

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Stanley And The Ten Sleepless Knights: A 'Serenade Cyan Done'

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They cyan done we and we cyan done it. -Tina Encarnacion

Tina Encarnacion, like so many other Stanley and the Ten Sleepless Knights fans, could not get enough of the infectious quelbe music the legendary band played for hours on end during its two-night annual "Crucian Christmas Foreday Serenade" through the neighborhoods and towns of St. Croix.

At midnight on both Monday and Tuesday, the Ten Sleepless Knights loaded up their big truck with musicians, instruments and good vibes, and set out from the parking lot of WTJX -TV in Christiansted to bring Christmas cheer to island residents. On Monday, the



and on Tuesday, those in the east would get a piece of

Ten Sleepless Knights fans dance in the rain at Grove

Place early Monday morning.

It's a sound and a fete that only Stanley can bring. As much as the revelers loved dancing to the music, it was evident that the Ten Sleepless Knights enjoyed playing it themselves. The scratch band played flutes, drums, cowbells and other instrumentation for three, five, seven hours at a time--it was a *serenade cyan done*.

But before the dancing (locals call it tramping) in the streets, there was the motorcade.

Hardcore Stanley fans, many in carpools, got up at 'fore-day-mahnin', braving the rain on Monday, and pulled in place behind the big truck to join the band as it made its way through Ginger Thomas, Strawberry, Mon Bijou, Grove Place, Carlton and eventually into Frederiksted town. The Tuesday morning revelers followed the band through Princess, St. John, Welcome and other eastern neighborhoods, with a grande finale tramp from Times Square back to the WTJX-TV studios.

Those in the motorcade beeped their horns and exchanged holiday pleasantries with residents who had ventured outside on their porches or to their front gates to get a taste of the Ten Sleepless Knights as they cruised by playing the sweet songs of the season.

Talk about a Crucian Christmas tradition at its best.

But, the tradition was almost lost.

During a scheduled stop for food and refreshments at a home in Grove Place, keyboardist Larry Larsen spoke with the *VI Consortium* about the band's serenade.

"It began as an attempt on the part of WTJX, the public TV station, and Rena Bradhurst of the AVIS who wanted to bring back the tradition and they organized it," he said.

"The band used to do it about 20 years ago and it's trying to recreate a tradition that was being lost and ever since then," he said, "it's been every year around this time, we go

around to the different communities and provide music to the people of St. Croix."

And Larsen said the community welcomes the annual serenade.

"I think the community comes out, so there's a little rain tonight, but normally, it's a big crowd," he said. "If you go to Frederiksted, you'll see even a bigger crowd over there on the road."

Larsen was right. As soon as the truck made that left turn by the Post Office to head into Frederiksted town, the first set of revelers, almost on cue, got behind it and started dancing. A two step here. A side step there. A spin. A turn. Backward movement.



in the air. All the while keeping pace with the slow-moving truck. The music bellowed through the loud speakers.

Ten Sleepless Knights reveler dance in the street in

Christiansted early Tuesday morning.

The crowd grew as the band made its way deeper into the historic town. Governor-elect Osbert Potter could be seen waving a washcloth in the air and courteously dancing with residents as he, too, was caught up in the hypnotic music of Stanley. We tramping, we tramping!

At the final stop in Frederiksted, where the Sleepless Knights concluded their epic seven-hour set near the playground by Fort Christian, *VI Consortium* caught up with Tanya-Marie Singh, COO and interim CEO of WTJX-TV, to learn more about their involvement with the popular tradition that was almost lost.

She said while attending a concert at the Island Center for the Performing Arts in 2006, both she and Potter, who worked at WTJX at the time, were listening to members of the Ten Sleepless Knights share the history of the serenade. At that time, the event was defunct. Singh said she and Potter instantly knew they had to resurrect the tradition.

That was eight years ago. Since then, Singh said the public television station has filmed and aired three documentaries on the Ten Sleepless Knights' Christmas serenade.

"It started as a one-time thing and the community was so positively overwhelmed by it that we kept it going," she said, adding that many elderly residents, in particular, called the station "in tears," thanking executives for reviving a part of their culture.

"Now, we do it as a public service to the community," Singh said of the serenade, as she thanked the event's sponsors, including Banco Popular, Stanley and The Ten Sleepless Knights, and her employer.

Of the arning hand members. Singh noted there were two deaths in the group, the most November. In April 2013, original band member Christian



Revelers tramp through the streets of Frederiksted early

Monday morning at the Ten Sleepless Knights Christmas Serenade.

"Every moment we have with them is precious," she said.

And, Encarnacion enjoyed every precious moment of the tramp through Frederiksted town to the music she has loved since her childhood in Gallows Bay, Christiansted.

"I've been coming since I was small," she said, decked out in fun party clothes. "The adults would come out of the homes and bring a bottle of guavaberry and sausage for the band."

When asked what was her favorite Ten Sleepless Knights song, Encarnacion could not decide.

"I love all ah dem," she said with a laugh.

From "Guavaberry," to "Ma Ma Make Your Johnny Cake," to "How Will Santa Get Here" and "Feliz Navidad"...we have to agree with Encarnacion--we love all ah dem, too.

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[Listen to the original recording](#)

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