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INSIGHT

Trinidad & Tobago Investment & Trade

February 2013 • Vol 2 • Issue 1

The Creative Industries



Creative Industries in T&T



Trinidad and Tobago (T&T) has a vibrant and artistic culture known for its ethnic diversity and rich historical roots that has yielded diverse indigenous art forms and many talented people. The blend of these attributes has resulted in a microcosm of creative talent and best-practice models for the island's creative sectors.

The distinct subsectors that have emerged include Carnival, Entertainment, Film, Fashion and Animation. These areas have been thriving and show tremendous potential for growth within an international market. Presently, there exists copyright and intellectual property legislation which aims to protect and promote creativity, innovation and the rights of industry professionals.

Today, we take a look at some subsectors which boast

a heightened activity and yield quality returns, Carnival and Film/Entertainment.

Trinidad and Tobago's Carnival is renowned for its participatory nature, unique style, creativity and grandeur. T&T has been able to bring awareness to its domestic carnival experience through its diasporan markets in the US, UK and Canada and through fully established Diaspora Carnivals in these countries. Great literary minds, filmmakers and entertainers have emerged to become prominent national figures and international personalities. Some of these include Sullivan Walker, Geoffrey Holder, Horace James, Heather Headley, Nikki Minaj, VS Naipaul, Paul Keens-Douglas, Peter Minshall and many more.

The score of talent, skill and intrinsic knowledge that resides within Trinidad and Tobago's creative industry players, stakeholders and artistes, has allowed for niche



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avenues to be formed, in which business opportunities can be found. Among these are sound engineering projects, costume production for “mas”/carnival and theatre, “on location” filming, entertainment centres, design centres and fashion houses for Caribbean themed styles.

Valuable assets that are unique to the creative sector within Trinidad and Tobago, include the continuous growth of the skill set and labour pool. Tertiary centres have formalised training programs that enhance the indigenous talent and flair among the populace. Programs which exist currently from the University of Trinidad and Tobago are: BFA - Performing Arts; BFA - Fashion Design; Diploma - Digital Media Studies; Diploma - Fashion Management.

In addition, the access to technology locally has allowed the domestic talent to evolve to the stage of producing works that match the standard and quality of their international counterparts. Short films and animations, theatre artistic design and costuming is fully produced and developed by the Trinidadian artist, playwright, filmmaker and masman.

To better leverage the resources available , what is needed are the avenues available for promotion and the existence of niche markets to international audiences- in essence transforming the Trinidadian/Tobagonian artforms into value- added products which international

retailers, businesses and institutions utilise in their business models. For example, outsourcing costume design and fabrication to T&T could be an alternative to current models used by international theatres and studios and be a cost-reducing factor in the long run, based on the competitive wage structure T&T possesses.

For projects such as sound and music production, outsourced animation jobs, skill, talent and cost are the key factors that make the T&T offer so uniquely valuable to countries which possess large markets and allow for the possibility of joint venture projects to be entered into with foreign and local players. Furthermore, the strategic trade links which the country possesses allows for access to a market size of over 700 million.

As the world community evolves and changes, the growing trend is the continued engagement and embracement of cultures and acceptance of the unique and exotic. T&T is the prime example of exoticism, uniqueness and a melting pot, allowing a vast array of multicultural elements to influence and shape all creative projects. ■



