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Carnival Village Opens with Tribute to Music Educator Malvern Gumbs

Festivities ignite on St. Thomas as the community celebrates the influential career and contributions of a local music legend

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Malvern Gumbs has won nine Carnival Road March titles, and is aiming for his 10th with his latest hit, V.I. People. By. DEAR PRODUCTIONS, V.I. CONSORTIUM

With the official opening of Carnival Village on Monday night, festivities on St. Thomas have kicked into high gear.

Dubbed “Malvern’s Melodic Greathouse” after music educator Malvern Gumbs, the village was a hive of activity as patrons criss-crossed the grounds, sampling food and beverages from vendor booths.

“Can you imagine a village without music? Not possible!” declared Senate President Novelle Francis, noting that this year’s honor went to a highly deserving person. Apart from Mr. Gumbs’ 27-year long career as a music teacher in the territory’s school system, his direct contributions to Carnival and culture were highlighted during Monday’s ribbon-cutting ceremony. Mr. Gumbs was lauded for his composing and arranging efforts on behalf of junior and senior calypsonians, his incredible nine back-to-back road march titles with Spectrum band, and his work through recently established non-profit MVG: Connecting the World Through Music. His sister Merida, who introduced the honoree to the supportive audience, said that their late mother was the one who introduced Mr. Gumbs – and her other children – to music.



Carnival Village opening night on April 29, 2024 during the performance of Soca superstar Machel Montano. (Credit: USVI Division of Festivals)

“We get the opportunity to celebrate this wonderful young man who not only provides us extraordinary music, through his voice, and through his other musical talents, but who teaches,” said Lieutenant Governor Tregenza Roach, celebrating the evening’s honoree. Despite what he called Mr. Gumbs’s “tender age,” the lieutenant governor argued that his impactful contributions

to the island's Carnival sector make him more than worthy of the accolades.

“Anybody could win a road march, but could anybody write a song [that] wins a gubernatorial election?” Governor Albert Bryan quipped, highlighting Mr. Gumbs's broad range of skill and expertise in creating music meant to impart specific moods or encourage specific behavior, whether it's chipping down the road or queuing at a polling station to cast a vote.

Mr. Gumbs's brief remarks were overflowing with gratitude at the honor bestowed upon him. “I love all of you,” said the beaming musician. “Happy Carnival everybody!”

After the short opening and ribbon-cutting ceremony, the village was flooded with the throngs of patrons who came to sample local delicacies, purchase trinkets, and enjoy performances from a host of musicians.

The evening culminated with electrifying performances from several music artists, including international soca superstar Machel Montano.

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