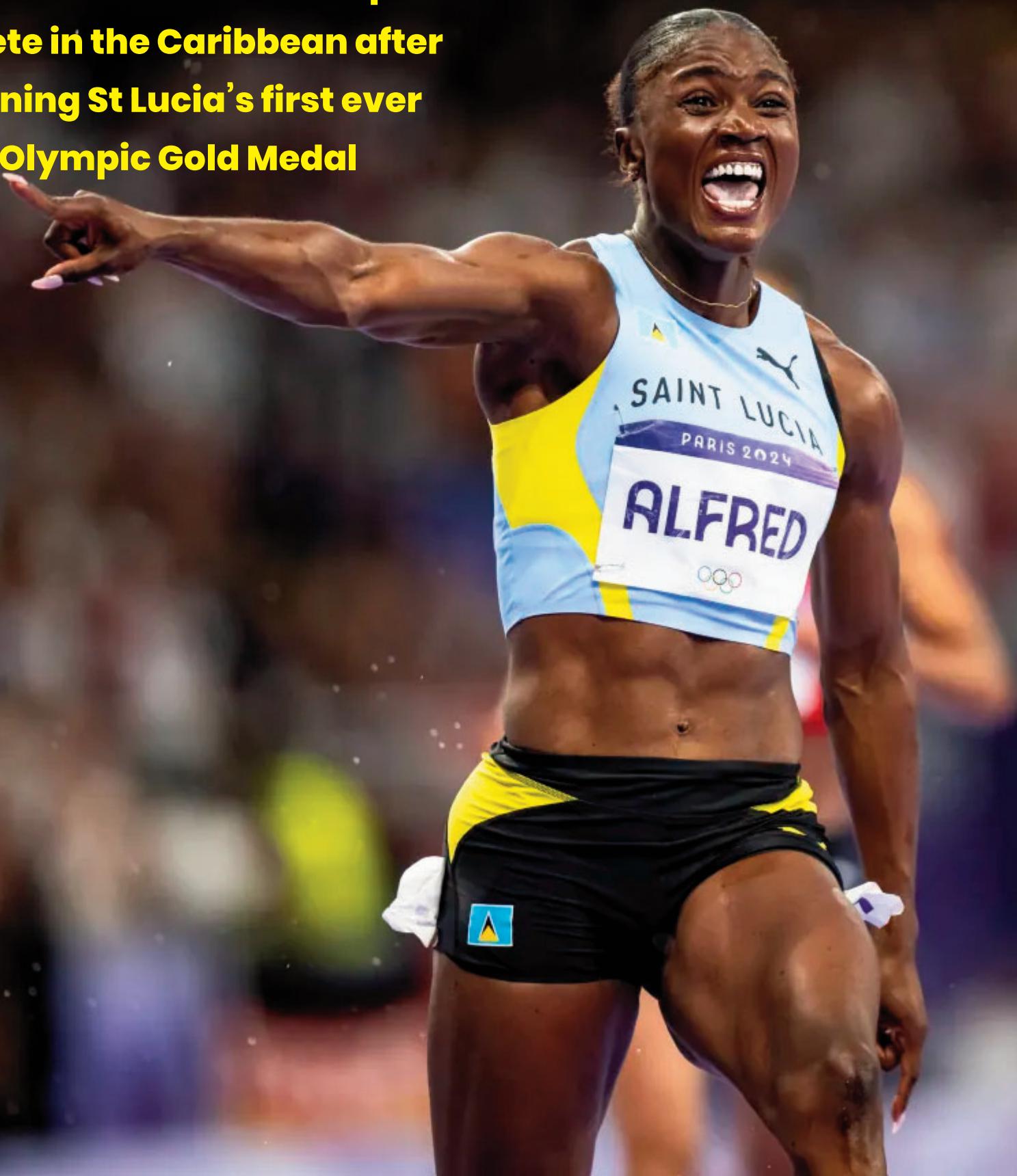




COCOA TEA SWEET
2025 release from Kes the
Band is blazing across
global music charts

ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

**Julien Alfred named top
athlete in the Caribbean after
winning St Lucia's first ever
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Cocoa Tea Sweet

Kes' 2025 release is blazing across music charts around the globe

Kes' (Kees Diefenthaller) 2025 Carnival release, "Cocoa Tea", is sweetening music charts across the globe.

The band's first release for Carnival 2025, "Cocoa Tea" has topped the US iTunes Reggae chart and several streaming platforms, charts and playlists in countries all around the region, in the UK and the USA.

Written by Kes, hit-making producer Michael "Tano" Montano and reigning Trinidad and Tobago Road March King/songwriter Mical Teja (Mical Williams), the song was released on November 15, just before the Kes The Band (KTB) brothers from South Trinidad embarked on their third annual US East Coast tour. The track features backing vocals from Tano, rising star Denzil "Coutain" and former national calypso monarch (2020) Terri Lyons.

As the tour rocked packed venues in Montreal, Canada; and Boston, Massachusetts; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Silver Springs, Maryland; Norfolk, Virginia; Raleigh, North Carolina; and Atlanta, Georgia, in the US, from November 24 to December 5, the lyric video for the song on the band's YouTube channel skyrocketed to one million views in the first two weeks as the song got added to thousands of streaming playlists.

Giving thanks to fans, Kes recalled a time when KTB music was not a household name across the diaspora, back when the band struggled to even get airplay in its home base.

The band will celebrate its 20th anniversary at its annual Carnival Festival Experience, entitled IZWE 2025, scheduled for Tuesday, February 25, at the Queen's Park Savannah, Port of Spain.

"Real views!" Kes exclaimed. "Yuh know ah remember de days when we used to get a lotta trouble to get even airplay, so I give thanks for the day to see this. Thank you for the support, thank you for the love of the song and, yo, this is the mission: we spreading this to the world, thank you very much!"

On Sunday night, Ineffable Records president Adam Gross posted an update detailing statistics showing the song's mainstream appeal and interest growing rapidly in less than a month and without an official music video.

"Cocoa Tea" came out three weeks ago and



Kes: his new songs has over 61 million views on Tik Tok

the numbers that it is doing are unprecedented for any soca record and are the best numbers any Kes song has ever done out the gate, as it looks to hopefully be the biggest Kes record of all time!" Gross enthused.

Gross detailed the most recent analytics for the track: "The song has three million plays, including three million on YouTube, over 400,000 on Spotify and almost 500,000 on Apple music. On YouTube, it is still doing over 125,000 plays a day without an official music video. It's number three on Toronto's local pulse Spotify chart and sits at the top of Shazam charts in 20 different places."

Gross said the success of the song is a tes-

tament to the work ethic of Kes The Band and the organic followings it has built in several Caribbean territories. Those stats come as little surprise as the song is on everyone and their mother's playlists and social media feeds.

