Carnival 50: How the Troupes Prepare

Big smiles, high energy, bright colors and spectacular costumes are key elements for a winning “Mas” troupe. Mas troupes are choruses accompanied by floats and Jam bands, that form the procession of the Grand parade(s). The parades are a grand spectacle of feathers, sequins, skin and baccel. They are the glittering centerpiece of Carnival.

I say the above are the recipe for a “winning” troupe because the troupes are also judged and awarded prizes for categories such as “Best Troupe”, “Best Individual Piece”, Best Costume Design, Best Float etc. Best troupe is the grand prize of them all and is awarded to the troupe who impressed the judges most with the quality of their costumes, creativity and energy. Last year the coveted top prize was awarded to “Blue Etoile”, directed by Nathalie Paroutte. Blue Etoile had only been on the road for two years when they won but Nathalie has been a lover and participant of Carnival for much longer. “I participated twice, in the parades, when I was a child and I was in a pageant when I was seven,” she tells me and though her adult troupe has only been on the road for two years, she has been a troupe producer for some ten years already.

After returning to the island from the UK, her daughter Kyeanna wanted to be in the parades. “We had just come back from the UK and she wanted to participate in Carnival and of course, me being a Carnival lover, I wanted her to experience the full color, the full culture of what St. Maarten’s Carnival had to offer.”

Perfume? Don’t Buy: Learn to Make it
By Sarina Alexander

Everyone can have their own personalized fragrance. Sarina Alexander takes the class at Tjon Perfumery in Grand Case.

The Shady Brothers: Stars Born in SXM
By Chris Morvan

Our multi-cultural island is the jumping-off point for the international career of two siblings, born and raised on Sint Maarten.
Letter From the Editor
April 25, 2019

It is vacation time for our editor Hilary Grant. She has chosen a special spot for her travels, a region where she will find jewelry stores familiar to us here in Sint Maarten/Saint Martin. As a GIA Graduate Gemologist, Hilary is now on a cruise in Alaska, where several of our SXM jewelers maintain branches. So, don’t be surprised if one of our next issues covers her experiences and features photos of pine- trees, rugged coastlines, and jewelers wearing thick coats.

In this Weekly Edition No. 17, we will learn more about the final preparation of the carnival troupes. The grand parades are only a few weeks away, and the costume manufacturers are working overtime to dress up the troupes.

Our contributor Sarina Alexander participated in a lecture on how to produce one’s own fragrance and she describes her experience. Tijn in Grand Case allows everyone to have their personalized perfume.

Jan Thoelke
Publisher

PS: If you enjoyed our publication and would like to continue to read from home, please use the QR code to the right to access our digital publication on our website.

Online Portal
For in-depth information about our island, consult ST-MAARTEN.COM - the official online portal. Please use the convenient QR codes with any smart phone to access individual pages directly.

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Carnival 50: How the Troupes Prepare for the Grand Parades

Continued from Page 1

Text by Lazette Brown, Photos by Richard Hazel - RTGH Photography

She was seven at the time and first played children’s mas with a troupe organized by the Lionel Connor school. For her second year, her mother signed her up with a private troupe. Both times however Kyeanna had not been happy with the costumes she had worn and Nathalie decided that she would step in to help her daughter.

“So, then I decided I am paying for these things and my daughter's not happy. I can do this. So, ten years ago, I decided to try for my daughter and from there it just took on a role of its own.” In 2017, Nathalie and her daughter, who was now a teenager, transitioned from children’s productions to the adult arena. One year after that they had been crowned the best on the road.

“We have a lot of energy,” with a little fist pump and shimmy- this is the answer Nathalie gives as to why she thought her troupe won last year. “If you’re jamming with us, you have to have a good time.” On a more serious note, she tells me that most of the feedback she received credits her use of a bold bright orange as that made them pay attention.

“All of the sudden you saw bright orange coming towards you and it made us hard to miss and even harder to forget.” The people also loved that her troupe had incorporated a choreographed routine into their road show. This is not normally done and it made us stand out even more to people that we were bringing this to table. Based on my love of music, Carnival music, Soca music I always have a rhythm inside of me. It keeps me moving, keeps me on the toes and keeps me energetic.” This is the same type of energy Nathalie wants the crowd to feel when they see her troupe stopping to put on the show.

