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Red Hazel

PBS documentary shines spotlight on Trini woman accused of being a communist

A new PBS documentary is shining a long-overdue spotlight on Hazel Scott, the Trinidadian-born jazz virtuoso, Hollywood star, and civil rights trailblazer whose career was tragically cut short during the Red Scare—a period of intense anti-communist suspicion in the U.S. that led to widespread blacklisting of entertainers, politicians, and intellectuals.

The new documentary *American Masters – The Disappearance of Miss Scott* premiered nationwide on Friday, February 21, at 9 p.m. ET on PBS. It explores Scott's meteoric rise to fame, her groundbreaking achievements, and the devastating impact of McCarthy-era blacklisting. The documentary will be available for streaming until March 22.

Born in Port of Spain, Trinidad in 1920, Hazel Scott was a musical wonder and was trained by her mother, a classically trained pianist and music teacher. Four years later, she left the Caribbean for Harlem, New York with her mother and grandmother, and by the age of eight she was a pupil of Professor Walter Damrosch at the Juilliard School of Music.

Scott's undeniable talent led to a vibrant jazz career performing with the likes of Max Roach and Charles Mingus in some of New York City's most iconic venues, including Café Society, Cotton Club, and Carnegie Hall. She later transitioned to film, starring as herself in movies such as *Something to Shout About*, *I Dood It*, and *Rhapsody in Blue*. In 1950, Scott made history as the first Black American to host her own nationally syndicated television show, *The Hazel Scott Show*, featuring performances alongside jazz greats like Charles Mingus and Max Roach.

Beyond her musical brilliance, Scott was a fierce advocate for civil rights. She refused to perform before segregated audiences, called out Hollywood's discriminatory treatment of Black actors, and even took a restaurant to court for refusing to serve her. In 1945, she married Adam Clayton Powell Jr., the first Black American congressman from New York, forming a powerful duo in the fight for racial equality.

However, Scott's outspoken activism made



Hazel Scott's career was cut short after she was accused of being a communist

her a target. During the 1950s Red Scare, she was called before the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) to answer accusations of communist ties. Though she defended herself forcefully, the backlash led to her being blacklisted, effectively ending her career in the U.S. To evade political fallout, Scott moved to Paris in 1957, where she appeared in the French Gilles Grangier crime film *Le désordre et la nuit* (1958). In 1963, she marched alongside other African-American expatriates, including James Baldwin, to the U.S. Embassy in Paris in support of the March on Washington. She did not return to the U.S. until 1967, after the Civil Rights Movement had brought significant legislative changes, including the prohibition of racial segregation and enforcement of voting rights.

Scott continued to perform occasionally in nightclubs while making appearances on day-

time television. She remained an influential figure until her passing. On October 2, 1981, Hazel Scott died of cancer at Mount Sinai Hospital in Manhattan at the age of 61. She is buried at Flushing Cemetery in Queens, New York, near legendary musicians Louis Armstrong, Johnny Hodges, and Dizzy Gillespie.

The *Disappearance of Miss Scott* is the first known documentary centered on Scott's life, featuring archival footage, animation, and interviews with notable figures, including country star Mickey Guyton, actresses Amanda Seales and Tracie Thoms, jazz musicians Camille Thurman and Jason Moran, and Scott's son, Adam Clayton Powell III. Jamaican-American Emmy Award-winning actress Sheryl Lee Ralph lends her voice to excerpts from Scott's unpublished autobiography, offering a deeply personal look at a woman who refused to compromise her principles.

TIME IS NOW TO GET the Life you Deserve

You have done the inner work. You have been tending to yourself, nurturing your heart, strengthening your foundation. Now, it is time to bring that inward growth outward.

It is easy to wait for the perfect moment. To feel like there needs to be more clarity, more certainty, more readiness. But have you noticed? The longer you wait, the further away things seem.

What if it is not about waiting? What if it is about deciding?

Everything you need is already within you. The strength. The knowing. The capability. There is no permission slip coming. No external force that will declare, "Now you are ready." That moment comes the second you choose it.

So what is stopping you?

Fear? Hesitation? The need to have everything figured out before you begin?

I get it. It feels safe to stay where things are familiar. Even when you know you are meant for more, stepping forward can feel uncertain. But growth does not happen in certainty. It happens in movement.

And the moment you take that first step, something shifts.

Clarity does not come from waiting. It comes from action, your actions. It comes from choosing to trust yourself, even when the path ahead is not entirely clear. It comes from understanding that the details will unfold and become clearer as you go.

Think about the times you have taken a leap before. Maybe it was something small, maybe something big. But in those moments, did you not feel something awaken within you? A knowing? A power?

That my friend is still within you.

The mind will try to tell you to

wait until you have all the answers. But that is an illusion. It is fake/ It is temporary. No one has it all figured out before they start. The ones who make it happen are the ones who start anyway.

So pause for a moment.

Where in your life have you been holding back? Where have you been waiting? What would happen if, instead of overthinking, you simply took the next step no matter how small?

Fear is simply the lack of not knowing and the does not fade before you act. It fades because you act. It now becomes a known as opposed to an unknown

And confidence? Confidence is not something you are given. It is something you build.

