

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Shamari Haynes's 2019 Festival Of the Bands Looks To Raise The Bar Again; Event Set For Saturday

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ST. CROIX -- Saturday at the Caribbean Museum Center for the Arts in Frederiksted will commence in earnest the festival season buildup on St. Croix. This will come as no surprise to those who have been following [Shamari Haynes's](#) Festival of the Bands production, as the event has become one of the most anticipated gatherings of carnival and festival lovers, where Mr. Haynes's costume designs for the upcoming season are unveiled. Doors open at 8:00 p.m. and showtime is 9:00 p.m. Tickets must be purchased ahead of the event. Go [here](#).

Year after year, Mr. Haynes and his team have managed to stun event-goers with quality designs and themes, and 2019 attendees should ready their expectations to be

surpassed.

"Festival of the Bands promises another top quality event that will highlight and feature several millennials that will contribute to the overall production," Mr. Haynes told The Consortium Thursday. Entertainment includes V.I. Songstress Tia, DJ 4T, DJ MoJo, the launch of Designs By Regal's "Caribbean Collection", and the unveiling of Simply Sophisticated Fun Troupe (SSFT) and Savage Festival 2020 designs for the upcoming Crucian Christmas Festival Adults Parade.

This year, Mr. Haynes partnered with local designer Regal Christopher of Designs By Regal for costumes of the troupe Savage Festival.

According to Mr. Haynes, the latest Simply Sophisticated Fun Troupe theme is "Insomnia", which he said is representative of "different elements that contribute to the insomnia most revelers suffer during the festival season." The Savage Festival Troupe theme is "Ethos: Secrets of the Lost Empires", which Mr. Haynes said represents a few lost cities known to man. Both themes were released in early May, he said.

Known to bring excellence to the craft of costume design and carnival troupes, the pressure to keep producing top notch costumes and themes, along with keeping hundreds of troupe members happy during the annual Adults Parade on St. Croix, is an annual reality for Mr. Haynes and his team. Nonetheless, he expressed confidence in his organization's ability to keep delivering.

"Although challenging at times, I'm very confident that my team and I can continue to wow the territory with our designs," he said. "Aside from that, we continue to evolve the overall experience for our participants, which also contributes to them having a great time in general."

Mr. Haynes has decided to accept less troupe members this year, a move he said is aimed at restoring the quality.

"With the influx of members last year (SSFT with 600+ members and SAVAGE with 50+ members), I feel as though we've lost the one thing that is most important to me: that connection with the reveler and myself/committee," he said. "Technically the ratio of my committee to my members is truly unrealistic so with the growth in quantity, it is my opinion that the quality (regarding experience) has lessened and it's important that I change that. We've also made changes in regards to supplies and distribution dates, which is expected to also add to a better experience."

A bill [signed into law by former Governor Kenneth Mapp in January](#) placed the execution of the territory's carnival and festivals under the Department of Tourism. Called the Division of Festivals, Mr. Haynes -- now employed at D.O.T. -- is expected to play a major role in improving the Crucian Christmas Festival experience. Mr. Haynes mentioned some of the ideas planned for the 2019-2020 festival season while emphasizing that the production will be a team effort.

"There is lots of pressure but it's also important to know that festival will not be a "Shamari production" but more so a collective collaboration between the department and the other departments we are expected to work with. The reality is, festival is about the people and giving the people what they want, and although I may not be a part of the

final decision making, it is my vow to contribute and make suggestions in any way that I can to make sure that this is the best festival yet," Mr. Haynes said.

He added, "I'm more so very happy to be back at D.O.T. and to be working alongside the new administration and leadership within the department to instill that change. New ideas include a festival village in Christiansted and an all white party. Other important ideas would be smoothing the process for vendors, festival troupes, J'ouvert troupes and everyone who continue to contribute to festival in general."