

Come lime with me

## **Derron Ellies**

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I started playing at the age of 10.

I remember going to an event with my parents and there was a steelband on the stage. At some point in the night I approached the band instruments and started observing the six bass drums and sticks. Since then, I made a point of listening keenly to steelband arrangements and wanting to play.

Primarily, I play the single tenor (low C). However, I learned every steelpan except for the quadroponic pan while in the Manzanilla Police Youth Club, the epicentre of my musical development.

In the right hands, a single tenor can be a uniting voice for bands of any instrumentation and size; background support for a solo voice; or a lone soldier's weapon, offering quick response and the ability to release salvo after musical salvo. This is why the single tenor is my steelpan of choice.

I do not practice as often as I would like, as I have an 8 to 4 that sucks up my energy. Where I would have dedicated three hours a day towards practice, I can only do two hours.

If I had to choose a favourite genre, I would take forever to decide. However, while calypso and soca will always have a special place in my heart, I have found myself deeply intrigued by the growing folk movement. Songwriters in the vein of Nappy Myers and Andre Tanker are once again finding their space in our musical landscape...and I am one of them, constantly exploring and growing in the genre.

On average, every month I perform at least about four times. Because I don't hold myself to only one genre of music, I am invited to perform for various audiences in a wide range of musical styles.

Sometimes I find myself nervous before hitting the stage. But I use that as fuel to give the audience and promoter the best show they ever had in a long while.

I have played at many carnivals in Trinidad, and one in St Lucia in 2007. My most recent carnival performance was at the International Soca Monarch finals of 2016 alongside Pternsky. Apart from that, I featured in many other contests and parties, both as a solo artist and as part of a band such as Rhapsody Next Generation.

In 2007, I went to India as part of a tourism delegation. We visited three states: Mumbai, Delhi and Bengaluru. In Delhi, I was invited to play at the residence of the Trinidad & Tobago High Commissioner who hosted us. I performed alongside Pandit Bhajan Sopori, renowned classical santoor artist, as an impromptu act. We were well received and are still talked about today.

My favourite steelpan player is Len Boogsie Sharpe, a brilliant performer with a remarkably musical mind and spirit. His humility makes him the greatest, in my view.

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Pamberi is my favourite steelband. Yet to win a crown, the spirit and determination of the members, arranger and management always warms my heart. Their musicality and down-to-earth demeanour will always have my full respect.

I have always loved "Pan By Storm", sung by calypsonian Designer. It has always conveyed to me that Steelpan music will take the world by surprise, and all will love it. Much like what is happening now.

I play the cuatro, a four-stringed instrument that can be seen as the bigger brother of the ukelele. I also play many types of percussive instruments, and I can play a song on any instrument that I tinker with after maybe an hour. I have perfect pitch, so that helps me a lot. But one of my favourite instruments is the synthesized version of the Steelpan, the Percussive Harmonic Instrument (P.H.I.) which was created by Dr Brian Copeland and his team. It took centuries to create the electronic keyboard and other MIDI instruments, so to have a MIDI synth Steelpan-derived instrument created in under a hundred years is a wonderful thing to me.

When I have down time, I go out with my wife Meagan. Whether we visit friends, family, or just spend time together alone, we always have fun. Apart from that I love to write songs and produce beats for songs, sometimes covers, sometimes originals.

The Steelpan is a beautiful creation, and we must do all we can COLLECTIVELY - players, arrangers, tuners, salesmen, researchers- to preserve, protect, promote and develop on what we have.