Every small action reinforces the belief that you can. Every decision, every forward step, strengthens that inner trust. That is how momentum is created. Not in massive, overwhelming leaps, but in steady, intentional movement.

One step. Then another. And suddenly, you look back and realize that you have changed.

You have stepped into the version of yourself that does not just dream of possibilities but brings them to life.

There is nothing wrong with wanting things to be perfect. But perfectionism has a sneaky way of keeping you stuck. The truth? You do not need perfect. You need presence. You need action. You need to trust that the path reveals itself as you walk it.

Take a deep breath. Feel that shift inside you. The part of you that knows it is time. The part of you that is ready.

You are capable. You are strong. And I know that everything you have been waiting for is already within reach.

All you have to do is take the first step. So let us do it and do it today, yes now.

And as you do, something changes. The moment you move; the universe moves with you. Have you noticed? When you make a decision, when you commit, things begin aligning. People, opportunities, even seemingly random moments where everything begins to shift in your favor and all the ducks line up in a row.

That is not coincidence. That is momentum being present.

You are not meant to stay in the same place forever. You are meant to grow, to expand, to stretch beyond your comfort zone. Yes, that can feel uncomfortable however have you ever noticed that the discomfort of staying stuck is far worse than the discomfort of stepping forward?

You know that feeling, the ache of knowing you are capable of more, yet hesitating. The tension of wanting change but resisting the unknown. That is the call. The invitation. The reminder that the only way forward is through. Let us break the wall by going through it. This is a technique that we use in Time Line ® Therapy.

So what if you stopped waiting for the fear to disappear? What if you accepted that courage is not the absence of fear, but the decision to move despite it?

There is so much waiting for you on the other side of that hesitation. Not just success or achievement, but freedom. The freedom of knowing that you are in control of your own path. The freedom of realizing that you are not a passive observer in your life for you are the creator of it.

Now imagine, just for a moment, what would happen if you fully embraced that truth.

What would change if you



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woke up tomorrow and decided, really decided that you are ready? That you will no longer let self-doubt dictate your choices? That you will no longer let fear hold the pen that writes your story?

It does not have to be a grand, dramatic shift. It can be one small choice. One moment of saying yes when you would have said no. One moment of trusting yourself when you would have hesitated. One moment of stepping forward when you would have stayed still.

And then, another.

That is how change happens. That is how transformation unfolds. Not in a single, life-altering moment, but in the accumulation of small, courageous choices.

So take a breath. Feel your feet on the ground. Feel the energy within you. The fire. The knowing. The readiness.

And then, move.

Not because everything is perfect. Not because you have all the answers. But because you are ready to create them.

Because you are done waiting for permission.

Because you are done waiting for clarity.

Because you are done waiting. This is your moment. This is your time.

Step forward.

And watch what unfolds.

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Take action now and step into the life you deserve.

COUNTING BLESSINGS

Grenada's Black Dan makes a mark on T&T Carnival stage

Grenadian soca artiste Blaka Dan (Wrenroy Ogiste) is literally counting his blessings.

After years grinding in the soca trenches, his moment has finally arrived with the Carnival hit “Blessings”. For a man who spent his formative years in Central Trinidad, the adulation of the T&T public has confirmed what he’s always known: his music is destined to cross borders.

“The journey has been long—lessons, conditioning, a lot of wondering when that big break would come,” he admitted. “Giving up never crossed my mind, but there were definitely moments when I asked myself, ‘When will it happen?’”

The promise of his talent first showed at Grenada Carnival in 2012 with “3 Dollar Bread”, a track that resonated with audiences and earned him a spot in the Groovy Soca Monarch finals. The following year, he solidified his place in Grenada’s soca history by winning the competition with “Whole Day We Jammin”. But the dream of breaking out beyond Grenada’s shores remained just out of reach.

It finally happened with “Blessing”, a song that has turned into the unofficial anthem of the season.

“I can’t even find the words to describe how this moment feels, but I know for sure it’s a blessing,” Blaka Dan said fully aware of the poetry of his words.

A story everyone can relate to

“Blessing” readily resonates, the sweet escape from a romantic relationship gone sour. Beneath the obvious connotations the songs speaks to transformation, perseverance and finding light after dark times. But is it based on a true story? “I’ll leave that open,” Blaka Dan teased. “What I will say is that it’s a story everyone can identify with in some way, shape, or form.”

His creative process is deeply personal. He doesn’t write his songs—he keeps them in his head. “I feel like I become one with my music that way,” he explained. “Yeah, I lose a lot of songs like that too, but if it’s meant to be, it stays. I go off feeling, and when it’s right, I just know.” That organic approach has made his music deeply relatable, a quality that has played a major role in the T&T audience embracing him so wholeheartedly this season. “This is actually my first real breakthrough in Trinidad,” he admitted. “I’ve performed here before, but just once or twice. This is the first time I’ve had a song dominating the season. The reception has been amazing—way beyond what I expected.”

Blaka Dan’s dominance this season extends beyond radio and fetes—his outstanding performance at the Ultimate Soca Champion (USC) competition at the Queen’s Park Savannah on Thursday night, has made him the most talked-about artiste on the islands.

