



## THE FESTIVAL OF CARNIVAL

Trinidad is the birthplace of the Caribbean Carnival. Trinidad is the larger of two islands in the Caribbean that form the country now called Trinidad and Tobago. The country is also part of the 'West Indies', a group of roughly half of the 26 countries that were formerly British colonies and are now part of the Commonwealth.

It was also in Trinidad that the steelpan was created, calypso and soca music developed and the first steelbands were formed.

The word 'Carnival' comes from an old Latin word meaning 'taking meat away'. Carnival was a medieval feast and celebration held just before the Christian period of lent, which comes before Easter, (spring time in Europe), when traditionally meat is not eaten and people ate up their stores of winter food. Carnival is also referred to as 'Mardi Gras', French for 'Fat Tuesday' which is the day before the period of lent, when Carnival is traditionally held.

The population of Trinidad and Tobago is a broad mix because of colonisation by the Spanish, French and British, who brought slaves from Africa, and indentured labourers (a kind of semi slavery) from India and China, mainly to work in the sugar plantations. The traditions of all these different groups have blended to create a unique 'Trinbagonian' culture.

French migrants in the late 18th century brought their Mardi Gras masquerade festival with them, and as enslaved Africans gradually became free, they were able to celebrate their native culture and their emancipation through dress, music, and dancing. The two popular celebrations fused to create the exciting, pulsing, colourful festival that Carnival is now. Carnival is also known as a 'Mas' parade, using the shortened form of 'Masquerade', in which participants adopt roles by wearing costumes and masks.





## BLUE DEVILS

### History

The origin of the 'Blue Devil' lies in the traditional mas character the 'Jab Molassi' or the 'molasses devil'. African slaves were perceived by their owners to have no morals and act devilishly so at Carnival time some would become Jab Molassis, covering themselves in molasses (a by-product of the sugar industry) to conceal their identities, and dance and jeer loudly at their colonial masters, in a mockery of that stereotype.

The Blue Devil character emerged from the Jab Molassi and now instead of covering themselves with molasses, participants cover themselves with blue body paint.

### Blue Devils in modern times

Once a year at Carnival time, the district of Paramin, isolated in the mountains of Trinidad, sheds its rural calmness and erupts into an inferno of blue-painted 'jabs' or devils.

Kootoo, King Devil, prepares with his brothers to once again win the village competition for the most convincing devil band.

Known for his athletic prowess, and given to extraordinary feats like ripping up trees and scaling tall buildings, the charismatic Kootoo must still work hard with his band of devils to win the prize in the face of serious competition from a new generation of 'jabs'

Blue Devils appear throughout the Carnival season. They are among the most vibrant and energetic traditional characters in the Carnival of Trinidad and Tobago.

The staccato beating of biscuit tins provide their percussive accompaniment. They dance with movements of the head and shoulders simultaneously whilst thrusting the pitchfork forward and screaming to the beat of the biscuit tin. You distinctly hear them coming down the road.

They are coming to Brisbane for the first time and you are invited to join in the fun as Blue Devils in the PANZfest Carnival Parade at

the Rocklea Showgrounds on Saturday 21st September 2019 from approx 4:30pm to 5:30pm.



The Blue Devil 'Band' as the group is known, is community based and has no formal training. Everyone is invited.

## BLUE DEVILS COSTUME

- Blue clothing
- Blue body paint
- Papier mache mask
- Cardboard horns on head band (can be conical on hat elastic)
- Cardboard 'back pack' for wings - blue stockings stretched over bent wire
- Biscuit tin 'pan men' - the tins can be held or threaded with string and worn around the neck
- Pitch fork
- Adults wear the same costume as children.