Our cultural diversity a valuable asset

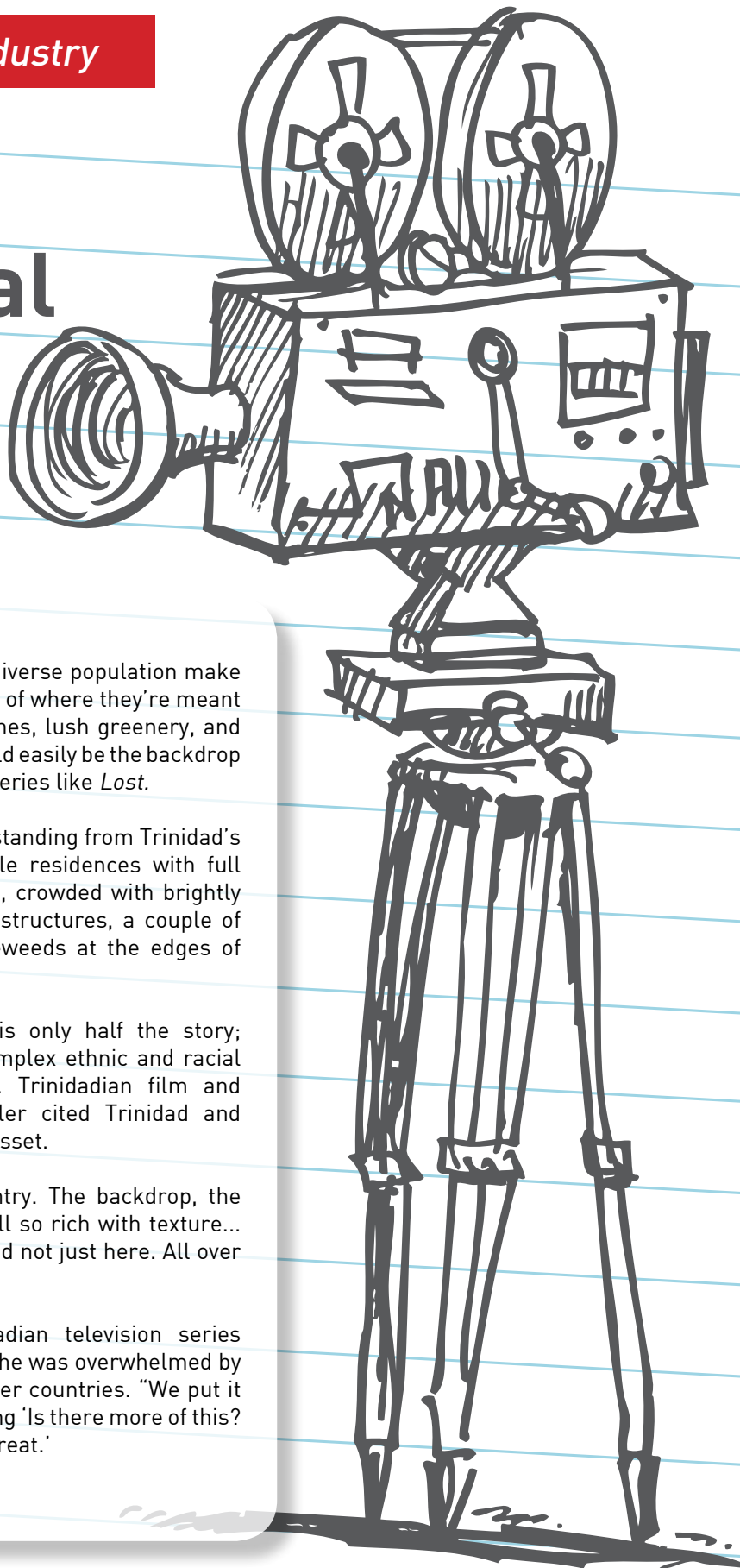
Trinidad and Tobago's lush scenery and diverse population make it an ideal place to shoot films, regardless of where they're meant to be released. With its white sand beaches, lush greenery, and hidden lagoons, the twin-island nation could easily be the backdrop for a movie like *Castaway* or a television series like *Lost*.

The old forts and cannons, rusty but still standing from Trinidad's days as a British colony; the Dutch-style residences with full wraparound porches; the fishing villages, crowded with brightly coloured boats; the crumbling religious structures, a couple of them half-decimated in fields of tumbleweeds at the edges of narrow dirt roads: all of it is regal.

The flexibility of Trinidad's geography is only half the story; the other half lies in the wonderfully complex ethnic and racial diversity of the Trinidadian population. Trinidadian film and television producer Danielle Diefenthaler cited Trinidad and Tobago's cultural diversity as a valuable asset.

"We have amazing textures in this country. The backdrop, the people, the ethnic composition: they're all so rich with texture... We have a product people want to see. And not just here. All over the world," said Diefenthaler.