Blaka Dan’s success isn’t just about the present moment—it’s a sign of where Grenada’s soca scene is headed. While jab ab soca has long been the island’s signature sound, he believes groovy soca is where the genre’s future lies.

“I started a programme in Grenada called Youth in Groovy where we go into schools, recruit young talent, and help them write and record songs. Then, we have a final competition where the schools back their favourite artistes,” he shared. “Grenada has the talent for groovy, but it’s not as embedded in our culture as it is in Trinidad. Trinis love groovy music, and that’s where soca’s longevity is.”

And longevity is exactly what Blaka Dan is aiming for. With tour dates already locked in for the US and collaborations on the horizon, he’s thinking bigger than ever. “I’m looking towards Grammy nominations, regional collaborations—Trinidad, Barbados, St Vincent, St Lucia, Dominica. Some



Blacka Dan is counting his blessings

people might think it’s a high reach, but I believe ‘Blessing’ has the potential to break all barriers.”

For Blaka Dan, T&T Carnival is just the beginning of an ambitious 2025. His story is proof that years of hard work, patience, and belief in self pays off. And, as his hit song suggests, he sees it for exactly what it is—a blessing.

BEHIND THE ‘PARDY’

Mervyn Soodeen created hit song months before Machel ever heard it

Mevon Soodeen never set out to be just another producer.

The man behind the hitmaking moniker Xplicit Mevon has spent the last decade quietly crafting some of the most genre-defying sounds in T&T’s music industry. From hip-hop to parang soca, he has built a career on adaptability and innovation, but 2025 has marked his most significant leap yet—co-producing Machel Montano’s “Pardy”, a front-runner for the Road March title.

It’s a career milestone that almost didn’t happen. In 2018, Soodeen made the risky decision to leave his stable IT job at the Ministry of Education to pursue music full-time. It was a leap of faith that came with uncertainty and second-guessing, but today, he says he wouldn’t change a thing.

“That decision was not one that was made on the spot. It played on my mind for years,” he admitted. “Music was a part-time hobby for me, and I built my studio in 2010 while still working in the Ministry. But I had no stability there—no gratuity, no vacation, no sick days. My contract kept getting renewed, but I was stuck. So, in 2018, I told myself, ‘I have this here, I’m going to utilise it.’”

His timing couldn’t have been worse. Just two years into his new path, the world shut down with the Covid-19 pandemic, leaving him wondering if he had made a mistake.

“I was scared, I won’t lie,” he confessed. “There was a point where I felt like I had made the wrong decision. But now, in 2025? I’d make that decision again in a heartbeat.”

Mevon has always played the long game. His diverse background—producing hip-hop tracks for Mark Hardy (Marcus Braveboy) and Yung Rudd (Isaac Rudder), pioneering new soca parang sounds with Rome (Jerome Precilla), and working across multiple genres—has given him the ability to blend different musical worlds effortlessly. That skillset is what helped shape “Pardy”.

The track’s journey began months before Montano even heard it.



“I started working on ‘Pardy’ around June or July,” Mevon recalled. “At that time, I was just building beats and sending them to different writers. I sent this beat to multiple artistes, even to Machel directly, but no one really bit at first.”

It wasn’t until a casual studio session with Andrew Jeffers, Rome’s manager, that things started moving. Jeffers loved the beat and took it home to develop it further. What came back wasn’t quite what Mevon envisioned, and at one point, he was ready to scrap the entire project.

“I wasn’t hearing what I wanted. I felt like the beat had too much potential for it to just be okay. Jeffers told me, ‘Let it soak.’ I was sceptical, but I trusted him.”

Just as things were clicking, disaster struck.

“The next day, my computer crashed. I lost everything. Every single project I was working on for 2025—gone.”

Luckily, the last file he had copied before the crash was the updated “Pardy” demo. With no working computer, he called engineer and producer Kyle Phillips and asked him to join

the project.

“I had nothing—I couldn’t edit, couldn’t record. So, I told Kyle, ‘I need you to be a part of this.’ He immediately said yes, and that’s how he got involved.”

The track was finally coming together, but one key element was missing. “By the truck, by the truck”—a chant that, in Mevon’s mind, only Machel could pull off.

“I told Jeffers, ‘If Montano doesn’t take this song, the only person who could sing those lines is Montano. No one else will make it work.’”

The track was sent to Montano while he was on the road for his 50th birthday celebrations, and a few days later, the soca superstar called back. That’s when Mevon knew they had something real.

“He told me, ‘Put this on ice. I played it for my team, I played it for international people, and everyone is saying this is special. Nothing else I’ve heard this year feels like this.’”

Now, with “Pardy” being played across every major fete and poised as a Road March favourite, Mevon is watching the competition unfold with cautious optimism.

“Road March was never part of my plans as a producer,” he admitted. “But if you have a horse in the race, you back your horse. We’ve put so much into this, and seeing people arguing over ‘Team Bunji’ vs ‘Team Machel’—it’s exciting. It’s a real contest.”

Despite his success, Mevon is still constantly looking ahead, integrating technology, AI, and new tools into his work. “I have a tech background, so I’m all for advancements. People are scared of AI, but I see its potential. Imagine pitching a demo to Machel where the AI makes the singer’s voice sound like him—it would only help artistes fine-tune their performances.”

