

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Rain Ends St. John Festival Village Early

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ST. JOHN -- The night began like any other during the weeklong Festival Village events here, but Tuesday night, St. John Festival's grand finale with a host of trending Soca artists to cap the night off with a bang, came to an abrupt end after torrential rainfall eventually caused the stage's roof to leak. The rainfall was so heavy that the sound engineer completely shut off the system, fearing a hazard.

The pouring eventually stopped, but the sound engineer refused to turn on the system, concerned that water might have compromised electrical equipment stationed underneath the stage. He said he would have attempted to turn on the power if he believed it could work without damaging equipment or becoming a hazard. Former WAPA boss Hugo Hodge had a look where the equipment were located, and told the

sound engineer that he should at least try turning on the system, and that if he heard any hum, turn it off. The next move by the sound engineer was to have a look at his speakers to ensure that rain hadn't damaged them. He looked and confirmed that they were fine. Following that assurance, the only thing left to do was test the system by turning it back on; at the time it was minutes after 1:00 a.m.

But that move never came; with the sound engineer seemingly uninterested in any effort to help the show continue. At one point, he told this reporter that the better scenario would have been to hold the show in Wednesday.

The artists -- Destra, Orlando Octave, Farmer Nappy, MX Prime -- arrived moments later ready to perform, only to find that the stage was already lowered. The St. John Festival Committee had spent upwards \$40,000, according to a member, on these artists.

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The problem could have been prevented, if the roof of the stage was different -- perhaps a dome-like setup, or if the tarpaulin was tightly secured to the roof's framework. But every time rain fell last night, helpers were seen walking around with long sticks pushing the tarpaulin upwards so that the rain could fall off. Some of that water fell right back on the stage, though, complicating efforts to prevent equipment from being damaged by water.

Members of the Festival Committee were seen negotiating with the artists' handlers, ostensibly to work out a compromise.