

THE CARNIVAL KIDS ARE ALL RIGHT!



SMILES: Taliyah Melholi, 7 PICTURES BY DAVID JACKSON

THE NINETEENTH Notting Hill Nursery Carnival took off in a blaze of colour with the theme Wings and Tings.

Organised by volunteers, children of nursery age enjoyed the atmosphere of the Notting Hill Carnival in the safety of Kensington Memorial Park in St Mark's Road, Ladbroke Grove, last Monday.

Starting at 11am, children from nearby nurseries and summer play projects had made their own costumes, becoming fantasy birds, angels and insects, before taking to the walkway to parade their new looks before family and friends. In the background, 15 steel bands of under-18s competed for trophies and medals in the Junior Panorama Competition.

Organiser Kim Woolford, 39, whose mum Lee started the Carnival, said: "The Notting Hill Nursery Carnival is a fantastic opportunity for young children to become involved in the carnival season."

"The children take great pride in their costumes, which they have put much time and effort into making."

"This event enables the focus to be upon them, aside from the huge crowds of the bank holiday weekend."

Other events included the glamorous mother and baby competition, which saw mums and little ones showing off their fabulous outfits.

Nursery teacher Caroline Angelin, 30, has worked at Colville Nursery off Portobello Road, Notting Hill, for two years.

She said: "We come every year. The children make their own costumes, which is a nice experience for them as they get to dress up and meet other children. I love spending time with colleagues at the carnival, and making costumes."

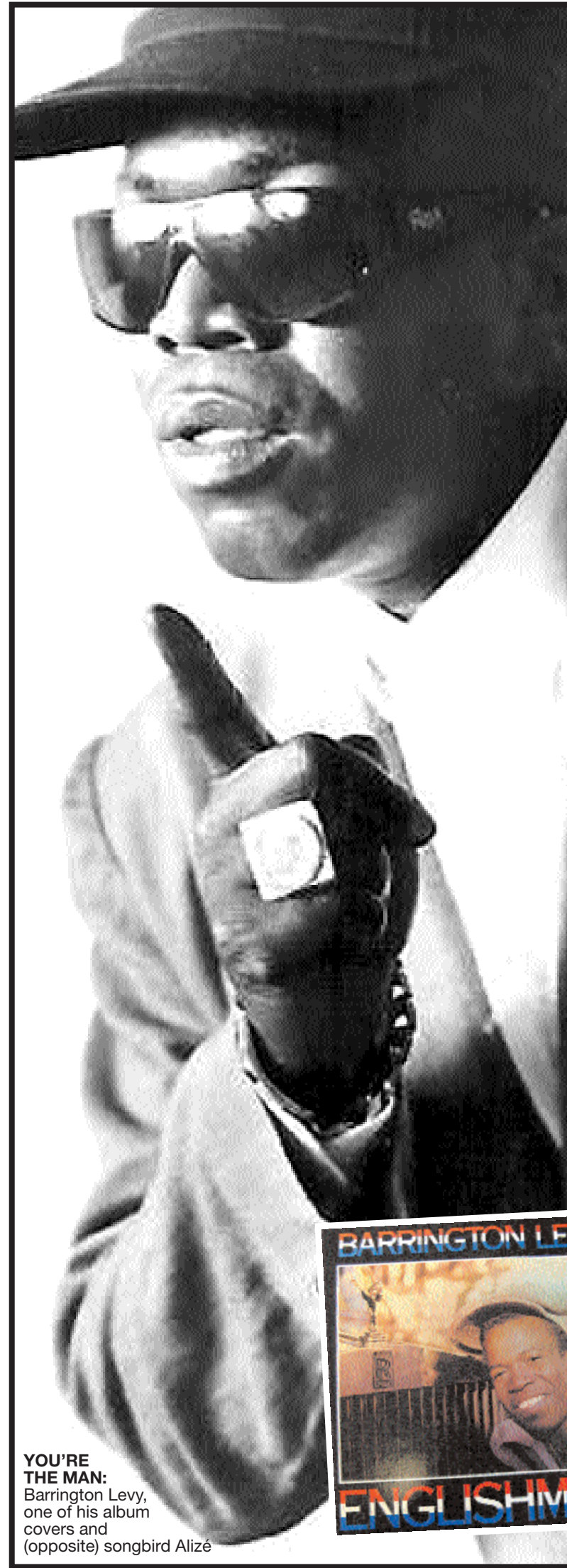
Prof Chris Mullard, chairman of Notting Hill Carnival Ltd, added: "These children are the carnivalists of the future."

