

Biography

Dr. Pelham Goddard, HBM

Pelham Goddard is a musician, arranger, composer, producer from St. James, Trinidad and Tobago. Over the past four decades, Pelham has left an indelible mark on the music industry in the Caribbean and on soca music throughout the world.

Goddard is one of Trinidad and Tobago's most influential musicians, arrangers, composers, and producers. Widely regarded as a cornerstone of modern soca and steelpan music, his work played a vital role in shaping the modern sound of Caribbean music from the 1970s onward.



Key Musical Contributions

- **Soca Pioneer:** Working closely with Ras Shorty I (Garfield Blackman) in the 1970s, Goddard helped develop and popularize the soca genre. He incorporated synthesizers, brass arrangements, and modern studio production into calypso, bridging traditional roots with contemporary dance rhythms.
- **Charlie's Roots:** In 1977, Goddard co-founded the legendary brass band **Charlie's Roots**, serving as its musical director and keyboardist. The band launched or elevated the careers of major soca stars, including David Rudder, Superblue (Austin Lyons), and Christopher "Tambu" Herbert.
- **Steelman Arranging:** Goddard is one of the most successful arrangers in Panorama history, most notably associated with **Republic Bank Exodus** steel orchestra. Under his musical direction, Exodus won four National Panorama titles (1992, 2001, 2003, and 2004) and multiple World Steelband Championships.
- **Prolific Producer & Composer:** He arranged and produced iconic tracks across four decades, including David Rudder's "Calypso Music," "The Hammer," and "Bahia Girl," as well as hits for Lord Kitchener, Calypso Rose, Mighty Sparrow, and Black Stalin.

Recognition & Honors

- **Hummingbird Medal (Gold):** Awarded by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago for his outstanding contribution to music and culture.
- **Honorary Doctorate:** Awarded an Honorary Doctor of Letters (DLitt) by the University of the West Indies (UWI) in 2022 for his lifelong dedication to Caribbean arts and music development.

The Charlie's Roots Era

Formed in 1977, **Charlie's Roots** is widely celebrated as one of the most musically sophisticated and influential brass bands in Trinidad and Tobago's history. Created through a partnership between record producer Rawlston Charles (owner of Charlie's Records in Brooklyn) and musical director Pelham Goddard, the band was established to modernize the sound of calypso and soca for both local carnival road march stages and the international studio recording scene.



Charlie's Roots during their peak era. Source: Facebook

Key Historical Milestones

- **Founding Concept (1977):** Rawlston Charles sought a dedicated, top-tier studio and backing band to record hits for his Brooklyn label. He tapped keyboardist and arranger Pelham Goddard to assemble the lineup, combining seasoned brass players with young vocal talent.

- **Launchpad for Soca Royalty:** The band served as the primary incubator for some of the biggest names in Caribbean music:
 - **Christopher "Tambu" Herbert:** Joined as an early lead vocalist, going on to win three consecutive Road March titles (1988–1990).
 - **David Rudder:** Joined initially as a backup vocalist in the late 1970s before stepping into the spotlight. In 1986, backed by Charlie's Roots, Rudder swept the Young King, Calypso Monarch, and Road March titles with "The Hammer" and "Bahia Girl."
 - **Superblue (Austin Lyons):** Early performances alongside Charlie's Roots helped launch his explosive career in the 1980s.
- **Studio & Live Dominance:** Beyond playing for massive Carnival fetes, Charlie's Roots functioned as the premier house band at KH Studios in Port of Spain, providing tight rhythm tracks and horn arrangements for countless legendary calypsonians, including Lord Kitchener, Mighty Sparrow, and Calypso Rose.

Impact on Soca & Caribbean Music

- **Modernizing the Soca Sound:** Pelham Goddard used Charlie's Roots as an experimental laboratory, blending synthesisers, electric basslines, and brass hooks with traditional Afro-Caribbean percussion. This set the standard for modern soca studio production.
- **Elevating Live Performances:** Before Charlie's Roots, brass bands often relied on rougher, improvised live performances. Goddard introduced strict rehearsal discipline, complex multi-part horn arrangements, and seamless transitions, raising the bar for live Carnival brass bands across the region.
- **Globalizing Soca:** Through regular tours across North America, Europe, and the Caribbean diaspora, Charlie's Roots exported the live Carnival experience, proving that soca could compete on international festival stages alongside funk, reggae, and salsa.

Republic Bank Exodus Steel Orchestra

Pelham Goddard's partnership with the **Republic Bank Exodus Steel Orchestra** (based in St. Augustine, Trinidad) is one of the most successful, defining collaborations in modern steelband history. Joining Exodus as resident arranger in 1989, Goddard helped transform the band into a dominant, globally recognized musical powerhouse.