"'Cocoa Tea' is currently number one in Trinidad, Guyana, Antigua, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Grenada, the British Virgin Islands, Dominica and Anguilla; among several other countries, it's in the top ten streamed songs as well," he shared. "The song is going viral on TikTok where it has been used in 66,000 different videos, including 32,000 using the original sound. All of that together bringing in 61 million views on TikTok."

Sticking to your New Year Resolutions

The start of a new year often brings with it the excitement of fresh starts and new resolutions. Many of us promise ourselves that this year will be different yet again, we will be healthier, more productive, or more connected yet again. We commit to making big changes and setting ambitious goals. But how do we ensure that these resolutions actually stick? How do we move from intention to action and keep our momentum going?

The truth is, resolutions can often fade as the months go by, and many people struggle to follow through due to the lack of motivation and maybe confidence as well. It is easy to get caught up in the excitement of a new beginning but challenging to maintain that energy over time. However, I will say that making lasting change is possible. It all starts with the right mindset and strategies. The key to success is not in making grand gestures but in taking consistent, small steps. Progress is made over time, and it is the little daily actions that add up to big results often refer to a baby steps.

One of the first steps in sticking to your resolution is to break your goals down into smaller, manageable steps. Big goals can feel overwhelming, we often refer to it as chunked up, especially when you look at them from a distance. The journey to transformation might seem daunting and almost impossible, however it does not have to be. Instead of focusing on the end result, concentrate on the small actions you can take each day. For example, if your goal is to get healthier, start by adding an extra glass of warm water each day in the morning and the last before bed-time or committing to a short walk after lunch. These small actions may seem insignificant, but over time they will compound and lead to meaningful change.

Another helpful trick to keep you going is to surround yourself with accountability. Find someone, whether a friend, family member, or mentor, who is willing to check in with you. You can share your goals and make a pact to encourage each other through the process. Having someone to share your progress with, or even someone to share the struggles and daily challenges with, can make a huge difference. When

someone else knows what you are working toward, it adds that extra layer of motivation and boost. It is easier to follow through when you know someone is rooting for you and you for them. Accountability also provides a sense of responsibility. It is easy to let yourself off the hook and slack off, but when you have someone checking in, you are more likely to stay on track.

And here is a big one: be kind to yourself, be loving to yourself. We are often our harshest critics and we tend to bring ourselves down because we are conditioned that way from our growing up days. We make one mistake, skip one day, and then suddenly feel like the whole thing is ruined. But here is the thing: life happens. You may miss a workout, miss a deadline, or have a bad week. But that does not mean you are done for. A setback is not failure. A setback is just a chance to get back on track. Remember that every day is a fresh start, and one bad moment does not define your entire journey and focus. When you let go of perfection, you give yourself the freedom to keep going, no matter what like the little engine that could, I think I can, I think I can, I KNOW I can and did. So, if you slip up, forgive yourself and get right back on track. That is what will make the difference in the long run.

If you find yourself getting discouraged or stuck, take a moment to reflect on the what you have achieved so far. What small steps have you already taken? What changes have you noticed? It is easy to get caught up in the big picture and forget to celebrate the tiny wins along the way. But those tiny wins are the real progress. They are the steps that add up to something great. The small things are often the hardest to notice, but they are the building blocks and foundation of our very success. When you reflect on these wins, it will remind you that progress is happening, even if it feels slow at times. And when you celebrate the small victories, you set yourself up for more success in the future.

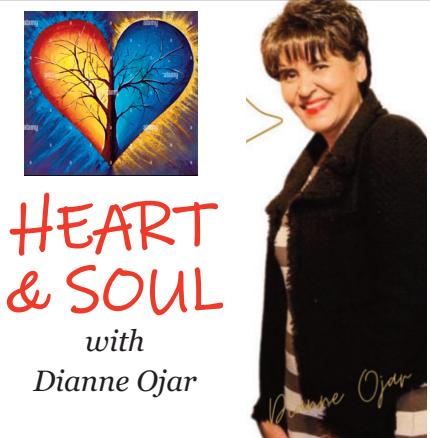
Another common pitfall is expecting too much too soon. If you set unrealistic expectations for yourself, you are setting yourself up for disappointment. Simply put it you have very high expectations of

anything or anyone then you may be setting yourself up for big disappointments. Big goals are wonderful, but they are usually a collection of small steps that happen over time. Change does not happen overnight. So, if your resolution is to be healthier, more productive, or more connected, give yourself permission to be a beginner. It is okay not to have it all figured out right now. You are allowed to take things one step at a time, remember the baby steps. You are allowed to take breaks, make mistakes, and still move forward and also a reminder is not mistakes but lessons learned. Perfection is not the goal. Growth is.

One important thing to remember is that your resolution is not just a to-do list; it is a reflection of the person you want to become. It is not about checking off boxes or meeting deadlines. It is about becoming the kind of person who embraces change, who shows up consistently, and who is willing to put in the work, even when it is hard. It is about growing into your best self, one small step at a time.

It is also helpful to create a routine or schedule that supports your goals. It is easy to say that you want to be more productive or exercise more, but without a clear plan, it can be hard to make it happen. Set aside time each day or week to focus on your resolution. Make it a part of your daily routine, just like brushing your teeth or eating lunch. When something becomes a habit, it requires less effort to maintain. So, if your goal is to exercise more, schedule your workouts just like any other important meeting. If your goal is to read more books, set aside time every day to read. The key is consistency. It may take a while for the habit to form, but once it does, it becomes much easier to stick with it.

Additionally, find ways to track your progress. Keeping track of how far you have come can serve as a huge motivator. There are many tools and apps available to help you monitor your progress, whether it is a fitness tracker, a journal, or a simple checklist. Tracking helps you stay accountable and see how far you have come, which can be incredibly encouraging. When you look back and see the small steps



HEART & SOUL

with
Dianne Ojar

you have taken, it will remind you that you are making progress, even if it feels slow.

Having a growth mindset is also crucial. A growth mindset, a willingness to be open means embracing challenges and viewing them as opportunities to learn, rather than obstacles to success. It means seeing failure as feedback, not as a sign that you should give up. When you adopt a growth mindset, you are more likely to surf through difficult times. You begin to see the value in the journey, rather than just focusing on the destination. Embrace the process of becoming the person you want to be, and understand that setbacks are a natural part of that process.

And let us not forget about the power of self-reflection. Take time each week or month to check in with yourself and assess your progress. Are you staying on track? Are there any adjustments you need to make? Self-reflection allows you to course-correct and adjust your approach if necessary. It is a chance to celebrate how far you have come and refocus on what lies ahead. It is also a great opportunity to practice gratitude. When you reflect on your progress, take a moment to appreciate how much you have already achieved. Grab your journal and jot down everything.