When Diefenthaler posted her Trinidadian television series *Westwood Park* online for the first time, she was overwhelmed by the response she got from viewers in other countries. "We put it up, and we had people from Malaysia asking 'Is there more of this? Where can I find more episodes? This is great.'





"Malaysia. Australia. people in the South Pacific, they see themselves in us. They see people who look like them; they see all these different mixtures."

The Trinidad government agrees. In 2012, it identified the creative sector as a huge opportunity for foreign investors. The Government launched a competitive rebate program with the goal of attracting international film producers. The programme, which includes an 150% tax rebate on top of a 35% cash rebate, is among the most generous in the region.

Trinidad's geographic location—at the southernmost tip of the Caribbean, below the hurricane belt —makes it an excellent choice for filmmakers concerned about production delays due to tropical storms. In addition, its strategic location (just four hours away from the U.S.) and talented and literate population make it an ideal choice for filmmakers from the United States who prefer to work with an English-speaking cast and crew.

Trinidadians are well-equipped to work on various aspects of film production, thanks to new B.A. and B.F.A. degree programmes in film direction, production and photography. The country is also home to 150 animators, a group Diefenthaler says is "exceptionally talented."

Initially, when the Government set out to target the sectors it intended to develop, it suggested various types of business investments that were in high demand, a number of which are in film production. Among the investment opportunities it identified was a 50-60 seat animation studio, a project intended to "leverage Trinidad's huge cost advantage in relation to the North American market."

According to invesTT research, a 22-24 minute animated television show episode would cost between USD\$200K-USD\$250K to produce in North America.

In Trinidad, that same episode could be produced for USD\$70K, a cost that's competitive with India's.

The world knows Trinidad and Tobago's citizens as the fun-loving souls behind Carnival, and Diefenthaler says that's only a fraction of the cultural capital they have to offer. Like Jamaica in the wildly successful *Pirates of the Caribbean* movies, Trinidad offers an excellent backdrop for major feature films. *God Loves the Fighter* by local filmmaker Damian Marcano gives us a taste of it.

For foreign investors concerned, as they should be, with return on investment, it really comes down to the stories. Ask anyone in Trinidad and they will tell you the country, owned at one time or another by several of the world's most powerful nations — Britain, Holland, Spain — is rife with great stories. And it's precisely because of its diverse history that it has managed to make an indelible mark on the world for such a tiny island. Here is a country that gave the world its only musical instrument in the 20th century — the steelpan. And that is just the beginning.

"I want to do a film that's about Trinidad now," Diefenthaler said. "Not the Trinidad that's just Carnival and calypsos, but an unapologetic love story between a Trinidadian woman who moves back home after living in New York and a Caribbean male. A story that spans the whole Caribbean."

"In the end," Diefenthaler concurs, "it really just boils down to the story."

As Trinidad and Tobago's creative industries pick up more traction, international investors will find a thriving economic and cultural space and a supportive government framework working, "hand in glove", to release Trinidad's biggest films yet. ■



The Creative Industries

The Creative Sector is a constantly evolving arena, where niche market opportunities can be found. Within the entertainment subsector the following projects can be developed for commercial objectives.

Film Subsector—Motion Picture and Video Production

Definition of local industry structure

- Four local television stations create local content mainly focused on news, documentaries, and local talent competitions.
- Two larger audiovisual rental companies—Advance Dynamics and Media 21 current companies contacted for equipment needed for any large productions. However, it is often necessary to fly equipment in from Miami and Barbados.
- While there have been a number of film productions in Trinidad and Tobago, all of these films have been location shoots that leverage on the unique film locations on offer in the country. For small scale and local productions, video post-production has been handled by one of the 12 companies in the country that have basic video editing capabilities.

OPPORTUNITY SCOPE

Trinidad and Tobago requires a two-three soundstage facility (15,000-20,000 sq. ft. per soundstage) to serve as the backbone of the local and location film projects

and has the capacity to allow for expansion over time when the market for additional space materialises.

