

SAGICOR & EXODUS HIT THE RIGHT NOTE



The steelpan, developed in Trinidad and Tobago, is the only indigenous musical instrument of our Caribbean region, and to that extent it shares a common thread with Sagicor. It is no surprise, therefore, that our operations in Trinidad decided to sponsor one of, if not the best steelband in the twin-island republic, Exodus Steel Orchestra.

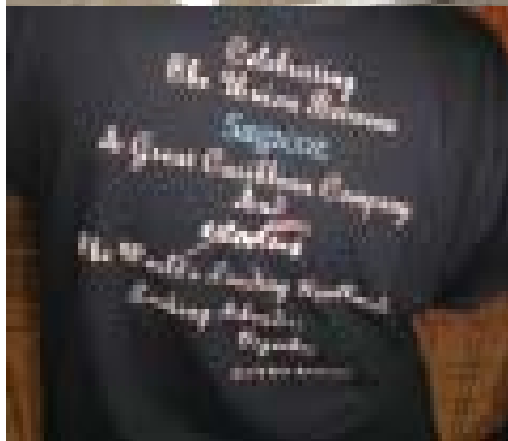
Exodus and Sagicor are an excellent fit. Exodus' Manager, Ainsworth Mohammed, said to Sagicor World, "We were fortunate that Sagicor decided to sponsor our band because that was the type of sponsor we wanted; a company that is stable, is Caribbean-based but with an international focus, not just a local company."

Exodus has an impressive 23-year history. The Steel Orchestra is the most disciplined and best organized within Trinidad and Tobago. Mr. Mohammed explained, "We have achieved this by applying the principles of management. My elder brother, now deceased, Amin, was a senior bank manager, and it was he who started the band, applying those principles of

management from the onset. In fact," he says, with a wry smile, "in the first year, we were known not as the best musical band, but as a well-managed band, but now I think I can say that the music has caught up."

Exodus has received top honours at every competition within the last decade. Their goals are highly laudable, their capabilities are proven, and their members, leadership and supporters have remained dedicated throughout the years.

Formed in 1981, Exodus has approximately 200 members and has a following that spans the socio-economic strata of Trinidad and Tobago. The band has made significant contributions to the growth of the art form by hosting one of the premier events of the annual cultural calendar for the past 15 years, "Pan Ramajay". They also make a positive contribution to cultural development via their youth program (Exocubs), which serves as a training ground for young talent, while providing a positive and disciplined environment for the young people in their community. For these efforts, they were awarded



In Trinidad, the names of steel bands and calypsonians are usually derived from an incident or behavioral or physical characteristic, and this is no different in the case of Exodus. Mr. Mohammed explained, "Amin and I were part of another steel band, Flamingos, which used to be a good band from the village of St. Johns in St. Augustine. The band's performance and image were deteriorating and Amin, in an effort to get it back to the level it should have been, called a meeting to discuss how to start an improvement programme. But there was strong resistance, especially from the captain. So Amin said to the members, 'I can't continue with this anymore. I'm going across the street and stand up, and those of you who want to form another steel band can come and join me.'

Well, most of the band members left and followed him, and that determined the name of the band, Exodus."

"We have to inject young blood, as we are getting old, because if we don't do that, we will suddenly realize that we do not have continuity of our organization. Our junior band, Exocubs, which is just seven years old, was created to harness and train a pool of talent to ensure that the adult band, Exodus, has a promising future, and we are very proud that Exocubs won the Ensemble Category in last year's Adult World Steel Band Championships. So we encourage our players to develop their natural skills, and the objective is to have all the

players at Grade III Level of music literacy, and those who wish to go right through to Grade VIII may continue to do so, and we would encourage them to do so. We are also looking to get young pan tuners, because they are important if we are to maintain good quality instruments."

Mr. Mohammed also credits the band's arranger, Pelham Goddard, who has been arranging the band's music for the past sixteen years; Pat Bishop, the band's drill master, and Jesus Acosta, who arranges the classical music. "Their contributions to the band," he said, "have been significant, and they have made an enormous impact on the quality, discipline and commitment exhibited by the players."

Scenes from Sagico Exodus' performance at Trinidad's 2005 Carnival Panorama Competition

