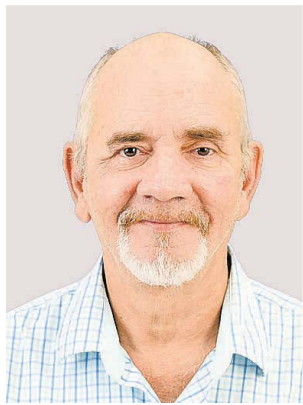


APRIL 16, 2025

A PUBLICATION OF THE DAILY HERALD



READY TO REVEAL!

Carnival Fever is already running high, with various events leading up to Monday's official opening of Carnival Village – the venue that is a characteristic part of the local festivities and creates such a unique atmosphere. This annual supplement dedicated to St. Maarten's prime cultural celebration is intended to help enhance that special feeling only this time of year brings.

While the next two weeks will be one big party, during which everyone can rightfully have a good time, people should not forget their responsibilities regarding work, home and family, particularly children. Remember to always behave in a civic manner and stay safe, but do enjoy.

The Publisher

GOVT'S PARTNERSHIP WITH SCDF BRINGS NEW HOPE FOR CARNIVAL'S FUTURE

The St. Maarten Carnival Development Foundation (SCDF) is expected to enter into an historic partnership with the government. This new collaboration aims to solve old problems and create opportunities for the future of Carnival.

SCDF Treasurer Michael Granger is optimistic about government's decision to formalise their collaboration through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that is currently being worked on.

"We're extremely optimistic. This sets the stage for real collaboration and growth. We've been advocating for this since 2013, when we first proposed a long-term partnership. To finally be on the verge of formalising it is both encouraging and promising for the future of Carnival," Granger explains.

For St. Maarten, the MOU being worked on will represent a shift in the approach to Carnival – one that has been long overdue. "We see this as a long-overdue shift. It's not a reinvention; it's about aligning with best practices that are already in place across the region. In fact, St. Maarten is one of the last Caribbean islands to adopt such a model," Granger notes. This partnership opens up the potential for Carnival to grow into a cultural, economic, and tourism powerhouse – something that St. Maarten has yet to fully tap into.

Granger is hopeful that this partnership will address some of the longstanding issues faced by SCDF in planning and executing Carnival. "The agreement lifts many of the limitations we've faced for years. Lack of consistent funding has

made it difficult to grow or innovate. With reliable government support and a strategic plan, we can finally invest in early planning, marketing, and broader collaboration with stakeholders. Most importantly, we can infuse more creativity into the festival and elevate the entire experience."

One of the key challenges SCDF has faced is securing adequate funding. "Carnival requires an annual budget of about US \$800,000, but through sponsors, gate receipts, season passes, booth rentals, and occasional subsidies, we typically only cover about half of that," Granger said. This has led to deferred payment agreements with contractors, resulting in almost a decade of rollover debt. With the new partnership, Granger believes the government's financial backing will provide a much-needed reset. "The partnership, and the funding that comes with it, will immediately address this issue and give us a much-needed financial reset."

The long-term vision for Carnival also includes sustainability, which Granger sees as a crucial aspect of this partnership. "A major part of the agreement is the development of a strategic plan, something that has been missing for too long. Sustainability is only possible when guided by realistic goals and dependable funding," he explains. One area of Carnival that needs urgent attention is its youth components, which he says need to be nurtured and developed to ensure the festival's longevity.

\$333,000) will make a significant impact on this year's planning. While it is a boost, Granger stresses that the full budget still remains around US \$800,000. "It gives us some breathing room and the ability to plan with a level of certainty. However, we want the public to understand that our total budget remains close to \$800,000, so we still need to raise the remaining funds through private partnerships and revenue-generating efforts," he explained.

A public-private partnership initiative announced recently is seen as vital for the success of Carnival from 2026 to 2028. "This initiative is key to rallying the private sector around Carnival," Granger says. He hopes that the strengthened relationship between SCDF and the government will rebuild confidence in the festival and encourage private-sector support for the many stakeholders who depend on it.

To ensure accountability and transparency moving forward, the new partnership includes the appointment of two government representatives on the SCDF board. "Transparency has always been a priority for us," Granger said. "The new partnership includes the appointment of two government representatives, one from TEATT and one from ECYS, to serve as non-voting members on our board. This will ensure ongoing alignment and mutual understanding between SCDF and the government."

As Carnival 2025 approaches, Granger has a strong message for the people of St. Maarten: "With greater structure, discipline, and support, our people will experience a Carnival that truly stands out in the Caribbean. St. Maarten Carnival is already the largest in the north eastern Caribbean, blending music, food, and culture in a one-of-a-kind venue – Carnival Village. And all of that has been achieved by a small team of dedicated volunteers with limited resources. This new partnership is our opportunity to take it to the next level. We're ready to deliver a festival that not only celebrates our culture but sets a new standard for the region."

Granger is also quick to acknowledge the role of Tourism, Economic Affairs, Transport and Telecommunications (TETT) Minister Grisha Heyliger-Marten in this progress. "None of this would have been possible without the dedication of the Minister of TEATT, Grisha Heyliger-Marten. From the very beginning, the Minister was unwavering in her commitment to saving Carnival," he says. "She gave us her word that she would deliver more support than we've ever received before, and she kept that promise."

Granger highlighted the Minister's support as a pivotal moment for the foundation and the festival. "Carnival is in a better place today because of Minister Heyliger-Marten," he said.

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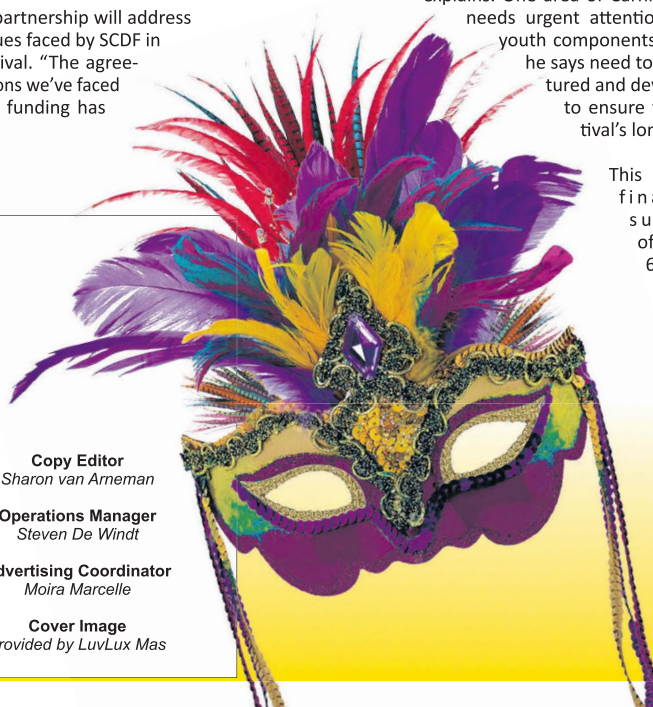
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'IT'S GOING TO BE HOT, HOT!'

Noche Latina promises fire, flavour, and fiesta at Carnival 2025



Yailin La Mas Viral

If there's one night that turns the Carnival Village into the heartbeat of Latin culture, it's Noche Latina (Latin Night); and this year's show is turning up the heat like never before.

Described by Dominican Roots Foundation President Milagros De Windt as "a hot show with great music," the 2025 edition promises energy, world-class performers, and a celebration that bridges culture, community, and Caribbean vibes.

The spotlight will shine on a great line-up of Latin stars, each one bringing their unique rhythm to the stage.

Headlining the night is none other than Luis Vargas, whose influence helped shape the genre into what it is today. "Luis Vargas, a legend of Bachata genre," Milagros said. He's known as El Rey Supremo de la Bachata for a reason, and fans can expect a nostalgic, singalong set of his classic hits. Vargas entered onto the bachata scene in the early 1980s. He was one of the first bachata artists to go into the Latin mainstream. Vargas is credited as the first bachatero to use guitar pedals – an idea he got from bachata sound engineer Rafael Montilla.

Montilla added a chorus pedal to Vargas' guitar while recording his album El Maiz in 1991. He is also credited as the first bachatero to implement the use of humbucker pickups on acoustic electric guitars. Self-produced and promoted, he sold his first albums in the early 1980's. Sony Discos (now Sony Music Latin) signed him in 1996, releasing Volvio el Dolor in 1997. He is the first bachata artist signed to Sony Music Latin.

Joining him will be El Blachy, the viral sensation known for "Pero Dime – En Vivo" with over 6.2 million streams on Spotify. "He is also well-known by his songs 'Hola Perdida', 'Una Noche' and 'Amor Divino', which have all been streamed over 3 million times on Spotify," Milagros said. Expect romance, rhythm, and heartfelt lyrics all night long.

And then there's the one and only Yailin La Mas Viral – an unstoppable force

in Latin Urban music. "She has become in a very short time the hottest Dembow singer of the moment. Everywhere she goes, it's a sold-out," Milagros said. "She is a mother; she is a fighter; she is a dreamer." Her music – blending reggaeton, trap, and hip-hop – speaks to real-life struggle and resilience, especially for young women. Her breakout hit "Bing Bong", released in November 2024, racked up 175 million YouTube views and another 75 million Spotify streams. She has paved the way for many upcoming Latin Urban artists who are looking to make their mark in the industry.

Yailin La Mas Viral is known for her unique style of Latin Urban music. Her lyrics are often inspired by her life experiences and often deal with themes of love, heartbreak, and struggle. Her production is smooth and catchy, with heavy basslines and synths. She currently has 12.4 million followers on Instagram. Need we say more?

The most anticipated moment of the night? "The entrance of Yailin. To hear the people singing along Luis Vargas, I can tell you people are going to sing and not least to see people singing along El Blachy." And for the first time in Latin Night history, the show will feature Merengue Típico, adding a traditional twist to the night's flavour.

