

The Virgin Islands Consortium

On Display At Screening Event, Nikki Brooks's Diversity In Music

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There was unique event that took place on Monday evening in the Orange Grove Easterly Building that is also home to a dental facility, but you wouldn't know it at a first, or even second glance.

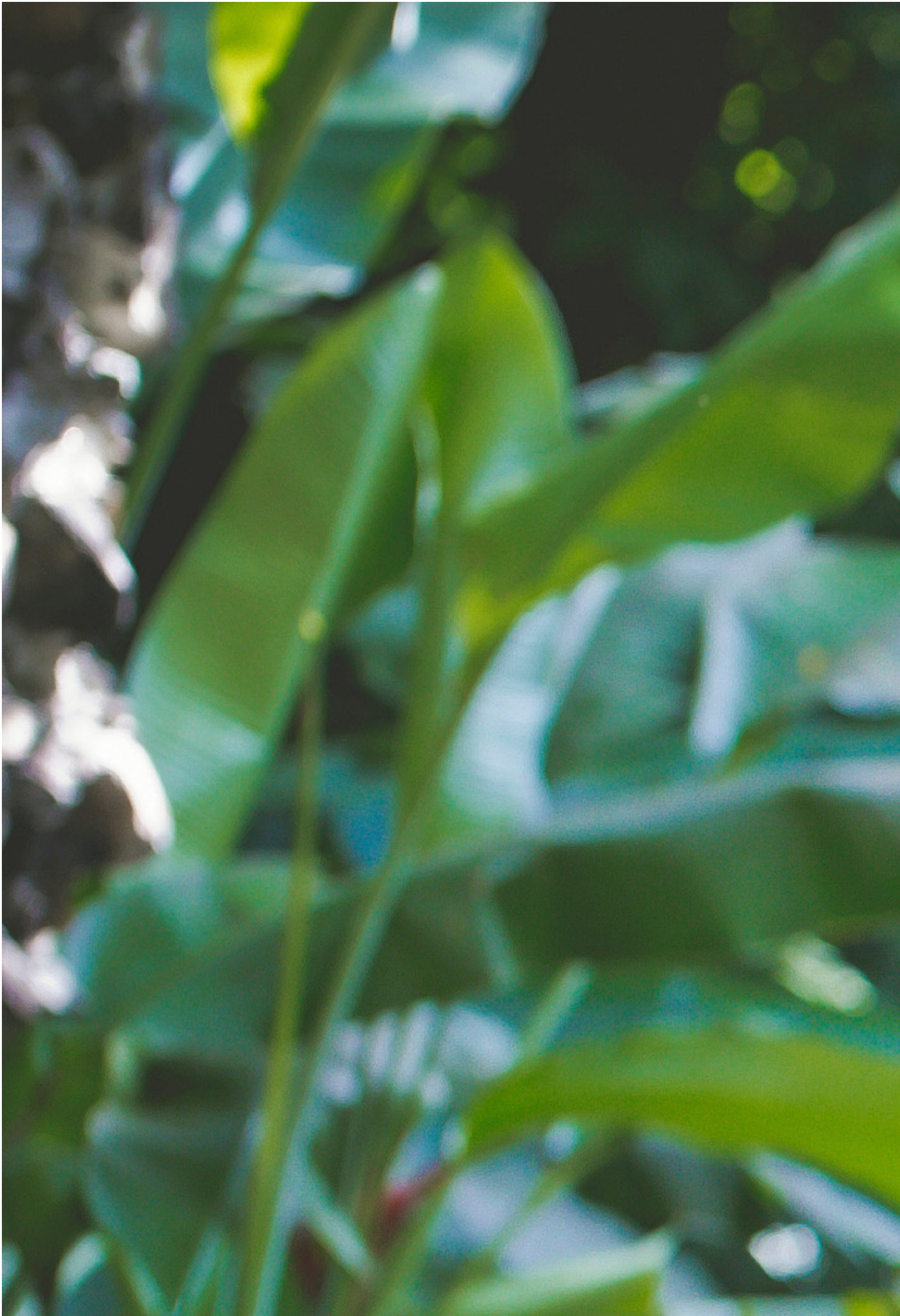
Pay closer attention, however, and your gaze would turn to the south side of the facility, exposing a walkway whose floor had been adorned with a red carpet, hinting at what to expect from the clandestinely placed affair.

