

The Virgin Islands Consortium

St. Thomas-Born Mixing Engineer Featured In Top Tech Publication For Mixing Cardi B's Grammy-Winning Album 'Invasion Of Privacy'

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U.S. Virgin Islanders continue to stand out in a myriad of fields. The latest to be highlighted in a major U.S. tech publication, The Verge, is St. Thomas-born Leslie Brathwaite, a mixing engineer who has worked with top names in the U.S. music industry.

According to The Verge, "Leslie Brathwaite is a name you might not know, but he is integral to bringing music to life. One of his latest accomplishments is mixing Cardi B's *Invasion of Privacy*, which recently won Best Rap Album at the 61st Grammy Awards,

making her the first female rapper to win the category as a solo artist."

His job is to "take all of the recorded material for the project — from vocals to instruments to individual sample hits — and craft the nuanced balance and relationship between every element before the music heads off to be mastered and then released to the world," The Verge said. Mr. Braithwaite has done mixing work for T-Pain, Rick Ross, Travis Porter, Gucci Mane, Beyoncé and Jay Z, Future, and Lil Uzi Vert, among others.

When asked by The Verge what was his path to becoming an engineer, Mr. Braithwaite said, "I was born in St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands. It's a very musical culture, centered around calypso and soca and reggae. From a very early age, I would follow the calypso bands and ask them if I could hook up the amplifiers or try to help them wrap cables. I was always intrigued with how things sounded. As I got a little older, I would sit for hours and play records from my dad's collection, listening to the kicks and the snares and the bass in songs. I would read the credits and was really interested with all these titles and the positions of people that made the stuff work. One day, my guidance counselor gave me a little pamphlet from Full Sail. When I took the tour with my dad, I was like, "This is where I want to be." I felt like I was home, seeing all the buttons and the boards and the speakers.

"After I graduated, I was a runner at D.A.R.P. Studios in the '90s. I'd get coffee, go for McDonald's, clean the bathrooms, whatever I could to stay around the studio. I was an unpaid intern, but I had full access to the studio. That was my exchange. I did anything they asked, but I also had the keys to everything. I worked my way up within the studio. I went from being an intern to an assistant engineer and then from an assistant engineer to a recording engineer. Before I knew it, I was mixing. My very first big mix was Monica's [*"Don't Take It Personal."*](#) After that, I decided if I wanted to be a full-time mixer, I had to stop recording. I just had to be a mixer."

Asked why, he explained, "The trend in the industry was that people wanted specialized things. If you're going into a hospital, and you know you have to have a brain tumor removed, you don't want a general surgeon to do it. You want a brain surgeon. I saw that mentality in the '90s. People would much prefer a mixer to mix their records than a guy who recorded and mixed, and mixing really spoke to me because it's just about me and the music."

Read the full interview on [The Verge](#).

Feature Image: Leslie Brathwaite, courtesy The Verge