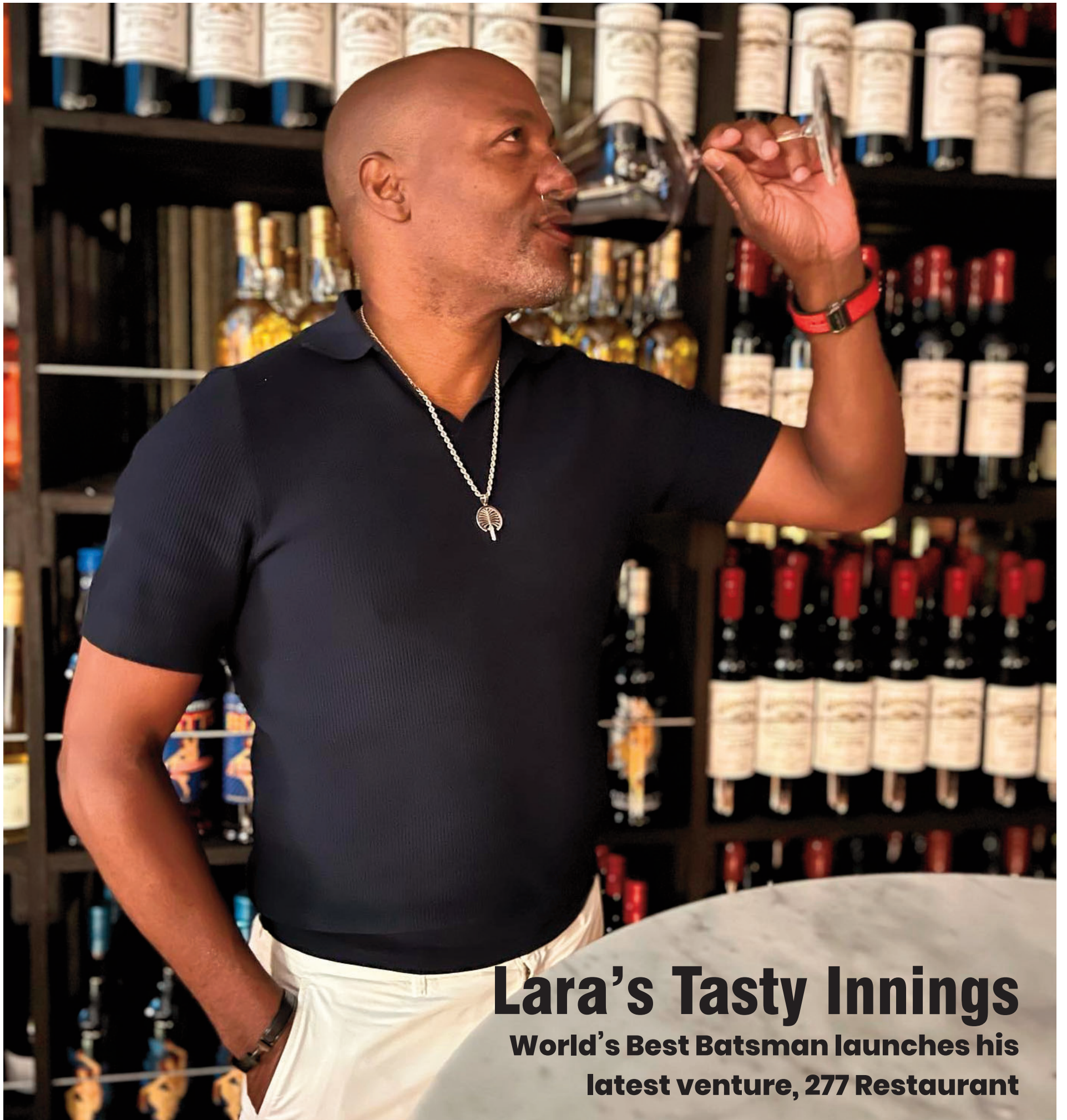




## GYALGEBRA

Bunji Garlin, Lady Lava team  
up with Major Lazer for new  
2026 recording



## Lara's Tasty Innings

World's Best Batsman launches his  
latest venture, 277 Restaurant





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# THUNDERSTRUCK

## AC/DC adds four Canadian cities to its 2026 Power Up tour

Rock ‘n’ roll fans better get ready to be shook all night long, because one of the biggest acts on earth is returning to four Canadian cities in 2026.

AC/DC has announced more dates for its ongoing Power Up tour (named for the band’s album of the same name that came out in 2020) that includes stops at some of the biggest stadiums in North America.

In Canada, the Australian rock band will perform with The Pretty Reckless in Vancouver, Edmonton, Toronto and Montreal.

Their first stop will be in Edmonton at 56,400-seat Commonwealth Stadium on Aug. 9, 2026.

“We’re thrilled to host rock star legends AC/DC at Commonwealth Stadium, the largest venue of its kind in Canada,” said Heather Seutter, director of Commonwealth Stadium.

“Events like this draw in people from across the city, the province and beyond and demonstrates that Edmonton is a concert destination of choice for major artists.”

AC/DC previously left fans Thunderstruck in Edmonton in 2015 and 2009.

After shows south of the border, AC/DC will then head to Montreal for a show at Parc Jean-Drapeau on Sept. 12, 2026. The park on the Saint Lawrence River that can hold up to 65,000 people is set to also host Iron Maiden the week before AC/DC’s arrival.

Their last Canadian date is Sept. 16 at Rogers Stadium in Toronto.

Tickets for all Canadian stops go on sale to the public on Friday at 10 a.m. local time on Ticketmaster.



AC/DC — best known for hits like “Hell’s Bells” and “Thunderstruck”

AC/DC has been one of the leading rock and roll bands for over four decades, with more than 200 million albums sold worldwide.

One of the most influential rock bands in history, AC/DC played their first show on Dec. 31, 1973 at a nightclub in Sydney, Australia.

By 1980, the band was on a roll, known for its high-energy performances and predictably hard-charging songs. Their album Highway to Hell was certified gold in America and made it into the top 25 Billboard album charts.

The band was founded by brothers Angus and Malcolm Young; the latter died in 2017 at the age of 64 after suffering from dementia for several years. Angus remains the only continuous member of the band.

The Power Up tour will see Angus Young on lead guitar, vocalist Brian Johnson, rhythm guitarist Stevie Young, drummer Matt Laug and bass player Chris Chaney

AC/DC was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2003.