Noche Latina has been part of the Carnival celebrations for decades. "I would say for over 30 years," Milagros said. But beyond just the music, it's a deep reflection of who we are as an island. "It is actually the most important event for the majority of Latinos that reside on both sides of the island and surrounding island," she said. "Latin Night confirms the diversity of our island. It confirms what we sell all year around – one island shared harmoniously with over 100 different nationalities."

Continued on page 16

St. Maarten 2025 Carnival Schedule
APRIL 21ST - MAY 5TH 2025

- FRIDAY, MARCH 14 • REPUBLIC BANK CARNIVAL KICK-OFF EVENT
- SATURDAY, MARCH 15 • CAUSEWAY JUMP-UP
- SATURDAY, MARCH 29 • HOT WAVES RTC: FAMILY FUN DAY
- FRIDAY, APRIL 4 • 721 ENTERTAINMENT FLASHBACK JAM
- SATURDAY, APRIL 5 • SIK ENTERTAINMENT ROAD TO CARNIVAL BASH
- SATURDAY, APRIL 5 • CALYPSO BARBARA JUNIOR CALYPSO AND ROADMARCH COMPETITION
- SUNDAY, APRIL 6 • SENIOR QUEEN PAGEANT SPEECH & CULTURAL WEAR COMPETITION
- SATURDAY, APRIL 12 • DA BIG BAD XP BACK YARD JAM
- SUNDAY, APRIL 13 • JUNIOR AND SENIOR CARNIVAL QUEEN PAGEANT
- MONDAY, APRIL 21 • OPENING OF CARNIVAL 2025 / OPENING JUMP-UP
- TUESDAY, APRIL 22 • NAGICO SENIOR CALYPSO FINALS
- WEDNESDAY, APRIL 23 • VILLAGE CHILD NIGHT / VILLAGE COCK UP SPECIALTY DRINK COMPETITION
- THURSDAY, APRIL 24 • BAND CLASH COMPETITION
- FRIDAY, APRIL 25 • STINK & DUTTY LOCAL EDITION
- SATURDAY, APRIL 26 - 4AM • JOUVERT MORNING JUMP-UP
- SATURDAY, APRIL 26 - 8PM • II BROTHERS ENTERTAINMENT STRICTLY THE BEST FESTIVAL: BOUYON EDITION CONCERT
- SUNDAY, APRIL 27 • HEADLINERS: ROOTS & RIDDIMS REGGAE CONCERT
- MONDAY, APRIL 28 • KONCERT X
- TUESDAY, APRIL 29 • NOCHE LATINA INTERNATIONAL LATIN CONCERT
- WEDNESDAY, APRIL 30 • JUNIOR & GRAND CARNIVAL PARADE
- THURSDAY, MAY 1 • LABOR DAY SECOND DAY PARADE
- FRIDAY, MAY 2 • NIGHT OF THE HIT MAKERS 2.0
- SATURDAY, MAY 3 • CARIBBEAN FLAG FEST
- SUNDAY, MAY 4 • BACCHANAL SUNDAY
- MONDAY, MAY 5 • CLOSING JUMP UP / BURNING KING MOMO



El Blachy



Republic Bank st. Maarten



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St. Maarten Carnival

13 HEAD STRAIGHT TO FINALS IN CALYPSO SHOWDOWN ON APRIL 22

Urmain "Youmay" Dormoy to light up stage

There's no elimination round this year. The 2025 Nagico Senior Calypso Competition is going full throttle with 13 singers heading straight to the finals.

That's right: "13 singers are going straight to the finals – no elimination needed!"

Set for April 22 at Jocelyn Arndell Festival Village, this year's finals promise a night of unfiltered lyrical heat, political punchlines, and pure kaiso magic. Each calypsonian will be giving it their all in one of Carnival's most anticipated cultural showcases.

Among the 13 finalists is none other than cultural powerhouse Urmain "Youmay" Dormoy, who is known across St. Maarten for his work as a cultural connoisseur, drum band leader, artiste, and performer. Now, he's bringing that same energy to the calypso stage.

"Cultural connoisseur, drum band leader, artiste, calypso singer; it's only natural that he takes the big stage to deliver some social commentary," the St. Maarten Carnival Development Foundation (SCDF) said in a post on its Facebook page. And the stakes couldn't be higher.

Dormoy and his fellow competitors, including the fiery Ebony Empress, will be attempting to "dethrone the reigning six-time Calypso Monarch of St. Maarten – Fish Da Mega Boss." With the crown up for grabs and no elimination rounds to weed out the competition, it's a one-shot deal: Bring the heat or be forgotten.

Other competitors include Ashayna Nisbett, whose stage name is *Ashayna*, and Edsel Eusebius, known as *The Mighty Yaadfowl* – both are ready to bring their lyrical fire to the stage.

This year's format means every artiste steps into the spotlight at full speed. For fans of calypso, that means a full evening of bold lyrics, clever commentary, and electrifying stage presence. Or, as SCDF puts it: "It is a night of sweet kaiso that you don't want to miss!"

With Youmay's signature style and passion for storytelling, plus the thrill of a "no holds barred" Finals night, the stage is set for an unforgettable showdown.

Mark your calendars for April 22, and get ready to experience a cultural tradition that continues to evolve, entertain, and educate with every beat. Calypso lives and the Village will be pulsing with it. The stage is set, the mics are warming up, and the crown is up for grabs!

'Ashayna' makes bold calypso debut: 'This is my 2 cents'

With lyrics she wrote herself, a clear message in her heart, and fire in her voice, first-time competitor 'Ashayna' is stepping into the 2025 Senior Calypso Competition with something to say – and she's not holding back.

"Calypso runs through my veins. Both my parents are from St. Kitts and I heard it growing up quite often," she tells *The Daily Herald*. "Music is a part of who I am, and being in the competition has been on my bucket list for years. This year, it felt like the right time to take the leap with all that's happening personally, socially and politically. I felt inspired to add my perspective; Carnival and calypso is a vibrant celebration of our culture and I want to be a part of it."

Ashayna Nisbett has been performing since childhood and is no stranger to the stage, but this will be her first time as a lead performer in the Calypso arena – a space she respects deeply. "It isn't my first time performing, but my first-ever Lead Calypso performance."



And she's not just showing up for the experience, she's showing up with purpose. "Expect lyrics with sharp commentary that make you think, a rhythm that makes you move, and a performance that brings my wit, my heart and my love of my country and its people to the stage."

Ashayna's two original songs carry powerful social messages, reflecting both the moment and the movement. "I'm all about social commentary, and this is my first time writing my own lyrics," she explained.

The first song, "Actions Speak," challenges the constant praise of "resilience" without tackling the issues behind the struggle. "The song challenges the overuse of the term 'resilience', often used to praise our society for its ability to recover from crises, without addressing the systemic issues that cause repeated struggles. It emphasizes the need for proactive governance and sustainable development."

Her second song, "Ms. Neverland's Sweetness," digs into deeper questions about independence and self-sufficiency. "It delivers a sharp critique of superficial claims to independence on the personal and national level. I argue that true sovereignty requires self-sufficiency without reliance on external aid (Ms. Neverland – Holland), something we need to work on prior to seeking independence. It's set in a satirical tone, yet is reflective overall."

That balance of satire and sincerity is central to her style. "To me, Calypso is a real form of Caribbean expression wrapped in rhythm. It's our history, our politics, our struggles and our joys, all expressed through creativity. It's a voice; my voice in song."

Her musical journey has been rich and varied, from church and school events to choirs and bands across the island. "I've been singing practically all my life – singing in school and church, and local events," she shared. "My official start on a formal stage was with Ms. Anastacia Larmonie in the youth jazz choir,

The Anboujouettes. I've since been a part of the Clara Reyes band 'Light' as well as the 'SXM Community Choir', and currently a member of 'The Showbiz Band' (featuring King Beau Beau). I am also a background vocalist for many of our local artistes."

Still, preparing for Calypso has been a whole new experience: "It's been intense, but rewarding. Late nights writing lyrics, perfecting arrangements, rehearsing vocals, fine-tuning the delivery, and working with musicians to bring the vision to life. The process has pushed me to grow as an artiste."

She admits the nerves are there, but so is the drive: "Definitely both! I'd be lying if I said there weren't nerves, but the excitement outweighs it. It's an honour to share the stage with St. Maarten's finest, talented calypsonians and to represent my voice and perspective. I hope to do justice to the tradition of Calypso."

Her goals for this debut go beyond the stage: "I want to spark conversation, make people think, and contribute meaningfully to our cultural heritage. Winning would be incredible, but my main goal is to make an impact through my performance. I want to inspire everyone, primarily more women to step out of your comfort zone and do those things on your bucket list."

Her influences reflect a wide musical range – from Calypso greats to pop icons: "In terms of Calypso, locally, I look up to Calypsonians like King Beau Beau, King Timo, Mighty Dow, Kaiso Brat and Shakiya, also Calypso musician Funk Gumbs. They've shown how powerful Calypso can be as a form of resistance, education, and entertainment. I try to follow that path, message with melody. My musical influences, however, really started with the late Whitney Houston and Destra."

For Ashayna, Calypso is more than just a genre – it's cultural survival. "It's essential. Calypso is our social commentary; it captures the pulse of the people. It's a way to hold leaders

accountable, celebrate our identity, and preserve our history. Without Calypso, we lose a big part of our voice."

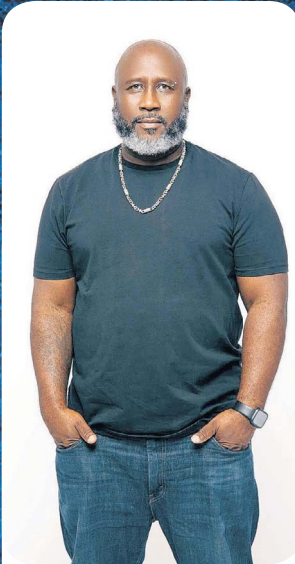
And when that voice hits the stage, she has a clear message for her audience: "I want to remind the people of St. Maarten that to be a strong nation, we must first be honest with ourselves of where we are and where we want to go. Set a vision and then act upon the steps necessary to get there. Country and its' people above self and we can achieve greatness. I try to keep it real while still being entertaining."