The Four National Panorama Titles

Under Goddard's musical direction, Exodus captured four National Senior Conventional Steelband Panorama championships, establishing a reputation for crystal-clear voicings, infectious melodic phrasing, and immaculate execution:

- **1992 – "Savannah Party" (David Rudder):** Exodus won its very first National Panorama title. Goddard's arrangement blended high-energy brassy motifs with clean, percussive counter-melodies that captured the festive spirit of the Queen's Park Savannah.
- **2001 – "A Happy Song" (Roger George / Composed by Pelham Goddard):** Written and arranged by Goddard specifically for Exodus, this piece earned the orchestra its second title. It featured a distinctive, joyful chromatic flow that showcased the band's precise touch.
- **2003 – "Pandora" (De Fosto):** Regarded as one of the most complete Panorama arrangements of the 2000s, Goddard's rendition of De Fosto's track delivered dramatic tension, crisp bass runs, and seamless key changes.
- **2004 – "War 2004" (De Fosto):** Exodus secured back-to-back Panorama titles with a powerful, militaristic arrangement driven by heavy engine-room rhythm work and intricate frontline runs.

Dual Threat: Composer and Arranger

Unlike many steelband arrangers who rely solely on existing calypsos, Goddard frequently **composed custom Panorama selections** for Exodus. Tracks he penned specifically for the band include:

- *"Simple Thing"* (2nd place, 1995)
- *"Play My Music"* (2nd place, 1999)
- *"The Band Plays On"* (2nd place, 2000)
- *"Good News"* (3rd place, 2002)

Goddard's dual role ensured that Exodus's repertoire was tailored specifically to the tonal strengths and section balancing of their panyard.

Steelband Classical & World Championships

Goddard's work with Exodus extended far beyond Carnival soca arrangements. Collaborating closely with legendary choral director and co-arranger **Desmond Waithe**, Goddard led Exodus to multiple victories on the classical and international stage:

- **2002 World Steelband Music Festival:** Exodus took 1st place executing Lennox Sharpe's *"Rain Forest"* alongside classical interpretations.
- **2005 World Steelband Music Festival:** Goddard and Waithe directed Exodus to another world title, arranging Rossini's overture to *"Semiramide"* alongside Lord Kitchener's *"Pan in A Minor"*.

Signature Arranging Style with Exodus

- **Spacious Harmony:** Goddard avoided over-cluttering arrangements, giving tenor and double-second pans room to resonate cleanly without overlapping frequencies.
- **Engine-Room Precision:** Drawing on his studio experience with Charlie's Roots, he locked the percussion section (iron, congas, rimshots) tight with the bass pans, giving Exodus an instantly recognizable driving pulse.
- **Melodic Accessibility:** His arrangements retained a strong sing-along quality, making Exodus a fan favorite both in the judges' stands and on the road.

Pelham Goddard holds the record as the most successful arranger in Carnival history, having arranged a record **13 Trinidad and Tobago Road March winning tracks**.

While singers are usually the ones credited with Road March titles, Goddard was the musical architect behind the scenes for nearly two decades of Carnival dominance.

Pelham Goddard's 13 Road March Wins

Year	Song Title	Artiste / Vocalist
1977	"Give More Tempo"	Calypso Rose
1978	"Soca Jam" ("Come Leh We Jam")	Calypso Rose
1980	"Soca Baptist"	Blue Boy (SuperBlue)
1981	"Ethel"	Blue Boy (SuperBlue)
1983	"Rebecca"	Blue Boy (SuperBlue)
1986	"Bahia Girl"	David Rudder
1988	"This Party Is It"	Christopher "Tambu" Herbert
1989	"Free Up, Free Up"	Christopher "Tambu" Herbert

Year	Song Title	Artiste / Vocalist
1990	"No, No, We Eh Going Home"	Christopher "Tambu" Herbert
1991	"Get Something and Wave"	SuperBlue
1992	"Jab Jab"	SuperBlue
1993	"Bacchanal Time"	SuperBlue
1995	"Signal to Lara"	SuperBlue

Key Historical Highlights of the Record

- **Breaking the Gender Barrier (1977):** When Goddard arranged Calypso Rose's "Give More Tempo," it made her the first woman in history to win the Road March title.
- **Back-to-Back Hat-Tricks:**
 - From **1988 to 1990**, Goddard arranged three consecutive Road March winners for Christopher "Tambu" Herbert while leading Charlie's Roots.
 - Immediately following that, from **1991 to 1993**, he achieved a second consecutive hat-trick with SuperBlue during his peak jump-up era.
- **Charlie's Roots Engine:** 12 of those 13 titles were recorded and backed with his band Charlie's Roots, making them the most successful backing band in Carnival history.

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