

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Fans Support Donnie McClurkin Despite Rainout

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ST. CROIX -- It rained, and it rained some more; yet droves of Crucian fans packed the John H. Woodson Junior High School grounds to see award-winning, gospel artist Donnie McClurkin perform Saturday night.

Cars lined the outskirts of the compound before the gates were even open, but for these folks, the wait had just begun.

Sylene Joseph, waited outside the gate from 5:17 p.m. When she finally got onto the campus, she found herself in the middle of a wave of anxious fans until about 8:30 that night. It was a 3-hour wait of pushing and shoving, she said.

“There were children getting trampled. People were fainting...people screaming in each others’ ears – it was utter confusion,” Joseph said. “There was possibly 200 people just ramming back and forth – security pushing us back.”

Meanwhile, local performers were on the inside. But instead of preparing their acts for the show, they were cleaning – chairs, floors, and bathrooms.

Sound engineers were on the inside too. They hustled to make the stage show-worthy just a couple of hours before the scheduled start of 8 p.m.

An intense, last-minute effort was underway to create a Plan B when Plan A became a bust. Plan A was an enormous stage that took about two days of preparation at the St. Croix Educational Complex track, where the concert was originally slated to be held.

But not only did the stage collapse, much of the sound system equipment got wet during the rainy weather around noon that day.

Shortly after, concert coordinators – the Global Gospel Entertainment Network (GGEN) team – launched a social media and telephone blast to dispel rumors that the show was cancelled. News soon spread that both the venue and time had changed.





















































































































Coordinators anticipated 1,500 to 2,000 people would show up to the Complex grounds. Just shy of the expected numbers, a strong 1,100 showed up to Woodson, according to GGEN Marketing Director CJ Thomas.

By the time they finally packed inside, sound engineers were still trying to cram what would normally take a day's work into a few hours. Nonetheless, the show finally began around 9:40 p.m. – sound limitations and all.

As a result of these limitations, many local acts were crossed off the show line-up. At this point, coordinators could only cater to performers who were using music tracks in lieu of a live band, according to GGEN Musical Director Kendra Young. That left performers like Papa Das out of Tortola, Anthony Ryan out of Florida, and the Music in Motion dancers.

For some local performers who'd been preparing months in advance to open for Mr. McClurkin, the cuts were disappointing.

"It was a little upsetting because we put a lot of practice into it," said Voices of Inspiration Performer Otisha King, "but at the end of the day I understood the reasons for it – for us not performing."

According to Young, the cuts were difficult to make but necessary for the show to go on.



ould we do?"

Collapsed stage at the sports

field behind the St. Croix Educational Complex facility.

Artists like Papa Das and Ryan were able to get the audience on their feet with high-energy performances. But as the hours rolled by, the intermittent screams for Mr. McClurkin's arrival on stage intensified. Anticipation skyrocketed as Mr. McClurkin taunted the eager crowd by peeping through the closed curtains every now and again.

When his 6'1" frame finally appeared on stage with a dynamic performance of "Days of Elijah," almost the entire auditorium stood to their feet with waving wash rags and the familiar tune on their lips.

It was midnight.

Some had been waiting for more than 6 hours, but the cheers were still overwhelming.

Mr. McClurkin and his band kept most of the crowd on their feet with moving performances of his popular hits like the “I’ve Got My Mind Made Up” Caribbean Medley, “Great is Your Mercy,” “I Call You Faithful,” “We Fall Down,” and his new single – “I Need You.”

“I was sweating out my makeup; I was in heels; my clothes were drenched, but I didn’t care,” Joseph said. “All the fatigue went away. I was no longer sleepy or tired.”

“That was the best worship experience I’ve ever had in my entire life, and I’ve been to some pretty awesome concerts,” she continued.

Of his own performance, Mr. McClurkin said it wasn’t about entertainment.

“It’s about Jesus,” he told VIC in an interview about 24 hours before the show.

At the concert, he told the audience that instead of entertaining them, he’d come to offer God worship. Near the end, the artist and minister made an appeal to those listening. He asked those who hadn’t given their lives to God to do so at that moment and to make plans to start attending a local church.

Thomas said GGEN plans to use future events to promote that same force of spiritual empowerment. The team has learned from their mistakes, according to Young, and will work on “having plan A, B, and C” in the future.