

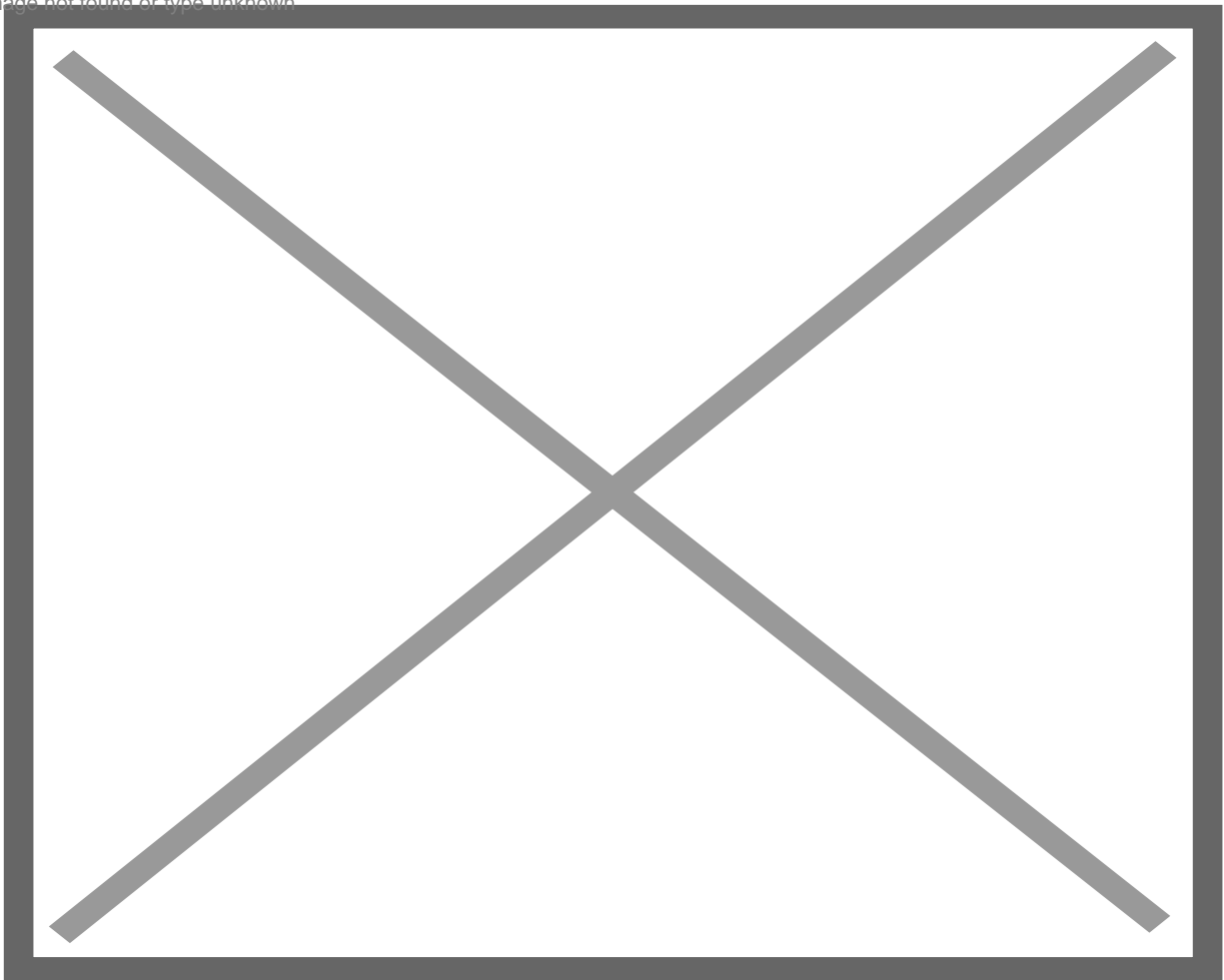
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Fort Frederik Museum is the Place to Be Saturday Night as Shamari Haynes Sets the Stage for Festival With Unveiling of Troupes, 15-Year Anniversary Celebration