This facility will be complemented by a video and audio post-production facility that will grant film makers the ability to create dailies as well as handle complex editing functions normally sent out of the country, thereby allowing full features to be shot and edited in country.

The facility will also have an equipment rental function wherein it will source and stock, for use in Trinidad and Tobago and the Caribbean, the latest in film equipment necessary to make an international standard feature.

There is also the option to include space that can accommodate the following:

- Corporate Events
- Fashion Shows
- Photo Shoots
- Proms & Homecoming Events
- Seminars & Conferences
- Conventions, Weddings etc.
- Film development facilities/ dark rooms
- Render farms

SITE LOCATIONS

- Frederick Settlement - Caroni (Central Trinidad)
- Chaguaramas (West Trinidad)

ESTIMATED CAPEX

Soundstage Cost US\$ 100-125 per sq. ft. Projected investment for Soundstage, Audio and Video Post facilities and equipment rental: US\$ 25-30 million

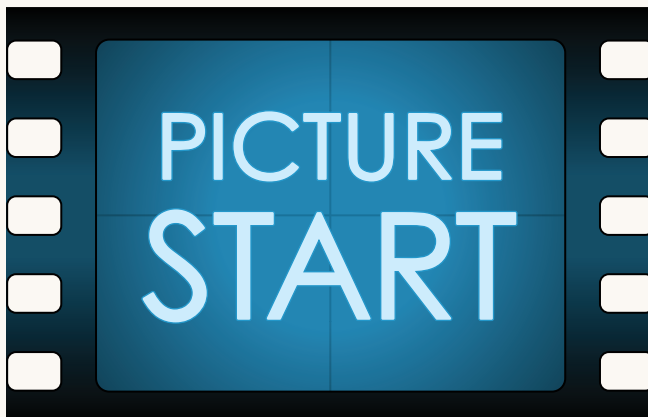
BENEFITS TO THE INVESTOR FOR INVESTING IN THE PROJECT

Trinidad and Tobago offers significant advantages for an investor in a sound stage facility with equipment rental services, which includes:

1. Multiethnic population which can facilitate multiple filming scenarios
2. Excellent filming locations
3. English speaking population with a 98% literacy rate
4. Attractive regime of fiscal and non-fiscal incentives for film
5. Membership in CARICOM

KEY REASONS FOR ON LOCATION FILMING:

- Concentrated variety of contrasting locations within close proximity.
- Diversified and unique landscape, fauna and flora.
- Diversity of cultures reflected in national festivals and multi-cultural sites.
- Easily accessible locations.
- A highly skilled labor force.
- A highly artistic and creative society.
- A growing number of professionals and highly skilled persons with film and video experience.
- A competitive foreign exchange rate and lower cost of production.
- A stable political environment.
- A liberalised economic environment.
- Established air routes between Trinidad and Tobago and North America and Europe.
- Excellent hotel and other types of accommodations including internationally recognised brands e.g. Hilton, Holiday Inn, Courtyard by Marriott, and Hyatt Hotel.
- State-of-the-art video production and editing facilities.



MARKET SIZE AND ACCESS

LOCAL DEMAND

- In the first year it is expected that approximately one -two features valued at US\$1,000,000 will be produced, and with the creation of the Sound Stage facilities it is expected that this would increase to approximately eight -ten features by the second year.
- Currently approximately US\$500,000 is spent on the rental of equipment annually and with the availability of equipment locally, this figure is expected to double by the 2nd year. (This figure does not include rentals which are sourced from abroad.)
- Local Television stations, Advertising Agencies and independent film makers.
- Universities.
- Foreign clients

TRADE AGREEMENTS

- All items originating from CARICOM countries may pass duty free into another CARICOM countries

OPPORTUNITIES FOR INNOVATION AND COLLABORATION

Possible joint-venture prospects

- The National Council for Indian Culture who own a large tract of land in central Trinidad have expressed interest in locating film facilities at the location
- A number of local film companies exist that may be interested in partnering with the potential sound stage investor
- The University of Trinidad and Tobago has a media arts programme that may serve as a potential partner at the facility. ■



Fashion, Style, Insight and Caribbean Influence





Fashion—a mainstay in today’s society; individual fashion is shown in casual dress to business attire. Influences and preferences from one person to another vary and are based upon personal beliefs, attitudes, personalities, culture and popular trends.