With a relentless focus on innovation, an instinct for game-changing collaborations, and a growing catalogue of hits, Xplicit Mevon isn’t just shaping the sound of Carnival 2025—he’s shaping its future.

Adesh, Maaya release SPANISH CHUTNEY

Adesh Samaroo and Venezuelan singer Maaya Real have teamed up to produce a Spanish chutney song titled Who Could Dance Better.

The song, a joint production of Samaroo and Zhaeer Khan (aka Big Rich), was recorded at Pungalunks Factory. Since its release in December 2024, the catchy song has been gaining airplay on radio stations.

Samaroo came up with idea of doing a duet with Maaya Real as he was seeking to unify Trinidad and Tobago and Venezuelan culture through music and dance.

Speaking to Newsday, Samaroo said he and Big Rich decided to invite Maaya Real to the project as she is a representative of Latin music in Trinidad and Tobago. They observed the progress she was making through Tik Tok and thought her participation in the song would be an important element to uniting both cultures.

"The song is about accepting different

cultures. We do things differently, but in the end, we are all the same," Samaroo said.

Who Could Dance Better encourages Trininis, Venezuelan and Guyanese to put their best dance forward and live in peace, instead of arguing, fighting and "toting feelings. The intention is the dance is the way to resolve differences. Women are beautiful no matter what country they come from, your race or your colour," Samaroo said.

Maaya Real said she is open to continue contributing to local music and bringing part of her Latin culture to the local sounds. She says she would like to go with the flow.

"I am really grateful for the opportunity Samaroo and Big Rich are giving me to be able to show Latin talent in TT. The intention is to make us better at what we do, learn from each other and take music further. Search for avenues where the culture is rich to include our culture from both (countries)," she said.



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Take Me Home!

Genre-blending musical force strikes a chord with fans

Freetown Collective, the genre-blending musical force from Trinidad and Tobago, has struck an emotional chord with audiences through its recent release, *Take Me Home*.

Take Me Home is a personal confession and cultural statement, intertwining themes of homecoming, nostalgia, and self-discovery. The track will resonate with anyone who has ever felt distant from the places or people that define their sense of home, said a media release.

Since its release in December 2024, *Take Me Home* has steadily risen, earning a spot on the Apple Music Top 100 (TT) and now sitting at number 42.

Muhammad Muwakil, co-founder and lead vocalist of Freetown Collective, believes in the transformative power of music, saying, “I think there is a certain part of the soul that has to get stirred when it hears music. We have to constantly have songs and art that remind us of how beautiful this place is. Yes, we need to be told about all the ills of society, but it is the artiste’s job to create some level of balance where there is none.”

This passion for storytelling and cultural preservation has also driven Muwakil to take on a new challenge – competing in the Young Kings Competition for the first time. As a finalist, he’s determined to share *Take Me Home* with all who are willing to listen, the release said.

“This is a beautiful and amazing twin-island republic and sometimes the news can be so overwhelming,” Muwakil said. “There are people who look and think that the whole of Trinidad is just a mess, and that is such an incorrect thing to say at any point.”

Freetown Collective aims to redefine Caribbean music, one electrifying performance at a time. This six-piece powerhouse blends the soul of calypso with the energy of urban pop, creating a sound that is both deeply rooted and undeniably global.

Its breakout hit, *Good Swimba*, was reimagined as *Believer* by Major Lazer and Showtek, earning Gold and Platinum Certification and amassing 40 million+ views on YouTube.



Freetown Collective

The group followed up with another explosive collaboration, *Amen*, cementing its place on the international stage. Its debut album, *Born in Darkness* (2018), was met with critical acclaim, while the single *Feel The Love*, with DJ Private Ryan, dominated Apple Music’s Top 100 (TT) for six consecutive weeks in 2020.

In 2022, the band continued pushing boundaries with *World on Fire*, featuring soca superstars DJ Private Ryan and Patrice Roberts, and in 2023 created *Mas* with Mical Teja.

Freetown Collective’s impact extends far beyond the studio. Over the past two years, the band has toured Canada, London, and Japan.

It sold out its own headline shows in London in 2023 and 2024, proving its international draw, and can boast of opening for reggae icons UB40 in 2023. Freetown’s global trajectory reached new heights with a career-defining performance at the legendary Glastonbury Festival in 2024.



Shenseea took home the prize for best Caribbean Music Act at the Music of Black Origins (MOBO) awards in the UK

SHENSEEA GETS A MOBO

Dancehall star wins Best Caribbean Music Act at British awards

Dancehall artist Shenseea won her second MOBO Award on Tuesday, taking home the Best Caribbean Music Act honor at the annual ceremony in Newcastle, England.

Shenseea beat out fellow nominees Spice, Popcaan, YG Marley, Valiant, and Skillibeng for the award, which was introduced in 2022 as a successor to the longstanding Best Reggae Act category.

Dancehall icon Vybz Kartel was also recognized at the event, receiving the Impact Award. This year's ceremony, held at Newcastle's Utilita Arena on Feb. 18, marked the first time the MOBO Awards took place in the northern UK city.