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Shamari Haynes plays mas during the Crucian Christmas Festival. By. GEORGE ARMSTRONG (KGP)

He's back at it again, this time after a two-year Covid-induced pause and with a 15-year anniversary being celebrated, Shamari Haynes — who also serves as the asst. director of the Division of Festivals — promises to leave attendees of his costumes unveiling event on Saturday wanting more, while accomplishing an important feat: setting the stage for this year's Crucian Christmas Festival.

Mr. Haynes is the founder of two troupes, his legacy, 15-year-old Simply Sophisticated Fun Troupe, and the nascent, 5-year-old SAVAGE Festival, the latter commanding a more edgy, risqué spirit.

The entrepreneur, who turned 30 this month, told the Consortium that the event, titled Festival of the Bands: The Return, will be memorable. It features a deliberate mix of artists, among them Shaw HP, one of the top bands in the territory currently, Dunrod, and Soca Artist Rudy Live. Also performing will be top USVI deejays, including SupaTrakz International, Lips International, and JShante.

But the stars of the event will be the female and male models unveiling the costumes of Simply Sophisticated Fun Troupe and SAVAGE Festival, showing for the first time the designs Mr. Haynes has been working on.

The event will not only help boost momentum for Mr. Hayne's own troupes, but for the Crucian Christmas Festival as well, which will be coming from a two-year hiatus as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and celebrating its 70th anniversary.

Mr. Haynes said this year's event comes with added importance and meaning for many reasons. "The 15th anniversary celebration of Simply Sophisticated Fun Troupe & the 5th anniversary celebration of SAVAGE Festival are important to me because it's an ode to all who have participated, contributed, sponsored or assisted since the inception of both festival troupes!" he said. "We've weathered countless challenges & obstacles, created costumes by hand for 10+ years, ran a mas camp post-hurricane Maria with a generator and flood lights and sat dormant during a 2-year pandemic. Both anniversaries call for celebration!"

Even as he spends countless hours organizing Festival of the Bands, Mr. Haynes is also the asst. director of the Division of Festivals, an arm within the Dept. of Tourism, and has the monumental task of helping execute a successful Crucian Christmas Festival which runs from Dec. 31 through Jan. 7, 2023.

"My position compliments my private work by allowing me the opportunity to experience both ends of festival production. Both the on, and off road experiences as well as the behind-the-scene allows for various perspectives and adds joy to what I do from both the private and government end of things," he said. "I won't say that balancing both is much of a hard challenge because I'm blessed with an awesome and very capable team on the private end, and a committed and understating team from the Government end who also understands and appreciate my love and commitment to festival."

The event starts at 7:00 p.m. and costs \$50 to attend (purchase tickets [here](#)). Mr. Haynes says patrons should not only expect a good time, but they will also be pleased with the unveiling of the costumes. "No Festival for the last two years allowed me the opportunity to reflect on the work that I do, my love for the industry and why I do it. It reignited my creative flame!" he exclaimed. "This years CCF is a breath of fresh air that I know will present lots of rejuvenated energy because I think as a district, we are all ready! It's a reminder that no matter how tough things may be in the moment, there will always be a time for us to get back together to celebrate as we best know how! This CCF is a personal celebration of my contributions to the industry!"

Looking to the future, Mr. Haynes sees more creativity in the coming years. "I am always thinking about ideas past this carnival. Festival is a lifestyle for me that many won't understand, and when you're passionate about something, it's always at the forefront of one's mind," he told the Consortium.

Registration to participate in either Simply Sophisticated Fun Troupe or SAVAGE Festival opens shortly after the launch on Saturday, and will be done via the organization's website, simplysavagevi.com, which is presently under construction in preparation for registration, Mr. Haynes said.

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