



## BY THE NUMBERS

The Tribe faithful at the Tribe Ignite fete held at Jenny's Car Park on Carnival Thursday.

- 80%** of Tribe's band was sold out on the first day that costume registration was opened to loyalty card holders and online sales.
- 15 minutes** is how long it took for the rest of the band to be sold out when it was opened to the public exclusively online.
- \$4,000** The average cost of a premium, "frontline" female costume in Birds of a Feather.
- \$6,000** in prize money was won by Stephanie Llanos as the Face of Tribe, the official model for the band's promotions. Llanos also won thousands of dollars worth of prizes from other sponsors.
- 180** candidates applied to be models for Tribe's launch and publicity in the Faces of Tribe competition.
- 1200** Tribe employees are deployed on the road on Carnival Monday and Tuesday, providing support and control services.
- 6** people make up the executive team responsible for Tribe's operations:
- 6** events were produced by the band leading up to Carnival 2009, the first of which was Tribe ICE, a cooler party, the last, the Blue Range Cooler Fete on Carnival Friday.

- 11** permanent paid staff are employed by the band, inclusive of the directors.
- 60** suppliers provide services to the band during production and on the days of Carnival. Among them are seven DJs, eight caterers, two traffic teams managing the trucks, 20 costume providers, three sound systems, five security groups, one group managing the band's banners and one toilet systems provider.
- 40 feet** The length of the band's longest service trailer, carved out of a shipping container.
- 2** tons of steel sheets, RHS and other steel rods were delivered to Brian Sylvester in Carlsen Field to refurbish the band's road vehicles along with 50 gallons of paint and 20 sheets of plywood.
- 5000** people were estimated to be registered to play in the band. Tribe's management declined to offer firm numbers until registration closed on Saturday. The band tried to reduce the overall size of the band by 1000 but only managed to cut 500.



President George Maxwell Williams and his wife Jean at the band's launch. This is the fourth year that the President has signed up to play mas with Tribe.



## MAKING THE BAND

**1** Faces of Tribe runner up Jaime-Lee Phillips (centre, front) leaves the stage at the band's launch.



**2**

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**4** One hundred and eighty models faced a panel of selectors in June 2008, who shortlisted 20 models.

For a band project as large and as resource intensive as Tribe's it's surprising how smoothly and well, politely, the business of the organisation is conducted.

One good reason is that most of the principals are family. Not like family, but actual relations. Monique, Dwayne and Lana Nobrega are siblings. Dean Ackin is married to Monique and Allan Lee and Gerard Ramirez are his cousins. These are people who were around each other for decades before the demands of a Carnival band pushed them together for long hours.

Some of the band's approach is attributable to evolution. Tribe is the inheritor of a mantle of young possession of the road that has passed from band to band since the rise of the large, institutional fun bands in the 1980's. From Savage to Barbarossa to Poison, a common thread of pretty, skimpy costumes led to larger bands as more and more masqueraders who seemed to get younger and fitter joined with each passing year.

At stake in the success of each of these bands was a subtle shift in power, from the commanding presence of the bandleader/designer to the bandleader/organiser, the convener of a desirable road party.

Tribe's success is built on clear management principles of customer satisfaction, not winning the band of the year title and it probably helps that Lee and Ackin both spent years working in bank management.

According to the band's director of design and production, Monique Nobrega, the theme for 2009 was driven by comments from the masqueraders.

"Last year's presentation didn't carry feathers and we wanted to do something with lots of feathers. If there's one thing we've learned, it's that our masqueraders like their feathers and their beads," Nobrega said.

People who show up to work with Tribe soon learn that the band's business is its

masqueraders, a customer service mantra that's betrayed by every action the band's executive takes.

After issues arose with costume quality from third party producers in 2008, the band introduced tighter measures to monitor its far flung network of contract costume producers, with visits to each producer at least once a week over the four months of production.

Most of the firsts in Carnival that the band claims have little to do with what's traditionally considered the core of the festival.

The band introduced surfer style shorts for male masqueraders and pioneered online sales fulfilment, allowing masqueraders to shop for costumes and buy them online.

Five years ago, the band was formed out of popular sections of Poison and decided to "unify the states," creating the first all-inclusive band, one in which all sections enjoy common services like security, food and drink and bathrooms. It's still possible to play in a private section in Tribe, but that "privacy" is limited to costume design, and even private section producers are now subject to Tribe's production oversight.

That relentless focus on their masqueraders sometimes leads to surprising decisions. At one pre-Carnival meeting, the parade route was analysed to ensure that the band wouldn't get stuck, not that it would cross the prescribed judging points.

When the band was approached through photographer Calvin French to facilitate the King of the Band ambitions of Jhawan Thomas and Michael Lee Poy, the performer and builder of last year's winning portrayal, the band agreed, signed and filed the papers for "King Cobo" and went back to planning costume distribution.

View Local Lives at [lyndersaydigital.com/ll/hm.html](http://lyndersaydigital.com/ll/hm.html)

**2)** Monique Nobrega prepares a costume prototype at her Valsayn home in April, 2008. The band's principal designers, her sister Lana and Gail Cabral design by prototype.

**3)** In August, the band opened costume sales to its loyalty card customers and for online sales. 80% of the band sold out that evening.

CAPTIONS >>>



**5** Blossom Duncan prepares the male individual costume for the Ruby Topaz section of the band at Richard and Anthony Productions' studios.

Photography and story by: Mark Lyndersay



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- 6) A moment of camaraderie at Tribe's family day for suppliers. The November event was the second gathering of the band's workers and contractors.
- 7) In early January, Christmas and Carnival mingle on costume contractor Donna Camacho's living room table.
- 8) In the final steps of the Tribe production process, Fiona Martin finishes packaging and Simone Medford (far right), checks the manifest for each costume before passing each package to her husband Dominic.
- 9) Michael Lee Poy helps Jhawan Thomas out of the King Cobo costume registered as Tribe's king. When the costume was assembled at the preliminary competition, it was decided that the safety risk of the design was too great for the stiltwalking performer and Thomas never left the costume assembly area.



**11** On the first day of costume distribution, racks of headpieces for the costume Flight of the Ibis await the band's masqueraders.

10) On a lot in Carlsen Field, Tribe's support trailers are repaired, refurbished and repainted for duty on the road on Carnival Monday and Tuesday.