

Earth: Cries of despair, wings of hope - Brian Mac Farlane



BRIAN MAC FARLANE works on costumes at his Woodbrook mascamp.



# The Art Camp



STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARK LYNDERSAY

ABOVE: NATALIA SANKAR and TRACY SHEPPARD paint costume pieces at the Earth mascamp. BELOW: KAREN OLIVIER paints lengths of cloth.

WALK past the sleek display area of Brian Mac Farlane's Woodbrook mascamp, through the converted bedrooms that are now dedicated to a stitching and cutting room and at the back of the house is a remarkable sight, a mas camp that seems to work more like an arts and crafts workshop.

Working on large tables the size of a table tennis board are people quietly daubing, and brushing a quirky collection of knobby looking items and stencils spread over strips of cloth. At another table, two young women are gluing and bending into shape an enormous heap of back pack harnesses.

It's curious, but unsurprising for a bandleader who works through most of the year providing styling and design services for events and the workflow at the Earth mascamp has an easy, practised pattern to it.

Although Mac Farlane can leverage talent he works with regularly at the design studio for the band, that's as far as the links between the camp and the design business goes - the staff is completely different.

"We've been trying to do things in a more environmentally friendly way with this band," said Mac Farlane. "We've avoided using oil paints in favour of emulsion paint and in one case, we used soil to colour

cloth for the section Flood. We mixed up the soil here and rubbed it into the cloth, then took it to a river to wash it out."

"It sounds like a lot of fun," I respond.

"Well," Mac Farlane says soberly, "it was a lot of work." Then a distant look crosses his face, as if he's recalling the day and he smiles, "but we also have a lot of fun."

"It's difficult now to find wire benders," says Mac Farlane, "and the older guys who really know the craft are being lost to us. There was an East Indian woman who did accordion pleating for us, but she's passed away, and nobody knows how to operate the machine, apparently. I've had to work around that."

"But we're lucky to have Mrs Rampersad, who has a shop that can handle our workload."

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Jean Latchmin Rampersad was busy finishing the sewing for Mac Farlane's cloth heavy presentation last week. Half a dozen workers were working in her Chaguanas workshop, and the room hums with the subtle hammering of sewing machines.

Rampersad started her business in 1983 with a single sewing machine and began her career offering services to Carnival with Peter Minshall on Tan Tan and Saga Boy.

"I have a small factory, and costs are very expensive," said Rampersad. "We produce baby clothes and school uniforms to keep things running between jobs. For Carnival, we start as early as October or November, but work trickles in throughout the year as people place orders for Carnivals abroad."



CHRISTINE RAMPERSAD works on costumes for Brian Mac Farlane's Earth at Jean Rampersad's Chaguanas workshop.