

Que Viva Mexico — Trini Revellers



Industry among the revellers

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARK LYNDERSAY

“HE’LL BE back in just a few minutes,” Gabrielle Viera insists. But there’s just a shadow of doubt in her eyes. Her father, Geraldo Viera Snr, is busy and time is running out on the production of the two kings that the family will be producing for Trini Revellers this year.

The Viera patriarch is something of a legend in Carnival circles, a 69-year-old mas veteran who has returned to the King of Carnival competition with bold face and underlines on his productions, enormous machines that light up, spit fire and fire-works and dwarf his tiny silver-haired frame.

At his Barataria workshop, the costume is beginning to take shape, with a massive fan of netting being patiently decorated with translucent plastic. The base, an intimidating, squat arch of metal on wheels that looks like post modern art is being ground and welded into shape.

But even the massive frameworks of the king in progress are dwarfed by the scale of Viera’s business, two buildings the size of small factories at the back of his home which have produced most of the plastic moulding for Carnival for almost 50 years now.

Massive machines covered in plastic sheeting are threaded with the plastic shapes of costumes in various states of completion in every space between them like bold white sketches of a band to be.

The “headbolts,” the full plastic caps that form the basis of many headpieces for bands, are still shaped and carved by Viera by hand out of automotive body filler material to make the masters for the process.

“It’s easier than papier-maché and wire bending,” said Viera. “With plastic you can turn out a thousand items in a day.”

“The strength and clarity and durability of plastics has improved over the years.

I do vacuum forming and once you have the right machine you can produce anything. Since Paradise Lost, I have been adapting and changing the equipment and I can make anything from an ant to an elephant.”



IN WOODBROOK, Mike Johnson is working on two sections of Trini Revellers’ 2007 presentation, Baila Baila and Banderos and working on king, queen and individual costumes for two children’s Carnival bands.

Trini Revellers has won every category it has entered from 2002 through 2006, growing from a medium to a large band and Johnson has been there for most of it.

Johnson is a veteran producer for Carnival and has designed a number of queen costumes over the years, but he left behind that aspect of the business in Trinidad with his last costume for Pamela Gordon in 2002.

“As I became more involved with Carnival,” said Johnson, “I found that I had a decision to make and it takes a lot of time to product just that one costume.”

Now Johnson works all year round on Carnival costumes. He’s just back from working in St Croix and after working with Trini Revellers, he will be back on the circuit as a producer, going to St Thomas, St Vincent, St Lucia and Barbados over the next few months.

Clockwise from top

- **RUSSEL PARIA** glues plastic cones to the frame of Geraldo Viera Senior’s King of Carnival costume at the masquerader’s Barataria camp.
- **ROGER BUDDY** works on plastic costume pieces in Viera’s factory space.
- **ANTONIO DE GANNES** and **COLLIS KINGSLEY** weld metal pieces for the base of Viera’s costume at right.
- **HENRY CHARLES** glues costume strips into place at Johnson’s mas-camp.
- **GUY PANTIN** and **MIKE JOHNSON** shape metal framework at Johnson’s Woodbrook mas-camp for Trini Revellers.



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