



## TEMPTED TO TASTE

A Chocolate City masquerader in the band at dawn in Boissiere village.



Curt Hinds of B&B Printery finishes a run of silkscreening on the polos and jerseys that will identify masqueraders in the band.



At her Couva home, Karla Morean, Dwain Jackson and Rondel Phillip (clockwise) package the goodies bags to be presented to masqueraders. Few used the bags on the road..



A DJ at The Corner Bar, which adjoins the band's North Trinidad headquarters plays while gift bags await collection.



Bantering while they check the details of their costumes on collection, Felisha Ali discusses the fit of a top while Nicky and Aleem Labiharie listen in.



In Arima, Karen Salina prepares bottles of chocolate.



At Lady Chancellor Hill, a vendor doles out steaming hot corn soup to masqueraders.

## THIS MAS IS SWEET

Photographs and story by  
**MARK LYNDERSAY**

Trinidad and Tobago's J'Ouvert celebrations bring out the primal in its revellers. Though the event has come some way from its more outrageous earlier incarnations in which a grown man might wear women's underwear or diapers.

J'Ouvert, literally "day open" is the first formal expression of Trinidad and Tobago's annual Carnival. It is the earthiest of the two days of celebration, with mud, oil and fire the most visible costuming in bands that still follow tradition.

After flirtations with colourful costumes, today's J'Ouvert innovators have returned to basics, bodies covered with mud and metallic paint, and in the case of the North South Crew, chocolate.

Zarin Morean is now in his fourth year of producing Chocolate City, with the 2010 presentation, "4 Fore-Play." Morean mixes the essentials of modern Carnival success, identification wrist bands, roped security details and all inclusive service, with a thick brown liquid that he advertises as chocolate. It certainly smells like it, and looks like it, but in the hours I spent with the band, I saw no one

tasting it and I never mustered the nerve myself.

There's something about the substance, which replaces machine oil and fine sand mud in the J'Ouvert arsenal of physical desecration that simply doesn't scream food, especially when you get it in a transparent squeeze bottle.

The result is that what might have been a chocoholic's wet dream becomes something of a nightmare of decadence, the rich smell of cocoa permeating the band as the players play strings of the thick brown substance like gelatinous whips across the backs of friends and squirt patterns on the heads of their companions

The North South crew, which produces variants of the band for Point Fortin's Borough day and Labour Day is now a team of 15 people who put delicious smelling band on the road each year.

"We've had no problems with the chocolate," Morean said. "It's like the chocolate brings a kind of calm on all the wildness. Each year after the band is on the road, all I hear about is weddings and christenings."



Chocolate City finally moves out from its meeting spot at Lady Chancellor Hill.

