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PHOTOS BY JEFF K. MAYERS AND MARVIN HAMILTON

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Ricardo "Daddy Chinee" Melville performs We are One at the Chutney Soca Monarch finals at Skinner Park, San Fernando. **PHOTOS BY LINCOLN HOLDER**



Chutney Soca Monarch 2023 Ricardo "Daddy Chinee" Melville surrounded by some of his supporters.

# DADDY CHINEE OVERWHELMED

## AIMS TO CONTINUE PRODUCING POSITIVE AND ORIGINAL MUSIC

**BAVINA SOOKDEO**

“Overwhelmed” was the only word Ricardo “Daddy Chinee” Melville could say when asked how he felt about his recent win at the Chutney Soca Monarch 2023.

Held at Skinner Park, San Fernando on Fantastic Friday (February 17), a tearful Ricardo Melville placed first in the 28-year-old competition.

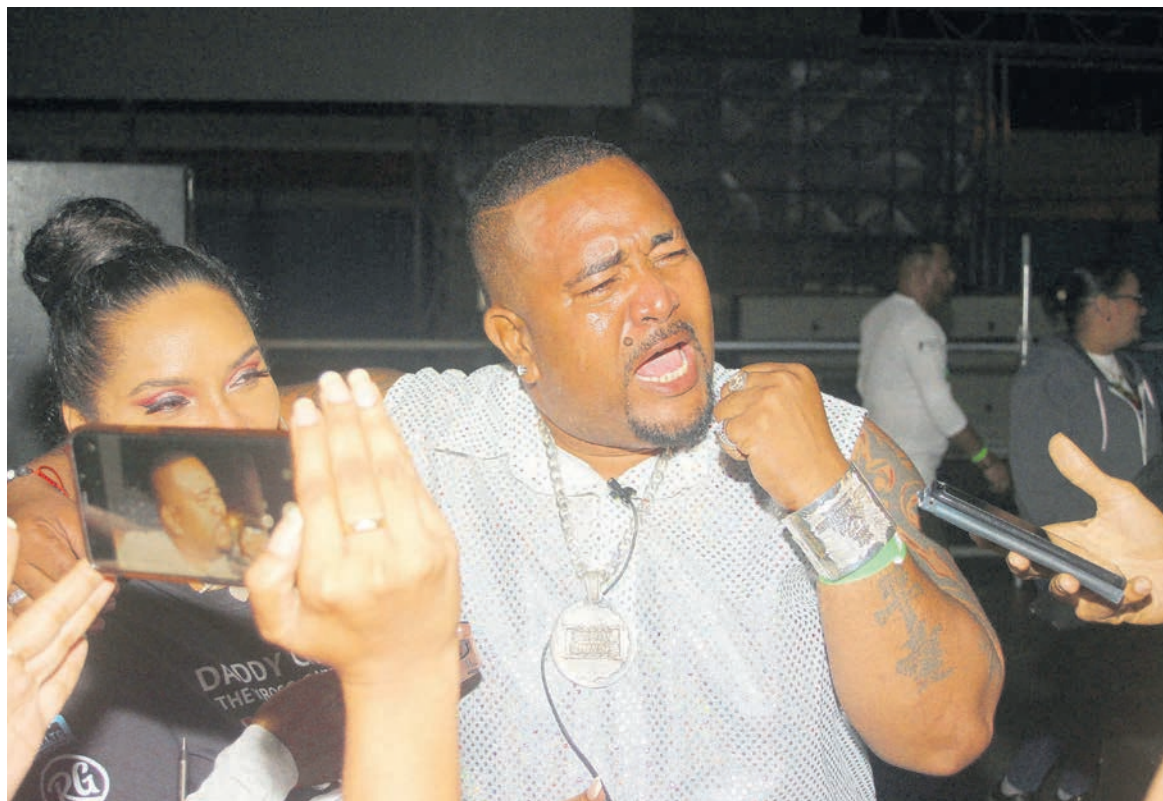
Melville’s exhilarating delivery of *We are One*, his nation-building song which celebrates TT’s rich culture and people, got him the first prize of \$400,000. It is a win the artiste said he was expecting since he was “confident in the positivity of the song.”

Many are speaking of *We are One* and the important message that it carries, one that is relevant for this time.

Asked where he got the idea for the song, Melville, who has been performing for over 25 years, said, “The idea came from Lewis Rowan (Tempo). He sent it to me and after listening to it, I made some changes to the lyrics to suit me. Therefore, the song was written by myself and Lewis.”

It was produced, arranged and mixed by Rishi Gayadeen of RG the Band and mastered by Nikholia Greene.

Melville’s energetic performance was also backed by a stage full of colourfully interesting props. His production included the Arouca Prisons Marching Band, Golden Boys Tassa Group, Sade Ellis Aerial



A tearful Daddy Chinee celebrates his victory at the finals of the 2023 Chutney Soca Monarch competition.

Arts silk cloth dancers, African dancers of the Exceptional School of Dance, Celebration of Our People – National Miss World Costume designed by Franklyn Jagdeo of Hott Stuff Promotions and portrayed by Krisa Bislal, moko jumbies and red devils from Junior Bisnath, Javin (African Drummers Team), Jaggessar costumes and the Premala New Generation Dance Academy.

A lot of hard work and effort went into Melville’s performance and production. He rehearsed twice with the band, for the semis and finals, and a number of times

by himself, all in preparation for the highly anticipated competition.

Did he encounter any challenges regarding his performance? The artiste insisted that he didn’t.

“My manager and wife handled everything. I just focused on my song, ensuring that I rendered it the right way.

Asked who he would like to thank for this win, the CSM champ said, “I have to give God thanks first. I also want to thank my team – Tricia Ramdhanie of Sunset Party Promotions TT, “Kevin of PDPI Ltd, my wife,

Sangeeta, Abigail of Premala New Generation Dance Academy, Rishi Gayadeen of RG The Band and all friends, family and fans.

Melville is intent on producing positive and original music. As for what he plans to do with his winnings, he said, “I plan on getting my daughter the best education.”

He has vowed to continue in the music industry until death. What keeps him going is believing in himself, his passion for music, hard work and perseverance. He said he aims to have his music “entice people all

year round, race does not matter.”

To others in his field he encouraged, “Don’t give up!” and to his critics he said, “Thanks for your input. You make me stronger!”