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# 2026 – A TIME FOR New Beginnings

Sit with me here. Take a deep breath. Feel it move through you. Exhale and let yourself relax.

Look at where you are now. Look at how much you have grown. Think about the choices you made, the moments you stood strong, the ways you cared for yourself, and the courage you showed when it was easier to hide. That is worth noticing. That is worth celebrating.

A new beginning is not about waiting for a date on the calendar. A new beginning happens the moment you decide it is time. It happens when you choose to take what you have learned and carry it forward into the next chapter.

Think back to when you started this journey. You were unsure but willing. You began with small steps, maybe even shaky steps, but you started anyway. You made space for self-care. You discovered your inner power. You shifted your perspective. You recalibrated when you needed to. You let yourself be seen. You stood firm when it mattered most. You leaned into change instead of resisting it. You chose gratitude and grace.

Now you are here. Stronger. Wiser. More connected to yourself. This is not the end. This is the doorway into something new.

A new beginning asks you to reflect. So take a moment with me now. Close your eyes if it helps. Think about the person you were when you began. What fears did you carry? What doubts held you back? Now think about the person you are in this moment. Can you see the difference? Can you feel the

shift?

That is transformation.

But a new beginning also asks you to dream again. Not the small dreams you keep tucked away, but the ones that light you up inside. What do you really want? What would make you feel alive? What would bring more meaning into your life?

Do not push those dreams aside. Let them rise. They are there for a reason.

Here is the truth. You do not need permission to begin again. You do not need everything figured out. You only need a willingness to step forward with what you know now. And you know more than you think. You have lived through enough to prove that you can do hard things. You have shown yourself that you can grow.

So what will you do with this new beginning?

Take a moment. Think about one area of your life where you are ready for something different. It could be your health, your work, your relationships, or simply the way you speak to yourself each day. Choose one. Hold it in your heart. That is where your new beginning starts.

A new beginning does not need to be big or flashy. It can be simple. It can be quiet. It can be one new thought you choose each morning. It can be one new action you take each week. The power is not in how grand it looks. The power is in the decision to begin at all.

I have had to begin again many times in my own life. Sometimes it was by choice. Other times

it was because life pushed me.

Each time I resisted, I suffered more. Each time I surrendered and chose to begin again, I found strength I did not know I had. That is why I believe in new beginnings. They are not weakness. They are courage.

So here is what I want you to know. It does not matter how many times you fell this year. It does not matter how many times you doubted yourself. It does not matter how many times you felt stuck. What matters is that you are still here. You are still breathing. You are still willing to rise.

That is power.

Take another breath now. Inhale the thought, I am ready. Exhale the thought, I release the past. Feel how different it feels when you choose to see yourself as someone who is ready for a new beginning.

And here is something else. You do not have to do this alone. When you step into a new beginning, you create a ripple. Others see it. Others feel it. Your courage becomes their inspiration. You may not even realize it, but someone is watching you. Someone is learning from you. Someone is waiting for your example to give them permission to begin too.

That is how powerful you are.

So as we sit here together, let me remind you. You are not behind. You are not lost. You are exactly where you need to be for your next beginning.

Now let us get practical. What is one thing you can do tomorrow that will move you closer to your new beginning? Write it down. Say



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it out loud. Commit to it. Then do it. Action creates momentum. Momentum creates change.

And when fear shows up, because it will, remember this. Fear is not a stop sign. Fear is a signal that you are moving into new territory. That is where growth happens. That is where life expands. Step forward anyway.

I have chosen to live this way. To begin again, as many times as it takes. To stop letting the past decide my future. To trust that every ending is really just a doorway to something greater. And I want you to live that way too.

So let me ask you one final question. Are you willing to give yourself permission to begin again? Not someday. Not later. Now?

Stay here with me for a breath. Hand on your heart if you want. Feel it beating. Feel that rhythm. That is life saying, you are still here. You are still becoming. You are still capable of more.

A new beginning is waiting for you.

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# GYALGEBRA

## Bunji, Lady Lava lend talent on new recording from Major Lazer

T&T party-starters Bunji Garlin (Ian Alvarez) and Lady Lava (Keisha Harris) are among a global group of artistes featured on hit-making DJ quartet Major Lazer's new mixtape, GYALGEBRA.

The nine-track project, released on November 21 via Diplo's Mad Decent label, gathers voices from Jamaica, Toronto, New Zealand and the Dominican Republic. Bunji appears on "G.O.A.T." alongside new Major Lazer vocalist America Foster; while Lady Lava features on "What Is The Time", carving out her biggest global look to date.

For Major Lazer, these selections were grounded in long-standing creative ties and an understanding of how Caribbean rhythms continue to inform their musical direction. Walshy Fire, born Leighton Paul Walsh, describes the project as a return to the original essence that shaped the group.

"When it comes to powerful, ram-you-in-the-head, aggressive soca, Bunji Garlin is that G.O.A.T. It only made sense to have him deliver the message on a song called 'G.O.A.T.'," Walshy Fire said.

Walshy Fire said this latest release reconnects the group with its foundational sound.

"The beat for 'What is the Time' had some of the flavour of 'Pon De Floor', Major Lazer's first big tune, with the marching-band snares," Walshy Fire said. "Lady Lava was a great addition to the track, tapping into zess and dances like 6:30."

That link between regional identity and global dance culture remains central to the group's vision.

"The Caribbean is at the heart of everything we do as Major Lazer. Highest respect to the rest of the Caribbean but with myself being from Jamaica and our longtime bredrin and longtime member Chris Jillionaire coming from Trinidad, those are going to be some of the first things you hear on any project," Walshy Fire added.

For Bunji Garlin, the collaboration is less about reinvention or strategy, and more about his ongoing creative process that continues to expand.

"I didn't try to do anything different because I am already different with many ideas I haven't



**Bunji Garlin — working with Lady Lava and Major Lazer**

even begun to share, so usually it's just a case of placing something that matches and if nothing I have matches it's easy to build fresh which happens a lot, too. In this it probably was a bit of both," Garlin explained.

Bunji's approach reflects a mindset shaped less by genre rules and more by creative latitude. He sees global spaces as offering greater room to explore ideas that may not always find acceptance within the traditional confines of soca.