A win in the competition would mean more than recognition; it would represent a breakthrough. "It would be a huge validation, not just for me, but for anyone with something to say and the courage to say it. It would open doors, but also give me a platform to continue in our cultural preservation through music. It's not just about the trophy; it's about the voice that comes with it."

As a new voice in a field of veterans, Ashayna is aware of the challenge, but is undeterred. "The biggest challenge has been finding my place among seasoned veterans. But I've leaned on mentors, listened to advice, and stayed true to my message. I remind myself that Calypso has room for all voices, especially the new ones."

And above all, she's grateful. "Just a big thank you to everyone supporting me: Showbiz Band, Shakiya, FocusForward Media, SCDF and my dear family and friends who've listened to my lyrics over and over. To the people of St. Maarten – this is my two cents. I'm proud to be part of this tradition."

In a competition rooted in culture, commentary, and creativity, Ashayna is coming in bold, honest, and ready. Calypso 2025, meet your newest voice.



When The Mighty "Yaadfowl" takes the stage at the 2025 Senior Calypso Competition, he won't just be chasing a crown; he'll be honouring his roots, sharing his story, and reintroducing himself to St. Maarten in a whole new way.

Known in other musical circles as Touché; this multi-talented performer is stepping into the Calypso arena for the first time under a brand-new alias – but make no mistake; he's no stranger to the stage.

"For most, if not all, of my life; I've been a musician performing with many different groups, so I'm no stranger to the stage," The Mighty Yaadfowl, whose birth name is Edsel Eusebius, told *The Daily Herald*; "I've played in many bands here in St. Maarten, but also when I lived in The Netherlands."

This year marks his debut in the Senior Calypso Competition, and it was years in the making. "For the past three years, I've been writing for one of the Jr. Calypso participants, and helping him prepare for his performances really inspired me to also take part."

Now, the mentor becomes the performer. And he's bringing with him a strong sense of purpose, culture, and creativity: "My goal is to deliver good calypso to the people, and a great performance – calypso that me and my people can be proud of. My close friends and family have been exclusively hearing my music for years now, so hopefully a bigger audience will enjoy and appreciate what I do musically."

He's entering the competition with two original songs – both written from a place of real experience and social awareness. "I write a lot of social songs – things that I see happening in the community. So, one song is about what I observe

THE MIGHTY 'YAADFOWL' ENTERS CALYPSO RING WITH A MESSAGE AND A MISSION

going on with the young people; the other song is a song letting everyone know how important calypso music is and how relevant it still is even today."

That second song is especially important to him. "Well, coincidentally, one of my songs talks about how important Calypso music was for the development of many music styles. So, it's very important to the Caribbean on a whole."

His passion for calypso is deeply personal: "Calypso music is one of the most important music styles for me. I grew up playing steel pan and listening to calypso as a young boy and it really is the foundation of everything that I do musically."

That foundation was built by family: "I started music at a very young age. I can't remember exactly how old, but I remember playing a banjo that my grandfather gave me and taught me to play during assemblies in primary school," he said.

His grandfather? None other than Tanny from "Tanny and the Boys" – a legendary name in local music – and it doesn't stop there. "My uncles had a steel pan orchestra, Risdon Steel Orchestra, with my uncle Porkchop leading the group. When I was a little older, my uncle Franky used to teach me Steel Pan, and Uncle George used to teach me guitar. So, my uncles and grandfather really are the ones who inspired me to be a musician and got me started."

Now, with that foundation beneath him, The Mighty Yaadfowl is ready to add a new chapter to the family's musical legacy. Preparing for the competition hasn't been easy, but he's taking it all in stride: "It's my first time. So, although I assisted the Jr. Calypsonian on his journey, it's still a different experience. So, I'm taking it all in and learning as I go."

The hardest part? Time. "Well, the most challenging aspect for me, so far, has just been time management. There is so much that you have to prepare for the performance," he explained. "You gotta have your songs completed and then you gotta make sure they are written out for the band to rehearse and then whatever props or videos you wanna use have to be also organized. So, it can be a lot at times."

Still, his attitude is focused and positive: "I think I would say I feel more excited. The days are drawing nearer and I can't wait to let

everyone see what I've been preparing."

For him, this moment is more than a performance; it's a homecoming. "I just want to share my music with more people. When I was younger, I used to write and sing on many albums, but I haven't done that in a long time. So, some people might just know me as a bass player. So, I'll like to reintroduce myself to the many who don't know me as a songwriter and performer."

His musical influences are as diverse as they are legendary: "I've played and learnt a lot from many different musical influences," he said. "One of the advantages of growing up in St. Maarten is that you're exposed to so many different styles of music and as a young musician, all of these styles played a role in my music development. The main influences I had growing up, though, were The Mighty Sparrow, Burning Flames, and Hartatak Band."

That blend of influences, experience, and personal history all comes together in his

music; but especially in the message he wants to leave with the audience.

"I would just like people to remember that we have to appreciate what we own. Calypso is we own Caribbean people music," he said. "We should not disregard it but appreciate its contribution and acknowledge the significance it's had on many other music genres that we love."

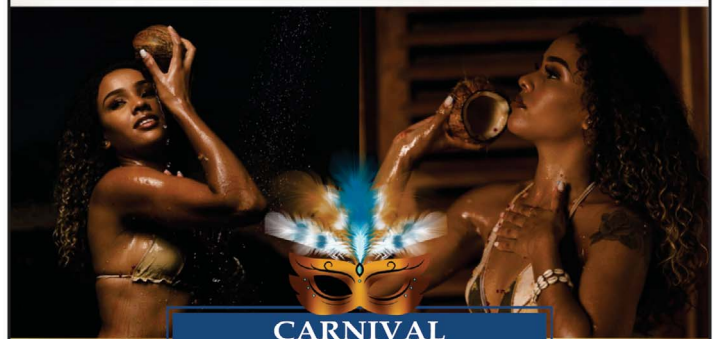
And if he wins? "If I were to win, it would be an extreme honour to hold that title, because some of my favourite artists here on St. Maarten have been Calypso kings, and to be a part of that Calypso legacy would mean a great deal to me."

Whether he walks away with the crown or not, one thing's for sure, The Mighty Yaadfowl will be delivering a performance straight from the heart, powered by tradition, pride, and a message that's as relevant today as it ever was.

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Da Big Bad XP Backyard Jam, which took place last Saturday, happened during a special milestone for the wildly popular band – 10 years of rockin the stage and enticing people to get up and dance. Looking back at the past decade, band leader Darnell ‘Mixxie’ York said he could never have imagined what the band would have become, and how the place they grew up in, playing basketball as kids, would set the stage for one of the most anticipated parties of the Carnival season. Da Big Bad XP Backyard Jam doesn’t only attract revelers from across the island to the band’s hometown, but also Carnival lovers from Antigua, St. Kitts, Statia and Saba.

The 10-year mark brings up a lot of exciting memories and nostalgia. The band can count among its accomplishments, performing at Flag Fest three times back-to-back, winning Band Clash three times back-

to-back, winning Band of the Year multiple times, and lots of performances abroad. The group has travelled to many different islands across the region, and has shared the stage with many Caribbean talents both here and abroad.

The Backyard Jam is a unique Carnival event that the band holds close to its heart. This was its fourth year running. It first came from a place of wanting to give back, York reminisced when speaking to *The Daily Herald* ahead of Saturday’s concert. The band used to make appearances at schools and basketball tournaments. One day, the idea came to host a party right where they grew up, a concert for the whole community in the back yard – hence the name.

After York approached his parents about the idea, the band had just one week to plan it and spread the word. Around 400 people showed up to the first ever Backyard Jam – and the rest is history.

Everything is free of charge: music by Da Big Bad XP, other bands and DJs, and food and drink. The group tries to include all

A DECADE OF DA BIG BAD XP!

types of bands, which is one of the only events on the official Carnival schedule to be held outside of the Jocelyn Arndell Festival Village, in Middle Region. Hosting such a big party in the neighbourhood is also part of giving back to the community – it’s something everyone can attend, without having to pay to experience a big concert.

From veteran bands to up-and-coming ones, Da Big Bad XP tries to include a wide variety of musicians in their backyard line-up. Over the years, the audience has jammed to performances by Skilfull Band, Rolling Tones, and Onyan from Burning Flames. This year, the line-up featured Control Band, X-plosion Band, DCG Band, Ebony Empress, Jabs, DeeJay Main Event, and DJ Wilson.

While Da Big Bad XP has had a few changes over the years, becoming more mature and streamlining their sound, York says the group stays true to itself and makes sure to blend their own sounds and style, not falling into the trap of copying other islands.

The band played their best hits of the past decade, along with two new songs in this year’s concert. Band members include Darnell ‘Mixxie’ York (band leader, bassist and Ableton controller), Dwayne York (lead vocalist and composer), Fred York (drummer), Ali Burnett

(guitarist), Conrad ‘Cisco’ Richardson (keyboardist), Albert Chance and Earl York (sound engineers) and Yves Maccow and Glen ‘Sasa’ Hazel (horn section).

With a decade officially under its belt, Da Big Bad XP, one of the island’s favourite bands, is looking forward to St. Maarten Carnival, especially jammin for jouvert and in the parades, but is also looking forward to releasing new music and performing all year round. “We have a lot of stuff planned when it comes to performances, and when it comes to giving back, we focus on the whole year.”

“We want to thank the people of St. Maarten for loving us for who we are. At the end of the day, it’s the people who make us. Without them, we ain’t nothin.” Congratulations to Da Big Bad XP on this milestone anniversary!



READY FOR 12 HOURS OF JOUVERT ENERGY?

The Stink & Dutty – local edition

Carnival’s Jouvert energy is getting heated up with an earlier start, so the question is: Are you ready?

