

ROY GEDDES

Guyana's original STEEL PAN MAN

When we think of the steelband, we think of Roy Geddes. Angela Singh discovers the story behind Guyana's premier pan man, and how he's developing the art form



The original pan man, Roy Geddes

Roy Geddes lives, breathes, and adores the steel pan more than any other. His talent is second to none, his passion is beautifully raw, and his dedication is, in a word, re-

markable. Oh, and did I mention this man's got style?

Decked out in burgundy plaid trousers, a red striped T-shirt and beige flat cap perched atop a bed of white hair for our interview, this is a man who remains true to his roots and is determined to continue his love affair with the pan - he even has a gold pan pendant slung around his neck, glittering in the sunlight.

His involvement into one Guyana's leading pan players has been an eventful one, beginning in 1953 at the age of 13. "Coming from a single-parent family and being the eldest of five, I had to leave school at 13," says the now 70-year-old Roy. He soon took up a job as a tradesman; however the glorious sound of the steel pan soon started floating his way. "I was living on Lombard Street at the time where I was bombarded with steel pan music and that's what inspired me to get involved. I would head to the pan yard everyday and imitate how the fellas there were playing."

Three years down the line and a plethora of pan sessions later, self-taught Roy started to take the art form seriously.

"After that, I started playing with the 'Casablancas', and started to think this could really be a career. The first time I performed I was so nervous, and couldn't stop trembling," he recalls, his mischievous eyes crinkling into a smile. But the path wasn't always easy. Back in the 1950s people had to work during the day to generate an income, and then head to their jam sessions in the evening. "You couldn't just play for the love of it alone," explains Roy.

However, people soon caught on to the fact that this wasn't just any ordinary pan man. Roy continued to make a name for himself, playing in bands in Wismar and later Bartica where his father lived. "I was well known in those regions," says Roy, "and I was one of the best as I was always willing to learn. I didn't know how to read music, so I had to be a very good listener."

After returning from his stint in Bartica, Roy's star really soared. He would tramp the streets of Georgetown, pan around his neck, whipping up a melodic frenzy wherever he went.

In 1962, the original pan man was selected to

hit the shores of Trinidad with the National Steel Orchestra of Guyana. "It was such an honour," explains Roy, "as Trinidad is the headquarters of the pan and it's where it was first invented."

Then in 1963 Roy was once again selected to be part of the National Steel Orchestra, but this time he headed to Cuba. "It was in Cuba that I learnt about respect and how to respect myself," he says smiling, fondly remembering the seven months spent on the rhythmic island. "The trip was a blessing in disguise as we would attend lectures and they would tell you to express yourself freely." It was almost like a second schooling for Roy, and when he returned to Guyana, the pan player realised there was a great deal he wanted to share with the youth of his country.

"I wanted to help people and teach them about patriotism, as well as respect for others and for themselves."

Midway into our interview which is taking place in his steel pan museum - full of memorabilia from the good old days, hammers for building and tuning pans, along with quotations and plants by the dozen - Roy suddenly jumps up from his chair.



A few of the steel pans that Roy's built and tuned



Inside Roy's steel pan museum

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NOTICE

The Guyana Sugar Corporation Inc invites suitably qualified Dealers, Suppliers and Agents to submit Proposals for the Supply of the following:

NEW or USED PICK-UP TYPE VEHICLES Extra Cab 4 x 4; Double Cab 4 x 4; Single Cab 2 x 4; Double Cab 2 x 4 (TOTAL 47 VEHICLES)

Closing date for Responses will be **Thursday, November 26, 2009.**

Instruction Package can be purchased and uplifted from the Secretary to the Materials Manager at the address below:

Materials Management Department
Ogle Estate
Ogle, East Coast Demerara.
Telephone: 592-222-3161, 3162
Fax: 592-222-3322

The Tender Document can be downloaded from GuySuCo's Website at: <http://www.guysuco.com/tenders/default.asp> kindly click on "Invitation to Tender"

NB: Further instructions on participation are embodied in the Instruction Package.



