

Nostalgia

London's Standard-bearer of 'Pan-round-Neck' celebrates 40 years on the Road

In 1969, Philmore 'Boots' Davidson coined the name 'Nostalgia' for a steelband whose roots are embedded in the history of the legendary Trinidad All Steel Percussion Orchestra (TASPO). Its eminent founders, Sterling Betancourt and Russell Henderson arrived in England in 1951 with TASPO to play at the 'Festival of Britain' but following their tour, stayed back in London and went on to form the 'Russell Henderson Steelband', the first home grown steelband in Britain. In 1963, while playing for a Children's Neighbourhood Carnival in London's Notting Hill area, as a 'pan-round-neck' band, they drifted onto the streets and, in so doing, saw the birth of the world renowned Notting Hill carnival.

Nostalgia celebrates 40 years this year and marked the event by playing at the wedding reception of one of its members, Camille Shah on 11th July in Brighton and then going on to win the best playing band in the Brighton carnival. Throughout the years, its members have almost single-handedly promoted and maintained the *pan-round-neck* tradition in England despite the immense logistical problems. However, the key element of *pan-round-neck* is the freedom and mobility given to the panists. This in turn enables pan playing to be more visible and accessible during street carnivals; breaking down the mystery and, allowing audiences to intermingle and freely participate. Nostalgia has led street carnivals in most of Britain's major cities; a particularly exciting recent event being the street carnival in Huddersfield in June 2008 in which Nostalgia led a huge band of revellers through the city centre from mid-night to the early hours of the morning.

Although the band has witnessed huge transformations over the years, it has never deviated from its responsibility to hold steadfastly onto its '*pan-round-neck*' tradition; actively teaching and developing programmes in numerous schools and universities, helping to start up new steelbands, organising workshops and participating in steelband conferences. Examples include the formation of steelbands at Paddington's Performance Arts and Media Centre and Shern Hall Methodist Church: projects at schools such as Hay Lane, Rokesly Infants, Chiswick Community and several schools in East and South London. Recently, a similar project in the Midlands resulted in the establishment of a Steelpan Academy and *pan-round-neck* steelband, led by Diana Hancox.