There is a fresh new twist: Jouvert is now starting at Carnival Village from 11:00pm on Friday, April 25, and continuing into Saturday, April 26, until 3:00am with the Stink & Dutty local edition. Featuring trucks with Da Big Bad XP Band, Skillful Band, and TG Band (2024 Band of the Year), this pre-party warmup bleeding into Jouvert is hosted by the SCDF, and takes place in the Carnival Village. DJ Tamon and the Explosion Band, which has won “Band of the Year” six times, will also be performing live on stage before the trucks roll out at the commencement of jouvert morning.

Mike Granger of the SCDF: “Like everything great in Carnival, the best things happen unplanned. This version of Stink & Dutty came about after the promoter suffered a tragic family loss and could not proceed with the international version. So, instead of changing the name and the concept, SCDF received permission from the promoter to keep the name and turn it into a local version of Stink & Dutty. It came together very quickly because we love our band culture. Any opportunity we get to involve our bands, we take it – being right before jouvert offered the ideal opportunity.”

For jouvert this year, there will be between 10 and 12 bands and DJs. The former six-time Band of the Year – Explosion Band – will start off the night on stage before the trucks start to move. The three trucks in the village for Stink & Dutty will start to roll out at 3:00am to meet

the other trucks at the Salt Pickers roundabout. What comes next is what should be a spectacular jouvert, which will follow the regular route.

This year, there will be even more troupes in jouvert, and more bands will have their own troupes. Many bands will also have special guest musicians from neighbouring islands on their trucks. There is so much to be excited about. This new Stink & Dutty pre-Jouvert concert will get you fired up and ready! So, join Stink & Dutty at the Jocelyn Arndell Festival Village at 11:00pm on Friday, April 25, and Jouvert morning at 4:00am on Saturday, April 26.



After last year's Carnival confusion, the government of St. Maarten is setting the stage for a smoother, stronger festival season, starting with a game-changing Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) be-

TEATT Minister Heyliger-Marten: Carnival deserves respect

~ MOU with SCDF being formalized ~

tween the Ministry of Tourism, Economic Affairs, Transport and Telecommunications (TEATT) and the St. Maarten Carnival Development Foundation (SCDF).

This strategic partnership, currently in progress, is the brainchild of TEATT Minister Grisha Heyliger-Marten, who said she was moved to act quickly after witnessing the chaos and lack of clarity that clouded Carnival 2024.

"Carnival – our island's largest and most culturally significant festival – receives the respect, support, and planning it deserves," Minister Hey-

liger-Marten told The Daily Herald.

She pointed to the breakdown in communication and absence of clear agreements last year that left stakeholders uncertain, and dampened the usually vibrant season. Determined to prevent a repeat, she's now taking steps to lay a more structured foundation for Carnival's future.

"The lack of clear agreements and timely support created uncertainty for stakeholders and cast a shadow on what should have been a celebratory season for our people and visitors alike," she said.

The upcoming MOU aims to create a clear, consistent, and collaborative working relationship between government and SCDF. By spelling out the roles and responsibilities of both parties, the document promises to improve transparency and long-term sustainability for one of St. Maarten's most important cultural events.

"The MOU underscores our collective commitment to strengthening Carnival as both a vibrant expression of our heritage and a key economic driver," she added.

Once finalised, the agreement will

serve as a guide for all Carnival planning and execution moving forward, aiming to uplift the experience for residents and tourists, fuel cultural tourism, and open new doors for local entrepreneurs and creatives.

"The goal is to enhance the Carnival experience for residents and visitors, boost our cultural tourism product, and create more opportunities for local businesses and creatives," Minister Heyliger-Marten said.

With the MOU on the horizon, the future of Carnival is looking brighter, bolder, and better organised.

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO GET READY FOR CARNIVAL

Carnival in Sint Maarten is more than just a celebration – it's a way of life. The music, the parades, the food, and the unbeatable atmosphere make it an unforgettable experience; but to fully enjoy every moment, you need to come prepared. Whether you're watching the Grand Parade, or hosting a backyard gathering, having the right gear makes all the difference. Carnival is all about fun; but let's be honest – spending the day without a place to sit, a cold drink, or a good meal can quickly take the shine off the celebration. Luckily, with a few simple essentials, you can be ready for anything the day brings.

Here's everything you need to be ready to party.

Coolers to keep drinks ice-cold
Staying refreshed during Carnival is a must, and a good cooler helps keep your drinks cold all day long. In the Caribbean heat, where the sun beams down from early morning to sunset, a warm drink isn't just disappointing; it can wear you out. A well-insulated cooler means your refreshments stay chilled and accessible throughout the day, whether you're camped out along the

parade route or enjoying a relaxed moment with friends and family. Look for one that suits your group size and mobility needs, from easy-to-carry styles to wheeled options that double as a seat.

Foldable tables for food and drinks
Carnival days call for good food, cool drinks, and a convenient place to enjoy them. A sturdy foldable table turns any space into a mini hub for snacking, prepping, or relaxing. Whether you're mixing drinks, plating up barbecue, or just need a space to stash your bag and sunglasses, having a table on hand makes things a lot easier. Choose one that suits your space – long banquet tables are great for group gatherings, while picnic-style tables are ideal for casual meals.

Foldable chairs for ultimate comfort
There's plenty of standing, walking, and dancing at Carnival, but you'll want a break eventually. A foldable chair gives you a comfortable place to sit, catch your breath, and take in the festivities. Choose a chair with

back support or padded features for longer rest periods, or go for lightweight and compact if you're moving between spots. Planning to share your setup with friends or family? A foldable bench offers space-saving seating for multiple people. These chairs don't just add comfort; they let you enjoy the day at your own pace.

Table barbecues for the ultimate Carnival feast

Food is at the heart of Carnival in Sint Maarten – from grilled chicken to ribs, and everything in between. A table barbecue gives you the freedom to prepare hot, fresh meals wherever you are. Look for a compact model that heats up quick-

ly and travels well. Whether you're keeping things simple or cooking for a crowd, the right grill lets you enjoy the flavours of the season while staying in the middle of the action. Bring your own grill, and you can cook up your favourite dishes exactly the way you like them.

Be ready for the best Carnival yet: Having the right setup can make your Carnival experience more enjoyable and hassle-free. With comfortable seating, a practical table, a reliable grill, and an efficient cooler, you're all set to fully embrace the energy of this year's Carnival. It's all about enjoying the celebration – not worrying about what you forgot to bring. So take a moment to plan

ahead and step into the season with everything you need to fully experience celebrations.

Check out the great selection of coolers, foldable chairs and tables, table barbecues and more at <https://www.kooymanbv.com>. Grab your essentials, and get ready to celebrate in style!



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Education, Culture, Youth and Sport (ECYS) Minister Melissa Gumbs might have a busy job, but when Carnival comes around, she knows how to enjoy it to the fullest, especially when it involves a bowl of soup.

"Every year, I embark on my own personal oyster soup quest," Minister Gumbs tells *The Daily Herald*, describing what has become her very own Carnival tradition: "A highly competitive (and delicious) challenge where I hunt down every booth selling oyster soup and conduct an in-depth taste test. Why? Be-

CULTURE MINISTER MELISSA GUMBS ON CARNIVAL, CULTURE, AND HER ANNUAL OYSTER SOUP QUEST

cause I love oyster soup! The booth holders always bring their A-game, making it an exciting and tasty experience."

Carnival is many things to many people, but for Minister Gumbs, it can be summed up in three simple but perfect words: "Food; Fête; Friends; because what's Carnival without local flavours, parties, and

good company to enjoy it with?"

While she's experienced almost every aspect of Carnival, except performing on stage (which she's happy to leave to the pros), it's the culture-inspired costumes that really catch her eye. "I love the inclusion of cultural wear. As Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, I have an even greater appreciation for how designers blend heritage and artistry into their creations. Seeing costumes inspired by our history, folklore, and Caribbean identity gives me a deep sense of pride!"

For Minister Gumbs, Carnival is more than just an event; it's a moment of togetherness and healing. She fondly recalls the post-Irma celebrations in 2018 as one of the most powerful Carnival memories. "It was the first one after Hurricane Irma, and it brought joy and healing to the island. The energy was unmatched, people were just happy to be together, celebrating, dancing and letting go of the stress of the past months."

And when it comes to the sounds of Carnival, Minister Gumbs keeps it local: "It's hard for me to choose just one, but it would definitely be a song from XP Band!"

Of course, food remains at the heart of her Carnival experience. Among her favourites? "Crab back and pumpkin Johnny cake from the Hazel sisters, Bad Boy satay, conch-stuffed wings, and, of course, oyster soup." That's right! Oyster soup gets a second (well-deserved) mention.

If she ever had the chance to ride on a float, it would have to be one that captures the essence of the island. "I'd love to be on a

culture-infused float that celebrates St. Maarten's unique history and identity. Imagine a float donning the colours of our flag, with elements representing our heritage, music, and, of course, our food!"

Her love for Carnival runs deep, reaching all the way back to childhood. "One of my most cherished childhood Carnival memories is watching my father jamming with Diane Velasquez in the Jolly Jumpers."

And if she could bring one celebrity along for the ride? It would be Rihanna. "She's from the Caribbean, so she understands the music, vibes, and energy, and I know she'd love every second because our Carnival has a vibe that's different from others. But, everyone should experience Carnival in St. Maarten at least once."

With that spirit, Minister Gumbs embodies what makes Carnival in St. Maarten so special – heritage, flavour, music, and the joy of community.



For many Carnival-goers, the excitement isn't just about the music and costumes; it's also about the unforgettable flavours of food served at Carnival time.

This year, Caribbean Grill at Booth #61 is bringing the taste of the islands straight to the heart of the Carnival Village, proudly occupying one of the newly rebuilt booths that were damaged during Hurricane Irma in 2017.

Caribbean Grill booth holder Shananda Busropan says the booth's name highlights the company's dedication to showcasing "the vibrant flavours and culinary traditions of the Caribbean, particularly the delicious street food known as 'truki pan' from Curaçao and Aruba."