A crossover artiste singing soca, chutney soca, reggae, R&B and soca parang, Melville has accomplished several other wins including the Sangre Grande Soca Monarch in 1993, the Prime Minister’s Best Village Trophy (Chutney Soca category) in 2022, three-time winner of the CRC Raja title (2021, 2022, 2023). In 2022, he placed second in the Intellectual Chutney Monarch competition. He placed third in CSM in 2021 and 2022, third in the 100FM’s Groovy Soca Sing off in 2022 and fourth in the 103FM’s Chutney Soca Road March also in 2022.

Born in Tobago but raised in Trinidad, Melville started singing in school at churches at the age of 13. His professional career started at the age of 18.

How did he get the name Daddy Chinee? “My father being Chinese/East Indian, my relatives started calling me ‘Chinee boy’ but when I started singing and travelling, I added ‘Daddy’ because boy could not travel,” Melville laughed.

He has performed with bands such as Kaliyan, Trishul, Roy Cape Allstars, Sound Revolution, Jah Vibes, Melobugs, T&TEC Gayatones (now known as the GT Band), Dil-E-Nadan and is the former founder and owner of the band Hipnotic. He is currently a member of the RG Band led by Rishi Gayadeen.



Kerine Williams-Figaro



Karene Asche



Duane Ta'zyah O'Connor. **PHOTOS BY JEFF K MAYERS**



Heaven "Snakey" Charles



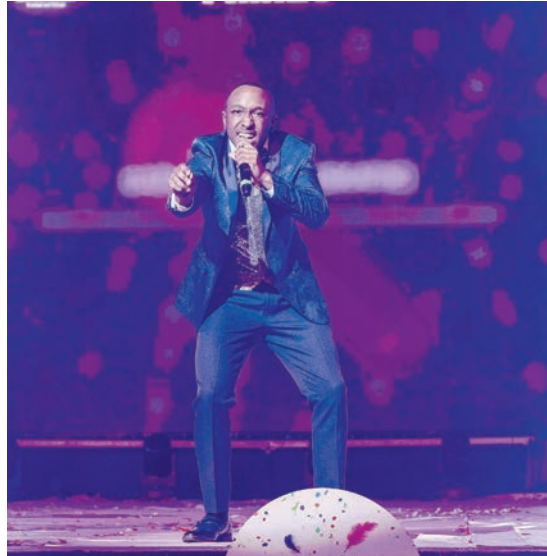
Carlos 'Skatie' James



Helon Francis



Mark Eastman



Ezekiel Yorke



Terri Lyons



Tameika Nandi Darius



Roderick "Chuck" Gordon



Maria Bhola-Paul

# TA'ZYAH MAKES CALYPSO MONARCH HISTORY

**H**istory was made on Carnival Sunday when, 11 years after Duane O'Connor won the national calypso monarch title, his son, Duane Ta'zyah O'Connor, 20, was crowned the 2023 Calypso Monarch at the Queen's Park Savannah, Port of Spain, on February 19. Performing Sing Hallelujah, Ta'zyah O'Connor topped a field of 12 finalists, including former monarchs Karene Asche, Roderick "Chuck" Gordon and Helon Francis; 2023 Young King Heaven "Snakey" Charles and this year's Calypso Queen Tameika Darius.

## RESULTS

CALYPSONIAN	SONG
Duane Ta'zyah O'Connor.....	Sing Hallelujah
Kerine "Tiny" Williams-Figaro.....	To You With Love
Karene Asche .....	Oasis
Roderick "Chuck" Gordon .....	Maths eh Matsing
Tameika Nandi Darius .....	Jahaji Bash
Terri Lyons .....	House Cleaning
Ezekiel Yorke .....	Being Human
Maria Bhola-Paul.....	People Man
Helon Francis .....	Mighty
Heaven "Snakey" Charles.....	What Yuh Need Again Trinbago
Mark Eastman .....	Pride
Carlos "Skatie" James.....	De New Normal

**BAVINA SOOKDEO**

**NWAC CALYPSO QUEEN ON ROAD TO SUCCESS**

**'I NEVER GAVE UP'**

**"N**ever give up, one day you will reach the top." This is the motto by which 36-year-old Tameika Darius lives and it has certainly come true.

Darius has been singing for over 30 years but has only accomplished her first major win this year as she was crowned NWAC Calypso Queen.

Darius' outstanding delivery of the calypso *Now More Than Ever* got her the prestigious title of Calypso Queen at the 37th edition of the competition which was hosted at Queen's Hall, St Ann's, on January 29 by the National Women's Action Committee (NWAC).

Her exhilarating performance of the calypso composed by Brian London has left many in awe. Darius was dressed in our national colours and went down on her knees calling out to the country and its citizens to stand united during these trying times and work towards a greater TT.

"Trinbago now more than ever, we need to stand together. For more than 60 years we have depended on each other, we need each other more than ever, we need to show we are one nation standing together." Words truly deserving of the hearty applause received.

She said about her success, "Winning the national Calypso Queen title still

feels surreal. I'm extremely happy that all the hard work and sacrifice has finally paid off. It's my first major title and first time in that competition. This title was handed down from my sister and the fact that my son (my biggest supporter and prodigy) was there to witness my victory made it even better." She added that her most rewarding experience was seeing her son, Xhaiden, witnessing her victory and knowing it's a step in the right direction for him. Xhaiden, six, also found calypso success this year, winning the San Fernando junior monarch competition for primary school students.

Coming from a talented family, Darius started singing calypso at the age of five. Her mother wrote calypsoes for her sister who also started singing at a tender age. Ambitious as ever, Darius wanted to follow in her sister's footsteps so she asked her mother to write a calypso for her. "She refused because I had a very heavy/husky talking voice," Darius explained, "but after much hesitation, she eventually penned a calypso called *Parents in Distress* and I

won my first competition."

In her junior calypso days, Darius' mother continued writing her songs. Over the years though, she has worked with a number of other writers making her debut in the Calypso Revue tent in 2007. That same year, she took the South Calypso Monarch title with a Gregory Ballantyne composition, *Through the eyes of a Gangster*, and *No Interconnection* by Larry Harewood. In 2011, she was a finalist in the National Calypso Monarch Competition with *Ungrateful* by Winsford "Joker" Devine.

She pointed out, *Now More Than Ever*, the song I won the title with, was written by Brian London and my 2023 hit *Susheila's Jahaji Bash* was written by Christophe Grant who composed four out of the five songs that took me to the semifinals." She placed fifth in this year's calypso monarch final.

