



The British Association of Steelbands Awards 11th anniversary

The Association celebrated their annual awards ceremony at the Holiday Inn in Bloomsbury, London. 2009 marked the 11th anniversary of the awards, which was established to celebrate the successes of bands and individuals and, in recognising excellence, to honour the wider and more sustained contributions of individuals, groups and organisations to the promotion of steel pan music, culture and heritage throughout the United Kingdom. The Association congratulates all recipients on their outstanding achievements. 2009 has seen the Association's continued growth. In celebrating achievements BAS are raising the profile of carnival arts. Tobago Crusoe opened the evening's entertainment with a couple of tunes and hilarious jokes before singing an ex-tempo birthday song and making a presentation to Elma Betancourt.

From its initiation in 1999 in the humble surroundings of the Tabernacle which now houses the refurbished Carnival Village, the Awards has developed in leaps and bounds setting the standards for similar events organized by the other Carnival arenas. Distinguished guests included Gerald Forsyth OBE and Frank Rollock - members of the BAS Hall of Fame, HE Gail Guy, Trinidad & Tobago High Commission, Toussaint Clarke and Robbie Joseph of the UK Pan Tuners Guild, Chris Boothman, London Notting Hill Carnival Board Member, Tony Isles, Chair of the UK Carnival Arts Centre, Ricky Belgrave and Lyndon Lacrete, Chairs of the Notting Hill Carnival arts arenas and the new President of Pan Trinbago, Keith Diaz and his executive officers, Richard Forteau, Secretary and Keith St Cyr, External Relations Officer.

Pepe Francis, Chair of BAS noted in his speech the effect that the current economic status is having on the steelband community, highlighting the support and involvement needed from the new Pan Trinbago executives and also the office of the Trinidad and Tobago High Commission.

BAS in conjunction with the UK Pan tuners Guild will continue to pursue their current programme of acquiring qualifications for steel pan tutors and pan tuners and their discussions with the University of the West Indies is ongoing.

It is a fact that BAS is the UK's only carnival arts based organisation whose membership and network extends throughout the UK. On the night they had members and representatives not only from London and the Home Counties but also from Newcastle,

Plymouth, Bath, Birmingham, Leicester, Cornwall, North Tyneside and Portsmouth. In the UK there are less than a handful of bands that have commercial sponsorship. BAS are working hard to convince companies of the many and varied benefits of investing in a steel band – social and community cohesion, regeneration, education, preventative and diversionary engagement strategies, employment opportunities as well as to brand awareness and promotion, marketing and, of course, the positive impact and influence on profit lines.

On the night, special homage was paid to Joel ' Tubbs' Hamilton –Mills for his organization of the BASDFD Pan Explosion competition, Debi Gardner for her outstanding and continuous support to the UK Steelband culture and Robbie Joseph for his arduous work done with the Pan Podium magazine and website celebrating its tenth anniversary this year. A Pan Podium display to mark its anniversary was mounted in the lobby of the hotel featuring front covers of all issues as well as copies of past and present issues of the magazine.

MCs on the night were none other than Martin Jay of Choice FM 96.9. and Kavelle Savary from the UKCCA. After having the truly delicious West Indian cuisine, witnessing the Awards and being entertained by the live act, Engine Room, Tobago Crusoe and Brown Sugar, patrons were treated to some lively music by DJ, Sugar K who had them dancing until the wee hours of the morning. Everyone is now looking forward to next year's event with great enthusiasm. Visit the Pan Podium photo Gallery to view all the photos of the BAS 2009 Awards ceremony.