The goal is clear: "We want to deliver an authentic Caribbean food experience that everyone attending Carnival will enjoy with every bite."

Booth #61 will offer an array of Caribbean delicacies, including perfectly grilled meats, grilled shrimp skewers, plantain, and the ever-popular traditional Caribbean rice and peas. "Each dish will be crafted with love, using special seasonings and traditional recipes," Busropan explains. The booth's focus on authenticity and freshness is what truly sets it apart. "We will use local and organic ingredients whenever possible, combined with secret spice blends that give our dishes unmatched flavour."

Caribbean Grill will also feature a grill guy with unique techniques inspired by Caribbean traditions, giving every bite a flavour that will be hard to beat. "What sets us apart from other vendors in the Carnival Village is our focus on authenticity and freshness. Our grill guy has his unique grilling techniques, inspired by Caribbean traditions, which will add a flavour that attendees won't find elsewhere."

For Busropan, joining Carnival as a vendor has been a long-standing dream. "I've always wanted to become a vendor for Carnival. Last year, I embarked on my entrepreneurial venture and gained a wealth of experience. Now, I feel ready to take the next step and join Carnival," she said.

Visitors to the booth can expect mouth-watering food that excites the senses, all within a lively, festive atmosphere. "We aim to

create a festive experience within our booth, complete with colourful decor. There will also be a special 'Carnival Combo' that includes a taste of the most popular dishes, served with a refreshing drink at a discounted price," Busropan says.

To ensure the food stays true to its roots, the team behind Caribbean Grill will stick to traditional preparation methods and source ingredients from trusted suppliers. "Our team includes chefs who are experienced in Caribbean cuisine, ensuring every dish is made to perfection. The flavours will come from a blend of local spices, herbs, and traditional cooking techniques, giving every dish its unique Caribbean flair," she assures.

"Food vendors play a crucial role in creating the Carnival atmosphere," she explains. "The aromas, colours, and flavours all contribute to making the Carnival lively and memorable." For Busropan, food is more than just sustenance; it's an essential part of the Carnival experience, connecting people and enhancing the celebration.

Caribbean Grill has set up its operations to handle the anticipated crowds. "The Caribbean Grill Crew has put together a more efficient way of working. We've implemented ready-to-serve dishes, faster cooking methods, and improved serving stations to manage the anticipated crowds." There will also be designated staff to help manage the lines and expedite orders, ensuring that everyone can get their food quickly and enjoy the festivities without delay.

"What I love most about being part of the Carnival is the opportunity to meet and serve a wonderfully diverse group of people. It will be rewarding to see them enjoy the flavours of our food and enjoy the festivities."

In an effort to streamline service even further, Caribbean Grill will also offer a pre-order system, though walk-ins are still encouraged. "We aim to create an experience that's lively and enjoyable for everyone involved," Busropan adds.

As for the booth's hopes for this year's Carnival, Busropan's vision is clear: "We hope to deliver an exceptional culinary experience that leaves attendees with lasting memories. We also aim to give an appreciation for Caribbean culture through our food."

Food, for Busropan, is about more than just flavour; it's about connection. "We hope to evoke smiles, laughter, and connection, making the event a cherished occasion for everyone involved."

Caribbean Grill Booth # 61 is ready to bring the taste of the islands to Carnival and create moments with every delicious bite. Caribbean Grill is established in Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Den Haag in the Netherlands with Busropan's business partner Virgil Hassell.

THE VILLAGE CHILL

Featuring the Village Cock-Up Specialty Drink Competition

As Carnival festivities are picking up the pace, the Village Chill Night is the place to be on Wednesday, April 23. The Chill Night will be all about creativity, flavour, fun, live entertainment and good company. Five booths will vie for the title of creating the season's best specialty drinks, in the Cock-Up contest. Come early to increase your chances of winning amazing prizes – doors open at 8:00pm.

Presented by SCDF and Where The Flex, the Cock-Up contest has been a hit for years, showcasing the flair and creativity of the booth holders. Check it out and you might just discover a new boozy concoction to carry you through the exciting Carnival slate in the Jocelyn Arndell Festival Village.

Besides bragging rights, a spotlight and new fans, the winning booth will receive a prize of US\$ 1,000. Battling it out for the title this year are The Bearded

Kitchen (booth 10), NouRish Nook (booth 11), Liquor N Flames (booth 17), Bad Decisionsz (booth 32), and Hot Waves (booths 68 and 69).

Get into the full swing of the Carnival mood. The evening will be hosted by none other than Rummer, and there will be live DJs and musical entertainment by DJ JP, DeeJay Vy-bz, DJ King Kembe, DJ Flames, DJ Outkast, DJ Siw' Roo, CD Rankin, Mr. Rude, King James, and OMG Live.

Make sure to come on time to take full advantage of the entertainment and possibility to win exciting prizes, including concert tickets for this year, and full season passes for Carnival 2026! Be there before 9:00pm to qualify for a raffle ticket for the 2026 season pass – the first one will be given out at 9:00pm on the dot – and subsequent prizes will be given out every half-hour during the event.

Don't miss the chance to win tickets to Band Clash, Wuk Dat Jouvert, Strictly The Best Festival – The Bouyon Edi-

tion, Headliners: Roots & Riddims, Konkert X "The Journey", Night Of The Hit Makers, Caribbean Flag Fest, Bacchanal Sunday, Buss Di Chains Cooler Fete and 2026 Season Passes!

The Cook-Up Contest, which is normally held on the same day, will not take place this year, but will be back next year.

Sponsors of the Village Chill Night include FLAME, VibeZ, The Bearded Kitchen: Booth 10; Abu Ghazi: Booth 18-19; Yden: Booth 23-24; WTF: Booth 34/35; and Hot Waves: Booth 68-69. A special thank you to WINAIR which assisted with airline tickets for OMG Live from Tortola.

The Village Chill Night kicks off at 8:00pm on Wednesday, April 23, at the Jocelyn Arndell Festival Village. The cover for entrance is US \$5.

COME REVEL IN THE ST. MAARTEN CARNIVAL GRAND PARADE Aqua Mania Adventures

Book now to experience the vibrant festivities of the St. Maarten Carnival, aboard Lambada sail catamaran.

Lambada will sail from Simpson Bay Resort Dock on April 30 at 1:30pm and head to Philipsburg so you can enjoy this annual, epic, excitement-filled cultural immersion. Leave behind the worries of transportation and parking, as Lambada takes you right to town, offering the best way to enjoy the picturesque coastline.



Sip ice-cold drinks served by our friendly crew while soaking in the tropical sunshine. After arriving in town, head for the pulsating beats of Carnival with exotic and feather plumed dancers, as the Grand Parade comes marching by. It's a swirl of colour and music and alive with paraders of all ages. Taste some delicious local cuisine at the food stands and capture every moment on camera.

At 5:30pm, depart the bustling town of Phillipsburg, and head into the sunset on a relaxing trip back to Simpson Bay. St. Maarten Carnival is a kaleidoscope of colour and sound, a jubilant celebration that must be experienced to be believed. On board Lambada, the magic of St. Maarten Carnival comes alive.



Details

DATE: Wednesday, April 30, 2025

TIME: 1:00pm – Check-in

1:30pm – Boat departs Simpson Bay Marina for Philipsburg

5:30pm – Boat leaves Philipsburg to return to Simpson Bay

COST: \$45 Adults/ \$25 from 5 to 13 years old/ \$15 from 0 to 4 years old

INCLUDED: Open Bar on board

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LUVLUX MAS: BRINGING LUXURY TO THE ROAD FOR CARNIVAL 2025

LuvLux Mas is not a first-time endeavour for this troupe leader, who participated in last year's Carnival, with a section that received rave reviews. "It's not my first year in St. Maarten Carnival. I had a section in 2024 which did amazing, and based on that feedback and the responses we got, and the support from those who backed us, we decided to branch out on our own."

The troupe's debut for Carnival 2025 is promising to be one of the most exciting, with some 200 participants, adding to the festive energy. They're also collaborating with TG Band and a DJ truck, featuring both local and international talent. Behind the scenes, a 16-person team has been working tirelessly to bring the troupe's vision to life.

This year's theme is "World of Atlantis," which draws inspiration from the mystique and beauty of the lost city of Atlantis. "In all our sections, we've added creativity to showcase the underwater creatures, forgotten treasures, and mystery," Janga explains.

The costumes are designed to reflect this mysterious underwater world: "Our costumes will transport you to a world long lost to history – Atlantis, a land of legends filled with extraordinary beauty, forgotten treasures, and mystery. Luxuriously embellished with bling, our designs offer the perfect coverage for all body types, ensuring they not only celebrate the essence of Atlantis, but also boost the confidence of our revellers."

The designs were created in collaboration with CA Carnival, with the troupe leader emphasizing the importance of adding more than just feathers and bling: "I needed to see art – a visual design of the theme – and that's what makes ours unique," adds Janga.

As for the message and vibe LuvLux Mas hopes to send, it's all about electrifying energy and unforgettable experiences: "We want the troupe to bring an electrifying energy to every crowd we perform for this year. Our goal is to create an unforgettable experience, whether it's through powerful storytelling, high-energy choreography, or moments that truly connect with the audi-

ence. LuvLux Mas aims to thrill the crowd by showcasing our rich culture and bringing creativity back to the road. We hope to inspire, entertain, and leave a lasting impact wherever we go!"

Of course, the troupe leader won't just be overseeing the action; she'll be right there in the mix, jamming along with her revellers: "Yes, we will be jamming individual pieces that are breath-taking – some characters to look out for are Pink Atlantis, Mother of Pearls, Queen La Siren and Queen of Triton."

The planning process for LuvLux Mas began in May 2024, with brainstorming sessions and the creation of a mood board: "After meeting with the designer, the process involved a lot of back and forth, with plenty of yes's and no's, along with some adjustments and fixes. We had a few minor schedule changes, but overall, it was a great experience."