The MOBO (Music of Black Origin) Awards, founded by Kanya King and Andy Ruffell, celebrate achievements in genres including hip-hop, grime, R&B, reggae, jazz, gospel, and Afrobeats. Shenseea previously won Best Reggae Act in 2021, making history as the first female winner in that category, which was established in 1996.

Shenseea released her second album, "Never Gets Late Here," on May 24. The 14-track project features collaborations with Coi Leray, Wizkid, Anitta, Masicka, and Di Genius. It was nominated for Best Reggae Album at the 2025 Grammy Awards.





Best of the Autoshow

Eye-candy for car lovers at CIAS 2025 in Toronto

*Photos by
Milan Maharaj*



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Fly High, Joey

Founder of Second Imij band passes after battling pneumonia

Joey Ng Wai, a renowned musician and beloved figure in the Caribbean music industry, has died. Ng Wai passed after battling pneumonia in mid-February.

Ng Wai had been hospitalized on December 29, 2024, in the Intensive Care Unit of the Port-of-Spain General Hospital. His family and well-wishers had been offering prayers and support throughout his illness before he succumbed.

His sister, Sharon Ng Wai-Pantin, revealed in early January that Ng Wai initially came down with the flu and attempted to treat it at his Maraval home, where he lived alone. However, his condition worsened. She noted that he also suffered from sleep apnea, which caused repeated interruptions in his breathing during sleep.

Doctors reported that Ng Wai's carbon monoxide levels were significantly above healthy levels, which affected his lungs. His family had asked the country to pray for his healing as he remained sedated during his hospitalization.

A gifted guitarist, musical director, and the visionary behind Imij and Company—originally known as Second Imij—Ng Wai played a pivotal role in shaping the sound of Caribbean music. Since 1992, Second Imij has been a fixture at Miami Carnival, bringing high-energy performances that became a defining element of the festival. His musical career also saw him play for other bands, including Zoo and Frantic.

“Joey’s passing is a tremendous loss to the Miami Carnival family and the wider Caribbean diaspora. His music uplifted and united us, and his contributions to our culture are immeasurable. We will forever cherish his legacy and the joy he brought to so many. Rest in peace, dear friend,” said Joan Hinkson Justin, chair of the Miami Broward Carnival Host Committee.



Joey Ng Wai — was a founder of the band Second Imij

Fellow musician Michelle Xavier shared heartfelt condolences, adding that Ng Wai was one of the best guitarists Trinidad and Tobago has ever produced.

Among those mourning his passing was Roger Salloum, founder and CEO of Rosal Music, who shared a heartfelt tribute on Ng Wai's Facebook page.

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Machel Montano along with his band at NPR's headquarters in Washington, DC

TIL A' MAWNIN

Shaggy and Sting pay tribute to reggae's sound system culture

Fresh off their Grammy-winning collaboration, Sting and Shaggy have reunited for a new single, "Til A Mawnin", a vibrant homage to reggae's Sound System culture.

The track, set for release on February 27, blends Sting's signature melodies with Shaggy's dynamic flow, offering a fusion of classic reggae rhythms and modern energy.

The single, released through a partnership between Shaggy's Ranch Entertainment and VP Records, is more than just a song—it's a celebration of the global influence of reggae sound systems. Accompanied by a music video directed by Jay Will, the visuals bring the culture to life,

showcasing the enduring legacy of this essential reggae tradition.

Co-written by Shaggy, Sting, and legendary producer Henry "Junjo" Lawes, "Til A Mawnin" reinterprets the classic "I'm Not Getting Crazy" Riddim, originally backed by the iconic Roots Radics Band. This riddim has provided the foundation for reggae classics like Don Carlos' "I'm Not Crazy," Frankie Paul's "Worries in the Dance," and Yellowman's "Getting Married." The updated version, produced by Shaggy and Shane Hoosong, breathes new life into the dancehall staple while preserving its roots.

The track was mixed by four-time Grammy

winner Robert Orton and mastered by Gene Grimaldi at Oasis Mastering.

Following the release, Sting and Shaggy will take the stage together on March 13 at the Reggae Rise Up Festival in St. Petersburg, FL, one of the country's most anticipated reggae events.



READY TO GO

Jamaican singer Denyque says her life is like a heartbeat monitor

Jamaican singer-songwriter Denyque has captivated audiences for over a decade with her smooth vocals and relatable lyrics. From her breakout hit *Can't Breathe* in 2009 to her upcoming debut album *GO*, she has continuously evolved—not just as an artist, but as a mother, entrepreneur, and creative visionary. Now based primarily in the United States, Denyque is embracing every facet of her identity while leaving an indelible mark on the music industry.

Denyque describes her musical evolution as “transcendent.” “I like to describe my life like a heartbeat—you know how it looks on a monitor? Just going up and down, but it keeps going.” That resilience has kept her in the game, even as she has taken pauses to focus on personal pursuits.

Her creative process is fluid and intuitive. “I hear the beat, and the beat leads me,” she explains in an interview. “Sometimes, the words just flow effortlessly. Other times, I know exactly what I want to say, but the words don’t come out the way I want. That’s when I call one of my writers, like, ‘Help! Help!’”