When I asked Nathalie what it meant to her winning this title on her second run as an adult troupe; she responded, “it was humbling, but it was also a great sense of achievement whereby you know you put your heart into something and you actually you know get recognition for the work. The work that she speaks of is the process of conceptualizing, designing and fabricating her costumes. Most troupes have on average 3 different themed sections. Each section in turn having a front line, midline and back line. While the section has an overall color scheme, the costumes on each line differ by design. So, Nathalie and her team are responsible for creating around nine different looks and an individual piece that encompasses the overall theme of the troupe.

She draws her inspiration she says from everywhere. Bits and pieces of different countries she has visited, things she has seen and sometimes even her moods. The process she describes to me is long and includes color schemes, costume shapes, accents and durability. Making sure that overall the costume makes sense, that what she has in her mind is buildable. Swimsuit styles are selected based on material quality, if it matches the color scheme selected and again durability. The costumes are then drawn up on paper and once approved Nathalie begins bending her wire. Bending wire is the term used to describe the fabrication of the framework of the costumes which are usually made of- a thick, pliable wire. She starts this in October and continues bending little by little until complete.
It sometimes seems as if musical instruments as we know them are on the verge of extinction. In an age when DJs are stars just as much as musicians, and when even acoustic guitars are being redesigned in the image of their electric cousins and fed through computers that can make them sound like anything from a grand piano to a bassoon, it is refreshing to find young musicians who can give you a tune with just a stringed wooden box and a voice.

Such is the case with the Shady Brothers, 21-year-old siblings Nicolas and Geraldo Schaede (the spelling is altered for their stage name), who grew up in St. Maarten and now spend much of their time in France, where they have a recording contract with a label in Paris.
"We write our songs on guitar and our album is based on reggae pop. We keep to the Caribbean groove," they say.

Those who used to go to La Bamba at Kim Sha on Sundays may remember the Shady boys, but they haven't played too much on the island. This must surely be their own choice, because they have the talent and the style of music to appeal to the bar owners who dictate what live music we listen to.

The boys started playing guitar at the age of 11 and began writing songs at 15. That's both of them at the same age, because they are two-thirds of the Schaede triplets, so there is another brother around who is exactly the same age as them, as well as another brother and a sister. Not only do the Shady Brothers look identical, they sound very similar too, to the extent that, listening to the recording of the interview, it's impossible to tell who said what.

The music business being as it is, it takes luck as much as ability to make be successful, and you do get the impression that fortune smiles on the Shady Brothers. The record deal came about after someone overheard them playing a video they had made and recommended them to a friend in Paris. But if talent is needed to back up the luck, they certainly have a musical gift. Having played me a recording that they made, complete with backing tracks that add a Latin element, they get the guitars out and give a seamless rendition of another of their compositions, guitars combining effortlessly and with sweet vocal harmonies in tuneful voices that interweave with a sort sibling inevitability. There's a light touch to the whole thing that is not unlike Jack Johnson, whom they credit as an influence.

What, I ask them, do they aim to achieve? "As much as possible," they say. "We'll see. If we can share our music with the world and they enjoy it, that's already an achievement."
Spread Joy, One Spritz at a Time at Tijn Perfumery
By Sarina Alexander

Every human being has a distinct and distinguishable body odor. But, what if each of us could create our own scent? A unique perfume created by you, for you?

Somewhere in St-Martin, in a village called Grand Case, at the end of the airport’s road, is the beginning of an experience like no other; where your olfactory senses take off and land into a space of imagination and creation.

Although the Tijn Perfumery should no longer be a mystery, having been featured in many publications such as the USA Today, Toronto Star, Bloomberg Television and Trip Advisor to name a few; many have yet to discover what Globe Guide has classified as one of the, “10 unforgettable think to do in St. Maarten/St-Martin.”