Lastly, remember that you are not alone. Everyone faces challenges when working toward their goals. There will be times when things get tough, and you might feel like giving up. But keep going. Trust the process. Believe in yourself. Change is hard, but it is possible. You are capable of achieving what you set your mind to. And even when the road gets rough, remember that every small step counts. Each day, each action, each decision brings you closer to your goal.

For further details or to start your transformative journey, reach out to Dianne at info@TheExperientialCoach.com. Visit www.MasterYourShiftsHypnosis.com and let Heart & Soul help you unlock your potential and achieve your ultimate breakthrough experience. We look forward to connecting with you!

THE BLUE-EYED BHOWGIE

New book takes deep look into the life of Guyana's Janet Jagan

Courtesy Prof Emerita Bridget Brereton

The first full-length biography of Janet Jagan, by my long-time UWI colleague Patricia Mohammed, has just been published by Ian Randle Publishers. She was born and grew up in Chicago, and first came to the then British Guiana in 1943, in her early twenties, as the new bride of Cheddi Jagan. What followed was a lifetime of deep and significant involvement in Guyana's political, social and cultural life, right up to her death in 2009 at the age of 86.

This is a long (533 pages) and deeply researched biography. Mohammed notes that the accessible sources for writing Janet's life are plentiful, with a huge cache of material at the Cheddi Jagan Research Centre in Georgetown (partly due to the diligent archival work of her daughter Nadira). Mohammed values oral sources and conducted many interviews, as well as using interviews conducted by others, notably Guyanese/Canadian academic Frank Birbalsingh. Both Cheddi and Janet wrote hundreds of articles, and some of her diaries are accessible. In addition, many publications about Janet, in books, newspapers and magazines—local, regional and international—are available.

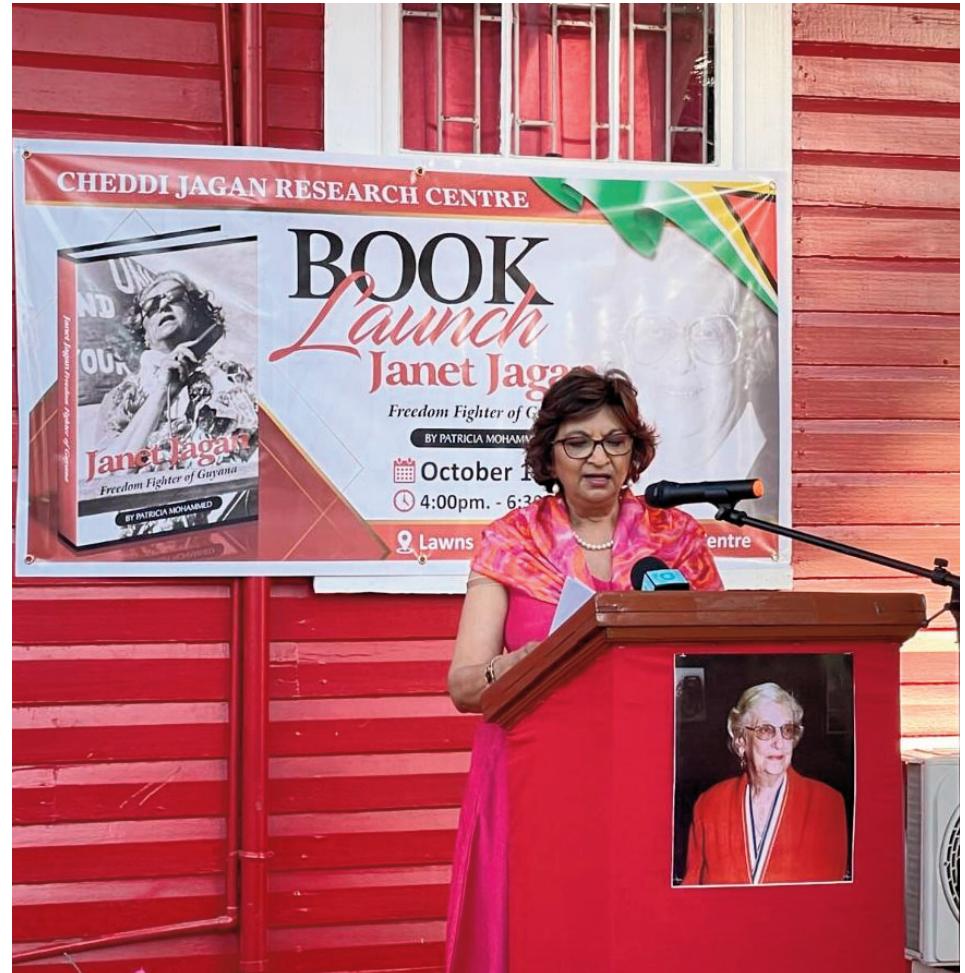
Mohammed acknowledges the challenges in writing about a person "still much alive in the minds of those who knew her personally, and who are committed to preserving her legacy". Her aim was "to represent the multi-dimensional aspects of a complex character that emerges from different sources". In this she certainly succeeds—though I did think it could have been more sharply focused in some places (and a bit shorter!).

Some of the 15 chapters narrate Janet's life on a chronological sequence, the conventional form for a biography, while others focus on particular themes in her work and character. The first two explore Janet's childhood, education and young adulthood in Chicago and Detroit from 1920, the year of her birth, to 1943, when she left to join her new husband. Mohammed probes the significance of her American Jewish ethnicity; her family was completely secular, and organised religion was never significant to Janet (or to Cheddi, though his family was Hindu). In 1943, she met Cheddi, who in his seven years in the US had acquired both a BSc and a DDS (Doctor of Dental Surgery). They soon got married, and she abandoned her nursing training to join him in British Guiana at the end of the same year.

Chapter 5 offers a probing and sympathetic analysis of the creation of a unique political partnership between the husband and wife. Mohammed admits that it is nearly impossible to separate Cheddi and Janet's work and impact, but aims to give her the centre of the stage, though she never sought out leading, public roles in the organisations they founded and led.

She rejects the common idea that Janet pushed Cheddi into a dogmatic kind of Marxism, which demonised her and undermined his "masculinity" as a man under his wife's thumb. Both were deeply attracted to left-wing ideas as young, idealistic persons growing up in the 1930s and early 1940s; they shared political views from the start of their life together. What Janet contributed, as everyone seems to agree, was an iron discipline and brilliant organisational skills necessary to build their political movement. They supported each other and needed each other's strengths; but Janet always preferred Cheddi to be the one in the public eye and never sought the limelight for herself.

Several chapters (6, 7, 9, 14 and 15) narrate the story of Janet's role in the founding of the People's Progressive Party (PPP) in 1950, her election to the legislature in 1953 as one of the first three Guyanese women to achieve this, the British suspension of the constitution in that year, Janet's time in jail for calling a meeting illegally, and her work in the PPP government of 1957 to 1964—including during the tragic strikes, riots and racial mayhem (1962-64) instigated by the CIA to destabilise the PPP and remove Cheddi from power.



