



news release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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UA Steel Drum Band documentaries premiering Feb. 15 on Western Reserve PBS

Jan. 25, 2011 — The history and heart of steel drum music and its journey from tropical Trinidad to northeast Ohio is the focus of “Hammer on Steel,” two programs premiering Feb. 15 on Western Reserve Public Media (formerly PBS 45 & 49).

Set in Akron and the Caribbean country of Trinidad and Tobago, both programs feature The University of Akron Steel Drum Band. They are the first documentaries about steel drum music ever shot in high definition.

Documenting the compelling and conflict-torn history of steel drum music, “Hammer on Steel: Bad Boys and Genius” premieres Feb. 15, at 9:30 p.m. on Western Reserve PBS WNEO.1/WEAO.1.

The second program, “Hammer on Steel: The Concert,” captures the UA Steel Drum Band’s 30th anniversary concert with Calypso singer Relator and percussionist Andy Narell last April at E.J. Thomas Hall on the UA campus. It premieres Feb. 15 at 10 p.m. on Western Reserve PBS WNEO.1/WEAO.1.

Forged less than 100 years ago in the heated struggle for independence in colonial Trinidad, steel drum music was often the source of tremendous conflict. As quickly as authorities seized and destroyed the handmade and hammered pans, Trinidadians would rebuild. Now the music has become a source of community pride, national identity, and economic development.

“We made ‘Hammer on Steel’ to tell the world about this wonderful music and the self-taught musicians who created it from the beginning — many of whom are now elderly and won’t be with us much longer,” explained Larry Snider, The University of Akron music professor who founded the UA Steel Drum Band in 1980.

“We also wanted to tell the unlikely story of how the Caribbean sounds of the steel drums have also found a home in less-than-tropical Northeast Ohio,” said Snider.

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Both “Hammer on Steel” programs were produced by Phil Hoffman, a faculty member in The University of Akron School of Communication and an Emmy award-winning documentary producer for Western Reserve PBS; Matt Dudack, the band’s artistic director and a faculty member and graduate of the UA School of Music; Richard Maurer, an audio engineer and graduate of the UA School of Music; and Snider. Tim McCarty directed the concert footage.

Support for the programs was provided by The University of Akron’s Office of the President, College of Creative and Professional Arts, School of Music, and School of Communication; The Kenneth L. Calhoun Charitable Trust; Radiation Oncology Physicians, LLC; Drs. Mark and Sandy Auburn; and numerous individuals.

Visit www.westernreservepbs.org/schedule.htm for additional air dates. Visit www.uasteelband.com for information about The University of Akron Steel Drum Band.

About Western Reserve Public Media

Western Reserve Public Media (formerly PBS 45 & 49) is owned and operated by Northeastern Educational Television of Ohio, Inc., a private, nonprofit corporation and consortium of Kent State University, The University of Akron and Youngstown State University. A trusted community resource, Western Reserve Public Media uses the power of commercial-free television and related services to enrich the lives of people through high-quality programming and educational services that teach, illuminate and inspire.

Western Reserve PBS, a service of the organization, is the only broadcast television service that reaches all of northeast Ohio. It is available to 1.8 million households and 4.4 million people in the Cleveland and Youngstown designated market areas. In an average week, over 500,000 households tune in. The organization also operates three standard definition channels, Fusion (WNEO.2/WEO.2), MHz Worldview (WNEO.3/WEO.3) and V-me (WNEO.4/WEO.4).

Through funding from eTech Ohio, Western Reserve Public Media provides K-12 educational technology training and instructional television programming to 21,500 educators and 256,700 students in eight Ohio counties. For more information about the organization, visit www.WesternReservePublicMedia.org or call 1-800-554-4549.

About The University of Akron Steel Drum Band

One of the country’s oldest and largest collegiate steel bands, The University of Akron Steel Drum Band was created in 1980 by Professor Larry Snider of the UA School of Music.

Committed to showcasing the rich cultural heritage of the steel drums, the band has become a well-known favorite throughout Northeast Ohio and beyond. Performing classical to jazz to Caribbean music, the band always draws full houses for its performances at Akron’s First Night and its annual spring concerts at The University of Akron’s E.J. Thomas Hall. It also has performed at Blossom Music Center, opening for the Boston Pops Esplanade Orchestra, the Cincinnati Pops, and the Cleveland Orchestra.

In 1987 the band was one of the first ensembles of its kind from the United States to travel to Trinidad to study performance, rehearsal techniques, and style from the original masters of the instrument.

Graduates of the UA Percussion Program now number more than 110 and are working as musicians and music educators around the globe. For more information about The University of Akron Steel Drum Band, visit www.uasteelband.com.