We all have a nose but it’s not every day that we get to be a nose. The sense of smell is the first tool of career of a perfume maker or composer. Though this isn’t a commonly ventured career path, in France a nose can make as little as 1700 euros and up to 2500 euros per month. CNN Money reported that, “a junior perfumer may start our making $60,000 but perfumers who come up with formulas for hit fragrances can easily command six figures.” That could stimulate more than one’s sense of smell, if you asked me…

When you walk into Tijn, you’re awaken by the different notes of odors, the glass bells besides every bottle of perfumes enabling you to sample their fragrances, the accessories made of natural stones and the inspiring quotes that trail the walls leading you to… a perfume organ?

Oh the sweet smell of discovery!

Just like a musical organ, the perfume organ is set up to easily access the different oils. They are placed in alphabetical order from Acai Berry to Ylang-Ylang (which is one of the components of Chanel No 5) and classified by their degree of evaporation.

Indeed, the top notes composed of citrus or herbs can last up to 30 minutes. These are the dominant notes which often determines whether we like a perfume or not. Then, the heart notes. In this category we find floral, green/fresh, fruity or spicy scent which are not as intense but last longer; between 30 minutes to four hours. Finally, the base notes. Lasting between one to 24 hours, these are the woody and earthy odors that linger on your clothing and trigger your memory.

Initially, the perfume organ was “just for show”. After frequent requests by customers to make their own perfume, John and Cindy decided to integrate this to their offer and it now represents half of their business.

Now, stepping into the laboratory, like over 12,000 people before you; you are handed a lab coat, a workbook and are given detailed instructions on how perfume is made. Emily, your friendly and enthusiastic helper reassures that, “there’s no wrong way of making a perfume. And having your own perfume triggers a feeling of achievement and pride.”

With your white coat on and cheat book in front of you, you select one of 12 pre-mixed oils which will be your primary notes. Then, like a chemist; choosing three out of the many synthetic and essential oils on the organ, you use your droppers to extract the oils from the jars, dropping a precise quantity into your beaker then diligently write down your formula.

Once you’ve made your three perfumes, you smell each beaker and chose your favorite which will be your actual perfume after a few more final steps. Alcohol containing methanol is added to your mixture of oils, the methanol contained in the alcohol makes it undrinkable and therefore isn’t taxed by governments, so “all perfumers use that”. The purpose of the alcohol is to propel the scent as it burns off, followed by distilled water to cool it down and smooth it out and propylene glycol to help the fragrance carry on the skin.

Finally, you pour your favorite concoction in an elegant glass bottle of your choice with the help of a small funnel, top it with a perfume spray nozzle and voila! You’ve created in one hour what normally takes between two to six months and 100 trials to finalize.

Now this calls for a toast! You’ve passed your assignment. Your lab coat is now exchanged with a gift bag containing elements of your choice, a certificate and a glass of champagne or refreshment.

The experience offered at Tijn in Grand Case is just as interesting and unconventional as the story of its founder John. Despite his background in chemistry, John decided to go to law school, becoming a prosecuting attorney at 24, then a lobbyist and trade show executive. After vacationing in St-Martin in 1996, John and his wife fell in love with the island and decided that they wanted to move here as a sort of semi-retirement. Questioning what they would do to sustain themselves, they realized that there weren’t many things that were made in St-Martin and thought it would be a good idea to put John’s background in chemistry to use. They created a lab in their house in Minnesota, met with perfumers and chemists, created different formulas and saved for ten years before they finally up and left for St-Martin to open Tijn in 2017; where they have been living up to one of the most striking quotes on the wall: “If you’re going to enjoy a perfume, enjoy happiness, you’re going to be sharing it with everybody else.”

Photo below: John at the Perfume Organ at Tijn Perfumery
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The Unique St. Maarten/St-Martin Crossword Puzzle

Find out if you are a truly knowledgeable about our region and its culture, history and geography

Careful! This week's crossword puzzle has a couple trick questions. You will notice that all questions are rooted in the Caribbean hemisphere and might take a bit of research to answer if you haven't spent much time here. It also means: the answers are valid for St. Maarten/St-Martin and the neighboring islands. For example, if we ask for an island directly to the North of our location, it can only be Anguilla.

