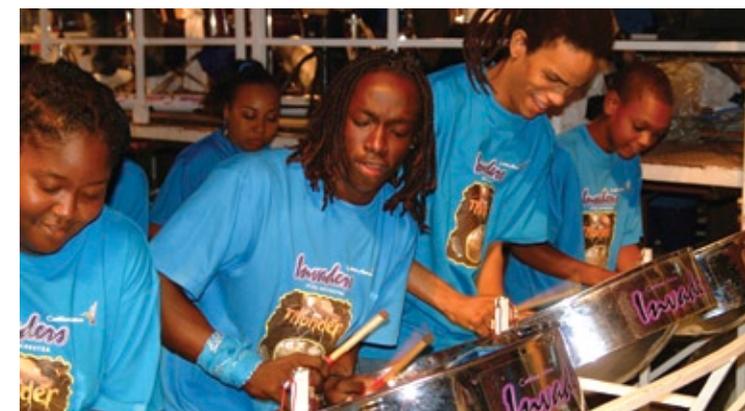
PAN from the WEST is the BEST

...says Bro. Valentino 2000's

This band, not only commanded the respect of the other powerful bands, but was also responsible for pioneering and spawning much of the revolutionary changes to the style and sound of the steelband. They definitely had a remarkable uniqueness in tuning

and playing. The standards set and levels of pan music attained by the elder crack shots was phenomenal, with a star studded cast, featuring the likes of Emmanuel "Cobo Jack" Riley, a top ranked steelband icon and Invaders pannist noted for ramajaying i.e. extemporizing at will, playing off the cuff, unrehearsed chords and melodies during whatever tune the band played on the move. This was in essence, the redefinition of steelband music some 50 years ago. Urban music it was, if one were tempted to categorize and compare that style in the context of today's diverse music genres, and the abilities of current steelband musical arrangers. They all dabble in an adult contemporary mix or fusion of Calypso/Soca, with the tempos and rhythms of the Classics, Jazz, Pop, R&B etc. Small wonder why 'own composition' is another hallmark of the west.

Invaders maintained the status of flagship and front runner of the west for approximately 25 years. They have endured so far, and outlasted many bands throughout their 68 years. Despite the negative effects of progress, change, migration and shifting paradigms, they are still ranked in the National Panorama's top 10. The legacy that is Invaders is inestimable. Many of Trinidad & Tobago's accomplished musicians, arrangers, tuners and pannists has roots planted with Invaders, passed through and were schooled, utilized their pan music platform, or, are the bloodline offspring of this parent band. Obviously eviction would tend to close the book for Invaders, since in reality, this will be the actual dismantling and removal of a national steelband monument, a shrine from which countless musical talents, and creations have evolved, a pinnacle for steelband and gateway to the illustrious urban steelband music from the West. Mindboggling it is how prime real estate motivates the big money developers, but, conversely, it takes drastic measures like the impending eviction to motivate national attention and recognition of the priceless heritage of the Invaders Steelband, and the entire Pan fraternity.



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