"The Notting Hill Nursery Carnival is another example of the universal quality of carnival season, proving that people of all ages and backgrounds are able to be involved in this extravaganza." Saffron Pineger



DRUMMER GIRL: Akyle Campbell, 5

WHEN LEVY BREAKS



YOU'RE THE MAN: Barrington Levy, one of his album covers and (opposite) songbird Alizé

WHEN DADDY'S A REGGAE GREAT, IT'S HARD TO ESTABLISHING YOUR OWN IDENTITY... OR IS IT? ASKS CHRISTIAN McLAUGHLIN

WHEN budding R&B star Alizé Levy describes the Notting Hill Carnival as "the second biggest musical influence in my life", it is more than just your average compliment.

As the daughter of reggae and dancehall superstar Barrington Levy, the top spot was arguably never in question.

But however formative Barrington was in her development, this musical family fairytale does not play out quite as you might expect.

On the verge of bursting from the shadow of her father's limelight, with a huge concert in the Bahamas on November 25, performing alongside the likes of Lenny Kravitz and Montell Jordan, Alizé has spurned her reggae and dancehall roots.

Refusing to bow to pressure from her father to follow in his footsteps, and disenchanted with the current Caribbean music scene, she has forged a career of her own, crafting soulful and sensual R&B songs.

"I sing about love," she candidly said on the phone from the flat she shares with her son, four-year-old Rico-Ché, in Hammersmith.

"I was tired of listening to Jamaicans talking about disgusting things like gang-banging girls as if it's something to laugh about."

She said, referring specifically to *Battery Doll*, a song by Beenie Man, a hugely popular reggae/dancehall musician whose misogynistic and homophobic lyrics have led to him being banned on several occasions from performing in the UK and US.

"And as a female artist, either you are pigeon-holed into writing vulgar songs about your genitalia like dancehall stars Lady Saw or Lady Patra, or you're singing gospel, roots and reggae which revolve around religion."

"There's no middle ground to sing about love and intimacies that relate to your own identity," the 24-year-old singer continued.

Her father, however, has a slightly different take on things. Barrington, 44, a reggae singer respected the world over, and one of the pioneers of dancehall, has said that if she wants to pursue R&B she can do it on her own terms.

Almost singlehandedly responsible for dancehall's emergence in UK mainstream music when he moved from Jamaica to London between 1981 and 1992, he defended

his stance, saying: "My concept

was all about the beats and not the lyrics. Dancehall is supposed to be optimistic, it's not about bashing or doing negative things to people."

"Musicians these days don't really love the music."

"They are in it for the money and will do anything to get it. The real problem is not people like Beenie Man or Lady Saw though, it's the radio stations. Radio stations need to bring back the love – if they don't play that music, nobody will listen."

"But Alizé is wrong to say that there is no middle way. There are many of us are trying to bring back conscious, soulful music in Jamaica."

Alizé was raised with brother Aaron, 22, and sister Carlene, 21, by her grandparents, Vivian and Newton Johnson. Living between Fulham and Shepherd's Bush until she was 12, she said: "It was only after I threw a crying-bitch-fit-tantrum that I was flown to Clarendon, Jamaica, to be with my dad."

"My mother wasn't present in my life and my dad was a telephone dad. It was his heyday, he was all over the place doing shows, and I found it quite difficult."

It was during these years, between the ages of six and 12, that Alizé lived for the Notting Hill Carnival. "I couldn't wait for Carnival. We would start preparing months in advance."

"I loved the costume, the make-up, and being allowed to escape out of my life and be someone else for the day. It makes me so happy to think about those times," she said, her voice softening.

"And the way I used to dance – wooh! A little child had no business winding like that," she added, bursting out laughing.

Barrington, speaking from his mobile, about to board a plane from Los Angeles to Kingston via Miami, said: "When I came to London in the 80s I definitely would go to Carnival. That's when all the ladies come out. But I never did see Alizé," he said.

