



Ali Charlton



Gail Becker



Margaret Sealy



Pamela Sealy-Hoyte



Astro Weekes

Readers share their Pics Of The Crop



Patrons were excited to see the **Courtesy Pic O De Crop Finals** at the **National Botanical Gardens** on Friday.

The **Sunday Sun** polled some of them to get their top three in no particular order before the announcement of the top four was

made yesterday morning.

Ali Charlton: De Announcer, he was fantastic. Teri doing **AI** was creative and **iWeb** with **Twisted**.

Gail Becker: My top three are Ian Webster number two, **Classic**, and

number one, **Adrian Clarke**.

Margaret Sealy: De Announcer, Chrystal and **i-Web**.

Pamela Sealy-Hoyte: My top three is **AC** going to get back the crown, **i-Web** and **De Announcer**.

Astro Weekes: **Quon**, **Mr Blood** and **De Announcer** in that order. (NS)

(Pictures by Reco Moore.)

De Announcer packs a punch

Ronnie **De Announcer** Clarke reminded Barbados that calypso is not just a song, it's a performance, a perspective and at times, a master class in theatre.

At this year's **Pic O De Crop Finals**, he delivered all three with style, satire and a surprising twist that had the crowd in stitches.

Placing third in the fiercely competitive finals, **De Announcer** credited his success to teamwork, bold choices and a fearless embrace of character. Reflecting on the journey, he called it "a blessing, a privilege and an honour" to represent his calypso tent, **Carters Shining Stars**, under the inspirational guidance of tent manager, Julie Sealy.

In a bold and unexpected move, **De Announcer** took to the stage dressed in tribute to the National Cultural Foundation chief executive officer, Carol Roberts, whom he portrayed not with mockery, but with mirth, mannerisms and meticulous detail – from hairstyle to posture.

"At no time was there any insulting or degradation of Carol Roberts. Sometimes, you make decisions that people don't agree with and as a calypsonian, it's my role to ensure that I reflect that. Always keeping myself on the right side of the line, and I've done that all the time.

Not personal

"It was never meant to be personal," he said, addressing questions about the target of the song, **National Carol Festival**. "I've known Carol Roberts for 40 years. As calypsonians, we reflect the culture – sometimes with sharp edges, but always with respect."

That respect came through not only in his lyrics but in the calculated care he took with his costume and persona. A switch from the originally planned black suit to a white kaftan was just the beginning.

"We were looking for a late draw in the order and if we did get a late draw, it would have been a case of me just lyrically decimating the people that had all sung before me, but we couldn't get it. So then, we got number six and Julie Sealy, tent manager of **Shining Stars** tent, said: 'Well, we might have to change the black suit.'"

With the help of designer, Passion, the perfect wig was styled, rehearsed and dramatically swapped in what he called a "12-second transformation".

"It wasn't easy – make-up started at 5:45 p.m. and finished just after the first contestant, but it all came together."

Usual impression

"We recognised we have to make an impact from the time we get on that stage and Carol dresses well, so I said I don't need to hire a Carol, I need to be Carol and that was it. Everybody's looking for this mean, tough, angry **Announcer**, which is the usual impression that they get, you know, combative but they would not expect me to take on the persona of Carol."

The performance was backed by a cast of talent.

"From a teamwork perspective, there was Julie, Henrietta's Closet, we have Passion, the designer, we have Marcia and Dave Weekes, who were really behind us from the get-go and then we had Unique by Faith, who did the make-up. We had Deborah Clarke and the background vocal team. We had Patricia Cox and the **Praise Academy** dancers and we had **Admiral International**."

It was, as **De Announcer** described it, "an incredible team effort".

This was **De Announcer's** ninth finals appearance, a testament to both his longevity and dedication to the artform. Despite the years of near-misses and mixed public reactions, he

remains grounded.

"That's part of being a calypsonian," he said.

"Sometimes, you don't get through when people think you should, but as

long as you finish strong, you build. Look at **Classic** as an example. It took him decades to win a crown. So, I'm grateful for where we are today." (NS)

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