This troupe leader believes, however, that Carnival could benefit from more support from local authorities, which would elevate it back to a global level: "What I enjoy most about the St. Maarten Carnival experience is the sense of community. I've been part of it since I was two – the vibrant culture, and the unforgettable energy that comes with participating in such a unique celebration," she shares.

As a troupe leader, her favourite part has been seeing her vision come together: "My favourite part of being a troupe leader is being able to guide my team and see results, and seeing things come together daily."

The troupe's registration officially closed on February 20 and due to demand, they offered an additional two-week window to sign up: "We had a lot of people ask us to sign up after our closed date, so we [gave] another two weeks to still register."

With Carnival celebrating its 54th anniversary, the troupe is especially proud to be part of this historic celebration: "Carnival's 54th anniversary is a testament to the rich history and vibrant spirit of Carnival. For our troupe, it's an honour to be part of such a longstanding tradi-



This year, a new troupe is making its mark on St. Maarten's Grand Carnival Parade: LuvLux Mas. With a name that evokes a sense of extravagance, the troupe is set to offer revellers a unique Carnival experience. The story behind the name is as intriguing as the troupe itself.

Troupe leader Tavi Janga explains: "I was at the airport waiting on my flight to London, and I got a call saying I need a name for my troupe. I was lost and thought, 'What can I name it?' I asked myself, 'Why am I in this?' 'What would I love to provide?' 'What am I known for?' It came to me – 'My love for Carnival, and I want my revellers to have a luxury experience.'"

tion, celebrating culture, creativity, and community.”

LuvLux Mas is setting a new standard for what it means to be on the road: “At LuvLux, we do things differently, always putting our revellers first and ensuring they have an unforgettable experience from registration to the last beat of the music. We’re redefining what it means to be on the road by bringing a touch of luxury to every aspect of the journey.”

The troupe is determined to offer a Carnival experience like no other. “Our goal is to create an atmosphere where every reveller feels pampered, valued, and immersed in the ultimate road experience. At LuvLux, luxury isn’t just a word; it’s the way we do things.”

With its theme, costumes, and commitment to luxury, LuvLux Mas is sure to be one of the standout experiences of the Carnival 2025 Grand Parade.



#ReggaeCyanDead: Three Decades of Reggae in One Night

Richie Spice



Reggae lovers have one date circled on their calendars – April 27. It’s usually King’s Day, a national holiday, but this year, the Kings and Queens of St. Maarten will undoubtedly be skanking to Carnival Village, where a true Queen and four Kings of the Caribbean’s most iconic music genre will take centre stage.

A late addition to the Carnival schedule – Headliners: Roots and Riddims – quickly became one of the season’s most talked-about events. It’s so true to its name that fans can’t tell who will be the last to grace the crowd with their sweet melodies, infectious riddims or heart-stopping lyrics. It could be Tanto Metro and Devonte, a duo whose music helped define 90s dancehall with signature hits such as “Everyone Falls in Love”, “Say Woeee” and “Give it to Her”. Or, it could be ladies’ favourite Christopher Martin, whose range encompasses hard-core reggae with “Look on my Face”, the waist-rocking dancehall tune, “I’m a Big Deal”, or a lovers’ ballad like “Star Across the Sky”.

Richie Spice is another strong contender to close the night, with his barrage of conscious anthems that set the reggae world of the 2000s on fire, including “The Plane Land”, “Earth a Run Red”,

Tanya Stephens



“Marijuana”, “Youth Dem Cold” and “The World is a Cycle”. Or, it could very well be the lyrical Goddess herself, Tanya Stephens, whose profound storytelling will be on full display when she belts out “It’s a Pity”, “These Streets” or “Big Ninja Bike”.

According to promoter Bertaux “Mr. Rude” Fleming of Xtratight Entertainment, the idea behind the show was to showcase reggae’s top talent across three decades. He also wanted to trigger St. Maarten’s collective memory, a reminder of why the island fell in love with reggae and dancehall in the first place.

“Anybody on that line-up could close,” Fleming said. Show-goers have no fear, though, for a schedule will soon be released. But Fleming insists that this is just to let fans know when their favourite artiste will be on the mic. “There’s no closer, there’s no opener. There’s just time slots,” he said.

After asking to do a reggae show during Carnival for two years, Fleming said it is “a good dream come

true” to finally put on an event in his self-described forte. St. Maarten Carnival Development Foundation (SCDF) had contacted Divico Distributors Chief Executive Officer Sunny Khatnani, about hosting a reggae night after the much-anticipated Caribbean Queen Pageant fell through. It was Khatnani who then reached out to Fleming to partner in the event.

“It was a really big moment for me,” Fleming said.

Eager to grab this opportunity with both hands, Fleming says this is just “year one out of 10”.

“It is not the biggest line-up that we could present. It is a good start leading towards better things,” he said.

When asked about future plans, the respected promoter was tight-lipped but did indicate, with a little more than a grin, that he wishes to bring the legendary Shabba Ranks to The Friendly Island’s shores. “That would be an artiste that St. Maarten would love to see,” Fleming said.

In addition to the big Jamaican stars, St. Maarten’s own Royalty will be on stage, alongside CD Rankin, DeeJ Blaze and DJ Outkast. Leading the crowd through the night will be host Uncle Shadz.

Fans can wet their musical appetite before the show with Xtratight’s official mix, available on SoundCloud: www.soundcloud.com/xtratight

Tickets are now US \$50, with the price going to \$60 on April 21, the week of the show. More will be charged at the door.

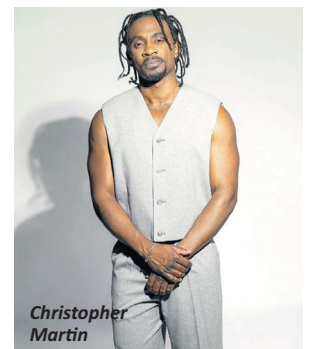
Tickets can be purchased online at www.xtratight.com, as well as Aleeeze Box Office, Levi’s Marigot, Adolphus Richardson Office Supplies, and Domino’s Pizza (all locations).

Doors open at 7:00pm, with the show starting at 8:00pm. “We are definitely encouraging everyone to come on time, because we have to end at 2:00am,” Fleming said.

Partners and sponsors include Divico Distributors, Red Stripe, Amstel Bright, and Delta Petroleum.



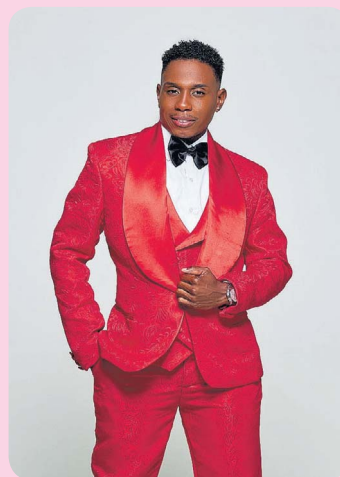
Tanto Metro & Devonte



Christopher Martin



KLIMAXX KARNIVAL BRINGS FRESH ENERGY TO THE ROAD FOR CARNIVAL 2025



Laurant from Dominica, Tyler Johnson from Saba, and Deyon Bovell, originally from Barbados, but residing on the French side of St. Martin. Of course, I am also a local designer contributing to the creative direction. Their designs stand out due to their intricate detailing, use of premium materials, and a strong connection to cultural and natural elements."

Behind the scenes, it's a team effort: "Klimaxx Karnival is made up of a diverse group of revellers who share a passion for Carnival. We anticipate a strong turnout, with multiple sections representing different themes. The core team behind Klimaxx consists of dedicated designers, logistics coordinators, and event planners who work tirelessly to bring our vision to life."



When Laurant Hall hits the road this year with Klimaxx Karnival, he's not just bringing a new troupe to the St. Maarten Grand Carnival Parade; he's bringing a powerful celebration of creativity from across the Caribbean.

According to Hall, "Klimaxx represents the peak of energy, excitement, and the ultimate Carnival experience. The name was chosen to reflect the high-energy atmosphere and unforgettable moments we aim to create for our revellers. It's about reaching the climax of joy and celebration on the road."

Although this is Hall's first time leading a troupe, he's no rookie when it comes to Carnival. His decision to launch Klimaxx Karnival came from a place of passion and purpose.

"Yes, this is my first time leading a troupe, but I have been deeply involved in Carnival for many years. My motivation came from a desire to create a platform where smaller, talented designers from St. Martin and the Caribbean could showcase their crea-

tivity. I also wanted to address common issues in the industry, such as late launches and delays in costume deliveries, ensuring a smooth and exciting experience for all participants."

The 2025 theme for Klimaxx Karnival is "Untamed Horizons" and it's more than just a name. Hall says it embodies freedom, exploration, and the wild beauty of nature. "Each costume section draws inspiration from elements like the elegance of birds, the resilience of flowers, and the mystique of twilight. The overall vibe is one of bold expression and unrestrained revelry."

With sections like Mystic Twilight, Eternal Blossom, and Cardinal Blaze, the troupe is leaning into themes of strength, transformation, and beauty: "Our costumes are designed to be vibrant, luxurious, and full of movement. We have sections like 'Mystic Twilight,' inspired by the transformation of the snake, 'Eternal Blossom,' celebrating the resilience of nature, and 'Cardinal Blaze,' which embodies fiery passion. Each costume tells a story of strength, transformation, and beauty."

Inclusivity and confidence are core to the design philosophy: "The look and feel of the costumes are crafted to ensure that every woman, no matter her shape or size, feels comfortable and sexy, yet respectful on the road. This means incorporating swimsuits and designs that complement each individual, allowing them to feel confident and radiant throughout the parade."

The creative talent behind the costumes is as diverse as the designs themselves: "Our costumes were designed by a talented group of designers, each bringing their unique vision and expertise to the table. Rick and Marlon from R&M Design have over 20 years of experience in the Carnival scene. Additionally, we have Shammah

That energy is exactly what Hall wants the crowd to feel: "We want Klimaxx Karnival to radiate excitement, confidence, and pure joy. Our revellers will embody the spirit of freedom and celebration, sending a message that Carnival is about embracing life to the fullest."

