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Ribbon Cut on Carnival Village as Imagination Brass Honored and St. Thomas Carnival Moves Into Full Swing

The opening ceremony was used to reflect on Carnival's cultural legacy, recognize this year's honorees, and cut the ribbon on Imagi Music City before performances by Jam Band, Imagination Brass, Alison Hinds, Farmer Nappy, Hypa Sounds, and Mikal Teja.

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Janeke Simon **April 28, 2026**

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Officials, honorees, and Carnival royalty gather for the ribbon-cutting that officially opened Carnival Village at Imagi Music City on Monday night. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM.

Imagi Music City came alive on Monday night for the ceremony that officially signals the opening of Carnival Village for the season. As usual, before the commencement of festivities, various officials offered remarks reflecting on traditional carnival village culture and honoring this year's awardees.

Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett was the first to speak. "Our Carnival and festival celebrations are where our ancestors' stories live," said the congresswoman. "Every parade costume, every pan note, every parade costume echoes with that." This year's Village honorees, Ms. Plaskett said, are an extension of that long, unbroken tradition. Imagination Brass, she declared, "has done nothing less than carry the soul of St. Thomas to stages across this region and beyond."

She cited "Theresa Rocking" as her favorite song from the group, while Senate President Milton Potter quipped that for the past several decades, he has been "trying to find out who Theresa is." Like the band's music, he said, Carnival is an activity that brings generations together. "Our elders remember Carnival's past, our young people create Carnival's future, and for a few precious nights, we are reminded that community is something you can feel," he declared. Senator Potter emphasized Carnival's collective and collaborative nature, offering thanks to the many entities and individuals who must work together to produce an event of this scale and caliber.

Following brief appearances from this year's Carnival royalty, Lieutenant Governor Treganza Roach took the microphone. His short speech began by honoring his recently departed sister, a staple at Carnival Village nights, as well as some of the cultural icons who have also passed – Alfred "Chubby" Lockhart, Jeavon "UnkleMehn" Sasso, and Elred "Edgie" Christian, among others. This acknowledgement, Lt. Gov. Roach said, was not intended to change the tone of jubilation, "because their message to us is to live with passion, with grace, with love, with compassion."

He urged Virgin Islanders to understand just how much they owe to those who have gone before, and with that understanding commit to making their own contributions towards maintaining a thriving Carnival culture.

As he took his place in front of the microphone stand, Governor Albert Bryan Jr. paused for a moment to soak in the melodies and the message of his intro music: "VI To the Bone", by Mic Love. With one hand raised and his eyes closed, the Governor stood with a smile on his face, letting the patriotic lyrics wash over him for a few bars before beginning his remarks. He reflected on the eight years that the Division of Festivals has spent in charge of co-ordinating the territory's three main cultural events, and praised the efforts of the Department of Tourism employees who work so diligently to make it happen. "You could mess up a lot of things in St. Thomas but if you mess up Carnival, they will never forgive you," he quipped.

Like Ms. Plaksett before him, he also identified his favorite song from the evening's honorees - Zoom Zoom, a song that won Road March during that year's Crucian Christmas Festival. "You know you good when you're a St. Thomas band and you go St. Croix and win the Road March," Governor Bryan declared.

With the time for talking concluded, the government officials on the podium gathered to help Governor Bryan cut the ribbon to officially deem Carnival Village open for the season. The rest of the evening featured sessions from Jam Band, Dundee, and Imagination Brass and performances from Alison Hinds, Farmer Nappy, Hypa Sounds. The night concluded with headline act Mikal Teja bringing down the house with an energetic set.