Author Patricia Mohammed at the book launch

After the PPP was defeated at the end of 1964, the party endured 28 years in opposition. The sources agree that Janet was crucial in keeping it together, continuing its work and propaganda, and avoiding the kinds of splits so common in left-wing parties. The last two chapters chronicle the PPP's return to power in 1992, with Cheddi as President, his death in 1997, and then Janet's reluctant (and ill advised?) agreement to stand as President when the PPP won the election in that year. She became the first female President of Guyana and served for 20 months, resigning in August 1999 because of ill health.

In between the narrative chapters are ones which deal with particular themes. Chapter 8 examines Janet's important role as an activist for women's rights and welfare, though she never described herself as a feminist. She co-founded the Women's Political and Economic Organisation in 1946, an important body which began the organised movement for women's rights and full political participation in Guyana. Perhaps sadly, it soon faded, and morphed into the Women's Progressive Organisation as the female arm of the PPP, losing its independence. But for all her life, Janet worked to empower women and girls, especially rural ones, and to bring them into the party.

Three chapters (11, 12 and 13) pick up other aspects of Janet's life, for she was far from being a one-dimensional political person. Her character, family life and interaction with her adopted country are examined in 11, titled 'The blue-eyed Bhowgie of Guyana'—the affectionate but respectful title she won as Cheddi's wife. And 12 and 13 show how writing, journalism, and reading were central to Janet's life. She wrote hundreds of articles for the PPP's journals and edited them for long periods; she mentored journalists; she wrote poetry and children's stories; and she was a noted patron of the arts and literature in Guyana.

A multi-dimensional character who lived a remarkable life, Janet Jagan has been well served in this long but absorbing biography.



Court drawing shows Diddy's severe weight loss

PRISON DIE-T?

Speculation abounds over Diddy's massive weight loss behind bars

Diddy continues to lose weight in prison, and a prison expert is breaking down his reasons for what is happening.

A news reporter recently commented on Diddy's massive weight loss following his court hearing earlier this week, prompting a discussion online and leaving some of his supporters concerned about his health. The reporters say the Bad Boy Records mogul looked "astonishingly thinner" in court. Law & Crime Network reporter Elizabeth Millner says Sean 'Diddy' Combs has undergone significant changes in his physical appearance since his incarceration.

She says that Combs' weight loss isn't the only change in his appearance. He also appears to have gone a bit grayer. "From that video that was obtained by Daily Mail back in September of Diddy playing hacky sack in Central Park 'til

now, he appeared astonishingly thinner, which you can expect to be inside a federal detention center for a couple months now," Millner reported. "A lot different from the luxury lifestyle he was living before. But he appeared very noticeably thinner." She added, "He appeared grayer a little bit, too."

Diddy is housed at the Metropolitan Detention Center, MDC, in Brooklyn. The facility is famous for housing high-profile inmates like celebrities and wealthy individuals due to its security. Millner stated that the billionaire mogul's legal troubles and incarceration may be starting to weigh heavily on him.

Prison expert Larry Levine appeared on the DailyMail.com's "The Trial of Diddy" podcast, where he shared his theory about why Diddy could be losing so much weight in prison, telling listeners that it might be much

more than the legal aspects of his troubles that are affecting his health. Levine explains that Diddy could be deliberately refusing meals due to fear of his food containing poison.

"People want to kill him," Levine said. "What if someone on the outside has a connection inside the prison? They could contaminate his food, poisoning him over time."

Diddy's attorneys have dismissed reports that he is not eating behind bars and moved to calm speculations about his weight loss. This isn't the first time that Levine has alleged that the rap mogul's life could be in danger while incarcerated. He first spoke on the topic in September in an interview with News Nation, where he alleged that Diddy might have dirt on a lot of powerful people who may be trying to take him out.

St Lucia Sprint Queen named Caribbean Athlete of the Year

St. Lucia's sprint queen Julien Alfred has bagged yet another distinguished award as she was named the Athletics Weekly (AW) International Female Athlete of the Year for 2024.

Alfred, who won St. Lucia's first-ever Olympic medals at the 2024 Paris Olympics when she succeeded in winning gold in the women's 100 meters and silver in the 200 meters, beat out several other nominees, including Belgium's Nafi Thiam, the Netherlands' Sifan Hassan, Kenya's trio of Ruth Chepnetich, Faith Kipyego, and Beatrice Chebet, the USA's Gabby Thomas and Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone, and Ukraine's Yaroslava Mahuchikh.

Alfred, 23, had a spectacular year. She also won gold in the 60 meters at the World Indoor Championships and the 100-meter title at the Wanda Diamond League.

At last month's Caribbean Association of National Olympic Committees (CANOC) Sports Awards, Alfred took home the Caribbean Female Sports Personality of the Year and the Caribbean Break-through Award, which she shared with Dominica's Olympic gold medallist Thea LaFond.

She is also a finalist for the World Athletics Track Athlete of the Year, along with McLaughlin-Levrone.

Athletes Weekly is the number one website, magazine, and social media hub in the United Kingdom for road racing, track and field, cross country, walks, trail running, fell running, mountain running, and ultra running.

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A Conspiracy

Ray J insists case against Diddy is nothing but a plot

Ray J has varied opinions on Diddy's allegations and federal case.

The R&B singer previously came under fire for his comments about Sean 'Diddy' Combs and other unnamed celebrities he alleged are engaging in similar things that the rap mogul has been accused of. After being called out by celebrities like Nicki Minaj and 50 Cent, Ray J walked back his statement and issued an apology. This doesn't mean that he is done commenting on the saga.

Ray J and Lil Woody recently chimed in for an interview on YouTuber Lah Mike's 20 Versus series, where the former Love and Hip Hop star shared his opinion on the downfall of the rap mogul, who is facing numerous civil cases and a federal racketeering and sex trafficking case. It's safe to say that Diddy's legal team is under severe pressure to keep up with the demands he is facing in the justice system.

However, the "One Wish" singer says there is a conspiracy against the billionaire. "Listen, I've been to a lot of Diddy parties, and ain't none of them had no dirty sh*t happening at them," the singer said. "All this happening with Diddy is a conspiracy y'all."

Ray J added that until now, the stories are mere allegations with no real evidence against the Bad Boy Records founder. "It's all about he say, she say," the reality TV star added. "So I say this, as we narrow it down to what's what and what's not, I've said sh--, people have said sh*t, but when you really think about it, there's no facts to none of this sh--. So what we thinking about now is they tearing down the community, bro. Creating false narratives for sh-- that never happened dog."