"The part I tapped into is the unconfined side. The larger world is more open source as compared to soca which can be very territorial in terms of what the topic can be and how you approach it. Out in the wider world it's more of a free form, so there I can spread more," he said.

That same philosophy also influences how he chooses the projects he commits to, particularly when it comes to international collabo-

rations.

"It means being able to work the material collaboratively on the global level. Like sometime ago I turned down some ML projects because they needed some toplines and two-liners, and I told Diplo we had done too much of that already; if it's not full-song format, I'll respectfully decline it and that goes to anyone else as well on the level," Garlin revealed. "When Wes approached me on this track, I told him we gotta be in a position to work the song full 100."

For Lady Lava, Major Lazer's invitation signals both recognition and affirmation. Her presence on GYALGEBRA builds on recent milestones, including her Caribbean Music Awards win as Best Zess Act, and her appearance on the Jus Bus remix of Blackpink's "Jump".

"I feel extremely humbled to be able to work with the Major Lazer!" Lava said.





# AH DOH LIKE PARANG

## Christmas in Trinidad just isn't a festive season without the music

The Moonlighters has released its original soca parang single for the 2025 Christmas season.

The track, titled “Ah Doh Like Parang”, blends witty lyrics, catchy rhythms, and that unmistakable Trini Christmas flair.

Launched November 1 on YouTube, band member Neil Chan says the single has received raving reviews and thousands of views.

Chan, who penned the lyrics, said the song is about a fellow whose wife accuses him of always being in a parang party.

“So, he and his wife fall out because she says every time she misses him, he’s in a parang party somewhere. His response is that—no, he doesn’t like parang, but parang likes him. It’s a very humorous kind of song,” he says.

While this is the band’s first soca parang release, Chan said the feedback from the public

has been overwhelming.

“The band is not a parang band, but after hearing the track, many people think we are a parang band,” he shared, chuckling.

For the band’s maiden soca parang, Chan delivers on the lead vocals and bass guitar; Anthony Rattansingh plays the rhythm guitar; Brian Seepaulsingh strums the cuatro; Barry Mootoo provides the keys; and Makesi Joseph dabbles on the percussion.

Chan said the band was formed 20 years ago, together with some residents of his Central Trinidad community.

“We play all Caribbean music: reggae, kaiso, soca. We even play bossa nova and some Latin music. We also play some of the old jazz standards. We have a very wide repertoire,” he continued.

The song, he added, was debuted during the band’s live performance at the Kaiso Blues

Cafe, Wrightson Road, Port of Spain in November.

The event, titled Just Good Music 3, was sold out, and its proceeds are being given to a charity.

“Most of the time when we play, we do a charity gig. So, we pick a charity and then we would have a show and then make a donation,” he said.

While the band did not host a charity gig in 2024, he said its 2023 donation went to two charities. “In 2023, we had two shows and we were able to donate \$46,000. We donated \$32,000 to Children with Cancer, the I Care campaign; and the rest, \$14,000, went to the St Patrick’s RC Church for repairs of its pews,” he said.

This year, however, he said the money raised would be funnelled into the band to cover recording costs.

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# WAH YUH WANT?

## Soca song to be featured on Canadian TV show soundtrack

Soca artiste Melly Rose's 2022 single Wah Yuh Want featuring Sekon Sta will feature in the hit Canadian television comedy series, Office Movers' second season.

The series airs on Canadian streaming service, Crave.

It was produced by Kasey Phillips' Precision Productions.

This is a major milestone for the artiste and she said in a release that it was a proud and powerful movement for her and the wider Caribbean music industry.

"The feature stands as a testament to the global appeal of soca and the growing presence of Caribbean artistes on the world stage," the release said.

The series' second season will also feature music from other Caribbean soca ar-

tistes including Iwer George, College Boy Jesse, Teddyson John, Badjohn Republic and Preedy.

TT comedian Gervail "Jr Lee" Lemo will also be making his debut on the show.

"This is such a big moment for me and for Caribbean music as a whole. Hearing Wah Yuh Want in an international TV show for the first time, it's a feeling I can't describe.

"I'm so thankful for everyone who made it possible, especially Kasey Phillips from Precision Productions for his incredible work syncing the tracks and getting them featured in television and film. It's an honor to see our soca music and our culture represented and celebrated on this level," Melly Rose (pictured at right) said.



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# GANJA FARMER

## Hit song earns a Grammy nomination 21 years after its release

Marlon Asher's "Ganja Farmer" turned 21 this year, and there is no more fitting coming-of-age celebration than a Grammy nomination for Asher and the two men who helped bring the song to life, Carl "Beaver" Henderson and Geron "Gee" Woodruffe.

The trio are credited on Burna Boy's Grammy-nominated album *No Sign of Weakness* for the track 28 Grams, which samples *Ganja Farmer*. The album is nominated in the Best Global Music Album category. Niph Key from Nigeria produced the song. Asher is credited as a writer, while Beaver and Gee are credited as co-producers. Should the album win, the trio will receive at least a Grammy certificate.

This marks the second Grammy-nominated album Asher has been featured. He also appears on Keznamdi's debut album *Blxxd* and *Fyah*, which is up for Best Reggae Album, with a song titled *Bun de Ganja*. It is one of Asher's first releases under his new label, Vas Productions.

Though *Ganja Farmer* has remained a global anthem since its release in 2004, the team sees Burna Boy's Grammy nomination and the publicity surrounding it as an opportunity to breathe new life into the evergreen hit. A remix and possibly a new video are already being discussed with Asher's label.

Reflecting on the song's longevity, a track that literally changed his life and took him around the world, Asher, a Trinidad and Tobago native now resident in the US, gives full credit to Gee and Beaver.

"I was just a construction worker who could sing," he said via phone. "They told me this song could be a hit, let's record it. I had done a version before at Caribbean Sound Basin for Kisskadee Karavan and Beaver was already familiar with it when Gee brought me to him. I think it's because of how it came together that it's lasted so long. As soon as Geron said, 'Let's record it,' I was all for it."

Beaver credits the song's success to their chemistry and the way it was produced.

"Nothing in life is a coincidence," he said. "Geron and I met accidentally. We had meetings with the same person, mine first and his after. I overheard the start of his meeting, gave him some advice, and from then, we just clicked. The same magic that happened with us happened



**Marlon Asher performing *Ganja Farmer* at a concert earlier this year**

when we met Marlon. As a producer, you can't predict a hit every time, but something in your gut tells you when there's something special. Twenty-one years later, here we are."

