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'De Mark Buss'

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Enter the E Pan

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SEEMS that everywhere you turn these days there is someone boasting of having created a new type of steelpan or innovative method of making the instrument. Salmon Cupid, a music teacher from Trinidad who is based in Canada showed up at the *Express* on Monday bearing what he claims is the world's first electronic steelpan. In fact the instrument contains more plastic than steel and features rubberised touch pads that can be played either with sticks or fingers. Buttons on a console electronically control volume and equalisation as well as the tones that range from tenor to bass steelpan sounds as well as other instruments including piano and trumpet.

Cupid said that his instrument has been in the making for the past 14 years and

to date it is the only electronic steelpan to have a patent pending. His patent application #10774256 was filed in 2004. Cupid said he kept his invention a secret in order to secure necessary legal protection and documentation before finally revealing it to the world. There have been, however, other electronic steelpans and instruments that deliver the steelpan tone on the mar-

ket for some time now. Among them are the PanKat Midi Pan Controller and one that has been developed at UWI by the Pan Development Centre.

Cupid dismisses these developments saying that he has been working on his invention much longer than any other person or organisation and is the only person with a patent pending for such an invention. He added that he set out to create the electronic steelpan when he realised that pannists were losing out on studio work because one could get the pan sound on keyboards and sequencers. His desire is to ensure that the steelpan, electronic or traditional, remains wholly and solely a product of Trinidad and Tobago.

"The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing. In other words I am about ensuring that the world knows that the steelpan is from Trinidad and Tobago. I do not want to take anything away from anyone else. I have worked on this for the past 14 years alongside a team of engineers and it's not something that sounds like a pan, it is a pan that can do many things. I am here to show and tell of the instrument and chose this time because of the many people who are now in the panyards."

"I have over the years contacted the Government many times telling them of the work we've been doing and they have never responded to me. Richard Forteau from Pan Trinbago knows of the electronic steelpan and although he is yet to see it has congratulated me. I am planning to meet with Pan Trinbago today (January 28) as well as with a number of pannists here who are excited over the instrument. We must do what we can to secure the pan legacy of Trinidad and Tobago. I believe that we are too laid back in letting it be known that the pan is ours. Where is the steelpan on the Caribbean Airlines planes? Also, make the image of the pan bigger on our currency," Cupid said.

The Electronic Steelpan created by Cupid has sequencing capabilities as well as interchangeable notes so that one can lay out the notes according to a pan from Trinidad All Stars and then change it to the settings of a pan from Renegades. The pan can also be synced to other electronic instruments for a performance or recording session.

Although the prototype is roughly the size of a traditional guitar pan and there is a fairly large console attached to its, Cupid said the instrument will eventually be much smaller and very lightweight for easy transportation.

INNOVATION: Salmon Cupid shows off his E-Pan, which he claims is the first electronically synthesised steelpan. -Photo: KENRICK BOBB