This is a strikingly different statement from the previous statements that Ray J made on the matter, leaving some fans to speculate if he got checked by someone or if the recent alleged death threats scared him into changing his narrative. The singer recently alleges that he has been getting threats and even had his car vandalized. His revelation came amid his appearances on TMZ's new documentary The Downfall of



Ray J and Diddy in happier times

Diddy: Inside the Freak-Offs, streaming on Tubi, where he alleges that other celebrities are asking him to keep quiet about their alleged involve-

ment in the legendary parties. He also stated that celebrities are paying off alleged victims to keep quiet.



Island Records founder Chris Blackwell (r) signed, among others, Bob Marley and the Wailers

LABEL OF THE YEAR

Jamaica's Island Records tops Rolling Stone's awards

Island Records was honored as Record Label of the Year at the second annual Rolling Stone UK Awards on at the end of 2024.

The event, held at the Roundhouse in Camden, celebrated achievements across music, film, and entertainment, with Island Records standing out among contenders like Sony Music, XL Recordings, Communion Music, Ninja Tune, and Domino.

Louis Bloom, Island Records' UK President, accepted the award, emphasizing the label's commitment to fostering groundbreaking talent. "Our mission is to sign true visionaries with exceptional talent," Bloom said in his acceptance speech.

Founded in 1958 by Chris Blackwell in Jamaica, Island Records has a storied legacy that includes pioneering reggae music and broadening its catalog to include rock, pop, and alternative genres.

Island Records introduced the world at large to Bob Marley and reggae music. Artists such as Toots and the Maytals, Burning Spear, Third World, and Black Uhuru not only added a multicultural component to pop music but also had a lasting influence on Island Records labelmates and recording artists worldwide. Blackwell was also the first major label executive to expose African musicians, including King Sunny Ade, to a wider audience.

A video tribute featured a heartfelt message from Chris Black-

well himself, celebrating the label's enduring success. "It's been 65 years since I started Island Records, and it is still going strong," Blackwell said. "Louis, Steve, and the Island Records family... congratulations. I can't tell you just how happy and proud I am of you all for keeping Island Records alive. Thank you. One Love."

Cedella Marley, daughter of reggae legend Bob Marley and mother of Skip Marley, also appeared in the video to express her gratitude and connection to the label. "Island has always been very close and strong to our hearts, and as we look ahead to daddy's 80th earthstrong next year, it's great to know that the label is still all about true artistes and great music," Cedella said, signing off with a message of unity and love.

Island Records' legacy includes not only shaping the global reggae scene but also supporting a diverse array of artistes and genres. Today, the label continues to thrive on both sides of the Atlantic, nurturing fresh talent while staying true to its roots of innovation and artistry.

The Rolling Stone UK Awards featured 14 categories recognizing excellence in music, film, and entertainment, making Island's win a testament to its ongoing cultural significance.



The Best Used Cars

Consumer Reports named its best in after-market buys

Given the turbulent economy over the past five years, finding a car that lasts longer than 200,000 miles isn't a matter of pride — it's a financial planning near-necessity. Thankfully, cars last much longer today than they did years ago, but that doesn't mean that some used cars don't outperform new models.

As Forbes noted, cars from 1970 averaged about 5.7 years and were grounded near the 100,000-mile mark. Today, the average passenger car age is around 12.5 years in the U.S., and many vehicles can last between 200,000 and 300,000 miles. That's if they've been regularly maintained throughout their lifespan.

According to Consumer Reports (CR), "Almost any car can make it to 200,000 miles and beyond if you spend enough money on it. The better strategy is to start with a model that has proven to be safe, scored high in our road tests, has a strong reliability track record, and has been properly maintained."

If that's true, why do only 1% of cars built yearly pass the 200,000-mile mark? Certainly, most vehicles die before reaching 200,000 miles because their owners don't follow maintenance schedules, but some used models are built to last.

CR recently came out with a list of the 12 most problem-free new cars, minivans, pickup trucks and SUVs most likely to ride past 200,000 miles. Except for the Ford F-150, every entry was a Toyota or Honda.

Here are 10 models that may outlast the average new vehicle, ranked by their highest mileage-achieving cars.

Toyota Sequoia

Potential Lifespan: 296,509 miles

Wherever you look, you'll find Toyota dominating its reliability rankings. Surprisingly, the Sequoia ranks 1st in iSeeCars' rankings and is a good bet to exceed 300,000 miles on the odometer.

Toyota Land Cruiser

Potential Lifespan: 280,236 miles

300,000 miles is a lot for any car, but the Land Cruiser is known for its durability, and getting a used model with 1000,000 to 200,000 miles on it shouldn't discourage any potential buyer from buying one.

Chevrolet Suburban

With the potential of lasting over 265,000 miles, the Suburban is one of the longest-lasting SUVs, more dependable than its rivals the Ford



Toyota Sequoia has been named the best used car on the market

Expedition, Dodge Durango and Jeep Wagoneer.

Toyota Tundra

Potential Lifespan: 256,022 miles

Trucks subjected to heavy use are likely to have structural or mechanical problems when they reach high odometer readings, but this consistently good seller for Toyota enjoys a well-deserved reputation for reliability and durability and can rack upward of 250,000 miles easily.

GMC Yukon XL

Potential Lifespan: 252,360 miles

Ranking fifth overall in iSeeCars' rankings of the top cars offering the greatest potential lifespan, the Yukon XL can easily last two decades.

Toyota Prius

Potential Lifespan: 250,601 miles

When will people learn? Economical and reliable, the Prius is simply the best compact car on the market and its batteries are "almost invincible," per MotorBiscuit.

Chevrolet Tahoe

Potential Lifespan: 250,338 miles

RepairPal doesn't rank the Tahoe particularly high in reliability and repair probability (21st out of 26 for midsize SUVs), but the Chevrolet Tahoe is a mileage eater that will outlast many of its competitors in lifetime miles.

Honda Ridgeline

Potential Lifespan: 248,669 miles

"For those who want the practicality of a truck and the performance of a car," a Ridgeline

should last up to 300,000 miles with cautious driving and regular maintenance, per HotCars.

Toyota Avalon

Potential Lifespan: 245,710 miles

Toyota Highlander Hybrid

Potential Lifespan: 244,994 miles



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No Comment

Vybz Kartel declines to say anything on controversy over his T&T appearance

Jamaican dancehall superstar Vybz Kartel has declined to comment on the controversy surrounding his potential performance in Trinidad and Tobago during the upcoming Carnival season.

Instead, the artiste, whose real name is Adidja Palmer, chose to focus on promoting his new rum brand, STR8 VYBZ, during its official Trinidad and Tobago launch at the Angostura Solera Wine and Spirits Retail Store in Port-of-Spain.

Speculation about Kartel performing during Carnival erupted last month after a social media post hinted he was slated to perform on Carnival Friday, sparking a heated debate about its impact on local soca artistes.