And, yes, Hall will be right there in the mix with his troupe: "Absolutely! I'll be on the road with my troupe, fully immersed in the experience. My costume will be a special representation of our theme, designed to showcase leadership and energy, embodying the essence of Klimaxx Karnival. Of course, after all the hard work, sweat, and tears, it's only right for me to enjoy what my team and I endured in the process."

Pulling off a troupe debut takes serious planning, and Hall's team started early: "Planning began over a year in advance to ensure that every detail is executed to perfection. Challenges include securing sponsorships, ensuring timely delivery of materials, and coordinating logistics. However, with a strong team, we have been able to navigate these hurdles successfully."

For Hall, nothing compares to the feeling of seeing Carnival come alive: "The energy! There's nothing like seeing people come together to celebrate our culture, music, and traditions. The joy, the colours, the movement – everything about Carnival is electrifying."

And even with all the stress and challenges, there's one moment that makes it all worth it: "Seeing my vision come to life and knowing that we are providing an unforgettable experience for our revellers; watching people enjoy the road and seeing our designs in action make all the hard work worth it."



Thinking about jumping in? There's still time: "Yes! We still have a few spaces that can be filled. Interested individuals can visit our troupe camp or sign up online. Cost and details can be found on our social media pages and website. Our camp is located in Point Blanche, there you can see costume samples and get more information."

As St. Maarten celebrates its 54th Carnival this year, Hall is honoured to be a part of it: "Carnival's 54th anniversary is a testament to the resilience and vibrancy of our culture. For Klimaxx Karnival, it is an honour to be part of this legacy, and we are proud to contribute to the ongoing evolution of St. Maarten's biggest celebration."

From the vibrant designs to the message of empowerment and unity, Klimaxx Karnival is ready to make a strong debut. With Hall at the helm, Carnival 2025 just got a lot more exciting.

Much thanks from Klimaxx and team to main sponsors FLOW, Prime Distributors, and Het Cultuurfonds Caribisch Gebied for their support. Klimaxx also expresses appreciation to KFC, Fun Miles, Kooyman, Focus Forward, and Kerai Styles for supporting their debut.



CARNIVAL'S CROWN JEWEL RETURNS

Night of the Hitmakers is Back in the Village!

Flamboyant costumes. Smoky, sweet BBQ. Sipping strong drinks with your favourite people. Waist-shattering, irresistible riddims. As ubiquitous as these are to St. Maarten Carnival, there was also one show that could be mentioned in the same breath, a night that brought out the dancing shoes and anchored the island's biggest cultural event: Night of the Hitmakers. And it is back in the Village this year for its 12th edition.

Last year, the iconic show was one of several flagship events to be held outside of the main festival. This year, what has been dubbed "The Big, Local Show" has returned to its vaulted spot as a jewel at the centre of the Carnival crown.

Hitmakers' homecoming fills a void no other show could – literally. Promoter Bertaux "Mr. Rude" Fleming of Xtratight Entertainment said he had been contact-

ed by St. Maarten Carnival Development Foundation (SCDF) about bringing his staple show back to the village after another event had dropped off the Carnival schedule.

Fleming had planned to put on Hitmakers in Aleeeze Convention Center on May 2, and now that SCDF had an opening on the very same day, the veteran promoter and local entertainment figure thought it was "meant to be".

"It was meant to be for a few reasons. The first one is that we didn't have to change the date, we just changed the location," Fleming said.

With a bigger venue, Fleming set his sights on expanding the line-up, but the recipe remained the same. Add one part Antilles, one part Kompa, a generous portion of St. Maarten, and finish with a dash of "hype and pressure".

This is evident in the taste of the show to come. On stage will be Jeon, the sensation from Aruba, alongside Kompa musician Kai, St. Maarten's very own Control Band, and the legendary Burning Flames from Antigua and Barbuda.

Burning Flames – widely considered to be pioneers of Soca music with massive hits such as "Workey Workey", "Swinging Engine" and "If You Get What You Want" – is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year.

According to Fleming, to have them for this year's Hitmakers, also felt meant to be. "For me, that was perfect. To be able to celebrate such a milestone, it just was the icing on the cake," he said.

Fleming said he sees Hitmakers as more than just an event, but as a social and cultural gathering. It is a conversation that seamlessly blends all the voices of St.

Maarten's multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-musical melting pot.

"Being part of Carnival again, it definitely gives us great pleasure," he said. "People could definitely expect an exciting night, like every other Night of the Hitmakers."

Tickets cost US \$40 and are currently on sale at www.xtratight.com, as well as Aleeeze Box Office, Levi's Marigot, Adolphus Richardson Office Supplies, and Domino's Pizza (all locations). Starting on April 28, the price of a ticket will be \$50, and will be more at the door.

Doors open at 8:00pm, with the show starting at 9:00pm. Sponsors include TelEm, Winair, King Lottery, Heineken, and Simpson Bay Resort, Marina and Spa.





Caribbean Flag Fest, a true highlight of the Carnival slate along with Bacchanal Sunday, will once again be taking place in the Jocelyn Arndell Festival Village. Organisers are revving up to deliver an amazing and high-energy Bacchanal Weekend on May 3 and 4. The 2025 Flag Fest line-up includes hot artistes from across the region, and will be hosted by King Vers. Reppin the St. Maarten flag will be our very own King James, DJ Vybz and Deej Blaze, while regional artistes include Pantha Vibes International from Anguilla, Kollision Band from St. Kitts & Nevis, Vibe Band from Tortola, Tony Mix from Haiti, TK International (the event's flagship band) and Signal Band from Dominica, and Nadia Batson, Nailah Blackman and Mical Teja from Trinidad & Tobago.

Flag Fest will be a very high energy Fete like no other Carnival event or fete, with performances by some of our top leading Caribbean Power Soca and Jam Band musical bands, performers and artistes. They keep up the energy from the time they step on the stage, until they step off – this high and very intoxicated energy is consistent throughout the entire night.

This year will be the first time that Mical

Teja, Kollision Band and Signal Band perform at Flag Fest, and it will be the first time that Vibe Band performs on the island.

The type of music at Flag Fest is what truly sets the event apart: "When we started 10 years ago, the Carnival power / groovy soca music was no longer a part of the St. Maarten Carnival calendar. Promoters were more focused on R&B, Hip Hop, Latin, Zouk, Reggae, and Calypso. As we saw that the main ingredient of our Caribbean Carnival music and flavour was missing, that's where we decided to target and focus on the upbeat Carnival soca music genres throughout the Caribbean. As most Caribbean Carnivals have their own flavour of Carnival music, and we are promoting a Carnival event, here is where we meticulously choose performers that can deliver what we ask for, with Carnival lovers in mind," say the promoters.

Never been to a Flag Fest? What you must do for the ultimate experience is to first wear comfortable sneakers and clothing. Second, do bring your national flags and then third, do come prepared to fete like never before, from beginning to end!

The vibe at this particular show will be one like no other. It will be a very high energy

Come Celebrate Life at Caribbean Flag Fest

~ dress in your best creative flag wear ~

night of super great performances by some of our leading artistes around the Caribbean. They will engage you from the very first tune to the very last tune. It's one event, one Carnival night, one fete that you dare not miss out on for St. Maarten Carnival 2025.

Now in its 10th year, Caribbean Flag Fest has become one of Sint Maarten's leading Carnival Flagship shows / fetes. This is the event where every nation in the world is invited to come and display and fly their national flags high, proudly and freely.

Attendees are also invited and encouraged to display their flag in a creative way by means of a creative flag-wear outfit. There are prizes for the most creative flag-wear and the largest flag, as well as a few cash prizes for revelers who arrive between 6:00pm and 6:45pm.

When asked what they are looking forward to the most this year, organisers said: "To have another amazing Caribbean Flag Fest show and fete where all bands, DJs, artistes, performers, Carnival lovers, Caribbean flag fest supporters, fans, and first-comers have a most enjoyable night, waving their flags proudly in the air and leaving at the end of the night wanting more...for 2026!

We also asked organiser Fabiana Arnell about her favourite event highlights: "For me," she replied, "it's the same every year. 1: Seeing all of the various flags high in the air. 2: The creative flag outfits worn and displayed. 3: Everyone enjoying themselves at the event. And important is 4: When persons say at the end of the night and for many days and weeks after, that Caribbean Flag Fest was THE BEST show / event for Carnival this year! This is how to fete!"

Hosting the Bacchanal Weekend (Caribbean Flag Fest and Bacchanal Sunday) once again in the Carnival village is a win-win-win for SCDF, the Bacchanal Weekend Team, fans, and Carnival lovers.

Caribbean Flag Fest takes place in the Jocelyn Arndell Festival Village on Saturday, May 3, starting promptly at 7:00pm and ending at 3:00am. Attendees must be at least 15 years old. Tickets are available at Tech Hub, Levi's Boutique (Marigot only), XSM Promotionz, Picture This Studio, Caribbean Liquors, Kalaboom Headquarters (Ms. Lalie's Center Bush Road), and through the KBAND App.



Booth #62 'Blissful Bites'

As Carnival 2025 approaches, booth #62 'Blissful Bites' is ready to make its mark with a menu designed to satisfy cravings and offer a true indulgence experience. The booth's name, "Blissful Bites", captures what they're all about, evoking a sense of indulgence, comfort, and happiness," says booth holder Krizia Cannegieter, sharing that

they'll be serving up Loaded Fries, Spiral Potatoes, and Loaded Mac & Cheese, each generously topped with a variety of mouth-watering options.

"But that's not all," reveals Cannegieter. "We have a few delicious surprises in store to keep your taste buds excited!" And adding to the fun are their signature drinks, such as, "The Greatest Bend Ova," in tall keepsake lid cups, perfect for safe feting and especially useful during Jouvert, and the "F.Y.M." shot.