Asked how she selects a theme for her songs, Darius admitted that while she may choose a topic or have input, most times she leaves it up to the writer.

With every success comes its own set of challenges and for Darius it

was no different. She disclosed, "The greatest challenge I faced this year was preparing both my son and myself for the Carnival season as some performances and auditions clashed."

Despite her challenges, displaying qualities of a true queen, Darius made it happen. "I work by appointments so I am able to schedule time for rehearsals for both my son and myself," she pointed out. "I take my singing very seriously so most of my spare time is spent rehearsing because I believe there's always room for improvement."

The singer's family has also been very supportive of her journey. Around this time of year, a few of her family members get together to put things in place for her so she can focus on her stage performance. "I must make mention of my mom, Angela Darius, and my cousin, Adanna, who after seeing me cry for almost half day (because the outfit I had planned to wear in Skinner Park didn't turn out as expected), spent all of the Friday night before the competition, constructing a new outfit which looked excellent on stage. My cousin Leslie too, works in the background to ensure the technical aspect of my performance is always on point," stated Darius.

Asked if she would like to offer any words of advice to those involved in the artform, the Calypso Queen said, "Keep going and let's nurture the youths for they are the ones to carry on our legacy."

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Players, friends and family of Naparima Combined embrace each other after being announced winners of Junior Panorama (Secondary Schools) at Queen's Park Savannah, Port of Spain. **PHOTOS BY ANGELO MARCELLE**



A bass player from Naps Combined performs Big Bad Soca with the band at the national Junior Panorama competition at the Queen's Park Savannah, Port of Spain.

**BAVINA SOOKDEO**

**N**aparima Girls' High School and Naparima College students had much to celebrate this Carnival season. Their band – Naps Combined Steel Orchestra returned to winner's row in the secondary schools category of the 2023 National Junior Panorama competition.

They players won with their rousing rendition of Big Bad Soca by Bunji Garlin at the finals, Queen's Park Savannah, Port of Spain on January 22. The arrangement was done by Shaquille Vincent with Desree Seecharan and Kevon Duncan as drill masters.

Roger Ali, the acting principal of Naparima College, said both schools are extremely grateful for the victory since it serves as a reward for the many hours of work put in by the arranger, drill masters, and most importantly, the players.

Band member Joshua Eversley agreed. "It's a new feeling for sure but a welcome one. Even back in primary school I hadn't played for any sort of Panorama event, so it's definitely a new environment for me at least. For my first time competing not just with NAPS Combined, but in Panorama as a whole, it's very amazing to know that I can call myself and the whole band champions."

Another player Daniella Maharaj felt overjoyed. "I am in love with being part of a champion team. We deserved that first place. We worked with conscientiousness and we were meticulous so that we could achieve our goal. And I saw for myself that hard work indeed pays off."

The emotions were similarly felt by Kadeer Mohammed and Aiden Roy Mohammed. "I am overjoyed," said Kadeer. "It feels like it isn't real, I am very proud of my band members and amazed by their talents." Aiden agreed that the title was well-deserved. "We all put out an overwhelming effort, both players and support team alike," he said.

Vincent, who chose Big Bad Soca to arrange for the band, felt it was important to celebrate our culture.

# NAPS COMBINED ELATED OVER RETURN TO WINNERS' ROW

"Everyone's song selection process is different. I always try to choose a piece that was never done for a Panorama before. Big Bad Soca was a song I always liked and I love the message, the praises sung about our culture and soca music, in particular. The lyrical content is also uplifting, so this was a plus."

Naps Combined was conceived by former music teacher of Naparima Girls, Bernadette Roberts. She approached then principal Carolyn Bally-Gosine who bought into the idea. "It was thought that we would not have had enough members from our school," explained acting principal, Karen Bally, "so we decided to invite the boys from our brother school to join us, and the rest is history."

The initial stages were challenging as neither school had the required number of pans but they were fortunate to obtain the support of San Fernando Mayor Junia Regrello and got use of Heritage Skiffle Steel Orchestra's pans.

Additionally, Unipet came on board as a major sponsor of the band. "We have also been very fortunate to have members of staff who understand the importance of activities such as these and who dedicate themselves to seeing it to the end," said Bally who made special mention of Kathy Ann Cedeno-Cook (Naparima Girls') and Amanda Ramjohn (Naparima College) – co-managers who have been with the band from its inception.

There is no doubt that the band encountered challenges in the face of the covid19 pandemic and with students leaving school as they graduated. However, this was

overcome with the recruitment of a new group of prospective players.

"With guidance from those in charge of the music and a lot of hard work and practice that void disappears. This year in particular, we had a surplus of inexperienced players. To combat this, we would have done some rudimentary and technical work before starting to teach the arrangement," said Cedeno-Cook.

As such, training began in October with sessions once a week. By November that increased to twice a week. As the preliminaries and finals approached, training was seven days a week. The players also sacrificed their Christmas vacation as the band put in all-day training sessions.

So what can we expect from Naps Combined in the future? The band hopes to be more than a Panorama band. "We see ourselves in the not too distant future acquiring some pans of our own," said Cedeno-Cook. "We would like to build our band's repertoire so that we can organise a concert to showcase the talents of our young players. Ultimately, we aim to form a stage side that would be able to play at various events."

Although Naps Combined only started in September 2017 and entered the Junior Panorama competition in 2018, its success has been impressive. Its wins include:

- 2018: 2nd – Fallin by Kes the Band**
- 2019: 1st – No Weapon by LFS Music**
- 2020: 3rd – Back to Basics by Aaron Duncan**
- 2023: 1st – Big Bad Soca by Bunji Garlin**

# UPTOWN FASCINATORS ARRANGER: NOTHING BEATS WINNING

**BAVINA SOOKDEO**

**S**teelband arranger Ojay Richards still finds it surreal that his band, Tobago's Uptown Fascinators, not only won this year's Panorama small conventional bands crown, but did so for a second time.

"It's a surreal feeling because we prepared hard for it. We had the goal of winning but nothing beats that feeling even though you know you're in that position to win the competition," Richards said.

"There is nothing better than hearing the band name

called in the first position," he smiled. "We were very ecstatic about it and I feel really great about taking the title two times in a row."

Uptown Fascinators won in 2020, when Carnival was last held before a two-year hiatus owing to the covid19 pandemic.