If we are using compound words in the answer, they do NOT have spaces!

If you try to solve the puzzle as a visitor to our island and you get stuck: don't be shy! Approach a local and ask. You might find they struggle to answer as well. Or strike up an interesting conversation and learn a bit about our very unique region.

Mistakes do happen, even though our puzzle is produced right here on the island. If you detect an error, drop us a line at SXM@EMAIL.COM.

Puzzle Solution on page 18
Find Shopping, Activities and Services Here
Visit the Island's Party and Dining Hot Spots

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Caribbean Endemic Bird Festival Takes Aim at Plastic Pollution

Visiting the Amuseum Naturalis on Sunday morning on the 27th of April should be on the list of resident families and island visitors who are interested in animals and especially birds in the Caribbean.

Every spring, groups on islands all over the Caribbean celebrate the birds that live only in the region. These events are all part of the Caribbean Endemic Bird Festival, organized by BirdsCaribbean. This year, the theme of the festival is Protect Birds: Be the Solution to Plastic Pollution.

“Plastic pollution is a global problem, and it hurts the Caribbean in many ways,” explained festival coordinator Sheylda Diaz Mendez. “Our islands are home to over 170 birds found nowhere else in the world. They depend on clean wild spaces to live.”

On St. Martin, the Les Fruits de Mer association hosts the Endemic Animal Festival on Sunday, April 28th from 9am to noon at Amuseum Naturalis. The free festival will feature the animals that live only on St. Martin. Other parts of local nature and heritage will also be explored using the theme Survivors.

“The animals and plants that live only on St. Martin are survivors,” explained Les Fruits de Mer president Jenn Yerkes. “The people that lived here throughout history and prehistory are survivors, too. And for us to survive in the future, we need to take care of our island and our planet. Plastic pollution is one of the big problems we need to solve.”

Endemic Animal Festival guests can decorate a bird feeder made out of a plastic water bottle. They can also see how 5,000 years of recycling traditions on St. Martin might hold the key to a more eco-friendly future. The free event also includes fun bird activities, a poetry exhibit and much more. Caribbean Endemic Bird Festival events are held between Earth Day on April 22nd and International Biodiversity Day on May 22nd.

The Endemic Animal Festival on St. Martin is Sunday, April 28th from 9am to noon at Amuseum Naturalis. To learn more about this free event, visit lesfruitsdemer.com or find Les Fruits de Mer on Facebook.

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Animal

Festival

2019
St. Maarten is a beloved destination to shop in the Caribbean. With an array of products, all at duty free prices and avoiding that annoying sales tax, a day just doesn’t seem like enough time to see it all. We highly suggest at least a couple of visits to Front Street while you are on island. With so many stores and so little time, here are a handful of establishments you must be sure to check out.

Jewelry and timepiece shopping is at the top of the list. Twinkling diamonds, luscious colored gemstones, and timepiece brands galore; there is truly something for everyone on your shopping list. If you are looking for a jewelry piece that you cannot find back in the United States, try Tanzanite or Larimar. Tanzanite sold in St. Maarten ranges from commercial quality in a light shade to top quality in rich, deep hues. Our island certainly offers a much larger selection of this gemstone than you would see back home. As for Larimar, it is a ‘Caribbean gem’ and its vibrant blue color is reminiscent of our ocean waters.

Diamonds are also top of the list when shopping on Front Street. Majesty Jewelers has the celebrity favorite- Hearts on Fire while Shiva’s Gold and Gems has stunning high-quality naturally colored diamonds; just to name a few crowd pleasers. If you are searching for wrist jewelry, you will find timepieces from Swatch to pre-owned Rolex and everything in between.

All the jewelry stores featured in the ST-MAARTEN.COM Weekly Edition are endorsed by us, so shop peacefully knowing that you are in good hands.

Perhaps you are looking for a vibrantly colored tropical shirt to put you in the island life mentality. Pacific Avenue is where you need to shop. They are located towards the start of Front Street, just a short walk from Jump Up Casino. They are the only licensed store on the island to sell Tommy Bahama and Lilly Pulitzer wares. You will be welcomed into their boutique style, air conditioned store with an enthusiastic and gracious smile. Pacific Avenue carries men’s and women’s attire, ranging from t-shirts to resort apparel.

