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Large Concerts? Carnival? 2020 is Lost. Think Mid-2021, Experts, Event Organizers Say

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**Jouvert Morning during the 2018-2019 Carnival Season on St. Croix By. REEMY-REEMZ
PHOTOGRAPHY FOR THE VIRGIN ISLANDS CONSORTIUM**

The Caribbean is synonymous with sun, fun, beautiful people, exotic tours, and yes, carnival. But the latter, according to experts, will not be a reality, at least for governments whose leaders take expert advice seriously, until the second half of 2021, as more data becomes available on so-called "super-spreader" events of the novel coronavirus.

A new theory has emerged that says banning mass public events where hundreds of attendees can infect themselves in the space of a few hours, along with other measures such as wearing face masks, might slow the pace of the deadly pathogen's progression to a manageable level even as

other parts of the economy reopen.

Researchers believe that events such as carnival festivities in the U.S. and Germany, soccer matches in Italy and horse races in Britain, led to explosive growth of the virus in those countries.

According to [the Wall Street Journal](#), a study published in the National Academy of Sciences in the U.S. last week, found that one minute of loud speech proved enough to produce thousands of droplets that remain airborne for about 12 minutes, potentially infecting anyone in the area. There are similar studies that found virus-laden aerosols could stay airborne for hours.

More troubling is that the study found mass infections oftentimes were more serious than those contracted under other conditions.

Hendrik Streeck, a virologist with the University Hospital Bonn, Germany, performed research into a coronavirus outbreak in the western county of Heinsberg, Germany, which established that the virus's spread surged across the region after around 400 people took part in a traditional carnival party, where they drank, kissed and sang for several hours on February 15.

“Most cases globally, and especially most deaths, happened after superspreading events,” said Dr. Streeck, speaking to WSJ. He told the publication that people who attended the carnival not only got infected and then spread the virus across the county, but also showed stronger symptoms and a comparatively severe illness — possibly because they received a higher load of the virus from close and prolonged exposure.

Weeks later, the virus wreaked havoc by infecting thousands and killing dozens.

In light of the new data, even those being hit the hardest economically by the virus, concert organizers, say 2020 is lost, and that mid-2021 is the earliest large-scale events will be held. Others say a vaccine, tracing and treatment procedures are also critical components of the reemergence of carnivals and concerts.

“2020 is gone—so is half of 2021,” says Gregg Perloff, CEO and founder of Another Planet Entertainment, which runs the Outside Lands Music and Arts Festival in San Francisco.

“The hope is that we will have a big summer season in 2021,” says Joe Berchtold, president of Live Nation Entertainment, the world’s biggest concert promoter, which has lost 33 percent of its market value this year. Both Perloff and Berchtold spoke to [WSJ during interviews](#).

In the U.S., the shutdown brought to a halt a decade-long boom in the concert industry, with live music set to generate \$30 billion in revenue in 2020 before the virus hit, according to PricewaterhouseCoopers LLC.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis ([via](#) New York Times), gross domestic product attributable to arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodations and food services was nearly \$1.6 trillion last year, up from \$979 billion a decade ago.

Artists and event organizers on the mainland have been finding creative ways to reach audiences, though such events are being looked at more as ways for artists to stay in touch with fans compared to revenue generators. There is the Verzuz series of "beat battles" on Instagram. Artists have also showed up in concerts in video games such as Fortnite. Drive-in concerts, where artists perform on a stage and attendees sit in their cars, are seen as stop-gap.

In the Caribbean, the USVI Dept. of Tourism, Division of Festivals held virtual events in April, the territory's traditional season for carnival in St. Thomas, that featured artists performing for virtual crowds after the April event was canceled.

A trend that gained momentum through Guyana's online carnival events after the country canceled its activities, saw participants joining the fun from their homes through Zoom. The innovation took hold and was utilized successfully by the Division of Festivals and private entities in the USVI.

Even when large-scale events finally come back, protocols will have changed. There will be new rules for safety and sanitation, particularly around food and beverages, rest rooms and, for larger venues, elevators.

Speaking to WSJ, Dave Brown, chief operating officer of American Airlines Center, a 20,000-capacity arena in Dallas, said "The way 9/11 changed our industry in terms of security... this will [lead to] best practices that our touring industry is compelled to employ forever."

Mr. Brown said hand railings will be frequently cleaned by staff, packaged foods will be served, and hand sanitizers will see visible placements for use.