The band's energetic performance of Dollar Wine by Colin Lucas won them the 2023 title at the Panorama small bands finals held at Queen's Park Savannah, Port of Spain on January 14. They placed first with 281 points.

**UPTOWN FASCINATORS:** continues on page 7



Uptown Fascinators perform Dollar Wine at the Panorama finals on January 14.

# SMALL BAND, LARGE SOUND

**UPTOWN FASCINATORS:** from page 6

The arranger first thanked the band members and the management for its success. He further added, "I want to thank anybody who believed in me and trusted in me and in my guidance as an arranger. They put their full trust in me, first of all just to arrange the sound and tune of choice and everything, and I could not have done it without that support from the band, the management, the general supporters and the people who would have been holding me down behind the scenes as well."

This is Richards' fifth year arranging for Uptown Fascinators.

"In the first year of me arranging, we made it to the finals for the first time in the band's existence. We then placed fifth in the second year. In the third year, we placed sixth and in the following two years we won consistently."

As for why Dollar Wine was chosen, Richards pointed out, "I like to choose older songs as I think that I could work a lot better with music that comes from the older tunes."

But it isn't just the older tunes that appeal to him. He explained that it must be a hit song that even the old and young can identify with, remember and know.

"When I brought the song to the captain, she just knew that I would have picked a song like that because it fits my style as an arranger," he laughed. His idea for this song dawned on him in a conversation with a colleague from the University of TT who suggested the song would be a good option for Panorama.

"I never really thought about it before," said Richards, "and when I actually listened to it I told him, 'You know what, you're right. I think I'll do that with Uptown,' and that's how it came about."

Early in the season, members of the band rehearsed every day with the exception of weekends. When it got closer to competition time, they practised every night. "On weekends, we practised during the day and on weekdays, we practised at night," said Richards.

Questioned on the challenges, Richards said, "Just getting competent players is a challenge but I don't have a huge problem with Uptown anymore because the band has grown and understands my arrangement and my style."

He disclosed that in the early days it was a bit challenging. "Certain things I know that I might have had to pull back, or put in, or not be able to, because the band may not have been able to take it," said Richards, "but they have the music, the skill and the level now has grown from when I started."

But with challenges come tremendous rewards and according to the arranger, the best reward is winning Panorama. "I cannot ask for a better reward than that because we're going into the competition wanting to win and then that's exactly what we are doing, we're winning."

Uptown Fascinators' motto is Small band, large sound. "Whenever you hear this small band, we sound like a large band," Richards boasted. As for what to expect from this small band with a large sound, Richards insists, "More success and growing. Maybe one day we can jump up into the medium or large category...that is the future plan for the band, just to grow."

What does the arranger advise others who wish to be winners in the arena?

"Learn your theory. Music theory is very important. That plays a huge role in the success of Uptown Fascinators and me, as

an arranger," he explained. "I started off arranging without music theory. I just did not really feel like doing music theory, but after restructuring how I approach my arrangements, I started scoring my music. I'm able to see how the music spreads, what is clashing with what, and what is not clashing. It is a great asset."

Pan Trinbago president Beverley Ramsey-Moore celebrates with Uptown Fascinators Steel Orchestra after their winning performance of Dollar Wine by Colin Lucas during the Panorama Small Conventional Steel Orchestra finals at the Queen's Park Savannah, on January 14. **PHOTOS BY AYANNA KINSALE**



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Guaico Presbyterian.



South East Port of Spain. **PHOTOS BY ANGELO MARCELLE**

# JUNIOR PANNISTS SHOW THEIR SKILLS

**T**he national Junior Panorama competition took place on January 22 at the Queen's Park Savannah, Port of Spain. From early morning the young musicians came out to show off their skills in three categories – Primary Schools, Secondary Schools and Under 21 (non-school). When all was said and done, Guaico Presbyterian Primary School completed a hat-trick, winning the primary schools category for the third consecutive time, while former secondary schools winners, Naps Combined (Naparima College and Naparima Girls High School), claimed the top spot again. T&TEC Tropical Angel Harps Youth Steel Orchestra topped the Under 21 (non-school) category.

## RESULTS

### PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- Guaico Presbyterian
- St Mary's Government
- Success RC (tie)
- St Gabriel's RC (tie)
- Vance River RC
- Febeau Government
- Couva AC (tie)
- Tamana RC (tie)
- Carenage Boys Government
- Santa Maria RC

### SECONDARY SCHOOLS

- Naps Combined
- South East PoS
- BATCE (Bishop Anstey and Trinity College East)
- Holy Cross College
- QRC/Providence
- St Joseph's Convent, St Joseph
- Bishop Anstey PoS
- St Francois Girls' College
- El Dorado East
- Pleasantville Secondary

### UNDER 21 (NON-SCHOOL)

- T&TEC Tropical Angel Harps Youth Steel Orchestra
- Shell Invaders Youth Steel Orchestra
- BP Renegades Youth Steel Orchestra
- Trinidad All Stars Youth Steel Orchestra
- Fonclaire Juniors
- Hadco Phase II Youth Steel Orchestra
- First Citizens Supernovas Youth Steel Orchestra (tie)
- HCC Alumknights Steel Orchestra (tie)
- Desperadoes Youth Steel Orchestra
- Panasonic Connection Steel Orchestra
- Cordettes Academy for the Arts
- Pandemonium Youth Steel Orchestra
- Queens Beach Salybia Beach Resort Hotel Matthew's Steel Orchestra Music Academy



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# CHORD MASTERS, UPTOWN FASCINATORS CLAIM EARLY TITLES

Chord Masters steel orchestra walked away with the first Carnival 2023 title when the San Juan band won the single pan Panorama competition on December 7, 2022. It was a long night at the Queen's Park Savannah, Port of Spain as the semifinal was cancelled owing to bad weather and all bands moved to the final.

The next band to claim a Panorama title was Tobago band Uptown Fascinators which won the small bands category on January 14.



