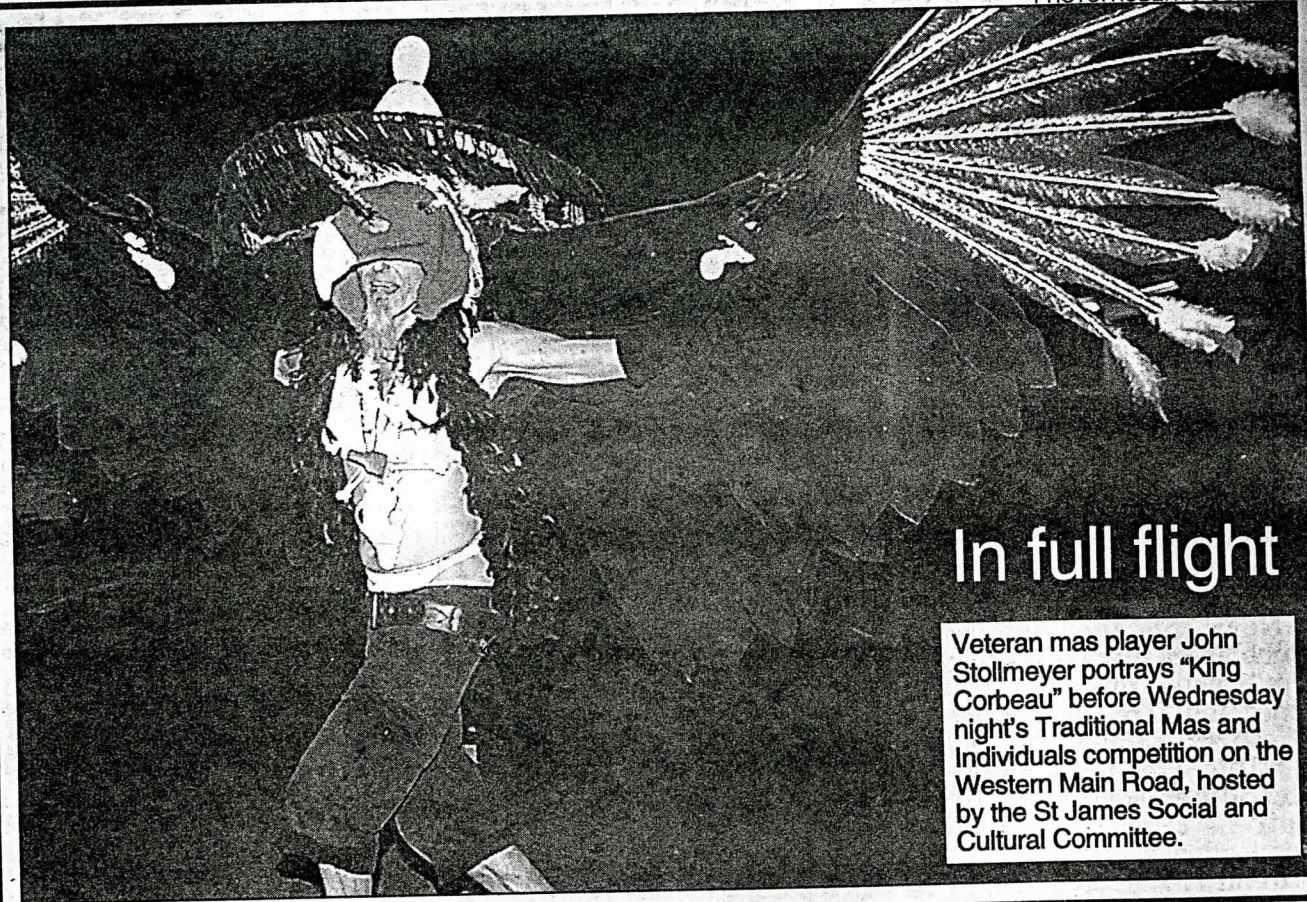


ML 1040

PHOTO: ROBERTO CODALLO



In full flight

Veteran mas player John Stollmeyer portrays "King Corbeau" before Wednesday night's Traditional Mas and Individuals competition on the Western Main Road, hosted by the St James Social and Cultural Committee.

South steelbands get own finals

Keino Swamber

South Bureau

AFTER failing to make it to the finals of the bmobile 2007 National Panorama finals, south steelbands will now have the opportunity to compete in their own finals.

The competition, announced yesterday and titled "You Be The Judge", is scheduled to be held at Skinner Park, the same venue where the national final will be held for the first time in history, on Sunday.

Pan Trinbago's South/Central Region chairman, Withfield Weekes, said the event was in the making even before the large band finalists for the national competition were announced.

"But Weekes said it became even more necessary to produce the

show because many southerners were disappointed with the national semi-final results.

"The competition will also serve as a dry run for the major event to be held the next week, and will give members of the public a chance to hear the bands that did not make it to the (national) finals," Weekes said.

"Plans were finalised only on Tuesday because we weren't getting sponsorship. But the Minister of Culture (Joan Yuille-Williams) was gracious enough to come to our rescue."

The competition starts at 6 p.m. but the prize structure was still being worked out up to late yesterday.

Weekes said the response from the bands was "extremely good".

"The bands are happy to have the opportunity to prove that they

are as good as any after being left out," he said.

"Like all southerners, we (Pan Trinbago South/Central) are disappointed but we know that San Fernandians are resilient people and the bands will bounce back."

A similar competition was held in 2005, after the organisation's central executive made a decision to exclude south from hosting any national pan competitions that year.

Asked to explain why bands from the region have consistently failed to make it to the top three, Weekes said he was at a loss.

"If I as the chairman of the region had the answer, I certainly would have given it to all my bands so that we would have been there. It is really discouraging. It's not that our bands are not performing at all."