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# Alwyn Baptiste Jr. Honored as Village Named After Him Opens With Large Turnout

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**I2r: Dept. of Tourism Asst. Commissioner Elizabeth Watley Hansen, Governor Albert Bryan, Alwyn Baptiste, Jr., and Div. of Festivals Director Ian Turnbull. By. GEORGE ARMSTRONG (KGP)/V.I. CONSORTIUM**

Alwyn “Daddy Jones” Baptiste Jr. of Vio International was bestowed one of the greatest honors as a Virgin Islander on Friday night at the opening of the Festival Village on St. Croix, which was named the "Daddy Jones Musical Kingdom" in honor of the legendary musician.

He was recognized for more than 30 decades of his musical contributions as a songwriter and producer to the territory before scores of residents and visitors who gathered for the opening of the Crucian Christmas Festival.

Each year, festival villages in the territory are named after an influential Virgin Islander as a way to pay tribute to them.

Mr. Baptiste paid that tribute forward by recognizing his parents, particularly his father who nurtured his talent while expressing his own musical skills.

“I’ve been a musician for the past 34/35 years. I’ve been coming to the village and to know now that the village is named after me is a blessing. It’s humbling,” he said.

He went on to acknowledge the musicians who have participated in his journey saying, “This is as much for you as well.”

Ian Turnbull, director of the Division of Festivals described Mr. Baptiste as the Caribbeans “Albert Einstein of music.”

“What he does is scientific,” he remarked.

Apart from being a well-known musician, Mr. Baptiste also works at the V.I. Legislature and was described by Senate President Donna Frett-Gregory as being a “legend in his own right.”

“I’m working with an icon everyday and I didn’t really realize it,” she said.

Lieutenant Governor Tregenza Roach applauded his professionalism, having worked with Mr. Baptiste at the Legislature.

“I first met him at the Legislature and what I can say about Mr. Baptiste is that the level of professionalism that he displays in the Legislature, in the work that he does so well is the same discipline and professionalism that he brings to his music,” he shared.

The late Mae-Louise Williams, Queen of the Bands in the annual Crucian Festival Parade for more than a decade was also recognized as a Cultural honoree that night.

Williams died suddenly on July 5 at age 69.

Described by many as a true reveler, she was well known for her prize-winning carnival Queen of the Band costumes and her vibrant energy while playing Mas.

Her two daughters Nataki Brown and Dr. Jana Brady received tokens of appreciation from the Division of Festivals on her behalf.

“Melo was my friend. She was my friend, my neighbor and we hang out together and we’ve been to a lot of parties,” recalled Governor Albert Bryan.

In 2022, St. Croix is celebrating 70 years of carnival festivities which marks a tradition that dates back to the enslavement of Africans in the Caribbean.

In his remarks, the governor encouraged everyone to party safely and to drink responsibly.

“Leave your gun home and come and have a good time and let’s have a safe and happy carnival, festival,” he said.

This year’s festival, which opened on December 11 and will end on January 7, is the first in-person function since the Covid-19 pandemic.