The controversy intensified when soca artiste Kevon "Yankey Boy" Heath staged a hunger strike in protest of the news.

Speaking at the event, Kartel sidestepped questions about the performance rumors, saying, "I love Carnival. As a matter of fact, remember Jamaica Carnival is huge," before briefly singing Destra and Machel Montano's 2003 hit It's Carnival. He added, "We love Carnival, but I cannot speak to that right now because we are just promoting STR8 VYBZ to the Trinidad people, to the Caribbean people, because this is a Caribbean effort. It's a joint collaboration between Jamaica and Trinidad."

Kartel hailed Trinidad and Tobago as his second home, emphasizing the significance of launching STR8 VYBZ in the country as its first market outside Jamaica. Angostura has been unveiled as the official co-packer and master distributor for the rum, which was first launched in Jamaica on November 5. The company aims to expand the brand's reach internationally.

Since his release from prison earlier this



Vybz Kartel is no stranger to Trinidad Carnival

year, Kartel's return to the music stage has been highly anticipated. While he confirmed plans to perform in Jamaica on New Year's Eve, he has yet to announce details of any Trinidad Carnival appearance.

Kartel, no stranger to Trinidad Carnival, previously performed during the season at Licensing Fete in 2010 and has collaborated with top soca artistes, including Machel Montano, Bunji Garlin, and KMC.

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GLAMOUR GIRL

Jamaica's first Miss World Carole Joan Crawford has died

Carole Joan Crawford, the first Jamaican and Caribbean woman to win the prestigious Miss World title, passed away on December 18 at the age of 81.

Crawford made history in 1963 when, at just 20 years old, she was crowned Miss World, becoming a trailblazer for the region.

Standing at 5'3" (1.59 meters), Crawford defied the height norms of beauty pageants at the time. During the competition, held in London, she wore a specially designed high-neck swimsuit to enhance her stature, a testament to her adaptability and determination. Her victory marked a groundbreaking moment, as she became the first delegate from Jamaica and the Caribbean to secure the title.

Her historic win was celebrated with grandeur upon her return to Jamaica. "The reception when I returned was simply fantastic," Crawford recalled in an earlier interview. "The airport was filled with people welcoming me. The Government had issued millions of commemorative stamps with my picture in my swimsuit on it. There were receptions with Sir Alexander Bustamante and Governor General Sir Clifford Campbell and his wife. I was presented with the gold key to the city of Kingston."

Prime Minister Andrew Holness honored Crawford's memory in a statement, calling her a "true Jamaican trailblazer." He said, "Carole's victory at just 20 years old not only shattered stereotypes but also brought immense pride to our nation, showcasing Jamaica's beauty and talent to the world. Her legacy is one of resilience and inspiration, reminding us that greatness knows no boundaries."

Crawford's win in 1963 and the celebrations that followed, including the issuance of commemorative stamps by Jamaica Post, remain etched in the nation's history as a moment of pride and cultural significance. Her passing marks the end of an era, but her influence and contributions to Jamaica's global recognition will continue to inspire.



Carol Jean Crawford after being crowned Miss World in 1963, being the first woman from the Caribbean region to win the title



No longer Royal

King Charles III revokes 112 year-old warrant held by Angostura Bitters

ANGOSTURA Ltd, the renowned producer of Angostura aromatic bitters, has had its Royal Warrant withdrawn by King Charles III, ending a long-standing relationship that lasted 112 years. The decision was part of a broader announcement made in December by the Royal Warrant Holders Association, which revealed the new Royal Warrants granted under King Charles III and Queen Camilla.

The Royal Warrant Holders Association noted that the second set of Royal Warrants for the new reign was granted in December 2024 to 386 companies that previously held a single Royal Warrant under Queen Elizabeth II, as well as seven companies with ongoing trading relationships with Queen Camilla. This marks a significant shift in the companies recognized by the monarchy under the current reign.

“These grants follow 152 Royal Warrants granted by Their Majesties in May, to companies drawn from those previously holding a Royal Warrant of Appointment to His Majesty as Prince of Wales, who began granting Warrants in 1980,” it stated.

Currently, there are 545 Royal Warrants held by 538 companies. Missing from the latest list, alongside ANGOSTURA Ltd, are several well-known brands, such as Cadbury, Elizabeth Arden, and Vauxhall. These companies, whose Royal Warrants were not renewed, will have to wait until May next year to reapply for a spot on the prestigious list of suppliers officially recognized by the British monarchy. This marks a significant change in the companies that are granted Royal Warrants under King Charles III’s reign.

In 1824, Dr. Johann Siegert, living in the town of Angostura, Venezuela, first created aromatic bitters as a medicinal tincture to treat stomach ailments. His invention marked the beginning of what would become a globally recognized brand.

In 1875, the Siegert family relocated the business to Trinidad, where it was run by Dr. Siegert’s sons, Carlos, Alfredo, and Luis, under the name JGB Siegert & Hijos. It was during this time that Angostura Aromatic Bitters gained popularity as a key ingredient in both cocktails and food, laying the foundation for its widespread use.

In 1912, JGB Siegert & Hijos became a pub-



World famous Angostura Bitters has lost its Royal Warrant

lic limited liability company, registered in England. Around this time, the company was also appointed as a direct supplier of Angostura aromatic bitters to His Majesty King George V, marking the beginning of its long association with the British monarchy.

In 1955, the company earned the distinction of becoming the manufacturers of Angostura Aromatic Bitters to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, making it the only bitters brand in the world with such credentials.

When Queen Elizabeth II passed away on September 8, 2022, all royal warrants she had granted became void, according to the Royal

Warrant Holders Association.

Its website stated: “The Royal Household will review Warrant grants upon a change of the reigning Sovereign.”

It further stated “Royal Warrants are granted for up to five years and only to companies that provide goods or services to the Royal Household. Goods purchased for re-sale by souvenir shops run by Royal Collection Enterprises and the Private Estates, and goods or services provided to the Crown Estate, Historic Royal Palaces, Highgrove Enterprises, King’s Foundation, the Duchies of Cornwall or Lancaster and Royal Parks do not qualify,” it stated.

BAD CHARGIE

Bajan singer making inroads in the land of soca

MANY Barbadians have contributed to Trinidad and Tobago's soca industry.

One of the latest to do so is 26-year-old songwriter Kris Fields.

Having already crafted tunes for soca stars who have included Machel Montano, Patrice Roberts, Shurwayne Winchester and Preedy, among others, he hopes to continue expanding his catalogue.

Fields is from Shorey Village in St Andrew, Barbados. Although he's an attorney by profession, music has always been his passion.

He said he grew up admiring his sister and aunt's involvement in the St Michael's Cathedral choir.

"I was always watching them sing, so I wanted to do that too. So I joined the choir when I was about maybe nine or ten, and that was probably my first little foray into music."

He said his parents often listened to music at home too – mostly "oldies."