"What sets us apart at the Carnival Village is our commitment to bold flavours, creative toppings, and the ultimate comfort food experience," says Cannegieter. "Our Loaded Fries, Spiral Potatoes, and Loaded Mac & Cheese aren't just snacks; they're indulgent masterpieces, carefully crafted with high-quality ingredients and a unique twist on classic favourites."

Dishes can be customised with a variety of premium toppings, and exclusive surprise items that offer something new with each visit. Their toppings range from smoky meats to premium cheeses, fresh herbs, and fun, unexpected pairings. "We love experimenting, so expect some special limited-time toppings

and flavour combos, exclusive to the Carnival," Cannegieter says.

Joining the Carnival Village felt natural for Cannegieter and her team: "It's the heart of the celebration where great food, vibrant energy, and community spirit come together," she says. "There's nothing better than sharing our love for bold, flavourful, and indulgent eats with people who appreciate good food just as much as we do. Attendees can expect a flavour-packed experience at our booth this year!"

They're thrilled to bring something fresh and exciting to the table; and for their Carnival debut this year, they'll be rolling out special, limited-time items. "We'll have special toppings and unique flavour combinations that you won't find anywhere else. We're also offering exciting promotions, including bundle deals, surprise add-ons and maybe even a secret menu item for adventurous foodies!"

Quality is top priority: "Fresh, high-quality ingredients" form the base of every dish, all prepared on-site to ensure they're hot and satisfying. "We source only the best ingredients to guarantee every bite is flavourful and satisfying," says Cannegieter.



CARNIVAL CORNER

A fresh take on entertainment with Band Clash

Carnival Corner, a dynamic collective of five passionate young professionals, is quickly making waves in the local entertainment scene. What started as a vlog has blossomed into a multifaceted organization dedicated to providing unique and high-energy events for the community. While the name might suggest a focus on Carnival festivities, the group's reach extends far beyond that, with a commitment to creating memorable experiences across different genres and generations.

Though their signature "Fete is Fete" event has grown in popularity, Carnival Corner is shifting gears this year to bring something truly special to the Carnival calendar – Band Clash 2025. This high-octane event, presented in partnership with SCDF, promises an incredible night of competition and entertainment. But that's not all; the organization is also collaborating with Showtime Sounds and BeatBox by Caribbean Liquors for their Jouvert troupe, Wicked, which is already gaining buzz. Pre-orders for shirts are now available through their Facebook page, so be sure to grab yours while they last! In addition to their signature events, Carnival Corner runs community-focused initiatives, such as a school bag donation drive during the summer and has more surprises planned for later this year.

Band Clash 2025: A night of intense competition

Carnival Corner's involvement in Band Clash 2025 stems from a deep-rooted connection to local bands. As former participants themselves, the team understands both the thrill and the challenges of such a competitive environment. When they noticed issues with previous Band Clash events, they saw an opportunity to inject fresh energy into the experience. With

a solid understanding of the bands' needs and challenges, the Carnival Corner team approached SCDF with a proposal – and the rest, as they say, is history.

When asked what they're most excited about as organizers, the team's answer was clear: The competition itself. "From the first meeting, the bands came with incredible energy and determination," says Lavinia Marsham, President of Carnival Corner. "We know they'll bring their best to the stage, and we're excited to see them push boundaries and deliver a show that will leave everyone talking."

Expect the unexpected at Band Clash 2025

For those considering which Carnival event to attend, Band Clash 2025 should top the list. The night promises to be a thrilling experience, filled with high-level performances and intense energy. With seven of the region's top local bands battling it out, the performances will be nothing short of spectacular. The atmosphere will be electric, the energy palpable, and the talent undeniable.

What's more, the event's unpredictability is sure to keep things fresh. Unlike previous years, the order in which the bands perform won't be revealed until the night of the event. This new approach, along with changes to the logistical setup, will add a layer of excitement and spontaneity to the competition, ensuring that both the audience and the bands are kept on their toes.

What's new in 2025?

This year, the event organizers are shaking things up with a few key changes. One of the most significant adjustments is the new arrangement for the trucks, which, in past years, were positioned in the village. This often led to logistical issues, preventing bands from having proper sound checks and resulting in a rushed start to the show. To address

this, Band Clash 2025 will move everything to the stage, where the bands will be responsible for their own sound engineers. This puts the onus on the bands to ensure their sound is flawless, giving them more control over their performance.

Another exciting change is how the line-up will be revealed. Bands will need to be in the village by 7:30pm, but the order of appearances won't be announced until the show starts at 8:00pm. This unpredictability will heighten the excitement and make the competition even more intense.

The bands competing for glory

The competition will feature seven of the most talented local bands:

- 1: Xtream Band
- 2: ZTB
- 3: Remember the Times
- 4: DCG
- 5: Skillful Band
- 6: Strictly Vybes Band
- 7: The Official Band

Each band brings its unique flair to the table, and with Band Clash 2025 being such a coveted event, you can expect nothing less than fierce rivalry and top-notch performances.

What are the bands up against?

As always, Band Clash has a strict set of rules and judging criteria. For example, each band can have one regional member, but the rest must be local. Additionally, only local music is allowed in the competition – any outside music will result in a 30-point deduction. Profanity is also strictly prohibited during performances, ensuring that the event remains family-friendly.

The judging process will be transparent, with the criteria and point-system being posted on the Carnival Corner Facebook page ahead of

the event, so both bands and fans can get a sense of what the judges will be looking for.

What's in it for the winning band?

The stakes are high, and the rewards are even higher. The winning band will walk away with a trophy, a coveted belt, and \$3,000 in cash. The first runner-up will receive \$1,500, while the winner of the Band-O-Rama competition will also take home \$3,000. Every band will receive a participation trophy as a token of appreciation for their contribution to the event.

Practical information for attendees

Band Clash 2025 is happening on April 24, with the show starting promptly at 8:00pm. The event will be held at the Jocelyn Arndell Festival Village, and tickets will be available for \$20 at the gate. It's strongly encouraged to arrive on time so you don't miss a single moment of the action.

A night to remember

The Carnival Corner team is incredibly grateful to SCDF for allowing them to organize Band Clash 2025, and they would like to extend their thanks to sponsors Penha, Fontink, and MCW Studios for their support. Additionally, a special shout out goes to the seven talented bands that will be gracing the stage and making this event truly spectacular.

"Let's make Band Clash 2025 a night to remember," says Lavinia. "We're excited to see how the event evolves, and we can't wait to set the stage for an even bigger and better Band Clash in 2026!"

For more information and updates, be sure to follow Carnival Corner on Facebook. See you at Band Clash 2025!

brings indulgent comfort food to Carnival Village

Blissful Bites uses special frying techniques to make potatoes crispy on the outside and fluffy inside, while the Mac & Cheese stays creamy and indulgent.

Food vendors like Blissful Bites help shape the Carnival experience. "Food vendors are the heartbeat of the Carnival – we bring the flavours, energy, and excitement that make the experience unforgettable. Our booths also add to the visual and sensory experience and the joy of biting into something truly indulgent. A great Carnival isn't complete without delicious, indulgent treats that fuel the fun, bring people together, and add to the overall joy of the event."

To manage the expected crowds, Blissful Bites is ready: "We've prepared for high traffic and maintained a focus on efficiency, quality, and customer satisfaction. With experienced staff, prepped & ready ingredients, and flexible menu options, we're confident we can deliver an amazing food experience even with the large crowds!"

"What I love most about being part of the Carnival is the energy and excitement that come with serving such a diverse group of people," says Cannegieter. "It's a celebra-

tion of cultures, backgrounds, and shared moments, and food plays such a vital role in that. There's something truly special about seeing people of all ages, from all walks of life, come together to enjoy a delicious bite, try something new, and bond over a shared love of good food."

Blissful Bites will be walk-up only: "We want everyone to experience the excitement of choosing their favourite treats right on the spot!" Cannegieter says. "Come by, place your order, and enjoy the fresh, hot food, refreshing drinks and delicious desserts that we've prepared just for you!"

As for her hopes for Carnival, Cannegieter says, "Our hopes for this year's Carnival are to create unforgettable experiences for everyone who visits our booth, from the first bite to the last laugh. We want to bring joy and excitement through our food and drinks, spark new connections, and make memories that people will carry with them long after the end of Carnival."

For Cannegieter, food vendors like Blissful Bites play a crucial role in making the event memorable: "Vendors like us bring variety and excitement to the table, offering at-

tendees the chance to indulge in comforting favourites and discover new and familiar flavours they won't find anywhere else. Food vendors help to elevate the Carnival experience, making it more than just entertainment – it's about connecting with others and creating lasting memories."





Luis Vargas

Continued from page 3

'IT'S GOING TO BE HOT, HOT!'

Noche Latina promises fire, flavour, and fiesta at Carnival 2025

Putting the show together takes months of effort, passion, and pressure. "A lot of back and forward, stress, happiness and satisfaction when you see people singing along with the artistes," Milagros explained. "Well, it doesn't look long, but finding the right artiste and the negotiation, setting the budget is hard and long." The team listens to the people, selecting performers based on what's hot or what's about to be.

While the main acts are international headliners, local DJs are also part of the celebration, bringing home-grown vibes to the mix.

So, what's new this year? Expect "a lot of giveaways; great music, nice ambience," Milagros said – and more than anything, inspiration: "Motivation to keep dreaming and work

hard for their dreams." That's the hope Milagros has for every person attending, especially when they see someone like Yailin: "Everyone has seen her grow and overcome countless difficulties – marriage, physical and verbal abuse – she keeps moving forward."

Tickets are flying fast and can be found at Oasis Restaurant, Tu y YO Restaurant, La Bomba Snack, Booths 30 & 31 at Carnival Village, RD Barbershop in Sandy Ground, Ria Money Transfer (next to Forum), and Power by Victor in Anguilla.

And if you've never been to Noche Latina before, Milagros has one final message:

"It is going to be hot, hot so please come experience it and you will never stop coming again."

ria Money Transfer

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