Newtown Playboys.  
PHOTO BY ROGER JACOB



T&TEC New Eastside Dimensio.  
PHOTO BY AYANNA KINSALE



Chord Masters steel orchestra. PHOTO BY ROGER JACOB

## RESULTS

### BAND TUNE OF CHOICE

#### SINGLE PAN

Chord Masters.....	First Experience
San Juan East Side Symphony.....	Earthquake
Newtown Playboys.....	Bashment to Carnival
T&T Fire Service.....	Caribbean Connection
T&T Police Service.....	Jab Jab
Metro Stars.....	De Band Coming (tie – 6th)
Gonzales Sheikers.....	Out and Bad (tie – 6th)
Trinidad Nostalgic.....	Curry Tabanca (tie – 8th)
La Famllie United Steel Orchestra.....	Get Something and Wave (tie – 8th)
T&T Prison Service.....	Take Ah Borrow (tie – 8th)
Platinum.....	Party Time Again (tie – 8th)
Marsicans.....	Pan By Storm
Arima Allstars.....	One Day
Uni Stars.....	Flag Woman
La Creole Pan Groove.....	Nah Do That
D' Original Woodbrook Modernaires...	Fiery (tie – 16th)
San Juan All Stars.....	Pan Night and Day (tie – 16th)
Pan On The Move.....	Long Time
Woodbrook Playboyz.....	Kakaroch
World Wide.....	Oh La La
Curepe Polyphonics Steel Orchestra.....	Band From Space
Pan Jammers.....	Rainorama
Nu Pioneers Pan Groove.....	Get Something and Wave (tie – 23rd)
Brimblers.....	All Ah We Is One Family (tie – 23rd)
Pan Elites.....	Long Time (tie – 25th)
Blanca 47.....	The Will (tie – 25th)
Scrunter's Pan Groove.....	Mash Up (tie – 27th)
Stardust Steel Orchestra.....	Breakaway (tie – 27th)
Pan Stereonetts.....	Fantastic Friday
Royal Stars Pan Symphony.....	Festival Song



San Juan Eastside Symphony.  
PHOTO BY ROGER JACOB



St Margaret's Superstars  
PHOTO BY AYANNA KINSALE

#### SMALL BANDS

Uptown Fascinators.....	Dollar Wine
T&T Defence Force.....	Raising Dust
St. Margaret's Superstars.....	Too Young To Soca (tie)
T&TEC New East Side Dimension.....	I Love Being Me (tie)
Fascinators Pan Symphony.....	Long Time
Highlanders.....	A Better Tomorrow
Arima Golden Symphony.....	This Melody Sweet
Roadblock Steel Orchestra.....	Dear Promoter
Southern Stars.....	Out and Bad (tie)
Tobago Pan-Thers.....	Get Up And Dance (tie)
Fusion Steel.....	By Any Means
Alpha Pan Pioneers.....	Cheers to Life
Genesis Pan Groove.....	Burn Dem
C&B Crown Cordaans.....	Mash Up
Panasonic Connection.....	Calling Meh
West Side Symphony.....	Calypso Music



TT Police Service.  
PHOTO BY ROGER JACOB



TT Defence Force.  
PHOTO BY AYANNA KINSALE



bp Renegades. PHOTOS BY ROGER JACOB



Republic Bank Exodus.

# BP RENEGADES ALL THE WAY

There was no stopping the band from Charlotte Street, Port of Spain this year as bp Renegades led the competition in the large bands category of Panorama from the first note to the last outro. The band entranced judges and music lovers alike with Duvone Stewart's arrangement of Leroy "Black Stalin" Calliste's Feel to Party. With the win, bp Renegades and Desperadoes are now tied for most Panorama titles – 12 each.

## RESULTS

BAND	TUNE OF CHOICE
bp Renegades .....	Feel to Party
Republic Bank Exodus .....	Tourist Leggo
Nutrien Silver Stars.....	Engine Room
Shell Invaders.....	Bun Dem
Massy Trinidad All Stars .....	Stage on Fire
Hadco Phase II Pan Groove.....	We Come Out To Party (tie)
NLCB Buccooneers.....	Bun Dem (tie)
T&TEC Tropical Angel Harps.....	Hall of Fame
Desperadoes.....	Long Live Soca
First Citizens Supernovas.....	Jubilation
NLCB Fonclaire .....	Long Live Soca
Proman Starlift.....	Witch Doctor
Heritage Petroleum Skiffle .....	Bun Dem



Shell Invaders.



Massy All Stars.



Nutrien Silver Stars.



Proman Starlift



Couva Joylanders.



Katzenjammers. PHOTOS BY DAVID REID



Pamperi.

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# ANOTHER TOBAGO PAN CHAMP KATZENJAMMERS TOPS MEDIUM BANDS

It was another big Panorama win for Tobago when Black Rock steel band Katzenjammers, led by Pan Trinbago president Beverly Ramsey-Moore, won the medium bands category on Tobago soil. At the final, held on February 12 at Parade Grounds, Dwight Yorke Stadium, Bacolet, 2020 champions Couva Joylanders placed second and Pamperi placed third.

## RESULTS

BAND	TUNE OF CHOICE
Katzenjammers	Tell Me Why
NGC Couva Joylanders	The Fete Ent Over Yet
Pamperi	The People's Champions
Curepe Scherzando	Mash Up
Dixieland	Lorraine (tie 5th)
Pan Elders	One For The Road (tie 5th)
Courts Sound Specialists of Laventille	Barbara (tie 7th)
Sforzata	Johnny (tie 7th)
NGC Steel Xplosion	Out and Bad (tie 9th)
Siparia Deltones	The Meeting Place (tie 9th)
Potential Symphony	Ah Come Out To Play
Arima Angel Harps	Carnival Tabanca

**BAVINA SOOKDEO**

**P**riya Nagassar has been crowned this year's Carnival Queen with her portrayal of The Mother of All Carnival Celebrations, from the band Celebration of the People.

Saying she feels "ecstatic, elated and overwhelmed" after winning the coveted title, Nagassar is, most importantly, proud of herself for reaching this far in life.

While this is her first time winning the title, Nagassar, 22, is no stranger to mas as she has been playing from the tender age of four.

"My grandmother (mother's mother) met Franklyn Jagdeo and Hott Stuff Promotions on Nikki on the Promenade and she insisted that I play mas with him and his band," explained Nagassar.

She played in the band as a masquerader till the age of 15 and in 2015, she was given the opportunity to play as an individual. That was the first year that Franklyn Jagdeo and Hott Stuff Promotions captured the Individual of the Year title.

From 2016, Nagassar was given the opportunity to play as a junior queen until the age of 18. In 2016 and 2017, she placed in the top ten in the finals and in 2018, she placed third.

