

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Virgin Islands-Produced Rhythms Among Most Popular in Trinidad Carnival as USVI Talent Shines Beyond Territory

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Soca superstar Bunji Garlin performing during Trinidad Carnival 2023.

PORT OF SPAIN, TRINIDAD — As people from all over the world continue to party in Trinidad Carnival to big Soca hits such as "Hard Fete" from Soca superstar Bunju Garlin, which appears to be in a dead heat for Road March with Nailah Blackman's and Skinny Fabulous's ["Come Home"](#), or "Mental Day" from Kes the Band — another international Soca group hailing from Trinidad — they are feting to rhythms produced by Virgin Islanders.

The USVI, with a population [less than 100,000 according to the 2020 Census](#), continues to produce top talent in several fields — [from sports](#), [to fashion](#) and [music](#) — that is impacting the world.

Trinidad Carnival, hailed as the world's greatest show, enters its final day today, but fetes have been happening since January. At every event, there are some songs that deejays play because of their popularity, and four of those hits are on a rhythm produced by St. Croix Native Jahmal Anthony Dee, known as Papo, called "The Spirit of Carnival Project".

The rhythm, or "riddim" as its called in the Caribbean, literally features some of the world's greatest Soca artists, among them Machel Montano, Kes, Bunji Garlin and Skinny Fabulous. The hits include ["Mental Day"](#) from Kes, ["The Spirit"](#) from Machel Montano, ["Behavior Nothin"](#) from Skinny Fabulous, and ["Umbrella"](#) from Bunji Garlin.

Meanwhile, Hard Fete from Bunji Garlin is the second most popular song in Trinidad currently, only trailing Come Home from Nailah Blackman and Skinny Fabulous, according to the Trinidad music charts. Hard Fete is a must-play at all fetes, and the current prediction is that it either comes in second behind the chart topper Come Home, or win the coveted title altogether.

The rhythm was produced by Gregory Hodge from St. Thomas, known worldwide as DJ Avalanche — a respected and highly sought-after deejay who has spanned the world performing at events. Mr. Hodge was recently interviewed by the Trinidad Express, where he provided information on how the song came together.

He recalled originally producing the rhythm and providing it to USVI artist Pampa. Pampa, according to Mr. Hodge, indicated his desire to do a remix with and selected Bunji Garlin, whose birth name is Ian Antonio Alvarez, as the featuring artist. However, when Bunji Garlin received the beat, he took great interest in it and told Mr. Hodge he wanted to do an original song, according to the Trinidad Express. When Bunji Garlin returned the song to Mr. Hodge a few weeks later, the deejay expressed that he was astonished by the Soca superstar's contribution.

"I listened to that song and it was like I was a patron in a fete and I jump up in my studio like I partying. Keep in mind I produced the song, so I already know basically what to expect, but Bunji put down the song and turned it into a masterpiece," Mr. Hodge told the Daily Express.

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