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Want Carnival in August? Get Vaccinated, Governor Says

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Jouvert Morning in St. Thomas in 2019. By. REEMY-REEMZ PHOTOGRAPHY FOR VI CONSORTIUM

Last week, Governor Albert Bryan told the Consortium that [there would be no carnival in St. Thomas next year](#), as the event traditionally happens in April, a time Mr. Bryan believes the territory will still be battling Covid-19.

Asked last week whether it was safe to say that there would be no carnival in St. Thomas next year, Mr. Bryan said yes. He later added that while one never knows for sure, all signs point toward the territory getting back to a sense of normalcy when vaccination in the USVI has been widely distributed, which won't happen until about the summer time with best projections.

But during his Covid-19 response update Monday, Mr. Bryan altered his stance, stating that carnival in August does not sound like a bad idea, and that if the territory gets a handle on the virus then, including widespread use of vaccines, the event could happen.

"Let's try to get vaccinated, let's push back carnival to August, maybe we could have fete in August," Mr. Bryan said. "We'll be done with this coronavirus and hopefully we won't see any part of this [new strain](#) that is supposedly coming aboard in Europe."

On September 28, Trinidad & Tobago Prime Minister Keith Rowley announced the cancelation of the popular event, which attracts thousands of visitors yearly in March. A week earlier, Brazil announced the cancelation of its famed carnival which was scheduled for February 2021. It was the first time the Rio de Janeiro event had been forfeited in its entire history.

Experts predicted early this year that large events won't be permitted until the second half of 2021 at the earliest. Researchers believe that events such as carnival festivities in the U.S. and Germany, soccer matches in Italy and horse races in Britain, led to explosive growth of the virus in those countries.

According to [the Wall Street Journal](#), a study published in the National Academy of Sciences in the U.S. in May, found that one minute of loud speech proved enough to produce thousands of droplets that remain airborne for about 12 minutes, potentially infecting anyone in the area. There are similar studies that found virus-laden aerosols could stay airborne for hours.

More troubling is that the study found mass infections oftentimes were more serious than those contracted under other conditions.

Hendrik Streeck, a virologist with the University Hospital Bonn, Germany, performed research into a coronavirus outbreak in the western county of Heinsberg, Germany, which established that the virus's spread surged across the region after around 400 people took part in a traditional carnival party, where they drank, kissed and sang for several hours on February 15.

"Most cases globally, and especially most deaths, happened after superspreading events," said Dr. Streeck, speaking to WSJ. He told the publication that people who attended the carnival not only got infected and then spread the virus across the county, but also showed stronger symptoms and a comparatively severe illness — possibly because they received a higher load of the virus from close and prolonged exposure.

Weeks later, the virus wreaked havoc by infecting thousands and killing dozens.

In light of the new data, even those being hit the hardest economically by the virus, concert organizers, say 2020 is lost, and that mid-2021 is the earliest large-scale events will be held. Others say a vaccine, tracing and treatment procedures are also critical components of the reemergence of carnivals and concerts.

"2020 is gone—so is half of 2021," says Gregg Perloff, CEO and founder of Another Planet Entertainment, which runs the Outside Lands Music and Arts Festival in San Francisco.

"The hope is that we will have a big summer season in 2021," says Joe Berchtold, president of Live Nation Entertainment, the world's biggest concert promoter, which has lost 33 percent of its market value this year. Both Perloff and Berchtold spoke to [WSJ during interviews](#).

In the U.S., the shutdown brought to a halt a decade-long boom in the concert industry, with live music set to generate \$30 billion in revenue in 2020 before the virus hit, according to PricewaterhouseCoopers LLC.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis ([via](#) New York Times), gross domestic product attributable to arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodations and food services was nearly \$1.6 trillion last year, up from \$979 billion a decade ago.

Artists and event organizers on the mainland have been finding creative ways to reach audiences, though such events are being looked at more as ways for artists to stay in touch with fans compared to revenue generators. There is the Verzuz series of "beat battles" on Instagram. Artists have also showed up in concerts in video games such as Fortnite. According to Forbes, Rapper Travis Scott made \$20 million for a 12-minute concert held in Fortnite the ubiquitous free-to-play video game from Epic Games.