

Calypso Tent finale – Jeffrey for King!

By **Stephen Spark** - Sun 26th Aug 2018



De Admiral, final night of the London Calypso Tent. Photograph: Stephen Spark

The Friday before Notting Hill Carnival is a watershed moment in the calendar. It's the last night of the London Calypso Tent, but it's also the start of everything else. As you leave The Tabernacle after the show, you turn a corner and hear Mangrove Steelband at full blast shaking the brick and stucco respectability of Notting Hill to its core.

Carnival is just a heartbeat away, and the air already feels different, as if it's charged with electricity. People who a few days ago had been complaining they hadn't felt the vibe this year suddenly find reasons to excuse themselves from family celebrations. "See you at Panorama," one shouts; "Jouvert again, boy?" another asks. You know where it's all leading...

"I've already warned my family," said De Admiral (Jeffrey Hinds): "If you hear me say I'm no longer interested in Carnival or calypso, you know the end is near!"

Jeff was talking after being elected – by popular vote, ie loudest applause – King of the Tent for his timely calypso **The Windrush Generation**, doubling up on his Calypso Monarch title the previous night. No second place is announced in this most unscientific of polls, but it was pretty clear G-String (**The Green, Green Grass of Rome**) would have secured the runner's-up spot. Sunshine and Nadiva had an unopposed run to the Queen of the Tent title with **I Got It**. That meant the singing sisters had also achieved the double, as they'd taken home the Groovy Soca Monarch title on 17 August.

With Smokey Joe ably filling Martin Jay's shoes as MC, we heard all the other Tent contestants, backed by the ABC All Stars Band and the Soca Divettes (resplendent in feathered finery), plus a number of local and overseas guests. Brown Sugar reprised her 2017 Monarch-winning song **Equal Opportunities**, Helena B reminded us **Crime Doesn't Pay** and the audience seemed to agree with D Alberto that they wanted to see **Harry for King**. But when it came to the crunch, Jeffrey was the People's Choice.

Performances by chutney queen Drupatee and 2018 Calypso Queen Stacey Sobers rounded off the show in unforgettable style – especially for one gentleman. Sitting in the front row involves heavy responsibilities and carries certain risks, and he'd clearly forgotten about a past encounter with Shirlane Hendrickson's infamous root vegetable. Luckily, he was up for it; those of a nervous disposition or limited stamina would be well advised to sit at the back of the hall!

And that's all part of the unique, friendly, humorous and entertaining atmosphere of the Final Night of the Tent. It's a night when the tension of competition is over and everyone can just let loose and enjoy themselves - on stage, on the seats and in the aisles. If you've never experienced it, put it in your diary for next year.

Sadly, Stacey Sobers flies back to Trinidad on Sunday morning; we definitely hope for a return visit soon. There is, however, another chance to catch Drupatee (or maybe she'll catch you!) on 1 September at the Fountain Hotel, Tottenham N15 5DE, near Seven Sisters tube.

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I am a meticulous sub-editor/copy-editor and proof-reader, able to work equally well independently and as part of a team, on both books and periodicals. When writing, I bring to my work the same level of care and attention to detail, enthusiasm and dedication that characterises my editing.