

WELCOME,



2007 has been one of the most difficult, and also one of the most rewarding, years as Chair of the British Association of Steelbands. The Association's decision to move the National Panorama Competition into Hyde Park was controversial with other carnival arenas and the community at large. Nevertheless, the bands held firm in their belief that moving the Panorama into the heart of the world's most diverse capital was not only right for steel bands but also for the carnival generally. Anyone who attended Panorama, or who has seen the DVD recording, knows we were right!

Already the leading pre-Carnival event, the 2007 Panorama attracted an audience of thousands and, despite a few technical problems, the venue proved perfect raising the profile of steel pan, the culture and the movement ten fold.

BAS would like to thank the Greater London Authority and the Mayor's Office, Royal Parks, OPSG, London Notting Hill Carnival Ltd and the production and security teams for their efforts in making this historical event such a success. Another significant success was the hosting of the 2007 J'Ouvert. BAS thanks Eric Stewart of the Met Police for his support of and confidence in the Association, and also Shabaka Thompson of Carnival Village who provided stewarding uniforms and helped to manage the processional route.

BAS also thanks Grace Food for their support of this year's Best Steel Band on the Road competition at the Notting Hill Carnival. Their contribution and support of the event, and attendance at the Annual Awards, is testimony to the growing profile of BAS and its members. We look forward to a long and fruitful partnership. It is with sadness I report the passing of two of the pan fraternity 'greats' - Ezekiel 'Biggs' Yearwood on 13 September and on 28 September 2007, Allan Baptiste. Born in St Vincent, 'Biggs' arrived in the UK in 1965. A pan maker, tuner and educator, he set up Pantonic Steel Orchestra (London) with the late Raymond Joseph. Allan was former President of the Dominica National Pan Association. Allan returned to Dominica in 2003 having spent 12 years in the UK teaching pan and working with a number of bands including Newham Steel Orchestra and Nostalgia Steel Band.

In October the UK's carnival community also saw the passing of Odian 'Skunky' Cyrus, a calypsonian, musician and songwriter who worked tirelessly promoting soca music in the UK. He made it possible for many soca artists to perform and expand their fan base. Great ambassadors for the culture, Biggs, Allan and Skunky will all be sorely missed. This year however, we have also had some good news and happy celebrations. Frank Rollock of London All Stars fame celebrated his 70th birthday at home in true style. The evening saw performances by Frank and his family, together with Aubrey Bryan and Earl Rodney. And in November Junior Regello, Leader of Skiffle Bunch Steel Orchestra in Trinidad, was elected PNM candidate for San Fernando East, and will be sitting as a Member of Parliament in the Trinidad legislature. Junior has visited the UK several times with Skiffle Bunch and performed at London's Regent Park, Royal Festival and Fairfield Halls Croydon as part of the Caribbean Carnival Extravaganza. BAS congratulates Junior on his achievement.

On behalf of the Executive Officers, members and Future Development Forum, I wish you a blessed New Year and a successful and happy 2008.

Pepe Francis