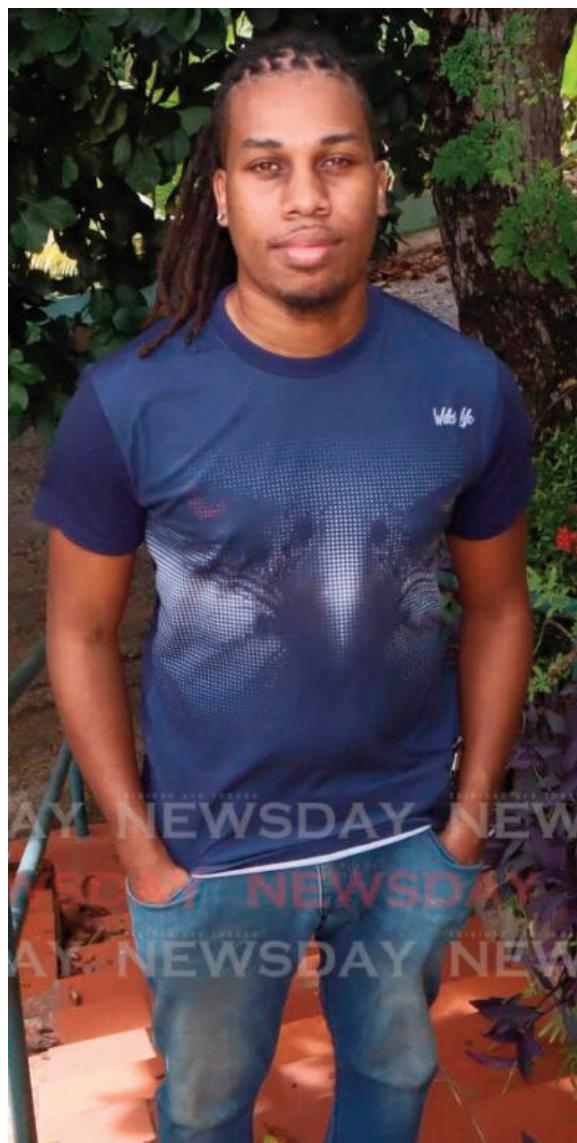
He continued to explore this interest during his secondary school days. It was then his songwriting journey began.

"I had a friend who was really into hip-hop and used to encourage me to write and we would rap...I wrote a lot."

For many music lovers, their first time listening to what would eventually become one of their favourite projects is unforgettable.

For Fields, that song was US rapper Kanye West's 2010 hit All of the Lights, featuring superstar – and fellow Barbadian – Rihanna.

"The first time I listened to that song on a car sound system was (when) it really clicked for me that I really wanted to do (music professionally). The way he did the drums, I was like, 'Whoa,' and it was very euphoric and very dif-



Kris Fields: Bad Chargie singer

ferent, so that was what stood out to me."

He went through many phases as he tried to figure out what aspect of the music industry he wanted to settle into. He initially combined singing and songwriting, even forming a band called Sharp 4.

"I had a drummer, a guitarist and a bass player.

"I had actually just finished secondary school, so I was about 17 or 18, and we used to play at the Old Jamm Inn (bar and nightclub)

at St Lawrence Gap in Barbados ... Those were some pretty good times."

It was also around that time he tried his hand at music production, a skill he continues to develop to this day.

From DMs to studios

As his interest in soca music grew, he began reaching out to TT artistes and producers on social media.

Laughing, he said, "Most of the connections I have in soca are literally just from messaging people on Instagram saying, 'I write songs. Do you need songs?'"

One such message eventually led to his first significant collaboration in soca. He got in touch with 2024 Young King and Road March winner Mical Teja (Mical Williams).

"He sent me this big folder full of riddims, and part of what I wrote on one of them is what ended up turning into Bad Chargie."

Bad Chargie, a 2022 track, was performed by Machel Montano and Viking Ding Dong.

"Teja is really good at his job, and he wrote most of it, but took a section I wrote and said, 'This is really nice. I'm going to build around it,'" Fields said.

On how he felt about his first TT writing stint being for Montano, he said, "Honestly, it was kind of crazy.

"I had just started doing this, and knew that working with him would augur well for (me). So I was over the moon about that.

"When I'm in Barbados, it's not like someone can invite me to a studio session (in TT) and I can just hop on a plane..."

"I primarily write soca music, and this is the best place to write that."

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Antigua's VC Bird International Airport achieves historic milestone

Antigua and Barbuda reached a historic milestone on December 21 as VC Bird International Airport managed 51 flights in a single day. The record-breaking day included 13 international flights, 35 regional flights, and three private charters, marking an unprecedented achievement for the Caribbean nation's main airport.

In addition to this aviation success, the country also received multiple tourism awards, further enhancing its reputation as a premier travel destination. Tourism Minister Charles "Max" Fernandez celebrated the achievement,

expressing optimism about the nation's continued growth and success in the global tourism industry.

The surge in air traffic at VC Bird International Airport coincided with a significant recognition at the Caribbean Journal's 2025 Travel Awards, where Antigua and Barbuda excelled in several categories. The Antigua and Barbuda Tourism Authority (ABTA) was honored as Caribbean Tourist Board of the Year, while the nation itself was named Caribbean Destination of the Year. The Journal praised the leadership of ABTA's CEO, Colin James, highlighting the organization's proactive, innovative, and creative approach to promoting Caribbean tourism. These accolades further solidify Antigua and Barbuda's growing reputation as a top travel destination in the region.

In addition to the recognition of Antigua and Barbuda's tourism authority, two local resorts also received notable honors at the Caribbean Journal's 2025 Travel Awards.

Galley Bay was named Caribbean All-Inclusive of the Year, while Keyonna Beach won Small All-Inclusive of the Year.

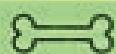
PHOENIX

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Top Ten of all time

Scorch Radio compiles list of the best soca songs in history

The popular Scorch Radio in Trinidad recently took on the Herculean task of playing what it deemed the top 101 soca songs in history to kick off the 101-day countdown to Trinidad and Tobago Carnival 2025. The country was buzzing as people tuned in to hear the songs selected. One soca star also gave his thoughts on the countdown.

In the end, the top ten selections were:

Hot Hot Hot – Arrow (1988)

SuperBlue – Get Something and Wave (1991), Signal to Lara (1995), Bacchanal Time (1993)

Differentology – Bunji Garlin (2014)

Tempted to Touch – Rupee (2002)

Togetherness – Alison Hinds and Square One (2007)

Famalay – Machel Montano, Bunji Garlin and Skinny Fabulous (2021)

Palance – JW and Blaze (2010)

Jump – Rupee (2001)

Turn Me On – Kevin Lyttle (2003)

And coming in at position one was:

It's Carnival – Machel Montano and Destra (2003)

The Caribbean was well represented, as TT, Barbados, St Vincent and the Grenadines and Montserrat all had artistes in the top ten.

