



IRON MAN

» Ting-a-licky ...ting-a-licky...ting-a-licky...ting...ting...ting, the iron, has always been dominating the sound in the early days.

➤ Pulsating with an irrepressible spirit after World War 11, steel pan music exploded from the ghettos and barrack yards of Trinidad with a powerful voice. Over the seven decades of its existence the steel pan has evolved into a musical instrument of great versatility. Combined into its own orchestra called the steel band, the steel pan can be tuned to play various scales within a diverse arrangements of music. The modern steel band or steel orchestra can successfully reproduce compositions of all musical genres.

Also retained from the bamboo-bamboo bands in the evolution of the modern steel band is the 'engine room' or the percussive element which allows the band to keep its timing. The 'bottle and spoon', and various assortments of iron, make up the elements of the 'engine room'.

The Iron man is the virtuoso percussionist in the engine room of the steel band. His enthusiastic rhythmic pounding of metal (wheel hubs, brake drums) accompanied by the many other components of the Engine Room (scratcher, drum kit, timbales, maracas - shac-shac) provide timing for all the steel band musicians.

Throughout a musical piece that includes an introduction, statement of melody, harmonic and melodic developments, changes in key, changes in rhythm, modulations, improvisations and finale the iron man can be heard distinctively keeping the entire orchestra in sync.

The late Aldwin 'Lord Kitchener' Roberts in his 1990 composition, 'Iron Man' personified the role

of this percussionist. His composition was played by his favourite steel band, AMOCO Renegades who captured the 1990 Trinidad and Tobago National Steel Bands Panorama title with a Jit Samaroo's musically arranged rendition of Kitchener's composition.

The Roaring Lion called them iron bands and later described by David Rudder as the engine room, that driving force "what does cause the bacchanal down dey". Locked inside this rhythm, linked to the gods, tuned to a special pitch of sweetness, so irresistible in the hands of a master. "sweeter than honey, jam iron, woman does leave dey man" – Lord Shorty. "Korey did damn well say if yuh iron good you is king" – Rudder. **They all depict the importance of the iron man in the orchestra. Long live the iron men and their sweet and pulsating rhythms that keep us chipping to the captivating sound of steel.**