On the lyrical side, Beaver believes *Ganja Farmer* endures because it is an ode to weed, a rebellious one written at a time when much of the world was legalising cannabis while, in TT, authorities were still destroying marijuana fields. Though now decriminalised, marijuana remains illegal in TT.

Musically, Beaver says the song's staying power comes from the fact that it isn't pure reggae. "It's soca music played at 80 BPM with a reggae singer," he said of the catchy groove.

Backing him up, Asher noted that after more than 15 years of performing with live bands, he has yet to find one that can play *Ganja Farmer* exactly as it was created. "Musicians always struggle with the beat, especially the drums," he

said.

The song's success is also a lesson in solid business. Gee formed a record label to sign Asher, ensuring that his work was protected. He brought on his sister, Anje, as Asher's manager and after extensive research, secured a publishing deal with Jack Russell Music out of London and distribution with Greensleeves records.

"We had to package it for the international audience and tailor it for different markets," said Gee. "If you don't understand those things, your track can fall short. You can't market in all markets at once."

Beaver added, "There's a magical phrase, collecting on the backend. For decades, we've been hustling, but we never said we had a song. We said we had a potential hit, so we needed to make sure that if it blew up, we'd benefit from it."





Mystic Quartz — a section from the Kalicharan band Bedazzle

# BEDAZZLE

## After loss of its matriarch, Kalicharan Mas coming strong for Carnival 2026

Kalicharan Mas launched its 2026 Carnival presentation, Bedazzle at the Lobby, Paria Suits, La Romaine on November 15.

The band originally founded by the the husband and wife team of Ivan and Wendy Kalicharan has captured the San Fernando Band of the Year title 31 times.

Wendy lost the battle to cancer in May this year.

Daughter and co-bandleader Ayana Kalicharan-Mahase said her mother Wendy lived a “beautiful and glittery life,” which inspired her designs for next year's presentation.

The launch featured sections like Oro, Onyx, Mystic Quartz, Lar-

imar, Bronze and Rose Quartz.

Kalicharan-Mahase said, “ It’s not just about sparkle, it is about impact, emotion and elevated beauty. The bedazzled theme is a celebration of brilliance, both literal and metaphorical. It is the connection to gemstones that elevates it from mere sparkle to a rich tapestry of meaning, beauty and emotional resonance. Whether in fashion, design or storytelling, it invites us to embrace the extraordinary and shine unapologetically.”

The event also formed part of a “thank you” to revellers who have been with the band over the years, with an after-party.





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# 277 NOT OUT

**Brian Lara begins new innings with a restaurant tribute to his historic run**

WEST Indies cricket great Brian Lara has begun a new innings in the food and hospitality industry with the official opening of his first restaurant, 277, at the posh Millennium Lakes Golf and Country Club, Trincity — near the airport in Trinidad.

The former West Indies captain, alongside his new business partner Shane Sagar, formally opened the doors of the venue in November before a crowd of invited guests, family, former teammates, business partners and supporters.

The launch marks Lara's most significant business venture since retiring from cricket, and he said the restaurant represents a new phase of his professional life.

Describing the moment as a welcomed shift into unfamiliar territory, Lara told attendees, all decked off in white, "This is a new chapter. This is a new arena for me."

The name 277, Lara said, was derived from his historic knock during a 1993 Test match against Australia at the Sydney Cricket Ground, where he scored his maiden Test century. Despite that third of five Test matches ending in a draw, a total team effort saw the visitors topple the Aussies 2-1 in that series.

That moment in Lara's timeless career, was described by the legendary batsman as "the first time I started believing in myself."

"It was the first time that I had that confidence. I had that identity that I wanted in cricket. It means a lot. And if I'm going to open something for the first time, it's got to be represented by that sort of characteristic."

He added that, for a first business venture of this scale, it was appropriate to connect it to his first major breakthrough as a batsman.

The menu offers a broad range of inter-



**Brian Lara — from star batsman to restaurant owner**

national cuisine, with a unique blend of experience from the two main chefs from England and TT and a pasty chef from India. They've incorporated a variety of local ingredients into the menu infused with the chefs' collective culinary experience from around the globe.

One example is 277's chadon beni chimi-churri — which merges TT's most popular local seasoning herb into an uncooked sauce and condiment, traditionally from Argentina and Uruguay, and served with grilled meats, such as steak and sausages, but also accompanying poultry, fish and vegetables.

Lara said he considered the restaurant industry a natural extension of his interests, explaining that he frequented the location in the past while golfing nearby. When the former restaurant occupying the space closed, the opportunity emerged for a new concept, eventually materialising into 277 after Sagar contacted him

to pursue the idea.

Lara said his team had completed training, preparations and planning over the past months and were now ready to "execute" as the business officially opens to the public.

Former West Indies opener Desmond Haynes attended as a special guest and recalled witnessing Lara's original 277 at the Sydney Cricket Ground. Haynes said he travelled to Trinidad for the launch at Lara's request and expressed optimism that the restaurant would grow successfully over time.

He also spoke briefly about Lara's achievements following the 277 innings, describing the number as a symbol of Lara's career trajectory.

"When you come here, I want to make sure that you're well fed. I want to make sure that you enjoy the ambience. And I want to make sure that you feel that you were entertained at 277," the star batsman said.

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# CHARLOTTEVILLE TAILS

## Short film gives a closer look at a stray dog's life in a small town

*Pat Ganase looks at a short film by Elspeth Duncan*

For as long as I've been coming to Charlotteville – over 30 years now – there have been dogs in this village. We call them strays (even when they wore collars) pothongs or more caustically shithongs.

Amazingly, they are never fierce. Even when we brought our own pup – Jet – on one of our first trips, he was not barked at, attacked or lured away.

Around the Man-O-War Bay cottages, we feed them our scraps and bones. Most of the dogs that come around or sleep in the crawl space below the cottages are well-mannered and patient. They don't need to speak for us to understand them. "We are here to welcome and look after you while you visit," as they join us on the beach or the road. And in the casual way of vacations, we are friends for a while.

In recent years, we see the same dogs, the ones we called Max, Toby, Dusty, giving them names, certain that they belong to homes in the village and have other names. We are never under any illusion or obligation of ownership, but glad that they are there to eat leftovers in our space.