The Scorch Radio team, led by CEO Kwesi "Hypa Hoppa" Hopkinson, gathered a team of 40 people with experience in music and entertainment. Some of them based locally and others from overseas.



Destra's song with Machel Montano was voted the best soca of all time

Those making contributions were DJs Private Ryan, Travis World and DJ Adam; entertainment journalist Laura Dowrich-Phillips; music writer, reviewer and concert producer Nigel Campbell; photojournalist David Wears; and international DJs Back to Basics and DJ Spice.

Members of the Stink and Dutty Committee, a group that host parties and Carnival fetes, gave input. Hopkinson, one of the founders of DJ group Radioactive in the 1990s, was also involved in the selection.

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Xavier Jr and Baptiste are two of the three singers behind the popular song Someone Else

DOMINICAN JAM

‘Someone Else’ set to dominate the airwaves at TT carnival

IT shares a universal message of how some people deal with relationships and it is told under the musical canopy of bouyon.

The Dominican genre developed in the late 80s and is stitched together with some of the country’s traditional sounds of cadence-lypso, zouk, jing ping and bele, among others.

The hit Dominican single Someone Else sung by Quan (Quan Denis), Littleboy and Trilla G, is projected to dominate Trinidad and Tobago Carnival spaces next year. It is already in heavy rotation at social events and other carnivals.

Gael Jno “Trilla G” Baptiste, 25, from Goodwill, Dominica, and Foster Larnel “Littleboy” Marcel Xavier, 28, from Le Lamentin, Martinique, spoke about the music.

Trilla G has been in music for about six years and is Dominica’s 2023 Calypso King.

He was always “artistic with words” and fascinated by English with its metaphors, similes and other literary devices.

“I used to make remixes of famous songs in

my own way, in my Dominican dialect, in the bouyon style. There was a time, in 2017, when I was attending the Dominica State College and we were doing rap battles.

“I was the champion: I remain undefeated to this day.”

He was encouraged to “make a song” by his friends. He made his first song in 2017 and there has been no “looking back since.”

Littleboy’s entry to music came from his father, Foster Xavier Snr.

His father is a singer and he played the drums with him. “I was always around him. I wanted to sing a little bit, but I started off doing beats,” he said.

He began producing beats in 2012, using his father’s keyboard and guitar. But three years ago, he decided to record a song in French and it did well in France.

In 2023, he had created a beat for another Dominican band. The beat stayed on his computer for an entire year and then fellow artiste Quan visited his studio.

“Quan is my boy, so he pass and check me in the studio. I made him listen to it; he liked it. Then he came with Trilla G and Trilla G liked it too. All of us put a verse on it.

“I knew it would have been a nice song, because when I made it for the band, they said it was a nice song.”

He was surprised, however, at TT’s response to it, and believes its universal message is driving its popularity.

“The chorus talking about something everybody can relate to,” Littleboy said.

Trilla G credited social media for the song’s ever-growing popularity.

He realised the song could be “big” in this country from its performance at Miami’s carnival.

“It was all over the place. Then I realised after Miami carnival, the next big carnival is TT’s. There were so many Trinidadian DJs and people there, I decided well, ‘Okay, if the DJs and them love the song so much, I feel like, you know, they would bring it down to TT.’



Season of Cheer

Toronto charity UniTnT Canada shares some Christmas treats in Trinidad

The Rapidfire Kidz Foundation and Canadian charity UNI TnT hosted their annual hospital Christmas treat at the San Fernando Teaching Hospital on December 14.

A media release said, the event was a fun-filled one, as the group, which included a number of “elves”, moved through the three paediatric wards of the hospital, presenting toys, footballs, board games, colouring books and crayons to the children. The children gleefully received the toys, and parents expressed gratitude for the initiative.

Foundation president Kevin Ratiram said that RKF has been doing the treat every Christmas since the foundation was formed in 2012. “A few years ago, UNI TnT started partnering with us, and there’s been no turning back. That

partnership continues many years later. This treat is very dear to us. Nothing beats the feeling of bringing some joy to sick children at this time of the year. This year, we also extended the treat beyond the usual San Fernando Hospital. We’ve also sent toys for the children at the Point Fortin Hospital.”

Some 53 children in total were treated between the two hospitals, the release said.

Ratiram said that the treat ended an extremely successful year for the foundation, which did projects on a monthly basis, including the construction of a playpark at the Debe Hindu School in October.

Photos: Above, the Rapidfire and UniTnT team; right, UNI TnT treasurer Carlos Maharaj shows off some of the toys distributed.



JAM AND MOVE

Terry Seales teams up with Chenko, DNA 868 Muzik to 'bring the vibes' for Carnival 2025

Soca artiste Terry Seales is optimistic that an international soca competition is on the way for Carnival 2025. He says it's long overdue, and necessary for the development of creatives in Trinidad and Tobago.

A media release said Seales will release a new single on the Jam and Move riddim – a project produced and worked on collaboratively with fellow artistes Chenko and Yohan Popwell, who's best known as Dna 868 Muzik.

"My single Jam and Move brings all the elements of Carnival together in one road-ready single," Seales said in the release.

He is eager to make his presence felt again.

Together with Chenko and Dna 868 Muzik this time around, he is optimistic that the music will ultimately speak for itself.

"Chenko's single is called Greater Dan Dem, and Dna 868 Muzik brings a tune called Mash Up. With my single, Jam and Move, the idea is to create the nostalgic energy of what many Carnival revellers know in their hearts, is true, about this season," Seales said, adding, "The music must bring the vibes."

The team has worked together before and for Seales, the brotherhood and musical cohesion is particularly refreshing.

"We worked together last season and the music we delivered was excellent I believe. The aim is to maintain that level of consistency. This time around, we're promoting using all the tools that are available to us, because ultimately, we just need the music to reach the people."

Of the new international soca competition, Seales says he is hopeful there will be equity in the selection process, and throughout the competition when that time comes.

"I think the competition should be fair and the people should be the final judge," he said.

Seales says over the years, he has observed the change of the music and is accepting of its overall direction, explaining that from a financial perspective, groovy soca makes sense.

"The grooves are hitting better because on the international market, it's more laid back, slower, more lyrics, better hooks. Internationally, they cannot understand the speed of the power soca."

"Mical Teja won Road March with a groovy soca song. The energy of that slower groove is much stronger now than the power soca and the power soca is more seasonal," he said noting that



Chenko helped create the Jam and Move rhythm

Kees Dieffenthaler's Cocoa Tea is leading the way into Carnival 2025.

Prepared to make the most of the season, Seales is set to release a second single in the

weeks ahead.

"I'd really like the public to be given the chance to hear the music and decide whether they like the songs or not."

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