

The Virgin Islands Consortium

The Sudden Death of Influential Roots Reggae Visionary, Vaughn Benjamin of Midnite Band and Akae Beka, Has Rocked the Virgin Islands and Reggae Community Around the World

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Shenneth Canegata **November 05, 2019**



ST. CROIX - Vaughn Benjamin, lead singer of Midnite and Akae Beka died suddenly on Monday. He was 50 years old. His death rocked the Virgin Islands community and the reggae world at large. Prayers, tributes, and condolences from family, friends, and fans flooded his social media pages and online news outlets.

Vaughn was born on the island of Antigua and moved to St. Croix at eight years old with his family. His unique gift for singing and his extensive verbal expression was evident to

his parents very early on. The anointing in the reggae icons voice was apparent by age four, and his words were prolific, even at the age of ten. He was a creative musician, a visionary, a lyricist, and an exceptional vocalist.

The expanse of his intellect and intense desire to live fully and purposefully fueled the passion with which he approached his work. Vaughn was charismatic and insightful, complex, yet lived a simple life. His love of music and his disciplined, relentless thirst for knowledge resulted in a collection of writings spanning more than forty years and amassing an extensive catalog of albums in his lifetime. His journey and passion for conscious reggae began with Midnite Band.



World Renowned Reggae Artist Vaughn Benjamin

In 1989 Midnite was formed with Vaughn as the lead singer and creative lyricist, while his brother, Ron Benjamin worked diligently to hone the “sound” that would eventually be termed “the Midnite sound.” During each performance the energy they created onstage coupled with the unique “Midnite sound” was electrifying and intoxicating; not something easily duplicated. The brothers are the sons of Antiguan music legend, Ronnie Benjamin Sr.

The band's production of over 70 albums composed of lyrics addressing the oppressed, social, political, and economic issues sung in concert with the infectious "Midnite sound" garnered them enormous exposure that would eventually catapult them to the status of "one of the world's most influential roots reggae bands."

Though the band's musicians changed over the years, Ron and Vaughn remained the heartbeat of Midnite and toured all over the United States, the Caribbean, Europe, Africa, Asia, North and South America, and Australia for 25 years.

In 2015 the brothers embarked on solo journeys. Vaughn's work continued under the name "Akae Beka." [He released 11 projects](#), the last one "Mek A Menshun" in July under Zion High Productions label



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World Renowned

Reggae Artist Vaughn Benjamin

Earlier this year, Vaughn's response in an interview with Vermont's [Seven Days](#) when asked what international morality meant to him clearly reflected his passion to do his part to bring awareness to national woes through expression using music and lyrical content: "It is what exists now, what people decide is an acceptable mode of behavior for interaction between all of the different nations, and addressing what we would identify as

moral breakdowns, from a worldwide, countrywide, even citywide perspective. It is a fact that these things haven't faded. There are still the same vices; there is still envy and corruption and greed and malice on the front pages of newspapers all over the world.

"So, it comes down to what the people agree about together again. It's not my place to say what some people agree isn't an acceptable mode of behavior. We can come together collectively and decide what is acceptable for humanity and then reinforce through mental and physical resources."

The influential visionary often returned to St. Croix to participate in Dub in the Rainforest and other local reggae shows. His work abroad in 2020 was increasing as well.

According to [Reggaville](#), just two weeks ago Akae Beka, LLC and his management team, run by Adrian Bluford of North Carolina, was working with well-known agent/booker, Mark Miller, who offered Vaughn dates for an extensive European Tour planned for 2020.

But it is not to be.

A life cut short suddenly, but a tremendous legacy, as evidenced by the music, lyrics, poetry, and words of wisdom he left behind that will produce a long-lasting impact.

Editor's Note: *VIC Journalist Shenneth Canegata is the sister of the late Vaughn Benjamin.*