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HE'S GOT THE BEAT: Earl La Pierre plays his steel drum at Caribbean Flavas on Thursday.

Steel drummer can play it all

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Earl La Pierre plays tunes many people are familiar with.

Sometimes it can be an Abba hit or something by The Rolling Stones. But the Trinidad native is not playing the guitar nor is he playing any of the other instruments that are a common sight in this week's Harvest Jazz and Blues Festival. La Pierre has come to Fredericton to make music with the steel drum.

"I like to bring the steel drum to wherever I'm going," he said during a break in a concert Thursday at Caribbean Flavas on York Street. "Just to give the people some knowledge (and) some culture."

The Toronto resident is one of Canada's best-known steel-drum musicians. He also has a unique connection with the instrument's history in this country. His father is credited with bringing the steel drum to Toronto in the 1960s. La Pierre said he enjoys the chance to introduce the instrument to others.

"A lot of people who have seen it never knew where it came from," he said.

La Pierre, a veteran of about 20 years on the steel drum, said he can perform any style of music, from rock 'n' roll to classical.

"It makes me proud to come to a place like New Brunswick, that probably has a steel drum somewhere but it's not seen and it's not as recognized as in other places," La Pierre said.

Caribbean Flavas co-owner Naz Ali helped bring La Pierre to Fredericton. He said he wanted to bring a different type of sound to the city.

"There's definitely more stuff like this to come," he said.

La Pierre returns to the Caribbean Flavas stage for two shows today.