

The Virgin Islands Consortium

V.I. Model Of The Year: Another Stellar Presentation By Jason Gardener

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ST. CROIX -- For the fourth straight year, Jason Gardener, founder of JG Management, has held the Virgin Islands Model of the Year competition, which has grown into a respectable show with all the hallmarks of any professional runway affair -- including judges who are well versed in the modeling industry from around the country, and even the British Virgin Islands.

Sunday's production, held at the Central High School gymnasium, was no less impressive. Mr. Gardener and his team changed the runway from a single, straight strip from the past three years into a triangular platform, giving models more opportunity -- and challenge -- to show off their talent.

But it was as if nothing changed, as models -- flanked by onlookers on either side of the runway, and judges looking squarely at them -- brought their best performances to the stage, with this year's show being dubbed the most competitive in the event's four-year history.

To use a modern term, the models in every division slayed the catwalk, doing so in a variety of categories, including Jeans, TV Commercial, Swimwear, Runway, Fashion Print and High Fashion.

And while every segment of the show came with much excitement, the most anticipated performances were the adult male and female divisions. That competition saw a fierce battle raging between model #1, 15-year-old Amira Thomas and model #7, 15-year-old Amanda Boissiere. To be clear, all models in this year's female category brought unflinching confidence to the runway.

In the end, Ms. Thomas was crowned the V.I. Female Model of 2017-18, with Tamika Henry, 22, coming in second place, followed by Ms. Boissiere in third and Mirisa Clendinen, 18, from St. John in fourth. The male division only saw two competitors -- Brian Checo and Christopher McDonald, with Mr. McDonald, who is from St. Thomas, winning the division.

V.I. Commercial Model of the Year, a division based on looks and age that sees winners playing roles to either promote, display, or advertise commercial products (notably fashion clothing) or to serve as a visual aide for people who are creating works of art or to pose for photography, was won by 12-year-old Adriana Rosario. Her competitors were 13-year-old Paris Chin (second place) and 15-year-old Cayla Felix, who came in third.

V.I. Female Child Model Of the Year went to 8-year-old Shayla Frederick, with runners-up Diana Rosario, age 9 (second place) and Jaelyn Nelson, 8, who came in third.

For Mr. Gardener, a former model himself, this year's show was a taste of what's to come.

"I feel great. It's about elevation; taking it to a next level -- you know, a little taste of what's to come for year five and Miss St. Croix as well," Mr. Gardener said, making a reference to the upcoming Miss St. Croix queen pageant that's part of St. Croix Carnival festivities in December.

Winners of the V.I. Model of the Year competition are managed by Mr. Gardener and Sandi Bass, a casting director, international model scout, lecturer and philanthropist.

"Our job now is to get them placed in different agencies. That process will start when we take them to New York in July as part of their prize," Mr. Gardner said. He said the goal is to expand the competition by inviting additional agents, and working on making the presentation even bigger to attract more sponsors, as well as raising the bar on the quality of models.

Top winners get a round trip ticket to New York City in July; hotel accommodations for winners ages 13 and up; agency go-sees in New York City; Caribbean Posh Magazine Feature; a management contract with JG Management USVI and Sandi Bass International; one ticket to a New York City Broadway show; New York City modeling

workshop with international runway coach Alva Page; photo shoot with a New York City photographer; official V.I. Model of the Year Sash; and a trophy, according to information provided by JG Management.

Feature Image: From left to right: Shayla Frederick, Adriana Rosario, Jason Gardener, Amira Thomas, and Christopher McDonald. (Credit: Ernice Gilbert, VIC)

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