



# Travelling...from dawn to dusk



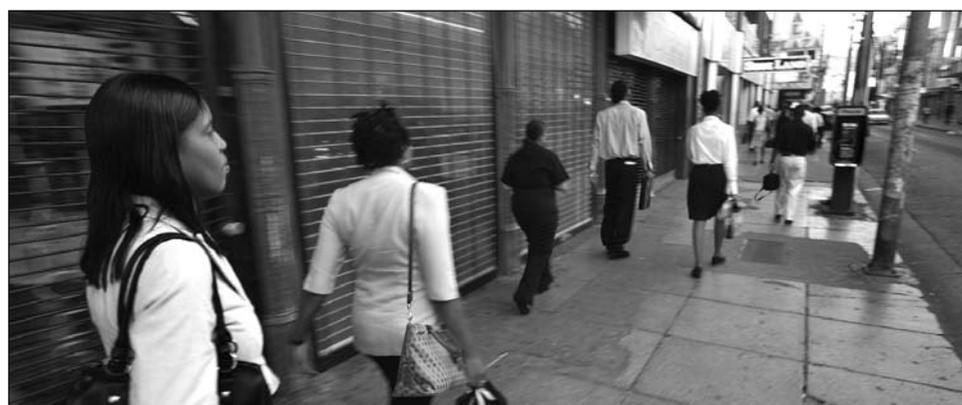
Dixie-Ann Dedier begins her day as the day begins.



The signal. Two for town.



The maxi-taxi journey is an opportunity for thinking and napping.



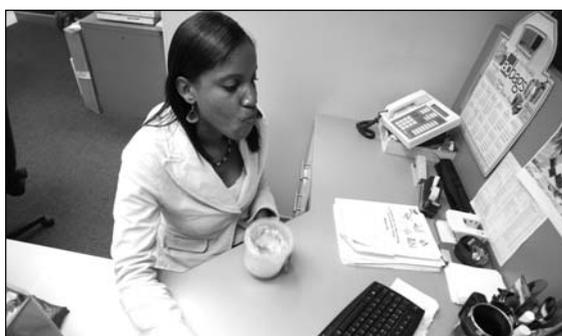
From City Gate, it's a short walk on almost empty streets, past closed stores to the St James taxi stand.



Journey's end. Dedier arrives at work.



After opening the office, it's time for breakfast.



AT RIGHT: As the computer starts up, the working day begins, two and a half hours after leaving home.

**B**LAME BAD urban planning if you want to. The tradition of putting the centres of commerce and distribution near the sheltered ports of the Gulf of Paria that's irrelevant in a modern age.

As more buildings sprout in a congested city centre, the roadways widen and a bold new carpark is built to make parking space for a growing flood of cars into the city, it's easy to forget about the people who must make that journey every day.

This is Dixie-Ann Dedier's story in its specifics, but it's the tale of thousands of people who journey from homes far from the corporate headquarters and retail outlets that clot the city.

From as early as 5:00am, cars begin to swarm into the city, clustering lights cutting through the predawn darkness, the first wave entering the city to unlock doors, warm pots and reboot a fitfully dozing Port of Spain.

Dedier, an administrative assistant for a local technology company, is already up and dressing, her lunch packed into a container by her mother.

The journey into the city from Valencia Gardens is surprisingly easy, the taxi rolling steadily along the Priority Bus Route as the first rays of sunlight cut orange shafts through the

cool blue glow of the early morning.

Dedier has been making this journey for six years now, and before that did her share of travelling to get to St George's College in Barataria, first from Arima, then from D'Abadie and finally from Valencia.

Along the way, she's become both practiced and sanguine about it. While we were waiting for the first maxi of our journey, she showed me an essay written two years ago for a communications class.

"You may have to do one of two things depending on where the driver actually stops. If he seems to be passing you very slowly, run with it and make sure to stay close to the door. If he seems to stop ahead of you, just trot up and put yourself in the midst of the throng," Dedier wrote.

I tried to follow this advice, but could never quite glide into the maxi the way she did so effortlessly. And this was at a cushy time to travel. The day was overcast, but didn't rain, and half of the travelling public is on vacation now, so the journey recorded on these pages is as good as it gets.

For three to four hours everyday, Dedier is in transit, one of thousands caught in a limbo world of fitful dozing, boredom and the humming roar of engines.

"Initially it didn't really bother me," Dedier says, "but now it's a real drag."

Photographs and story by  
**MARK LYNDERSAY**



As the maxi speeds into the night, Dedier finally betrays the length of her working day.



On the ride into the city, Dedier is holding up but the taxi driver is feeling the weight of the day.



Walking back to City Gate, most of the shops are closed again, but vendors are still busy.



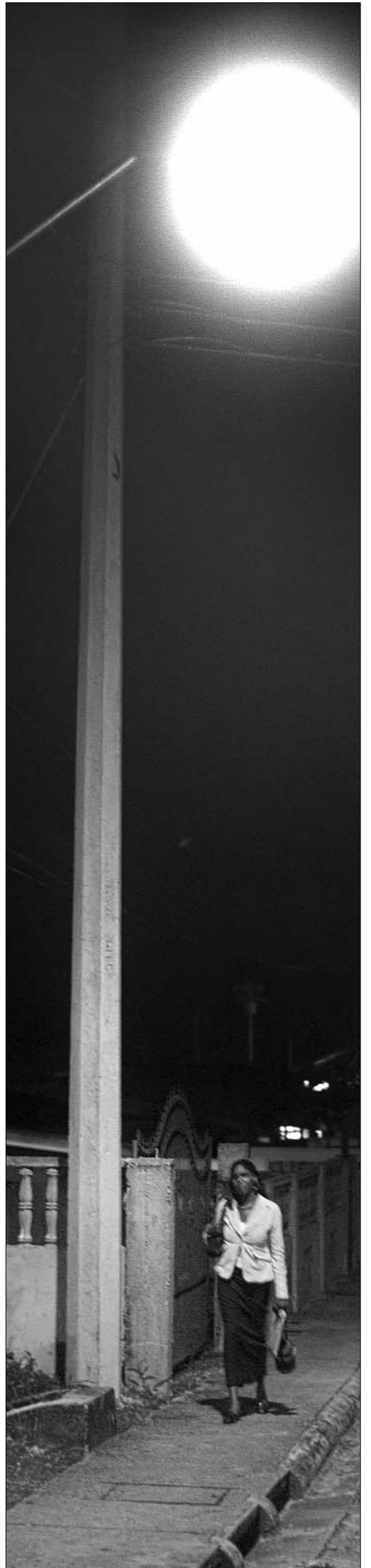
At the taxi-stand in City Gate, Dixie-Ann meets her brother Gerard.



"...put yourself in the midst of the throng..."



At day's end, Dedier drops to her couch and turns on the television, 14 hours after stepping onto the street that morning.



The last mile, alone after nightfall.