Despite an already impressive career, Denyque believes her proudest moment is still ahead. “I have a lot of moments I’m super proud of, but I don’t believe I’ve had my proudest moment yet. It’s a journey, and I’m still going,” she says. Her love for music and her desire to inspire others fuel her drive to keep pushing forward.

A true music fan at heart, Denyque has a dream list of artists she hopes to collaborate with. “Lil Wayne has been on my bucket list forever and a day—true Weezy fans know. I also want to collab with Tory Lanez, Chris Brown, and, of course, Rihanna. I know she may never do music again, but RiRi is definitely on that list!” Another dream collaboration? Dancehall and hip-hop legend Foxy Brown. “I really think we could do a dope song together.”

Beyond music, Denyque fully embraces her multifaceted identity. “I am multitalented, and I own it 100%,” she says with confidence. Fashion plays a key role in that expression. “You have to find your style and be comfortable in it. My comfort style is definitely tomboy chic—I’ve never been the girly, prissy tutu-type.”

Over the years, she has expanded her career beyond music into television, radio hosting, and entrepreneurship, proving she is a true power-



Denyque fully embraces her multifaceted identity

house.

June 6, 2025, marks the release of Denyque’s debut album, *GO*. The title reflects her relentless drive to achieve. “I gave you guys *R.E.A.D.Y* in 2024—‘Release Everything And Do You.’ Then I gave you my mixtape *S.E.T*—‘See Everything Transform.’ Now, on 6.6.2025, *GO* drops, and it translates to ‘Go OFF.’ So we have *Ready, Set, Go!*”

Co-produced by Denyque and a lineup of top-tier producers, *GO* captures the essence of her musical journey over the last five years. “It’s a beautiful culmination of everything since I came back into music. I think people are going to really, really love it.” Fans can also look forward to a music video for *Like Glu* featuring Charly Black, dropping this spring, and another for *Energy*, produced by Rome Da Don.

YE WANTS DIDDY FREED

Kanye calls out stars for not supporting jailed rap mogul

Kanye West is showing major support to Diddy at a time when other big celebrities are running as far away from him as possible.

What makes the move even more surprising is that Ye posted a FaceTime video of himself and Diddy's son, Christian Combs.

Remember Kanye West previously aired out Diddy calling him the Feds in an online rant prior to the Bad Boy Records mogul's arrest last year September on charges of sex trafficking, kidnapping, and racketeering.

The clip's audio wasn't clear, so it was hard to understand what the two were saying. But Ye wrote in all caps, "A son to his dad for every son who dad is locked up write or wrong I want yall to listen to Dave Chapelles jokes very close this time lets see how funny it gets when families are separated especially black families."

In another post on his X account, where he has been very active these days, he wrote, "Free Puff," in all caps. In his lengthy rant on X, Ye added, "All these celebrity ni—s and b—ches is pu— yall a watch our brother rot and never say sh-t." In another post, Ye calls Diddy his idol and hero. "They tryna prove a point and yall know that yall f—ing know that and sitting laughing at the f—ing internet on Instagram this man gave his life to us this my idol this my hero," he wrote.

Kanye West also mentioned Chris Brown in another post on X, where he expressed regret for not supporting the R&B singer when he was being canceled. "We all watched them try to cancel Chris Brown and ain't nobody do nothing I was pu—y then too Chris Brown its til the wheels fall off," he wrote. All of his tweets were written in all caps, which insinuates that



P Diddy with Kanye West (r)

he was angry.

Kanye West previously slammed Diddy for trying to walk him off the ledge when he went up against Adidas over their business dispute over his Yeezy brand. You can recall Adidas and many other brands cut ties with Kanye West at the time, which resulted in him losing

his billionaire status. Well, recent reports suggest that he is again a billionaire, which also gave him ammunition to go after his enemies and make thought-provoking posts on social media.

In the meantime, Diddy is heading for trial starting in May of this year.



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The party boat Cool Runnings with its passengers at Tobago's Nylon Pool

DAS TOBAGO

Germans trained to market island's "Beyond Ordinary" experience

EIGHT-SEVEN of Germany's top travel agents have been trained to market the Tobago Beyond Ordinary experience more effectively, as the island seeks to expand its reach in the German market.

The training, hosted in partnership with Condor Airlines, comes on the heels of the Tobago Tourism Agency Ltd (TTAL) launching the new visittobago.de website.

Condor currently offers a direct flight to Tobago from Frankfurt, Germany.

In a media release on February 25, TTAL

said the online training supports ongoing efforts by the agency to strengthen Tobago's position as a prime travel destination among tourists from the German, Austrian and Swiss markets. It said from the serenity of the island's unspoilt beaches and natural wonders such as the Japanese Gardens (corals in Speyside) and the world-famous Nylon Pool, to Tobago's renowned hospitality, diving and rich cultural heritage, the training covered the vast array of authentic experiences and adventures that Tobago offers.

TTAL director of marketing and communi-

cations Jason Antoine said: "Tobago is more than just a beach destination, it's a place where visitors can immerse themselves in vibrant culture, breath-taking nature, world-class diving, and unparalleled hospitality. Through this initiative, we are empowering travel agents to tell the full story of Tobago Beyond Ordinary, inspiring more travellers to explore our hidden gem."

