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## Simply Sophisticated Kicks Off Carnival Season with LUSH Costume Launch for Crucian Christmas Festival

The event, featuring TROOPAH LIVE, LIPS INTL, TRINITY KREW, and SHAW HP, will take place at the Starlight Lounge at Sydney Lee Theater this Saturday, August 3. Doors open at 4:00 p.m. with the show starting at 6:00 p.m. sharp

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Festival of the Bands 2023, now rebranded to LUSH: The Official Band Launch. By. KGP VI

Shamari Haynes, the founder of Simply Sophisticated Fun Troupe (SSFT), the largest carnival troupe in the U.S. Virgin Islands, has announced the launch of SSFT's new costume line for the upcoming Crucian Christmas Festival Adults Parade. The event will showcase the latest designs

for this year's celebration.

Established in 2008, Simply Sophisticated is celebrating its 17th installment in the parade this year. The highlight of this year's event is the return of SAVAGE Festival, which debuted in 2018. Originally introduced as a standalone brand to bring a new flair to the parade, SAVAGE Festival has now become a VVIP section within Simply Sophisticated. It continues to cater to its exclusive clientele and will now also provide options for men. The official costume launch will take place this Saturday, August 3 at the Starlight Lounge at Sydney Lee Theater. Doors open at 4:00 p.m., and the show kicks off at 6:00 p.m. sharp. Entertainment will be provided by TROOPAH LIVE, LIPS INTL, TRINITY KREW, and SHAW HP. Tickets are priced at \$45 and can be purchased online at [lushfestival.eventbrite.com](https://lushfestival.eventbrite.com).

In previous years, the Festival of the Bands featured costume releases for both Simply Sophisticated and SAVAGE Festival. However, with the reorganization of the brands to enhance the on-the-road experience, the FOTB branding has been retired. Moving forward, Simply Sophisticated will present LUSH: The Official Band Launch. This year's theme, inspired by a series of succulents, promises a premier experience depicting fruity desirables while celebrating freedom, revelry, and the spirit of mas.

Mr. Haynes emphasized the dedication of his team, who possess a combined 25+ years of experience in the mas business. "Being that my team and I are well traveled and possess a combined 25+ years of experience in the mas business, we study the carnival market yearly while using our own experiences elsewhere to create what we've deemed in recent years as 'The BETTER Carnival Experience,'" Mr. Haynes stated. He acknowledged the challenges of keeping the brand fresh annually while maintaining affordability for revelers in an ever-inflating industry.

The growth of the festival in the USVI has been significant, especially with the establishment of the Division of Festivals, Mr. Haynes told the Consortium. He noted that this development has not only ensured a return on investment in culture but also positioned the USVI as a leading destination for festivals. "The proof in that statement is evident as we've seen other destinations transition their festival committees under their local government and have taken a page out of USVI Festivals' book," Mr. Haynes added.

The 32-year-old prodigy identified areas for further growth, including a longer parade route, better infrastructure for expansion, and more opportunities for local vendors to earn money. He also suggested adding more day parties, all-inclusive events, and an additional day for revelers to play mas on the road. The free village concert nights have already made the festival a must-attend event, featuring some of the world's best entertainers year after year.

Expressing gratitude, Mr. Haynes said, "I'd like to thank our sponsors and supporters who support us year after year! With the hype around STX festival building, it is always a pleasure for Simply Sophisticated to set the tone for what we know will be another successful Crucian Christmas Festival."