The fashion industry is one filled with numerous niches from categorical wear such as beach, sport, resort to mainstream retail and high-end fashion. Within Trinidad and Tobago, the fashion industry has been around for over 30 years, with local designers including the famous Meiling, Heather Jones and Claudia Pegus.

Emerging recently and joining the ranks of Trinidad and Tobago talented designers, is Anya Ayoung-Chee. With three collections released in her career as a designer, she is branching out into international markets, where niche opportunities for her designs exist.

“I’m influenced in my designs by all of Trinidad and Tobago’s heritage, colonial history, and ethnic groups. When designing they all interfuse naturally and I don’t consciously select one aspect versus another,” says Ayoung-Chee.

In looking at what Trinidad and Tobago fashion has to offer on the world scale, Anya pinpointed the elements of colour, cut, pattern and Caribbean culture, the latter which she believes presents a distinguishing factor to allow Caribbean designs to stand apart.

In terms of integration into mainstream retail in international markets, that is Trinidad and Tobago designed clothing in major retail stores abroad, there is a market. Each designer would have their unique style, and the challenge is in matching styles to the peak demand seasons internationally. Spring /Summer and Fall/Winter.

Despite Caribbean fashion being seen as “warm weather” wear, designs can be sold as inner pieces for layering with other fall and winter staples such as jackets and coats. The key to having a successful launch into regional and international markets revolves around the understanding of trends and the market being penetrated.

Talent exists in abundance in Trinidad and Tobago as the University of Trinidad and Tobago now provides bachelor degrees in Fashion Design and the quality of output from the graduates is exceptional. Support is needed, however, for the designer entrepreneur to move into full production of clothing and the establishment of design houses, through capital investment for equipment, materials and the legal issues surrounding trademarks, business licenses and taxation.

Joint venture opportunities also are available in the form of providing not only capital, but also the expertise in navigating the distribution channels for sale of clothing. Business negotiations and issues relating to foreign production with domestic design need to be addressed. For certain markets that may require large-scale output, large production houses may be best suited abroad, with the original design and sample work being conducted locally.

It is noted that Trinidad and Tobago’s trade links with the US, Canada, EU , CARICOM and some Latin American countries, allow for easy entry into regional and international markets. Furthermore, legislation regarding intellectual property provides an environment which promotes creativity and protects the interests of designers and their business partners.

Recently, Anya held a fashion show on January 31st, 2013 along one of Trinidad and Tobago’s busiest entertainment strips, Ariapita Avenue titled “Fashion Roxy Avenue”. The fashion show, free to the public, showcased her latest designs inspired by Trinidad and Tobago Carnival. The Carnival season is full of parties, music competitions and fashion. “I see a natural synergy between Carnival and fashion”, states Anya. “It’s the mass festival for all of the population regardless of ethnic backgrounds, in which dress, fashion and style are at the forefront of all activities. New York Fashion Week 2013 ends February 9th and so the idea was to introduce and export a product that made sense with our climate and social calendar.”

Many designers share this vision of creating designs that can be worn by anyone regardless of nationality and the local fashion industry has been fortifying itself with training programmes, equipment, sample fabrics and regional shops, while participating in fashion shows locally, regionally and internationally.

Is fashion alive in Trinidad and Tobago? Is there a market to be developed and allow quality returns to those willing to invest? The answer is Yes! ■

The video link below provides more insight into the world of Trinidad and Tobago fashion: “Haute Caribe. The World of Trinidad and Tobago Fashion”

[http://www.investt.co.tt/
media-room/multimedia/all](http://www.investt.co.tt/media-room/multimedia/all)



Creating Through Animation

Creative expression, lying at the heart of the animation industry, cannot be fully maximised without significant financial investment to support the level of imagination and ingenuity which it entails.

