

pan podium feature
center
stage with
STEELHAMMERS

'Steeling' your heart with pan music
by Alix Nicholson



The electric atmosphere is positively charged as the musicians jump, dance, sing and laugh as they play their steel pans on stage. It is impossible not to join in as the toe-tapping, heart-jumping rhythms really heat up, and the band's exuberance starts to take over. Danish steelband, Steelhammers, just cannot hide the fun they have on stage; and why would they want to, with a joyful, award-winning sound that captivates audiences around Europe.

Formed in 1997, at the municipal school in Allerød (a small town just outside of Denmark's capital, Copenhagen), Steelhammers is a group with a real gift for rhythm. Injecting their soul into every recording and performance, the group of twelve (12) talented players, aged twenty plus, have a passion for steel pans and playing with good vibes and positive energy. The result. A fun and fresh sound based on Caribbean cha-cha, calypso, mambo and soca beats that makes audiences want to dance up a storm.

Allerød Music School has been a solid learning ground and starting point for many steel bands, and even more enthusiastic solo pan-players. Tutor, Kåre Videbæk, has been a driving force, educating many students and facilitating the formation of other bands at the school. Steelhammers was the third band to be founded at Allerød, and is also currently the longest-running band to come out of the school. The aim at Allerød is to develop their students' musical capabilities through rhythm, beats and song. Steelhammers is testament to Allerød's teachers and proof that the school is achieving their aim.

Steelhammers has had two main areas of focus over the 13 years they have been playing together: to create and maintain great friendships among the members and – of course – to play their steel pans with plenty of energy and good vibes. Both of these become evident when the group performs, as the show is more than just a few party tunes. The band's members – Louise Krebs, Sisse Nielsen, Mads Ole Sander, Christoffer Hovaldt, Martin Herse, Carsten Gates, Anders Vendrup, Christian Håkansson, Mathias Rangel Wulff, Stine Kristensen, Rasmus Bechshøft and Cecilie Jæger Leidersdorff – smile, laugh, jump, dance and sing as they bang out their beats... and no one leaves a Steelhammers concert without a smile on their face and tired legs from dancing the night away.



Since its inception, the band has toured both in Denmark and around Europe almost every summer, hoping to extend the reach and expand the awareness of steelband music to the general population. They have played in major cities from Stavanger in Norway to Málaga in Spain and Firenze in Italy, taking their Caribbean sound and contagious party atmosphere with them wherever they go. In fact, so tight and spectacular is their performance, Steelhammers was awarded third place in the Danish Steelband Championships during the 2007 Copenhagen Carnival. Most recently, Steelhammers participated in a not-for-profit concert at Global Copenhagen – a venue for world music.

As the fun-loving band members would tell you, it has not been hard to keep their group going for more than a decade – strong friendships have been forged through a shared love for life, travel, music and the joy of entertaining people with their captivating tunes. Although some of the band's members have joined along the way, the majority of Steelhammers' musicians have been there from the band's beginnings in the '90s, helping to develop both the direction of the band and the sound that they deliver to create what is, today, an ever-evolving performance that captivates audiences internationally.

Despite their busy performing schedule, Steelhammers has even found time to get into the recording studio and now has several CDs under their belt. Their most recent recording, however, was taken live at the Copenhagen Jazz House, where they played to an enthusiastic 200-strong audience. The band really values the vibe it creates for its audiences – as the members themselves have said, the music is only one part of the whole experience; the atmosphere is what really completes a night out with Steelhammers.

So where to next for this vivacious Danish group? For the time being, Steelhammers limits their performances to concerts and parties. But the 'Hammers' say they will keep playing as long as their bodies will let them, enjoying the happiness and excitement that comes of playing their steel band music.