She didn't play in 2019 because the band did not yet have a senior band. Due to covid19 and lockdowns, there was no Carnival in 2020 and 2021 but during the 2021-2022 period, Jagdeo decided to venture into a senior band and a great opportunity was once again given to Nagassar – she was asked to be a senior queen for the band.

"In 2022, the first year I played as a senior queen, I placed tenth in the finals," she said.

"This year, 2023, I placed eighth in the preliminary results and qualified for the semifinals. In the semifinals, I also placed 8th and qualified for the finals. In the finals oh well, I made history," she laughed.

While Nagassar always believed in herself, she never placed first in any competition.

"I started to think I was doing something wrong," she disclosed.

"So, I started doing things differently on stage. I always kept my smile while performing but I decided to do more, so, I began singing (making sure that they saw my lips moving) and using my hands to interact with the judges."

She started doing this in 2018 and placed third.

"I thought to myself, 'Well I am doing something right this time."

"For every performance, I try my best to be interactive towards the judges and before leaving the stage I blow kisses and give a wave to them," she smiled.

Nagassar's elaborate costume was designed by Jagdeo.

Asked how he feels about the win, Jagdeo said, "I was elated. This has always been a dream of mine since I was a child. It is definitely a dream come true. I enjoy my job and it gives me great pride and joy to see my design get into the finals on the big stage at the Queen's Park Savannah. It was pure joy for myself and my team which includes my father, Frankie, mother, Jenny, Erron Sookdeo, Navi Jagdeo, Sunil Jagdeo and Navin Matai. I thank God for this blessing and I am always grateful."

Questioned on the idea behind Nagassar's costume, Jagdeo, who has been designing for close to 24 years, explained, "Coming out of the pandemic and given the chance to design and produce the costumes, I felt like celebrating. I was in a celebratory mood and



Priya Nagassar portrays The Mother of All Carnivals – Celebrations at Dimanche Gras during the Queen of Carnival finals held at the Queen's Park Savannah, Port of Spain on February 19. **PHOTOS BY JEFF K MAYERS**

# CARNIVAL QUEEN: MAS IS A PART OF ME



Queen of Carnival Priya Nagassar stands with her male counterpart, 2023 King of Carnival Raymond Mark after the two were crowned at Dimanche Gras on February 19.

what could be more fitting than a costume with the slogan, The Mother of All Carnival – Celebrations?"

Asked what went into the design of the costume, Jagdeo pointed out that he usually starts with the frame which he envisions and then discusses it with his father, since he constructs the frame.

"No sketches are done on paper," disclosed Jagdeo, "just my vision in my head."

The Mother of All Carnivals – Celebrations took about one week and two days to complete.

"A team of five, we worked night and day."

Fabrics, braids, gemstones, foil, netting, feathers, steel, fibre glass, aluminium rods and PVC pipes were all used to create the masterpiece. Every aspect is discussed with his co-producers, Erron Sookdeo, Navi Jagdeo and Navin Matai.

Asked if he encountered any challenges with the piece, Jagdeo pointed out that his challenge is always with getting materials to go with his visions.

"I have a budget to work with because I am not a sponsored band so I always have to keep my spending in mind."

As for how he feels about working with Nagassar, Jagdeo said, "It is always a pleasure working with her. She is fun, so bubbly and she has a very happy, loving personality so designing for her comes easily."

While the bubbly Nagassar works as a clerical assistant trainee at councillor John Lezama's office in Caparo/Mamoral, rehearsals and fittings were of no issue for her as her boss supported her to the fullest. Rehearsals only happened once or twice before Carnival though and it was to try the costume to ensure she was comfortable.

Nagassar's family is also quite supportive of her involvement in the band.

"My family fully supports me," she pointed out. "If it was not for my family I wouldn't have been able to do this. They have been there from the very beginning and they continue to do so. My mom and dad are extremely proud of me as well as the other members of my family. I would definitely love to thank my grandmother (Nani, as I fondly call her) for getting me into Hott Stuff Promotions."

Asked if she had any words of advice for other queens, Nagassar said, "Always be confident. No matter what you place remember you are always a winner because not everyone can go on a stage and do what you do. It's a difficult thing to do, you feel anxious and you have a thousand things on your mind before entering the stage. But at the end of the day, not everyone can do the things we do. Go brave and success is sure to be yours."

So what does Nagassar plan to do with her winnings? She's in it for the love of it, she said.

"To be honest I do not even know how much is the prize, however, whatever it is, I will be giving it to my band leader, Franklyn Jagdeo for he is the one who did the design of the costume. It's his talent and his costume. I did not even have to pay to play and I will happily give the money to my band leader."

The young Nagassar lives by the motto – Do your best and the rewards will be granted. She explained that God answers prayers slowly but surely.

"You need to take one step at a time. Nothing happens before its timing."

As for her future plans, she disclosed, "I surely plan on defending my crown. I will be playing mas as long as I am able to. It's a part of me and who I am and nobody can change that."



Xavi Harriot, Guardian Of The Shaolin Temple. PHOTOS BY ANDREA DE SILVA



Makayla Questel-Frederick, Moonlit Matura.

# FOUR JUNIOR CARNIVAL MONARCHS REIGN

Two Junior Kings and two Junior Queens of Carnival were crowned in 2023. The competition was divided into two categories – school and non-school participants.

Among the kings, Jarel Peters, portraying A Musical Explosion, from the band Sweet Trinidad is the winner in the non-school

category while the schools winner is Xavi Harriot, Guardian of the Shaolin Temple, from the band Passage to China. The non-school queen is Alyssa Sirjoo, who portrayed Mama Africa, from the band Ubuntu, while Makayla Questel-Frederick, portraying Moonlight Matura from the band Let Here Be Light is the schools winner.