Don’t forget to hydrate and refuel your body in-between your fun filled day of shopping. Holland House is a great location for lunch, with a small tapas-style menu served at the bar and full lunch menu served in the restaurant. Between the pleasant food, stylish atmosphere and the magnificent ocean view; you’re sure to capture the essence of island life all while at Holland House.

Or if you prefer a beach bar scene, I Love SXM Beach Bar might be the spot for you. There are no white tablecloths in this charming beachside watering hole, just suitably priced food that is skillfully prepared and serving by a kind and hospitable team. This beach bar overlooks the delightful cruise ships. A visit to this bar allows you to enjoy the best of both worlds: great food and cocktails with a stunning view. Choose whether you want to dine in at one of their tables or opt to enjoy your tasty lunch beachside.
Then she makes her molds, attaches them to the frames and then wraps the completed framework so that it comfortably fits on the body. The completed frames are then decked out with feathers, fabrics and gems according to the drawn designs. The dance routine also needs to be factored in, the troupe has only six practices to get it right for parade day.

Nathalie is quite proud of the fact that she not only designs but also that she and her team hand crafts her costumes themselves. It is the practice of most Mas Camps on the island to buy their designs and to bring in specialized costume makers from away to create their looks.

She credits being lucky enough to have had persons like Mr. Alberto Brook and Lambert, who has about 47 years in the costume making business, as an advisor. “Yes, I am a costume designer in the modern era of Carnival, but I believe in and love the traditions of our island and I am honored to carry them on. I do this for the love of Carnival mostly, but also for our culture because I want to see us grow to that next level like Trinidad. They have one of the best Carnivals in the world, but St. Maarten is getting up there. We have to portray our own talent on the road, we have to be proud of us.”

Nathalie and her team are excited for Carnival 50. They can’t wait to be on the road again, but also are hoping to once again prove that locally produced costumes can be just as good, if not better, than those designed by foreign artists. In honor of St. Maarten’s Carnival Golden Jubilee, her Troupe theme and name is “Touche d’Or”. Each section will prominently feature a different shade of gold: yellow, rose and white. Overall Nathalie just wants everyone who joins her troupe to have fun and to bring only good, high energy with them on parade day. She is not here to be known as a one hit wonder, and even though she knows the competition for Carnival 50 will be tough with around 23 troupe forming the parade, Nathalie is sure that “Blue Etoile” will outshine them all!
Sudoku Puzzles

Try your skills on our Sudoku. Ranging from easy to difficult, giving you the opportunity to see if you are a puzzle master. Need help or want to see if you got it correct? Find the Sudoku solutions on Page 18. Good Luck!

Easy

Medium

Difficult

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The Belair Beach Hotel is offering a very generous promotion with this program. Please understand that certain qualification criteria apply.
Leading Grand Case Recovery: Bistrot Caraibes

Bistrot Caraibes is a top-rated restaurant located in the heart of Grand Case. Since they reopened, the locale has been buzzing with island visitors and locals all enjoying traditional and delicious French cuisine. This charming restaurant is consistently in the top five restaurants on our island. Highlighting an extensive wine list and choosing your fresh lobster from the tank for dinner, are just some attributes we love about this establishment.

Speaking of the live lobster tank out front, you can select the lobster you wish to nosh on for dinner, cooked in two tasty ways. Brothers Thibault and Amaury greet you at the door with a warm and friendly smile, making you feel right at home in this chic French restaurant.

The menu boasts dishes that will please the palate: from beef tenderloin to fresh red snapper, escargot to French onion soup, and desserts that make our mouths water even just mentioning! The scent of butter, garlic, and pure deliciousness wafts from the kitchen out to the tables and tables are filled with people enjoying the enticing cuisine.

Some favorites include the escargot (don’t forget to use the yummy baguette to soak up all that buttery goodness), roasted sea scallops, lobster thermidor, fresh red snapper and the beef tenderloin. And, in our opinion, a French meal is not complete without profiteroles and an espresso.