TTAL said it continues to build its global network of travel professionals who can confidently promote destination Tobago, further extending the island's marketing worldwide.

PHOENIX

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A\$AP Rocky accuser defiant in wake of not-guilty verdict against rapper

A\$AP Rocky's accuser, A\$AP Relli, is speaking out for the first time since the not-guilty verdict was handed down.

The Harlem rapper was found not guilty by a jury on February 18 in a Los Angeles court after weeks on trial for assaulting his former group member A\$AP Relli. According to Relli, A\$AP Rocky endangered his life when he allegedly brandished a gun during a confrontation in 2021 in Hollywood.

However, his testimony proved problematic during the trial as he clashed with defense attorneys while on the witness stand, forcing the judge to constantly reprimand him. There are now chatters that the District Attorney could be forced to go after Relli for alleged perjury following his questionable performance on the witness stand. It's unclear if his testimony was the major sway for the jury to acquit Rocky.

Following his testimony, Relli became the subject of ruthless trolling from Rihanna and A\$AP Rocky's fans and even some members of the hip-hop community like 50 Cent, who called him out for allegedly wanting a big payday. The Breakfast Club's co-host, Charlamagne Tha God, also gave Relli Donkey of the Day, rounding out a rough week for the deflected A\$AP Mob member.

Relli, whose real name is Terrell Ephron, is now hitting back at his critics by telling them to shove it. "Gossiping is a form of entertainment for people who have no meaningful goals or purpose in life, hate me, bring shame to my name, say bad



ASAP Relli accused Rocky of endangering his life

things about me, I don't care. Your existence doesn't add any value in my life," he wrote in a defiant message on his Instagram Story.

Perhaps it's not the best time for such a defiant message since he is now under the D.A.'s radar, but Relli appears to be ready for anything that comes at him.

In the meantime, A\$AP Rocky and Rihanna are in a celebratory mood as the two were spotted

out shopping together a day after his acquittal. Rihanna also celebrated her birthday on February 18.

So the news couldn't come at a better time for the celebrity couple.

RiRi also reacted to the verdict via her Instagram Story. "The Glory belongs to God and God alone," she wrote, adding, "Thankful, humbled by his mercy!"



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Voletta Wallace and a young Biggie Smalls

B.I.G. MAMA

Mother of Notorious B.I.G., Voletta Wallace, Dead At Age 78

The Notorious B.I.G.'s mother, Voletta Wallace, has died.

The late rapper was the only child of Jamaican Voletta Wallace and his late father, Selwyn George Latore. According to TMZ, Biggie Smalls' mother passed away on Friday morning (February 21) in Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania, per the Monroe County Coroner, Thomas Yanac. Ms. Wallace was reportedly in hospice care at the time of her passing, and her death is ruled natural cause.

Voletta Wallace was born in the parish of Trelawny, Jamaica, in 1953 before immigrating to the United States in the early 1970s when she moved to Brooklyn. Voletta became a single mother in the mid-1970s when Biggie Smalls' father walked out on the family, leaving her to raise her son, who would become one of the most legendary figures in hip hop.

"We suffered a tremendous loss today," her family said in a statement on Friday. "Our mother, our matriarch, the woman who dedicated herself to uplifting her son, Christopher Wallace, and preserving his legacy has passed. It is with immense sadness that we share this news with you, and ask that you give our family the space and time needed to grieve this monumental loss. Thank you for your continued outpouring of love, prayers and condolences in this difficult time."

After The Notorious B.I.G.'s tragic passing on March 9, 1997, Voletta took control of the running of his estate, which was valued at around \$10 million at the time. Over the years, she has released books and was instrumental in his 2009 biopic, *Notorious*, which grossed over \$44 million at the Box Office. At the time, she stated that it was important to tell the late

rapper's story on the big screen to help cement his legacy in pop culture.

According to reports, Biggie Smalls' estate was worth a whopping \$160 million at the time of her passing, as she passed on his legacy to his two children. Over the years, she continues to celebrate her son's life and legacy and oversee his foundation.

Biggie's rival Tupac Shakur's death is one step closer to being solved after authorities made an arrest last year and filed charges against Duane Keith Davis, better known as Keefe D. However, Biggie's murder remains an unsolved mystery.

Another rapper, Tyga, is also mourning the death of his mother on the same day of Voletta Wallace's passing.

Voletta was age 78 at the time of her death.



The Graduate

Meet Christian Frederick Cole, England's First Black Barrister

Christian Frederick Cole was a Sierra Leonean lawyer who became an historical icon after becoming the first African barrister to practice in England. His accomplishments further became significant because he was the first black African student at the University of Oxford. As a black man emerging from an underprivileged family background, you'll notice that his story was marred by unavoidable setbacks and trials. Nevertheless, his perseverance and unfaltering mentality will reveal to you why Christian Frederick Cole is a symbol of black excellence.

Christian Cole was born in 1852 into the Creole tribe. He was born in Waterloo. He was the grandson of a slave. After the death of his father, Cole was adopted by his uncle Reverend James Cole who was stationed at Waterloo.