## RESULTS

NAME	PORTRAYAL	BAND
<b>JUNIOR KINGS</b>		
<b>NON-SCHOOL PARTICIPANTS</b>		
Jarel Peters	A Musical Explosion	Sweet Trinidad
Enzi Davis	The Face of Humanity	Ubuntu
Shamarq Azario Collis	Like Fish Outta Water	Mauvaise Langue
Samuel Jackson	Mysterious Fauci D' Gladiator	Dawn of a New Day
Joel Mack	Taniwah – The Hydra Reborn	Wonders of This World – A Tribute to TT
Antonio Rampersad	Pan Explosion	Dat Is Ah Trini
Malachi Gittens	Arharzel the Blue Dragon	Tributes to the Heroes of Traditional Mas
Merrick Barnes	Illumination	Classix Productions: Dawn of a New Day
Josiah Ferrier	Midnight Robber	Outside Nice
Josiah Sutton	Mistah Pandemic	National Treasures
<b>SCHOOL PARTICIPANTS</b>		
Xavi Harriot	Guardian of the Shaolin Temple	Passage to China
Kymani Brooklyn Browne	Pan Under the Stars	Let There Be Light
Peter Barrow	Can This Dragon Dance	Passage to China
Rheim Purcell	My Love of Country: A Tribute to Carlisle Chang	Outta D Artist Attic

## JUNIOR QUEENS

<b>NON-SCHOOL PARTICIPANTS</b>		
Alyssa Sirjoo	Mama Africa	Ubuntu
Netanya Phillip	Dance La Reine Rive	Dat is ah Trini
Kioni Oxley	Dance Soucoyant Dance: A Tribute to Hilton Cox Fire in De Savannah	Dance – Know Yuh Icon
Reanna Persaud	D Spirit of Carnival	Sweet Trinidad
Surayya Carrington	Mutation	Dawn of A New Day
Jayda Forde	Firebird: The Awakening	Dawn of a New Day
Levaughn Clarke	Madame Frou-Frou	The Tribute
Jada Charles	Oil Spill in the Gulf of Paria	National Treasures
J'Nai Edwards	Jewel of the Reef	A Trip to Tobago
J'Anna Bethel	It's Celebration Time	Trinidad: We Flying High 2, It's a Celebration

<b>SCHOOL PARTICIPANTS</b>		
Makayla Questel-Frederick	Moonlit Matura	Let Here Be Light
Azelia Mills	Beautiful But Deadly	Passage to China
Ciara Selman	Nandi – A Tribute to Helen Humphrey	Outta D Artist Attic
Bryell Mills	Jade Princess	Passage to China



Jarel Peters, A Musical Explosion.



Alyssa Sirjoo, Mama Africa.



Raymond Mark, The Feathered Serpent Creature Ku Kul Kan. **PHOTOS BY JEFF K MAYERS**



Joseph Lewis, Udeveli Oluhlaza – The Haunted Jab of Canboulay.



Kyle Anthony Matas, Creatio Ex Nihlo – The External Source of Light Divine.



Marlon Rampersad, Hades King of The Underworld.



Ravi Lakhan, Tribute – Jesters Of The Tainted Past



Ronald Barney Blaize, Legacy of The Mighty Spartans.

MARK OF A KING

THE FEATHERED SERPENT CREATURE KU KUL KAN



Tekel Sylvan, Believe it or Not They Are Here.

**M**ark Raymond is the 2023 King of Carnival. Raymond, who designed his costume, portrayed The Feathered Serpent Creature Ku Kul Kan from the band Mythical Creatures. His portrayal was inspired by Mayan mythology: Ku Kul Kan was worshipped as a god with great strength, having control over the air and the wind.



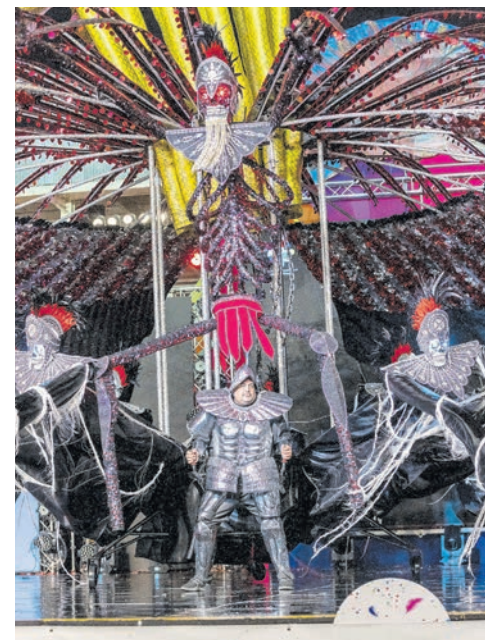
Joel Lewis, Waterfall Oracle.

RESULTS

NAME	PORTRAYAL
Raymond Mark .....	The Feathered Serpent Creature Ku Kul Kan
Ted Eustace .....	El Conquistador
Joseph Lewis .....	Udeveli Oluhlaza – The Haunted Jab of Canboulay
Kyle Anthony Matas .....	Creatio Ex Nihlo – The Eternal Source Of Light Divine
Ravi Lakhan .....	Tribute – Jesters of the Tainted Past
Joel Lewis .....	Waterfall Oracle
Russell Grant .....	The Resurrection Mule
Ronald Barney Blaize .....	Legacy of the Mighty Spartans
Marlon Rampersad .....	Hades of the Underworld
Tekel Sylvan .....	Believe It Or Not They Are Here

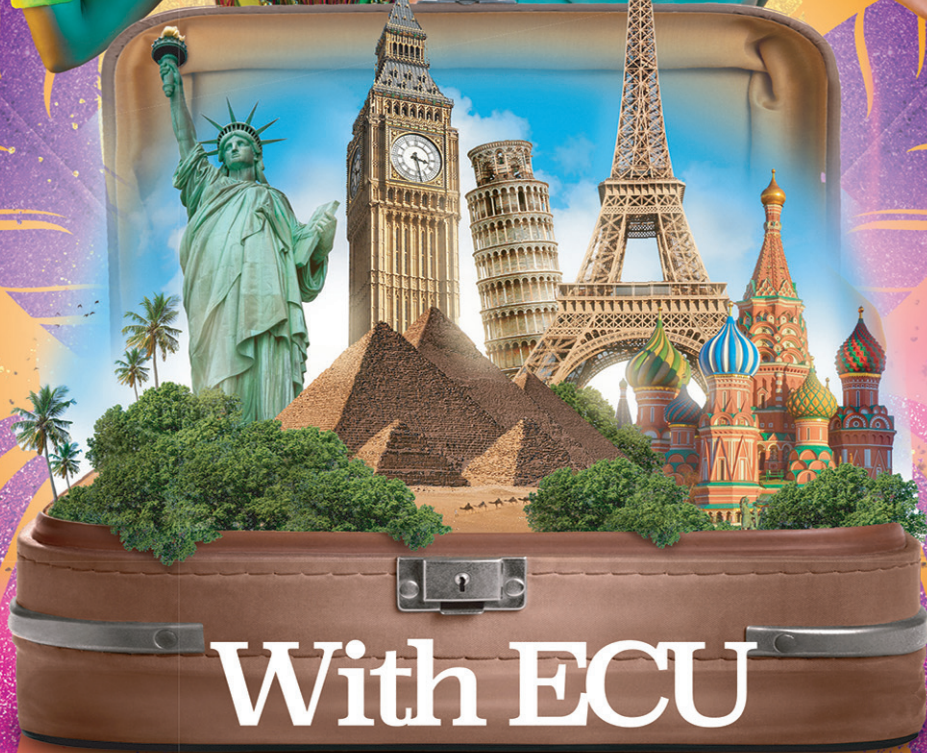


Russell Grant, The Resurrection Mule.