The Government has identified the creative industries among the priority sectors targeted for economic diversification. Of these industries, Animation is a key one which uses both labour and technology to help monetise and export our rich cultural heritage.

The industry is a fledgling one in Trinidad and Tobago at present, with a great degree of potential which must be nurtured. The increasing trend towards outsourcing in this industry is primarily due to the presence of good studios and the vast base of a skilled English-speaking workforce in outsourcing locations, where the cost of animation services is also significantly more affordable.

Trinidad and Tobago can compete on production cost and quality with established countries such as India and the Philippines. A 22 to 24 minute episode would cost between US\$200,000 and US\$250,000 in the US and Canada, and between US\$250,000 and US\$300,000 in Europe. The production cost in Trinidad and Tobago is approximately US\$62,000 to US\$65,000.

Apart from this significant cost advantage, our highly-skilled English-speaking workforce and our prime location endow the nation with enormous potential to become an outsourcing nexus for international companies.

Over the last year, invesTT has been working with Full Circle Studios towards the establishment of an animation incubator that will feature a 2D production studio to execute animation projects. These projects will involve Modeling, Character Rigging, Voice Recording, Layout, Screenplay, Storyboarding, Visual Development, Lighting, Texturing, Compositing, Sound Effects, Music Content, Repurposing and Digital Management. The long-term goal of this incubator is to provide facilities for independent animators to explore their creativity and create intellectual property that can be marketed internationally by invesTT.

In addition, there are independent animators with animated pilot shows including gaming features which target a multimillion dollar industry, that are ready for full development and production. However, there is need for capital investment and publicity backing to have these pilots turned into full animated episodes and marketed to regional and international networks. Engineered and conceptualised by local animators with over 20 years combined experience.

In particular, the group called “Trini-Delegation” or “Trini-D”, have packaged and produced pilots of five animated shows and are seeking to have these bought for full production and airing on worldwide networks and studios. Each artist has realised a fully-formed animated vision reflecting the beautiful, unique, and like calypso, universally demanded voice of the Caribbean.

The Animators of Trini-D highlighted

Created in partnership with Animae Caribe founder Camille Selvon Abrahams, Trinidad and Tobago's premiere 2D animation studio has created *Krik Krak Anansi*, a series about a young spider learning about life with his forest friends with mischievous antics that live up to his namesake!



Mathew Hudson:

This veteran animator known for commercial campaigns like the Lucozade Stick-Man has created the show *Breadfruit* which follows the misadventures of the mongrel Potts and friends as they go wild in their neighborhood in a hilarious neverending quest for adventure, fun and a free meal.

Kevin Bhall:

Temple in the Sea was created by this young, phenomenal animator and uses gorgeous animation to weave a rich, timeless legend from the true story of Trinidad's Sewdass Sadhu who built our nation's real Temple in the Sea.

Kelsey Noel - <https://vimeo.com/41636792>:

He has created a unique and utterly breathtaking, lush tropical "moving illustration" style to tell the story of *Cyborg Chicken*, a being hatched from an egg mutated from toxic chemicals, that protects his kind from natural and manmade dangers alike!

Victor Dolabaille - www.vicdgames.webs.com

As a 3D animator extraordinaire Victor brings us *Dreams vs Reality*. Our heroes Sue Raj and Manicou must battle the corrupt political villain Marvin, by defeating his schemes in reality and the world of dreams.

Seon Thompson - www.copybookpage.blogspot.com

Understanding that Caribbean culture is told as well as shown, Seon designed his series *Protest* by adapting our treasure trove of spoken word performances into animated shorts. In addition to the Caribbean, the series adapts international spoken word poetry into onscreen stories as well!

Omar Lewis - www.myatworld.com:

A lecturer at UTT's Animation Program and a published children's book author/illustrator, this fine artist and animator has created *The Wonderful World of Myat*. Myat is a girl who lives in a mythical realm with her family as she experiences amazing adventures. Oh... and she can fly like a bird and swim like a fish! ■

For an interactive look at the above pilots click here:

<http://vimeo.com/42020318>