

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Boat Parade 2015 Sees Massive Participation As Thousands Turnout In Show Of Defiance

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Ernice Gilbert **December 13, 2015**



ST. CROIX -- At about 6:00 p.m. on Saturday, you would be hard-pressed to find any parking in downtown Christiansted; because there were none. Residents attending the 2015 Boat Parade festivities late had to park on the outskirts of town and as far as Gallows Bay and stroll to the boardwalk, threading through the thousands of people who crammed the entire waterfront beginning from the Seaborne Airlines area, all the way to Fort Christiansvaern.

In its 21st year, yesterday was the strongest Boat Parade turnout in years by some estimates, as residents defied [recent criminal activity](#) and came out in large numbers to enjoy what has become a staple of Christmas celebrations here, especially since the

island, in recent times, has been short on family activities.

With all eyes on the ocean, decorated boats boasting revelers and deejays entertained the thousands of people who lined the boardwalk with glow lights, popular music and dancing. Some yelled, "merry Christmas!" and were greeted with even louder shouts of the same from the masses. But it was Pumpa, one of the territory's superstar recording artists, who kept the crowds incessantly entertained. The singer used hits like [Selfie](#), and one of his latest releases titled Butterfly, to get the crowds dancing and waving. A performer in true form, the boat that hosted Pumpa, though not big and fancy, captured the crowds' gaze during the first and second rounds. People lit their cellphones, held them high and waved at Pumpa's command.

Emerald Finney and her sister Christa Finney said they came out, not worrying about recent criminal activity because their children have always enjoyed the event and look forward to it every year. "It's mostly for the kids. They love the parade and fireworks, and afterward they want to go to get toys, eat food and then we go to the fort, let them play for a while and pass again," Emerald said. Her sister concurred. As a tell tail to the organizers' intent on keeping the event family oriented, bounces were placed at Fort Christiansvaern for children to play.

"I'm here every year," said Joei Richards, a high school senior who plays with the Ebenezer Steel Pan Orchestra every year at a function on the boardwalk that precedes the official Boat Parade festivities. She said she would continue to come because the islands is low on fun outings, and the Boat Parade has become something that the whole island looks forward.

It's also one of the few events that sees all segments of the community commingling.

Adding even more excitement to the already live party was a Chili Cook Off affair that took place on Hotel on the Cay. And vendors who participated in this year's Boat Parade were given an early Christmas; as booths saw flows of hungry event-goers before, during and after the activities, buying all sorts of foods and drinks.

Nothing, however, brought Christiansted to its feet on Saturday night like the final presentation: the fireworks. It was one of the best displays in years, lasting about 10 minutes or more, lighting up the night with bombastic sounds and brilliant lights. With every burst, there were cheers from the crowds that were spread about the boardwalk. Some louder than others in according with the brilliance of the display. The fireworks ended with a rapid fire presentation that received a thunderous ovation, as participants cheered and clapped their hands longer than any other time, in appreciation of the organizers' efforts.

And this year's event saw some changes as well. A program that usually serves as a prelude to the parade, featuring local church groups, was cut. And unlike other years where strong emphasis was placed on judging the boats, this year saw heavy focus on entertainment.

Following the parade, people lingered in Christiansted patronizing the booths, while others made their way home. The parade itself ended at about 7:45 p.m., but participants, in a celebratory mood, lingered in town late into the night.