In Charlotteville, we are as happy to see these doggies as we are to see the pelicans and magnificent frigatebirds, to hear the oropendolas and cocricos. But in Charlotteville, we are visitors, and welcomed or tolerated, the vacation allows us to have time and the wherewithal to befriend dogs as well as humans.

There's another side to a dog's life in Charlotteville. This is shown eloquently and graphically in Elspeth Duncan's short film, *Charlotteville Tails*. As Elspeth explained, it started with a career fair in which she talked about film-making and the power of cameras – even on a cellphone – to show others your view of the world. She proved it by making *Charlotteville Tails*, allowing the children to shape the film in their village.

Elspeth's passion, evolved through her friendship with the stray dog which she adopted and named Venus, is kindness to all creatures.



### Film looks at the lives of stray dogs in the Tobago town of Charlotteville

She is speaking for Venus in her advocacy, which steers the NGO Venus Doggess of Love. The film that emerged followed a few dogs that were starving, injured or scorned. The children in the film see maggots and screw worms removed; dogs being fed by kind strangers; some taken to the other end of the island for treatment; they sing and pray and raise funds for the safety and health of the dogs. At the end, Elspeth tells us sadly of those who died or disappeared. She advocates for a vet clinic in this village where simple, sometimes rough, are the lives of dogs and humans.

The villagers of Charlotteville, like most communities around Trinidad and Tobago, are generally indifferent. Even those dogs that are owned and called pets are often viewed as utilities: to bark when strangers approach the home, to be good guards, and in some instances, good hunters ("wild meat is \$100 a pound...").

*Charlotteville Tails* asks us to consider creatures – especially dogs, the species that evolved most intimately with humans – as kin, with the right to care and compassion. Studies have shown that dogs are evolving alongside humans for 30,000 years. More recent studies also speculate that dogs' behaviours are rapidly changing to match modern humans.

The dogs of Charlotteville are certainly quick studies in dogs' adaptability and survival. They

jostle with the birds on the beach for fish discarded by fishermen and have retained their ability to dismantle and digest fish bones. Their facial expressions and demeanour elicit smiles and trust. They follow you from one end of the village to the beach, then disappear, to reappear after dinnertime.

Docile and easily trained, these Trinbagonian pothounds are often adopted and taken to new homes in countries on both sides of the Atlantic. As diverse as the people of Trinidad and Tobago, the Trini pothounds evolved from every breed introduced here. Alsatian, Akita, Belgian and German Shepherd, Labrador, Rottweiler, Dachshund, Terrier, Bulldog, Pitbull, Chihuahua, Fox Hound, Pomeranian, Pekinese, Husky, toute moon! All are in the gene pool. So the variety is complex, surprising and endless: characteristics captured by clay sculptor Bunty O'Connor in her annual collection of Trini Pot-hounds.

Elspeth Duncan's intention is to use *Charlotteville Tails* to bring awareness and understanding, with the simple message, Be Kind to Animals. The film was completed in the first half of this year. It has already won awards at the TT Film Festival in September. She screened it recently at a fundraiser with the short film she produced earlier.



# JIMMY CROSSES OVER

## Reggae Legend Jimmy Cliff dies of pneumonia at age 81

Jamaica and the global music community are mourning the death of reggae legend Jimmy Cliff, who passed away at age 81. His wife, Latifa, confirmed the news in an emotional Instagram post, saying he “crossed over due to a seizure followed by pneumonia.”

“It’s with profound sadness that I share that my husband, Jimmy Cliff, has crossed over... To all his fans around the world, please know that your support was his strength throughout his whole career,” she wrote, thanking his medical team for their care. “Jimmy, my darling, may you rest in peace... I hope you all can respect our privacy during these hard times.” The message was signed by Latifa, and his children Lilty and Aken.

Born James Chambers in St. James in 1944, Cliff began writing songs while still in primary school before moving to Kingston at 14 in pursuit of a music career. His break came at 17 with Hurricane Hattie, produced by Leslie Kong, launching a prolific run of early Jamaican hits including King of Kings, Miss Jamaica, and Pride and Passion.

Cliff’s international rise accelerated after he signed with Island Records and relocated to the UK, scoring global hits in the late 1960s and early 1970s with Wonderful World, Beautiful People, Vietnam—which Bob Dylan once called the greatest protest song he’d heard—and his cover of Cat Stevens’ Wild World.

His landmark moment came in 1972 with The Harder They Come, both the film and soundtrack, in which he starred as Ivanhoe Martin. The project became a defining cultural export for Jamaica, introducing reggae to new audiences worldwide and cementing Cliff as one of the genre’s central architects. He later contributed to major film soundtracks, including Cool Runnings with his chart-topping version of I Can See Clearly Now, and appeared in films such as Club Paradise and Marked for Death.

Over the decades, Cliff collaborated with a wide range of artists—from Kool & the Gang and Annie Lennox to Sting and Joe Strummer—and earned two Grammy Awards. In 2010, he was inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame. He remained an active performer, releasing new



**Jimmy Cliff — reggae icon**

music into his late 70s, including the 2022 album Refugees.

He was also a recipient of the Order of Merit, the highest honour Jamaica grants for contributions to arts and sciences, making him the only reggae musician to receive the distinction during his lifetime. In March 2019, Jamaica officially renamed a stretch of road in Montego Bay after Jimmy Cliff. Gloucester Avenue — more popularly known as the “Hip Strip” — was rededicated as Jimmy Cliff Boulevard. During the ceremony, Cliff expressed gratitude, saying it was especially meaningful to be honoured in the parish where he was born — the very land where the old hospital once stood and where, ac-

cording to reports, his mother gave birth to him. Culture Minister Olivia “Babsy” Grange also called for a statue in his honour to be erected in Montego Bay, citing the importance of monuments as inspirations for future generations.

Tributes poured in, including from Prime Minister Andrew Holness, who hailed Cliff as “a true cultural giant whose music carried the heart of our nation to the world.”

“His music lifted people through hard times, inspired generations, and helped to shape the global respect that Jamaican culture enjoys today,” Holness said. “Walk good, Jimmy Cliff. Your legacy lives on in every corner of our island and in the hearts of the Jamaican people.”