Ministry Of Agriculture



GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY

Executing Agency: Ministry of Agriculture

GOG/UNDP Enabling Activities for the Preparation of Guyana's Second

National Communication to the UNFCCC

RE-ADVERTISEMENT

NATIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES CONSULTANCY

The Enabling Activity for the Second National Communication to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is to facilitate Guyana to fulfil its reporting obligation to the convention. The project is being implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture with support from the UNDP. The National Circumstances component of the Second National Communication will help to identify national priorities, objectives and circumstances to address climate change in Guyana

The Ministry of Agriculture is therefore desirous of contracting the services of suitably qualified applicants to prepare the National Circumstances Chapter of the Second National Communication Report.

The tasks will be executed under the direct supervision of the Ministry of Agriculture. The detailed Terms of Reference can be obtained from the SNC Project Office, Ministry of Agriculture, Regent Street & Vlissengen Road, Georgetown or websites: www.guyanacclimatechange.gov.gy & www.undp.org.gy.

Candidates who meet the minimum qualifications are invited to apply to the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Regent & Vlissengen Roads, Georgetown. The envelope should be clearly marked "Second National Communications Project - National Circumstances Consultancy"

Deadline for applications is November 6, 2009. Applications should be sent in triplicate hardcopies to the Permanent Secretary, MOA. Applications submitted by email will not be accepted.

Only short-listed candidates will be contacted.
Previous applicants need not apply.

Home of Genuine Demerara Cane Sugars

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Guyana's original STEEL PAN MAN



The pan tuning kit

The cricket is on upstairs and while his full focus is on the interview at hand, he, like any other sports-lover, has a radar for when something's happened. Today, Trinidad is playing and he's eager to find out from his wife Pam, what's been going on. "Ganga's out," he informs me, as he settles back down, a look of excitement flashing across his face as he shouts thanks to his wife of 43 years.

Leaning forward conspiratorially, he confides that Pam, who not only provides him with the cricket scores, is the academic one and secretary for the band as well as a loy-



One of the many decorations festooning Roy's garden

al companion to him. "Without her support, this wouldn't be possible," he declares, his face glowing proudly.

Back to the task at hand - it becomes clear that Roy's career went from strength to strength after discovering his love for teaching as well as playing steel pan.

He formed his own band called the Silvertones in 1964. During his time in the band, he played for Queen Elizabeth II, and won the Guyana Music Festival twice; he also chalked up awards for Best Original Costume Band, and took home first prize from the National History and Arts Council competition.

He's also received two National Awards for his contribution to the art form from former presidents Forbes Burnham and Dr Cheddi Jagan.

Roy remains humble however, and hasn't let the awards faze him. "I was honoured by them, but that's not what I was after."

Today, Roy isn't just one of the most prolific steel pan players of all time. He's also a pan builder and tuner (he sinks drums and creates pans in his museum - every corner is chock full of drums, pans and tools), arranger, leader, and most importantly, a social worker.

"My main objective is to commercialise the steel pan art form and pan production as an industry," he says. "I want pan men to be able to take care of their family and I want the steel pan to give the youth of today a firm direction in their life."

Teaching is something that Roy takes very seriously. "When kids come to learn to play, I try to instil family values as it's something that's lacking and hampering young people these days," Roy explains. Being a firm leader himself and adhering to a strict set of values, Roy believes discipline is essential and stresses that "you can't lead young people effectively unless you lead



The official awards table

them by example, which is what I am trying to do."

As well as his social work, Roy's other mission in life is to preserve the history of the steel pan, as he says, "a man who has no sense of history is like a man who has no eyes or ears."

"Pan won't die, there will always be pans around, but the development is lacking. That's why I have a museum which I am developing so future generations can learn more about it."