Ted Eustace, El Conquistador.

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Priya Nagassar, The Mother of All Carnivals - Celebrations  
 PHOTOS BY JEFF K MAYERS



Shynel Brizan, Aimee, A Dancer of Freedom's  
 Cousinship to Epitaphs of Fate.



Marie Eligon, Cleansing Fire



Nisa Nathu Hari, Khione: Winter's Enchantress



Ruth Adams Mendez, The Emergence of the Maraval Lily



Dana Rampersad, For the Love of T&T- A Tribute  
 To Trinidad & Tobago

NEW ROYALTY

PRIYA NAGASSAR  
 IS THE QUEEN OF  
 CARNIVAL

On only her second entry into the senior Queen of Carnival competition, Priya Nagassar has run away with the crown. Nagassar, 22, portrayed The Mother of All Carnival Celebrations, from the band Celebration of the People.

"I thought I was dreaming, when I came up on stage. I had to ask someone to pinch me. I'm really, really overwhelmed and I'm really happy and so thankful to the judges for this experience..." she said.

RESULTS

Priya Nagassar .....	The Mother of All Carnivals – Celebrations
Marie Eligon .....	Cleansing Fire
Shynel Brizan .....	Aimee, A Dancer Of Freedom's Cousinship to Epitaphs of Fate
Dana Rampersad.....	For The Love of TT – A Tribute
Savitri Holassie.....	Masquerade – The Hidden Beauty
Laura Rampersad.....	Athena Goddess of War and Wisdom
Nisa Nathu Hari .....	Khione: Winter's Enchantress
Krystal Thomas.....	Sa Sa Yea
Tekeyah Fletcher Marshall.....	The Spirit of Carnival – Tribute to Roland St George
Ruth Adams Mendez .....	The Emergence Of The Maraval Lily



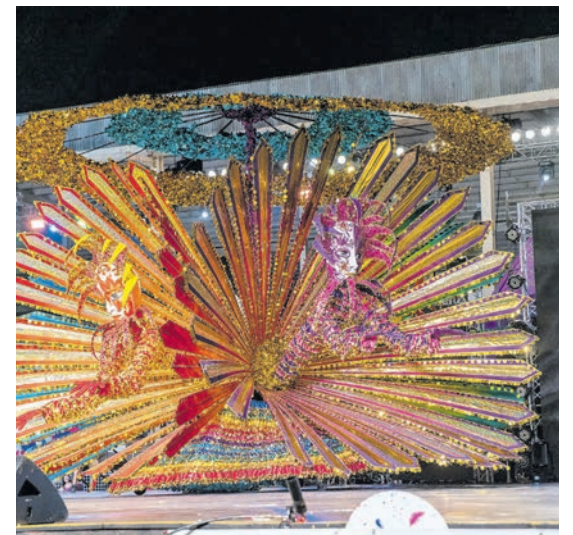
Takeyah Fletcher Marshall, The Spirit of Carnival - Tribute to Roland St George.



Krystal Thomas, Sa Sa Yea.



Laura Rampersad, Athena Goddess of  
 War and Wisdom



Savitri Holassie, Masquerade -  
 The Hidden Beauty





Ricardo "Daddy Chinee" Melville. PHOTOS BY LINCOLN HOLDER



Katelin Sultan.

# DADDY CHINEE, KATELIN CREATE CHUTNEY SOCA HISTORY

**R**icardo "Daddy Chinee" Melville is the 2023 Chutney Soca Monarch. Singing We Are One, Daddy Chinee dethroned former monarch Imran "GI" Beharry, and created history as the first non-Indo Trini to win the title, according to a release from competition organiser, Southex.

In another historical moment, nine-year-old Katelin Sultan, who placed fifth overall, won the Queen of Chutney Soca title, dethroning veteran chutney singer Ramrajie Prabhoo. This was Katelin's first time entering the competition.

## RESULTS

### CHUTNEY SOCA MONARCH

- Daddy Chinee
- Kenneth Supersad
- Gi Beharry
- Rick Ramoutar
- Katelin Sultan

### QUEEN OF CHUTNEY SOCA

- Katelin Sultan
- Ramrajie Prabhoo
- Shazeena Ramsumair



Imran "GI" Beharry.



Rick "Rick Ram" Ramoutar.



Shazeena "Shazzie" Ramsumair



Ramrajie Prabhoo



Kenneth Supersad



PHOTO BY AYANNA KINSALE



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# CHILD'S PLAY



PHOTO BY LINCOLN HOLDER



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PHOTO BY AYANNA KINSALE



# CANBOULAY

## THE BIRTH OF CARNIVAL

The canboulay (from the French *cannes brulées*, meaning burnt cane) festival is widely regarded as the precursor to the modern TT Carnival as we know it. It was originally a harvest festival, with singing, drumming, dancing and chanting.

The Canboulay riots took place in 1881 in Port of Spain and later in 1884 in San Fernando and Princes Town as a result of colonial police, led by Captain Baker, attempting to prevent Carnival celebrations from happening. Many people were killed as result of the riots.

The riots are re-enacted every year at the Piccadilly Greens in east Port of Spain to mark an important chapter in the history of the development of the country and its culture.

PHOTOS BY JEFF K MAYERS





PHOTO BY ROGER JACOB



PHOTO BY MARVIN HAMILTON



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# J'OUVERT: DUTTY MAS



PHOTO BY MARVIN HAMILTON



PHOTO BY GREVIC ALVARADO



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# MANIC MONDAY



PHOTO BY AYANNA KINSALE



A band of minstrels PHOTO BY AYANNA KINSALE



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# HAPPY TUESDAY!

PHOTOS BY JEFF K MAYERS, AYANNA KINSALE,  
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