# 2 BILLION & COUNTING

## Rihanna 2007 hit ‘Umbrella’ passes milestone on Spotify

Nearly two decades after it first dominated global airwaves, Rihanna’s single “Umbrella” has officially surpassed 2 billion streams on Spotify, adding yet another milestone to the Barbadian superstar’s career. Originally released on March 29, 2007, “Umbrella” featured rap mogul Jay-Z and served as the lead single from Rihanna’s third studio album, *Good Girl Gone Bad*.

The track, which catapulted Rihanna into global superstardom, marked a turning point not just in her career but in pop music itself. With its thunderous beat, emotionally-charged chorus, and genre-blending production, “Umbrella” became a cultural phenomenon, topping the charts in 19 countries, including a record-breaking 10-week run at No. 1 in the UK, the longest of the 2000s.

In the United States, it spent seven weeks atop the Billboard Hot 100, solidifying its status as one of the most defining songs of its era. Remarkably, the song found new life in 2023 when it re-entered the Hot 100 at No. 37 following Rihanna’s headline-making performance at the Super Bowl LVII halftime show.

This latest streaming milestone also makes “Umbrella” Jay-Z’s first and Rihanna’s third song to cross the 2-billion mark on Spotify, following fan-favorites “We Found Love” and “Love on the Brain.”

“Umbrella” left an indelible mark on pop culture. It won Best Rap/Sung Collaboration at the 50th Annual Grammy Awards and was nominated for both Record of the Year and Song of the Year. Its music video also earned Video of the Year at the 2007 MTV Video Music Awards. The Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) has since certified the single Diamond, reflecting over 10 million units sold in the U.S. alone. In 2021, Rolling



### Rihanna — a cultural phenomenon

Stone placed it at No. 332 on its authoritative list of The 500 Greatest Songs of All Time.

With this achievement, Rihanna continues to cement her status as one of the most successful Caribbean artists in history. Hailing from Saint Michael, Barbados, the singer, actress, entrepreneur, and philanthropist has built a global empire that extends far beyond music. Yet her roots remain at the core of her identity, and she’s frequently praised for putting Caribbean culture on the world stage.

Since “Umbrella”, Rihanna has released multiple chart-topping albums and countless singles, many of which have become anthems across genres. Her musical achievements are matched only by her impact in fashion and

beauty, most notably with her billion-dollar brand, Fenty Beauty.

While her fans continue to eagerly await news of her next studio album, Rihanna has been making headlines in other ways. Just this September, she gave birth to her third child and first daughter, Rocky Irish Mayers, with longtime partner ASAP Rocky.

Even as she embraces motherhood and entrepreneurial success, Rihanna’s influence in music shows no signs of waning. The 2-billion stream milestone is a testament to her staying power, her talent, and the global love for a song that, 18 years on, still feels as fresh and resonant as ever.



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**Sandals St Vincent has won the top Travvy Award — considered the ‘Oscars of the Travel Industry’**

# WORLD’S BEST RESORT

## **Sandals SVG wins Gold Medal for Best All-Inclusive Resort on the globe**

St. Vincent and the Grenadines’ Minister of Tourism, Civil Aviation, Sustainable Development and Culture, Hon. Carlos James, has congratulated Sandals Saint Vincent and the Grenadines after the property captured the Gold Medal for Best All-Inclusive Resort in the World at the 2025 Travvy Awards.

“This is a proud and historic moment for Saint Vincent and the Grenadines,” said Honourable Carlos James. “To have Sandals Saint Vincent and the Grenadines voted the best all-inclusive resort in the world is a powerful endorsement of our destination, our people, and the strategic partnership we have built with Sandals Resorts International. I warmly congratulate Executive Chairman Adam Stewart, the leadership team, and most importantly, the hundreds of Vincentians whose professionalism and

hospitality made this achievement possible.”

Often referred to as the “Oscars of the travel industry,” the Travvy Awards—presented by TravelAlliancemedias—are determined by travel advisors and honour top-performing tourism brands and destinations worldwide.

The Minister pointed to the resort’s strong results since opening in March 2024, citing high occupancy, standout guest reviews, and its integration of local culture, cuisine, and community engagement. “Sandals Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has quickly become a benchmark for excellence in the Caribbean,” he added. “From increased employment to expanded supply-chain opportunities for local farmers, fishers and artisans, the economic and social impact has been transformational. This award simply confirms what thousands of guests have

already shared, that Sandals Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is one of the most exceptional resorts anywhere in the world.”

James also welcomed Sandals Resorts International’s recently announced plan to build a new Beaches Resort in the country, calling it another major boost for the tourism sector. “The announcement of a new Beaches Resort is a tremendous vote of confidence in the direction of our tourism industry,” he said. “Beaches will open up incredible opportunities for family tourism, multi-generational travel, and new regional and international markets. It demonstrates Sandals’ deep belief in our destination and aligns perfectly with the Government’s vision for sustainable, diversified tourism growth.”

