

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Four Reasons Why You Should Attend Sunset Jazz, According To Melody Rames

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ST. CROIX -- Hurricane Hugo brought destruction to this island in 1989. But out of the destruction came a lot of good, including the birthing of FEDA -- the Frederiksted Economic Development Association -- responsible for many of activities that occur in the island's second town.

One of the most prominent events is Sunset Jazz, the monthly show that sees jazz musicians serenading residents from all walks of life.

Melody Rames, FEDA's president for the last four years, spoke briefly with The Consortium and gave a history of the organization, and reasons why residents should

attend the longstanding affair.

"FEDA was born after Hurricane Hugo in 1989. At that time, the governor came to leaders in Frederiksted and said we need community action to help build the town back up. So the Frederiksted Merchants Association was born, and that evolved into FEDA," Rames made known. Another popular event the group organizes is the July 4 fireworks celebration that sees thousands of residents descending on Frederiksted.

But for those who've never attended Sunset Jazz, and for people who have been deterred from going out because of recent criminal activity here, Rames said Sunset Jazz attracts a crowd that is peaceful and laid back. The type looking to enjoy the beautiful sunsets of Frederiksted along with family and friends, while becoming enamored by the captivating rhythms of jazz music.

Reason No. 1: Family-friendly atmosphere. "It's such a great time here, Rames said. "A family-friendly atmosphere and some people bring their pets and children sometimes."

Reason No. 2: It's safe. "It's a very safe atmosphere. VIPD is always looking out for us."

Reason No. 3: Diverse crowd. "We have people who come religiously, some all the way from east end and others from a block away."

Reason No. 4: Meeting place. "One thing about Sunset Jazz is that it's a meeting place for the start of the weekend. Folks often say, 'meet me at Sunset Jazz, and then we'll go here.' Sometimes you have family and class reunions, and they say, 'okay, everybody let's meet at Sunset Jazz.'"

At 7:00 p.m., the crowd stood at about 125. Rames said that on a regularly basis, the amount of people attending the event is roughly 300. She attributed the slim turnout to showers that fell earlier, and expected it to pickup as the night progressed.

Last night's act was St. Croix native Hasani Arthur, who was visiting the island and contacted FEDA to arrange the performance. Rames said the association usually creates its schedule at the beginning of the year, but an exception was made to accommodate Hasani.

FEDA's biggest Sunset Jazz event of the year is held in December, when Stanley and the Ten Sleepless Knights take to the bandstand at the Budhoe Park, where about a thousand people show up ready to have a good time.

And all members of FEDA are from Frederiksted, Rames confirmed. She also teased an October 30th show to be held on the waterfront, which will be a concert and street fair sponsored by the Dept. of Tourism.

"That event is going to be fabulous," Rames assured, making her way back to a vendor stand where she worked as a server.

Sen. Novelle Francis was spotted enjoying the event as well. Having come from a long day of legislative work, the first-term Democrat saw it fit to end the day with soothing jazz music.

Feature Image: Hasani Arthur is on the left with trumpet, jazzing a captivated crowd in Frederiksted on Friday night.

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