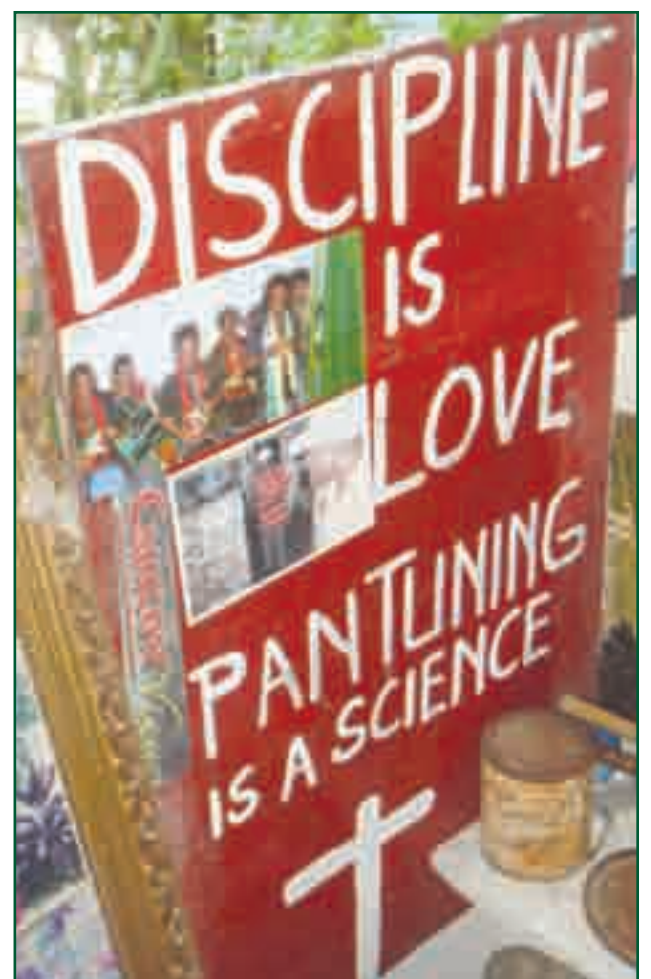
Looking around his museum (which tourists flock regularly), you can immediately gage a sense of just how rich the steel pan culture is. This museum tells the story of Roy's 56-year stint in the business and as he himself can vouch for, his "contribution is not just seasonal, but full-time."

Photographs line the walls, awards are piled high on a table, a football lies on a bench in homage to Roy's alter-ego Pele - he is a pretty mean football player - and inspiring quotations fill every nook and cranny encouraging the practice of discipline, responsibility and patriotism.

Roy Geddes is certainly a man with a mission and one who continues to break barriers when it comes to the steel pan. As the pan player himself says, "Greatness is determined by service" and given his service to the art form thus far, that must mean, and rightfully so, that Roy Geddes is a tru-

ly great player, creator and most of all, teacher.

The Roy Geddes Steel Pan Museum is located at 190 Roxanne Burnham Gardens, Georgetown. For more information call 226 9844.



One of the many inspiring quotations

MINISTRY OF HEALTH

ADMISSION TO SINGLE TRAINED/RURAL MIDWIFERY PROGRAMME

Applications are invited from suitably qualified persons who are desirous of pursuing training as Single Trained-Midwives. These persons will be required to function in the Riverain or Hinterland regions at districts/community levels.

The training will commence in January 2010 and will be of two years' duration. Before admission to the training programme persons must be passed as medically fit and will be required to enter into a Contractual Agreement to serve the Government of Guyana for a period of not less than five years.

Successful applicants will receive a stipend of \$15,000 per month and a Ration Allowance of \$1,810 per month throughout the duration of the course. The applicants are also required to be in possession of a **VALID PASSPORT**.

QUALIFICATION FOR ENTRY

- a) Two subjects GCE 'O' Level grades A, B or C with English Language being one. A Science subject or Mathematics will be an asset.
- OR**
- b) Two subjects CXC General Proficiency Grades 1, 2 or 3 Basic 1, with English Language being one. A Science subject or Mathematics will be an asset.
- OR**
- c) Successful completion of the Pre-Nursing Course conducted by the General Nursing Council of Guyana.
- OR**
- d) A credit at the Patient Care Assistant Training Programme with two years post-qualification experience.
- OR**
- e) A credit at the Community, Health Workers Training Programme with two years post-qualification experience.

Application forms can be obtained from the Ministry of Health on website www.health.gov.gy or the Regional Executive Officers, Regions 1-10, Government Hospitals or other Health Institutions

These forms should be forwarded not later than November 13, 2009 to the office of the:

**Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Health
Lot 1 Brickdam
Georgetown**