He further described the resort as a regional model for tourism development



# PHOENIX

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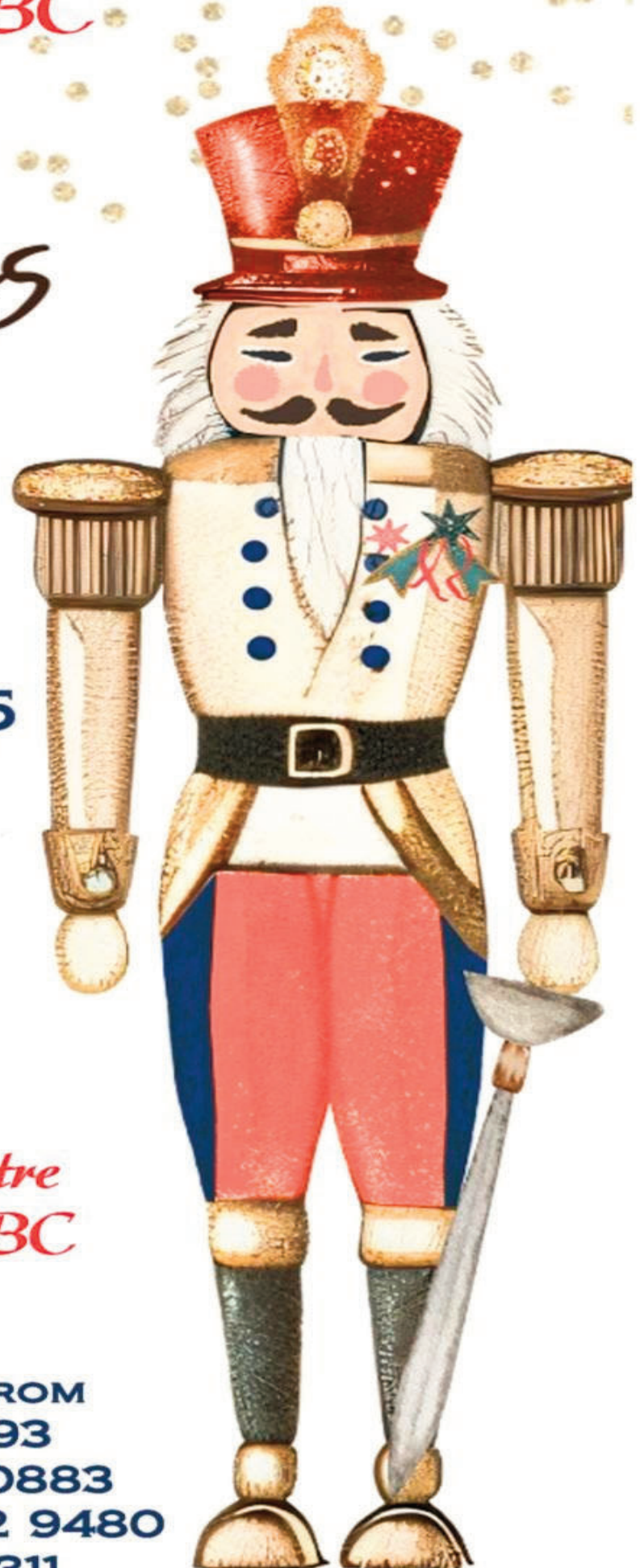
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# Rebel Beauties

## Contestants, national directors at Ms Universe quit after claims of racism

The Miss Universe Organization is facing its most intense scrutiny in years after a series of explosive allegations – from claims of discriminatory decision-making to resignations by contestants and national directors – triggered a global debate about fairness, transparency, and whether racial bias played a role in the 2025 results.

The controversy erupted after Miss Universe president Raul Rocha allegedly suggested that Miss Côte d’Ivoire, Olivia Yacé, was not crowned due to her “passport” limiting travel. The remark – made during a livestream and widely circulated by pageant bloggers – sparked outrage across African and Caribbean communities, especially since Yacé was considered a front-runner.

Miss Guadeloupe Ophély Mézino, who finished in the Top 12, condemned the explanation as “the worst excuse” she had ever heard.

“Did you let them compete knowing they would never win?” she wrote on Instagram. “Are you trying to find a racist excuse for the fact that you didn’t choose someone who was highly qualified for this job?”

Mézino also questioned why smaller territories – many of them Afro-Caribbean or African – invest heavily in franchise fees if they have “no real chance” of advancing.

To her knowledge, she added, Côte d’Ivoire’s Yacé also holds an American passport – making the “visa” explanation even more questionable.

“My heart is burning. I don’t like injustice,” she wrote.

Days later, Yacé announced she was cutting ties with Miss Universe entirely, relinquishing her continental title. “To remain true to my values – respect, dignity, excellence, equal opportunity – I must step away,” she wrote. “I call upon Black, African, Caribbean, American, and Afro-descendant communities: continue entering spaces where you are not expected.”

She returned her sash and formally notified the organization that she would no longer be affiliated with the MUO.

The president of the Miss France organiza-



**Ophély Mézino, Ms Guadeloupe 2025**

tion, Frédéric Gilbert, told Paris Match that the franchise is considering withdrawing entirely after learning about the “Beyond the Crown” program – a little-known MUO initiative that allegedly influenced Top 30 placements without the knowledge of some national directors.

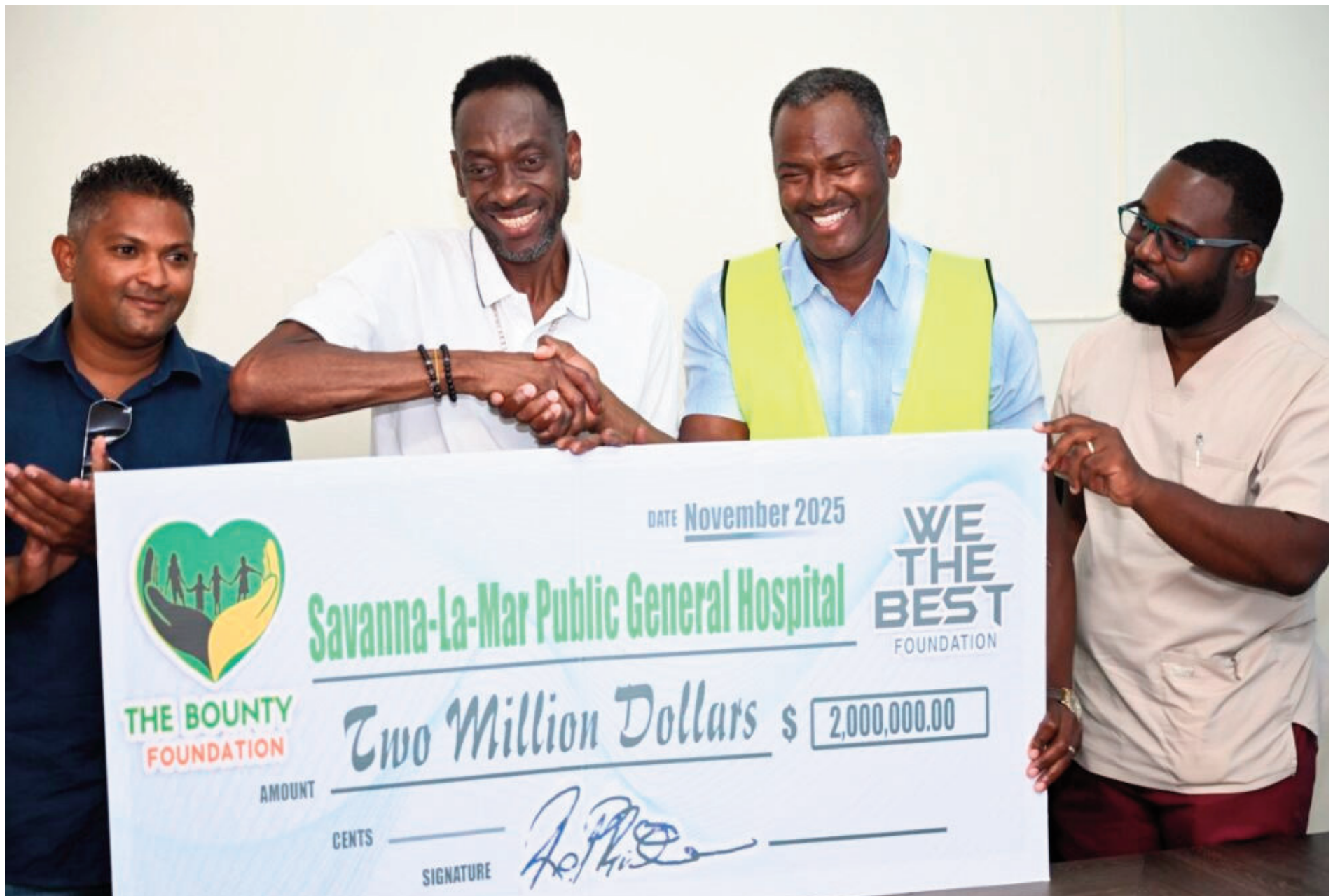
“We all pay a license fee,” Gilbert said. “They will have to explain themselves. We are not the only country asking whether to continue.”