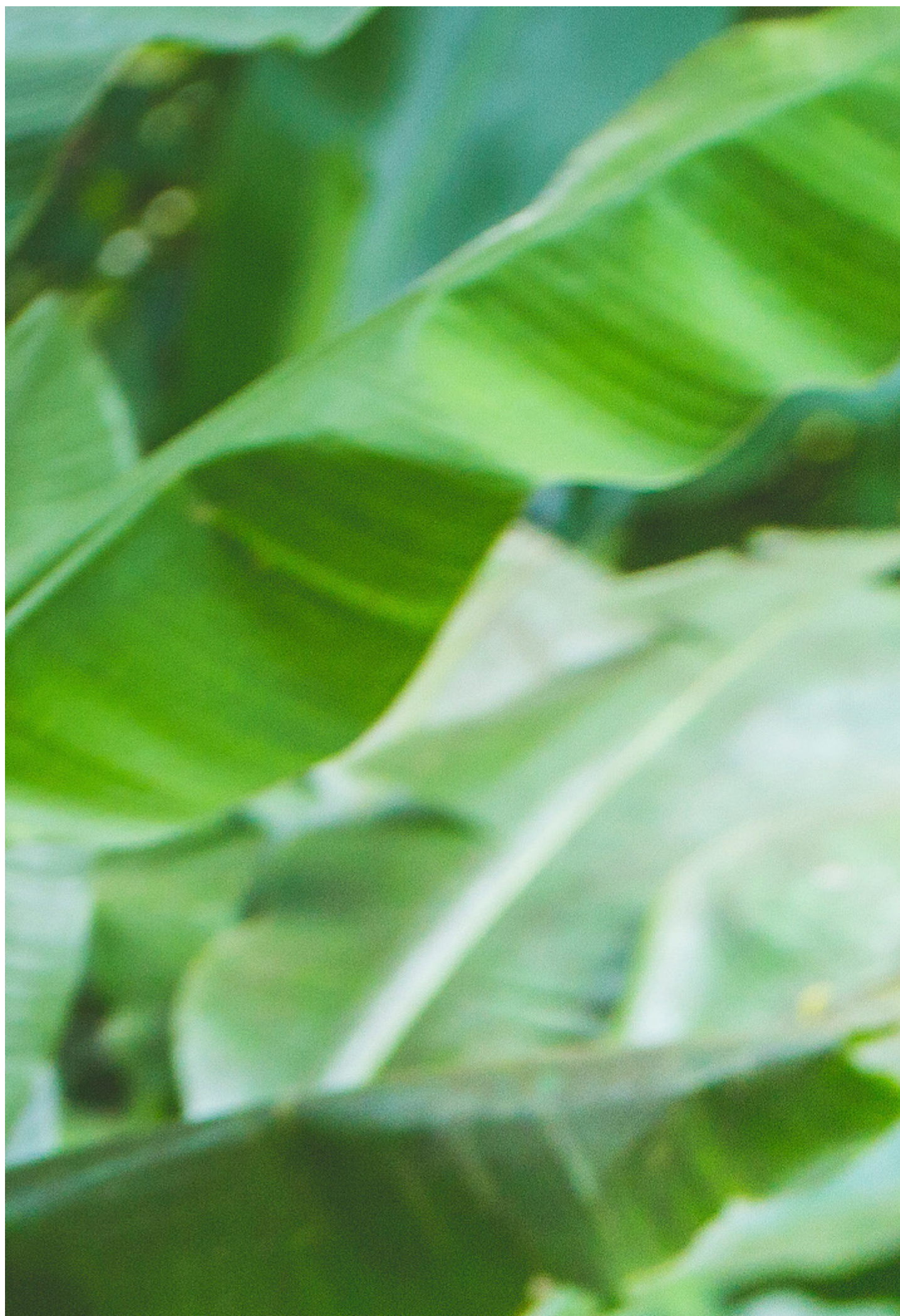
On the inside, a guest list of regulars and who's who filled a small room with about a dozen chairs to the front, and standing room along with some high tables at the back.

There were two large TVs on the front wall that were to be used later for a screening.

Devin Carington, commissioner of Dept. of Licensing and Consumer Affairs, and Catherine Hendry, Dept. of Labor commissioner, were both present. Shamari Haynes, a C.D.C. outreach specialist widely known for his involvement in festival activities and as owner of the biggest parade troupe on St. Croix, Simply Sophisticated, was also on hand. Former Lieutenant Governor Gregory Francis, along with the ubiquitous Vera Falu, attended the gathering as well.

Hors d'oeuvres, wines and champagnes were being consumed as attendees mingled and held small conversations. John Abramson Jr., the event's host, spoke briefly about the star of the night, Nikki Brooks, as well as some of the people who helped catapult the singer to her current level.











Thirty minutes in, out came Ms. Brooks, attired in a fitted black dress, stealing the show as she made her entrance. Her necklace, a wide, dazzling silver choker wrapped several times around her neck, was fitting with Ms. Brooks's grand persona.

Mic in hand, the entertainer held back tears as she gazed at the adoring and supportive crowd, who came to witness the screening of the new music video for her latest single, Chances. It was also her moment to unveil her diversity in music, surprising attendees who have come to appreciate Ms. Brooks for her Soca hits, among them the chart topping [Play Me Like Pan](#).

Chances, however, is a different song that Ms. Brooks describes as world music. It speaks of a woman scorned, who refuses to allow relationships to destroy her. In fact, the song uses heartbreaks as a propeller to greatness, with lyrics such as, "You cut my wings thought I wouldn't fly, but I levitate and made it out." The video was directed by local artist Cruz Rock, who himself has been making waves in the industry. He said the video took about two weeks to complete, and was shot at various locations on St. Croix.

The song's lyrics are soulful, and can be described as an R&B track that caters to a much larger crowd than Soca. Ms. Brooks, looking at a wider audience with a planned release of the song in the U.S. and other markets, says her hope is that the song empowers women to be strong. "I expect the V.I., on a whole, to stand behind a strong woman. We have strong men, but it's our time," she said.

Though the single will be released soon, it will also be made available as part of an EP with about six tracks to be released in December, which Ms. Brooks says will also feature remixes of her big hits from her last album.

The attendees, whose cheers following the music video filled the room, were given rating sheets to register their honest feedback, as Ms. Brooks seeks to better her craft. People The Consortium spoke with following the event, said they enjoyed the music and were delighted that Ms. Brooks was diversifying. One person spoke of the song's lyrics, stating that it brings to the fore what many women go through but are unwilling to open up about.

The event was a success, and it exposed a songstress not willing to settle for the mundane, but one who is adamant on pushing the boundaries and elevating her craft to new heights. Where the road leads remains to be seen, but Monday's screening gave a glimpse into the intentions of Ms. Brooks and the potential for stardom on her new, divergent path.