Did he miss her? "That's my best baby, of course I always missed her," he boomed.

It was during their time together in Clarendon, between the ages of 12 and 16, that Alizé began taking her writing seriously.

She said: "I wrote to escape the silence of Jamaica. It was actually exciting because at my dad's home there was nothing to do, literally."



No TV, no phone, nothing.

"It was tough to begin with but it changed my whole perspective. I went from an English benefits lifestyle to that of a diva."

"My dad was very protective and would take me everywhere, dressed up in heels like a little lady. He helped me structure the words I was writing and by the time I was 16, producers started appearing."

These early hopes came to nothing however.

"They were sharks and didn't have my best interests at heart. I left to come back to London, yo-yoing back and forth until I was 20, by when I wasn't interested in reggae anymore."

"My dad said he wouldn't help me, I'd left my baby's father behind... It was time to go it alone and follow my dream."

A decision that is finally paying off. On the verge of her big break with the concert in the Bahamas, Alizé will fly the flag in front of thousands alongside the UK's freshest talents – grime star Kano; fellow R&B singer, Nathan; and UK beatboxing champion, MC Zani. But for someone with

such a rocky past, you wonder how her songs are so filled with love.

"I've always been drawn to emotional music. My dad's ballads, like *Vice Versa Love*, are my favourite by far."

"In terms of my life I think it's a case of wanting what you've never had, like the poor person who wants to be rich."

Beautiful, honest and armed with a devastating voice, she has everything except the perfect agent and manager. Time to form an orderly queue, Alizé Levy is about to take off.

● Alizé will perform at the Backyard Comedy Club, 231 Cambridge Heath Road, Bethnal Green, on September 4. £6. Call: 020 7625 6957 or 07956 533481. Package deals for the Bahamas concert in Nassau, including flight, accommodation and ticket, £550 for five days. Call: 07951 989486 or email: stephan@deluxentertainment.co.uk

COULD REMOVAL OF BARRIERS CAUSE CARNIVAL CHAOS?



CROWD CONTROL: Barriers at last year's event

A NOTTING HILL Carnival stalwart has warned of the dangers facing this year's street party after a decision to remove safety barriers for a section of the parade route.

For years, eager carnival crowds have been separated from the flotillas of trucks, floats and partygoers walking the carnival route by sturdy barriers. But no longer.

A multi-agency safety planning group has decided to remove the barriers lining the southern half of the route, particularly the areas around Kensington Park Road, Needham Road and Arundel Gardens.

The move, decided in April, has angered some long-standing members of the carnival community. Larry Ford, 75, is a leading member of the Flamboyant Carnival Club and has taken part in Carnival since the 1970s.

He said: "I am very worried about it. It is dangerous. Years ago we had a lot of people who ran through the bands. What will happen this time? We have real reservations about what they are doing."

"It is a health and safety risk. Whatever happens this year there's going to be a full-blown discussion with the operational and safety planning group."

Groups of 'steaming' gangs are common at Carnival, pushing people as they move through crowds, sometimes pick-pocketing as they go.

But the police say the new scheme will ease crowd bottlenecks on the southern half of the route – where most of the estimated 800,000 visitors enter. Lee Woolford-Chivers, founder of the Notting Hill Nursery Carnival, takes groups of mothers and children to the event each year.

She said: "The lack of barriers will affect us if it starts the crowds moving. That's the problem. There is nowhere to go. They close up the side streets near Ladbroke Grove."

"I'd really like to see that change."

A police spokeswoman said: "The Met is extremely well-versed in delivering a full policing operation for Notting Hill Carnival and to ensure high standards are met. We review plans with partners to ensure they are fit for purpose for this yearly event."

"We would like to reassure the public that the decision not to barrier part of the south section of the Carnival route this year follows a thorough review of our policing plan, and has been put in place to ease congestion and aid crowd flow along the route."

"A complete CCTV network will monitor any situations that may arise." Ellie Dyer

'WHAT WILL HAPPEN THIS TIME?'

'THEY WERE SHARKS AND DIDN'T HAVE MY BEST INTERESTS AT HEART. I LEFT TO COME BACK TO LONDON, YO-YOING BACK AND FORTH UNTIL I WAS 20. BY THEN I WASN'T INTERESTED IN REGGAE'