

logo not found or type unknown

Black Empire Wins Inaugural Virgin Islands Band Clash

The first-ever Virgin Islands Band Clash crowned Black Empire as champions after a night of high-energy performances. Karnage secured the first runner-up position in a competition that celebrated the territory's vibrant live band culture

Entertainment / **Published On December 30, 2024 08:05 AM /**

Janeke Simon **December 30, 2024**

Image not found or type unknown



Lead singer of Black Empire, Blackest, performing during the bandclash event on Saturday. By. VICONSORTIUM

The first ever Virgin Islands Band Clash celebrated the territory's rich live band culture on Saturday, with Black Empire taking the inaugural crown.

The evening unfolded in a highly structured manner. Each of the five bands competing on Saturday was allotted a thirty-five minute slot, five minutes of which was to be spent performing the test tune worth 75 points – Backbone, a 1981 piece from Daddy Friday. Crowd reaction was worth 25 points, while the general performance and arrangement carried 75 points. Cohesiveness and musicianship was worth another 50 points, while originality and creativity could earn the band a maximum of 75 points. Band presentation was allotted 50 points, while orchestral quality was worth 75 points.

Black Empire was the first band to take the stage. The ski-mask clad bass player opened their set with an electric guitar rendition of “Carol of the Bells” before being joined by the horn section. The band then launched into an energetic playthrough of popular Soca, before closing with the test piece, which was performed with technical competence. During their set, the band took time to spotlight member Kevré “Maestro” Hendricks, the man for whom Festival Village is named this year.

In Stylez International was up next beginning their set with the popular hit “Donkey,” which featured a performer in a donkey costume prancing on stage to accompany their more conventionally attired backup dancers. The band, co-ordinated in quasi-military outfits complete with camouflage pants and bullet-proof style vests, complemented the lead singer dressed more formally in black button down and khaki suspenders. The donkey stayed for the entire performance, dancing at one point to a version of Sexy Redd's smash hit “Hey Sexxy”. In Stylez decided to tackle the test tune late in their set. However, instead of playing it fully, they opted to do a stripped down version of the main horn riff while the lead singer improvised unrelated lines over the music. They then returned to “Donkey” for the third time to close their performance.

QCdehBand received overwhelming support from the online audience from the beginning of their set, with compliments about their energy, sound quality, and flow. However, they completely omitted the test tune from their performance, and thus missed out on earning the points for that component of the evening.

Fourth on stage was Impac Band, who launched into their rendition of the test tune immediately following an energetic warmup. However, like In Stylez, the singers decided to let the instruments handle the workload, offering mere ad libs instead of performing the song fully. The rest of their set consisted of the typical party songs, with occasional challenges and “chat” thrown for the other competing bands from the young members of Impac.

St. Thomian band Karnage was last to perform, bringing their customary energy and groove from the warmup to the final notes. Having embarked on the test tune at the beginning of the performance, apparent technical difficulties forced several attempts before the band abandoned the song completely. Moving on to their more familiar repertoire of fete rhythms, the band powered through their performance despite declaring ongoing problems with their equipment.

By the end of the final band's performance, the initially sparse crowd had filled in considerably, with people dancing at the front of the stage like at any other concert. At least one woman even climbing over the security barricade to enjoy the music from a closer vantage point. Ultimately, however, the judging went the way of 11-time Road March champions Black Empire, who secured first place with Karnage in 1st runner up position.