

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Euphoria Grips Revelers At 2018 St. Patrick's Day Parade

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ST. CROIX -- It was as if St. Croix residents were attempting to say goodbye to the unwelcome worries and stresses that barged into their lives when Hurricane Maria viciously attacked the island in September, living behind devastation so immense that it will take years to fully recover. For those whose homes were damaged, there's the pain of dealing with adjusters, for those who lost their jobs, there's the constant struggle of finding another in an economy that is not offering much beyond construction, and then there's the foreboding that with another hurricane season just over two months away, the Caribbean is never completely out of the woods.

But for a few hours in downtown Christiansted on Saturday, Virgin Islanders from all walks of life -- young and old, black and white, rich and poor -- came together to celebrate life, using the St. Patrick's Day holiday as the vehicle to cast aside cares and intake a pleasure-filled day so memorable that it was sure to be imprinted in the minds of those who attended, especially participants of the parade, for a long time.

It was a sea of green in downtown. The event, which began at about 11:30 a.m. this year, has two starting points: one at Times Square near the St. Croix Foundation building, and another at the corner heading back into town at Fort Christiansvaern. But it didn't matter where you started, the reveling -- invoked by a myriad of deejays and a few bands -- was easy to find.

All that was needed to start the party was music. The sun was blazing hot, but it was a nonfactor; its scorch was overtaken by the freedom to let loose and enjoy life, aided by Soca music and alcohol. One after another, groups made their way up and down Christiansted, dancing and smiling and some taking their *feting* to the max.



Essi Gaston-Edwards wears a Simply Sophisticated Fun Troupe costume at St. Patrick's Day Parade on Saturday, March 17.

The usual suspects led the way. The Fairy Kingdom, led by Attorney Lydia Moolenar, did not disappoint. The group, which features ladies dressed like fairies, fearlessly made the road their stage, dancing on the ground, on a truck, on men -- and women -- caring little of what anyone thought. Then there was a massive float carrying a host of partygoers

who were jumping wildly to a host of American-made songs. Even a rock band made its way down the road, a reminder that the St. Patrick's Day party on St. Croix is one of the most diverse and culture blending affairs in the Caribbean.

Parade troupes Regal Dynasty and Simply Sophisticated, who brought along some of their dancers as a teaser of what's to come in April during carnival in St. Thomas, flavored the event with their beautiful women well primed in the art of [Caribbean wine](#). Their presence -- and waistlines -- pleased onlookers present in downtown Christiansted and from around the world through a [Consortium livestream](#).



Temisha Libert, known in Calypso as Caribbean Queen, celebrates with the Fairy Kingdom group at the 2018 St. Patrick's Day Parade.

Also showing their faces this year were political candidates in both the gubernatorial and senatorial fields. Albert Bryan was present with a small group, but it was Allison Petrus and Sammuel Sanes who left the biggest impression in the gubernatorial field, coming down the road as a team and backed by road march champion Fusion Band, which had a massive following. Governor Kenneth Mapp was seen outside Government House greeting eventgoers as well.

Some of the Senate candidates in attendance were Allison Degazon, Alicia Barnes, Javan James and Ricky Dean Andrews.

This year's St. Patrick's Day Parade theme, "Repairing the Rainbow", kept in mind the ruinous storms of 2017 and their impacts on the U.S. Virgin Islands. Yet while the road to

full recovery remains an arduous journey, times of celebration offer a brief recess to refuel, and perhaps strengthen one's determination for the road ahead.

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