Their wine list is all-encompassing with plenty of options to choose from in whites, reds and sparkling; and they also have a full bar if a cocktail with dinner is more to your liking.

At the end of the meal you will be offered a complimentary shot of their refreshing ginger house rum, and it is so good you’ll want to purchase a bottle to take home.

One thing is certain; dining at Bistrot Caraibes has the vibe of dining at a sophisticated, upscale French restaurant without any of pretentiousness.

Adventures in Sex and Dating in St. Maarten
A Regular Column by Leslie Hickerson

Flash forward a little bit and one of the housemates had a late start that night and was finally ready to go out. As she came downstairs she found the stranger in the living room. When asked who he was with he said Tina, who was in the restroom. The roommate knocked on the restroom door and Tina said she was ill so the stranger was asked to leave.

A few hours later everyone else comes home and goes to bed. One friend, Levi, went to use the bathroom and opened the door to find quite a disgusting scene. There was Tina, laying on the floor with sick all over. The toilet, Tina’s clothes, even the walls were covered. Gagging, Levi went in and cleaned Tina up the best he could, propped her on her side and left. The next morning the crew found her on the couch. Somehow in her sorry state Tina had showered, cleaned the bathroom (as best she could), and moved outside. She had no recollection of anything after just arriving at the bar, just a blank space, no guy, no bathroom, just waking up in the living room.

Luckily, she was safe and unhurt and the only remnants of her night was the awful smell that lingered in the bathroom for weeks.

This story is not a very happy one, but it could have turned out much, much worse.

A few years ago, a group of close friends were out at a popular bar. One member of the group, Tina, was going through a bit of a ‘free love’ period and was known to get a bit wild. But tonight was different. Tina’s friends noticed she was getting sloppy, which was very out of character, and when she came up to say she was ready to go home everyone approved.

What they didn’t know was that she had invited a stranger to accompany her. This was not totally unheard of, so it wouldn’t have been a big red flag, but her current state meant that anyone willing to ‘take her home’ was a little bit of a question mark.

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Creole Rock - Paradise for Divers and Snorkelers

Continued from Page 6

Just outside of Baie de Grand Case, on the French side of St-Martin, there is a protected piece of land that protrudes from the Caribbean Sea. Creole Rock is a popular site for both snorkelers and scuba divers. The peak is an easy landmark to spot from the beach, but below the waves it continues to the bottom of the ocean floor. This site is the perfect location for anyone who wants to enjoy the water. Surrounding the rock is a field of sea grass and boulders that have broken off from the main landmass with pieces of coral growing throughout.

Snorkelers and divers can both enjoy this site above and below the water. The rock face itself protects swimmers from winds that cause high waves and divers can circle around underneath to explore both sides of the island. The moorings in place are reserved for dive clubs, pleasure boats up to 50ft, dinghies and other small sailboats.

The marine-life that can be found in the area is vast and diverse. Quite often schools of grunt fish, tangs and sergeant majors can be found throughout the site. Green and hawksbill turtles frequently visit the grassy bottom, eagle rays cruise by the outer edges, and in the spring dolphins may be spotted swimming at the site in pods.

According to the guidelines of the Reserve Naturelle Saint Martin, “It is forbidden to use any motors within a zone of 30 meters (100 ft) from the beach, as well as disembarking on the beach and scaling the rock itself, where brown boobies and tropic birds make their nests.” This means that those who visit the site may not step foot on Creole Rock itself.

There are several tours offered on the island that make Creole Rock one of their snorkel stops and dive centers that use this site as a shallow, easy, site for anyone to enjoy. You can find anything from one-stop trips that visit only Creole Rock for a snorkel, to full day tours that include it on the itinerary along with other popular sites like Tintamarre and Pinel islands.

When visiting the area make sure that you abide all Reserve Naturelle guidelines, if you visit the site on your own boat make sure you check their website beforehand to see which buoy is most appropriate for your size vessel. Never climb on the land itself and make sure you stay safe on the surface by remaining within view of your boat.
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