

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Virgin Islands' Rich Culture Showcased During Annual USVI Folklife Festival

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Scenes from the Folklife Festival taken on Saturday, June 24, 2023. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM

The 2023 USVI Folklife Festival, an annual event celebrating the rich culture and history of the Virgin Islands continued Saturday with a successful event at the Estate Whim Museum. The festival, organized by the legendary Quadrille Music band, Stanley and the Ten Sleepless Knights (TSK), promises to highlight aspects of Virgin Islands' culture through a two-week series of workshops, events, and performances.

Saturday's event, though not as heavily attended as hoped, still drew a decent crowd. Many attendees expressed their enjoyment in participating in a series of activities that included Crucian cooking, quadrille/maypole dancing, moko jumbies and stilt walking, storytelling, cariso - singing and drumming, and woodworking. Various vendors also added to the lively atmosphere, serving local favorites to attendees.

Kendell "KC" Henry, a member of TSK, spoke about the event's origins and its goal to enhance cultural appreciation within the local community. His response to the V.I. Consortium shed light on the festival's backstory and its bright future.

"The inspiration of bringing this together is to showcase the Virgin Islands' rich culture and history," said Henry. He went on to detail how the Virgin Islands were showcased at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival in 1990. A group of Virgin Islanders spanning both districts also performed at the National Mall in DC, and this encouraged Henry and other locals to organize a similar celebration on home ground.

Despite the festival not being held last year, Henry expressed his optimism about this year's event. Over 400 students from eight different summer camps participated in various cultural activities on Friday. Henry emphasized the necessity of teaching younger generations about their rich cultural heritage, "We have to teach the young ones," he said.

The festival kicked off on June 22 at the Whim Museum and will continue until July 3, offering a variety of daily activities.

While Henry recognized that not everyone may be aware of the festival yet, he expressed joy at the positive feedback received so far. Attendees have been appreciative, and the event has imbued them with a sense of pride for their culture. "You know, knowing your culture is being proud of where you're from," said Henry.

With the festival becoming an annual event, organizers hope that it will grow in popularity and continue to bring the community together to celebrate the Virgin Islands' culture. "This is an annual thing we can't stop now," he said. "Not when everybody is going to be looking forward to this."