Before travelling to England, Christian sought tertiary education at the renowned Fourah Bay College in Freetown. His decision to enroll on Oxford University was simply a bold

and ambitious one. Negroes at the time could only dream of the opportunity. Nevertheless, his headmaster propelled his desire and encouraged him to apply to the prominent university.

Cole was accepted to study at Oxford as a non-collegiate student with the Delegacy of Un-attached Students in 1873. He studied the tough and intellectually drilling course known as Classics. Christian was a student contemporary with the dreaded imperialist Cecil Rhodes and the ostentatious author Oscar Wilde. While at Oxford, Christian Frederick Cole engaged in side hustles to sustain himself. He tutored white and privileged students which led to his classes becoming popular. He also lectured in music lessons.

In a narrative that defied adversity, Cole not only overcame financial hurdles but also transcended the challenges of not being affiliated with a college. His triumphant graduation in 1876, marked by a fourth-class honours de-

gree, seemed to weave the threads of fate itself.

As he stepped onto the stage of University College, his presence ignited a blaze of curiosity, painted even in the vivid strokes of press cartoons laden with racial caricatures.

After bidding adieu to Oxford in 1880, he embarked on a journey back to Sierra Leone, only to find the door to employment firmly shut. Unyielding, he retraced his steps to England, embarking on a new odyssey, this time donning the robes of a barrister. In a feat that etched his name into the annals of history, Cole was welcomed into the Inner Temple's fold in 1883, etching a path as the first black African to practice within the hallowed halls of English courts. His ambitions knew no bounds, leading him to distant Zanzibar, where the echoes of his legal prowess resonated.

Yet, destiny's fickle hand struck too soon. In 1885, at a mere 33 years of age, Cole's vibrant life was claimed by the relentless grasp of smallpox.

DREAM CITY

Hollywood superstar Idris Elba unveils plans for an eco-city in the land of his father, Sierra Leone

Idris Elba, one of Hollywood's biggest stars, sets to build an eco-city in Sherbro Island, a monumental Island in Sierra Leone with a population of around 30 to 40,000 people.

A year after Sierra Leone had gone to the polls and elected a new President, 2019 marked the year of Idris' first-ever visit to Sierra Leone, a country where his father was born.

His visit sparked headlines across the country. For a star so famous and popular, it was a symbol of homecoming to the country that birthed his father.

It was the visit that inspired him to embark on one of the biggest projects Sierra Leone has ever seen since post colonial times.

Idris' visit was welcomed with a presidential welcoming, and was received by President Bio. Eventually, he was given citizenship.

In 2020, Senegalese-born RnB superstar, Akon, announced "Akon City", a real life Wakanda city inspired by the Hollywood blockbuster movie Wakanda.

Although Akon's envisioned real life Wakanda city never progressed beyond the stage of dreams, in Sierra Leone, two childhood friends are dreaming big to build an eco-city.

Siaka Stevens, the grandson of former President Siaka Stevens, and Idris Elba are working round the clock to transforming a monumental and historic Island in Sierra Leone, Sherbro Island into an eco-city.

Idris and Siaka grew up together in east London.

Unlike Idris whose first visit to Sierra Leone came in 2019, Siaka had been visiting and spending time in Sierra Leone for the last decade.

Siaka, a luxury hospitality and entertainment businessman, had initially wanted to establish a boutique hotel in Sierra Leone but he realized "Sierra Leone wasn't ready for that level of tourism".

This ignited the idea of transforming Sherbro Island into an eco-city, and that's how Idris became a partner and big player in the project.

"Originally we went there thinking how could we bring tourism to the most incredible 19 miles of beachfront," Idris told the BBC in an interview.

During Idris Elba's visit to Sierra Leone in



An artist's rendition of Elba's dream city

2019, the Sherbro Alliance Partners (SAP) came to light. The Government of Sierra Leone and SAP signed deal to develop and transform Sherbro Island into an eco-city.

"We believe that Sherbro Island City will be an economic engine for our country and neighbours," said President Bio at the signing of documents.

According to Siaka, the project is estimated to "potentially accommodating a population of up to a million people".

Development of the project is to begin around the main town of Bonthe, but the whole island is within the scope of the project.

"Part of me wants to build that beautiful retirement home for my mum," said Idris Elba.

"Never in my lifetime would I have thought I could build the foundation for a new smart-city... I'm not qualified for that. But I am qualified to dream big," he continued.

As huge as this project is, and being one of

the biggest projects in Sierra Leone, it's clear that financing it requires partnerships, corporations, and investments.

According to SAP, the eco-city project is to be financed through a public-private partnership, whereby the island will be designated a special economic zone with a separate legal and economic system from the rest of Sierra Leone.

Electricity is still a major challenge in Sierra Leone. More than 70% of Sierra Leoneans don't have access to electricity. Rural areas like Sherbro Island still lack electricity.

In a bold and ambitious move, Idris and his wife Sabrina met with one of Europe's largest investors in renewable energy, Octopus Energy Generation.

In November last year, SAP partnered with Octopus Energy Generation to build wind and solar farm, which includes five wind turbines, an array of solar panels and battery storage.

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