

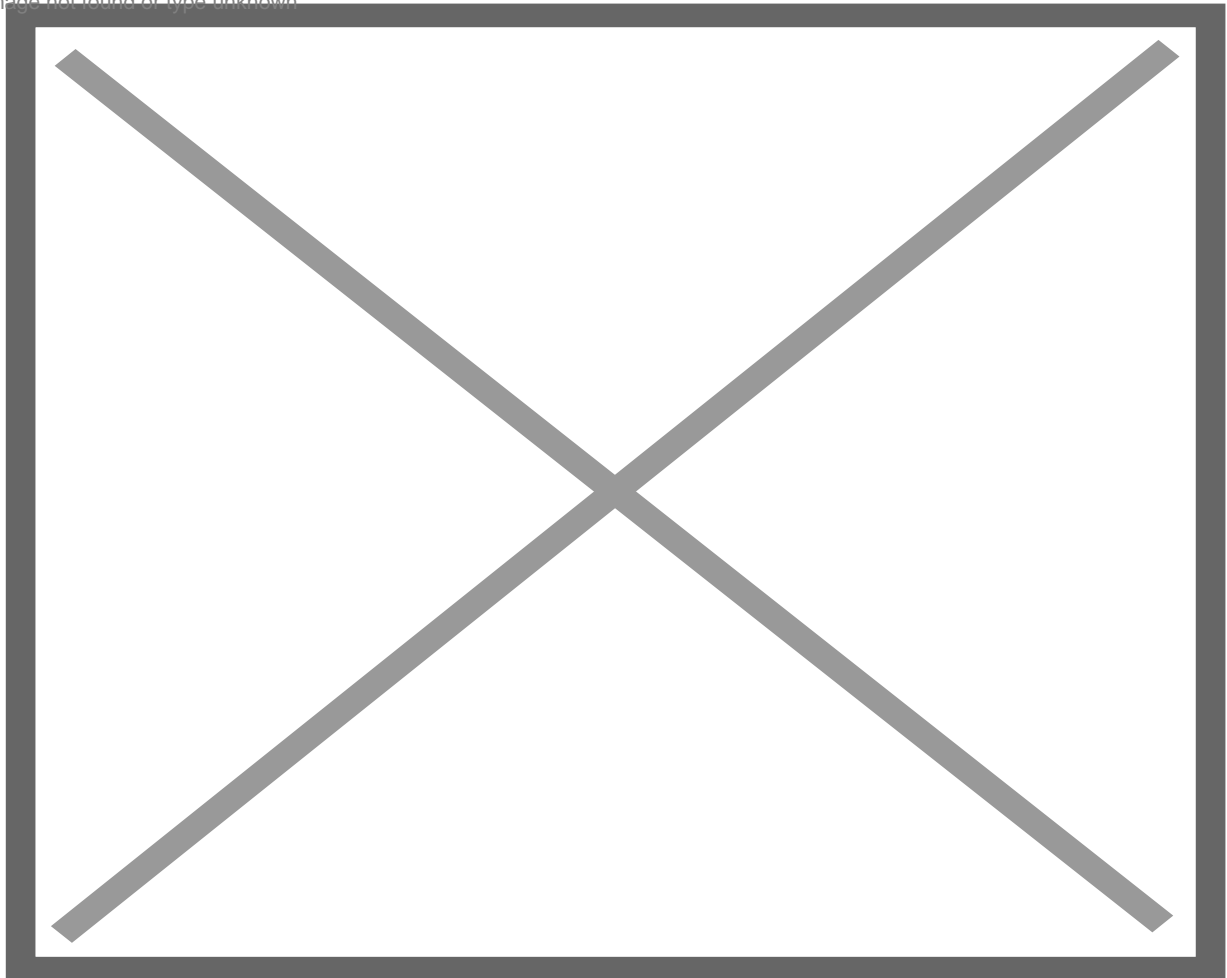
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## Pupa Kelly Musical Carnival Village Opens, Setting Tone For St. Thomas' 71st Carnival Celebrations

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Janeka Simon **April 25, 2023**

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**The St. Thomas Carnival Village on April 24, 2023. By. USVI DIVISION OF FESTIVALS**

Carnival Village roared to life on Monday night, unfolding in a spectacle of music, lights – and local culinary delights – dubbed “Endless Wuk”.

The evening began with a formal opening ceremony which featured a ribbon-cutting exercise by Governor Albert Bryan Jr., senators from the 35th Legislature, and this year’s crowned Carnival Queen, Prince and Princesses.

The Village for St. Thomas's 71st Carnival was named the Pupa Kelly Musical Arena this year, in honor Kelly Charleswell Sr., affectionately known by Virgin Islanders as “Pupa Kelly”.

“This was kind of overwhelming,” said Mr. Charleswell as he received his accolades from the crowd. “I’m so appreciative of this, you don’t even understand.”

Pupa Kelly, who is being recognized for his sterling service as a music teacher in schools, and for his long-running involvement in the territory’s musical scene, broke down in tears as he accepted the honor. “I’m a very quiet guy, I barely say what I do and they just brought it out,” he said, referring to the plaque that had been unveiled by the Legislature earlier.

Referencing the bloodshed that has unfolded across the territory even as Virgin Islanders prepared to celebrate Carnival festivities, Mr. Charleswell appealed for peace. “Let’s take the violence out of it and...just have a blast,” he urged.



After the ceremony, throngs of locals and visitors alike flocked the village, sampling local delicacies from the food vendors, buying trinkets, and – for children – enjoying the traditional fair rides.

As the night drew on, patrons at the free show drew closer to the stage and sang, danced and rocked to the sounds of local musicians including Express Band - who during an interview noted that they may have been the first in the region to record on compact disc (CDs), Spectrum Band, and ShawHP the Band, featuring Pascal.

The night's featured artist, Machel Montano, took to the stage. Following an electrifying performance, the Trinidadian soca superstar, in a backstage interview, spoke about his long connection with the territory. "I ain't been here in a long time, but I've been coming here for a long time," he said, recounting how as a child he used to tour St. Croix, St. Thomas and St. John with the "Pranasonic Express", his first band. "We used to look up to the Jam Bands...we used to kind of watch them on the drum machines and ...the activity and the action," he reminisced. His on-stage set reflected his admiration, with a tribute to Nick "Daddy" Friday and his legacy.

As the crowd began to filter out at the end of an evening of food, fete, and festivities, the MCs reminded them that this was only the beginning. "Tomorrow is Bangarang, you gotta come out," they urged. On St. Thomas, Carnival has officially begun.