Miss France delegate Eve Gilles ended her run at the Top 30.

Teri Brown-Walker, national director for Miss Universe Guyana and co-director for Ghana, also resigned on Nov. 24th, citing “threats and restrictions” affecting her business.

“This was disheartening and unfair,” she wrote.





Bounty Killer (second from left) presents a cheque to hospital officials in western Jamaica

# GIVING BACK

## Big named artistes step up to help JA hospitals after Hurricane Melissa

Four hospitals in western Jamaica have received a combined \$8 million boost through a philanthropic initiative following Hurricane Melissa.

Dancehall artist Bounty Killer (Rodney Price), through his Bounty Foundation, and American music producer DJ Khaled, via his We The Best Foundation, each contributed \$2 million on Monday, November 17. The donation benefits Savanna-la-Mar Public General Hospital in Westmoreland, Black River Hospital in St. Elizabeth, Falmouth Public General Hospital in Trelawny, and Cornwall Regional Hospital in St. James.

Savanna-la-Mar Hospital CEO Roan Grant praised the artistes as “benevolent givers” and outlined plans for the funds.

“The \$2 million given to the hospital will be

put to tremendous use, where we will use it in getting two arterial blood gas (ABG) machines. Those are some point of care machines that will hasten diagnoses for patients in the A and E (Accident and Emergency) Department, as well as the paediatric ward,” he said.

Grant noted that the hospital’s laboratory sustained heavy damage during the hurricane, which tore away the tarmac and created a “waterfall” inside, temporarily putting existing machinery out of service. He said the new portable ABG machines will be invaluable in adverse conditions, allowing doctors to provide care across multiple departments.

Head of the A and E Department, Dr. Jewayne Mills, echoed the gratitude. “I am really grateful. So, on behalf of the A and E Department, the Paediatric Department, as well as Sa-

vanna-la-Mar Public General Hospital and the wider Westmoreland community, I’d like to thank you, Mr. Price,” he said, noting the machines will be critical for swift diagnoses and proper patient care.

Bounty Killer highlighted the widespread challenges caused by Category Five Hurricane Melissa, which struck on October 28. He explained that he and DJ Khaled prioritised the health sector given its essential role in national recovery.

Other artistes have also stepped up in the aftermath of the hurricane, including Vybz Kartel, Masicka, Spice, Romeich Major, as well as international stars such as Tyrese, The Weeknd, and Diplo, contributing to relief and recovery efforts across Jamaica.





# Return of the Voice

## Tessanne Chin to make triumphant comeback to the USA at Jamaica Strong show

More than a decade after winning Season 5 of The Voice, Jamaican songbird Tessanne Chin is set to make a triumphant return to the United States for a highly anticipated performance at the Jamaica Strong concert at UBS Arena in Queens on Friday, December 12.

Tessanne will share the stage with reggae and dancehall heavyweights, including Shaggy, Sean Paul, KES, Inner Circle, Ky-Mani Marley, Aidonia, Chronic Law, T.O.K., Gramps Morgan, Richie Stephens, Mikey Spice, Reggae Queen

Marcia Griffiths, I-Octane, and gospel singer Kevin Downwell.

“It’s a tremendous honour to be able to use my voice for our country even though I wish the circumstances were different,” Tessanne told Caribbean National Weekly. “I feel like every Jamaican believes that it is our duty to answer our country’s call, particularly when the need is so great.”

Following her victory on The Voice in 2013, Tessanne performed at the White House for

President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama. She also appeared at the 42nd Daytime Emmy Awards and was a featured performer on The Voice Tour, which traveled across the United States. Her television appearances include NBC’s Today Show, Kathie Lee & Hoda, Live with Kelly & Michael, Access Hollywood, and New York Live.

In 2013, she was named Caribbean Journal’s Artist of the Year and received a Luminary Award from the University of the West Indies.

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# DEFENDING THE GAME

## PSG's Hakimi named African Footballer of the Year

Moroccan footballer Achraf Hakimi has been named African Footballer of the Year, becoming the first defender in more than five decades to win the continent's top individual honour.

The Paris Saint-Germain and Morocco right back received the award during the 2025 CAF Awards ceremony held in Rabat.

Hakimi topped the vote ahead of Liverpool's Egyptian forward Mohamed Salah and Nigerian striker Victor Osimhen after a remarkable year with PSG.

Hakimi helped the French champions secure four major trophies: the UEFA Champions League, Ligue 1 title, Coupe de France, and UEFA Super Cup.

The last defender to win the award was Bwanga Tshimen of Zaire (now DR Congo) in 1973. Hakimi also becomes the first Moroccan recipient since Mustapha Hadji in 1998.

"It is really a proud moment for me to win this prestigious award," Hakimi said. "This trophy is not just for me, but all the strong men and women who have dreams of being a footballer in Africa. And for those that always believed in me since I was a child, that I would be a professional footballer one day. I would like to thank them all."

Morocco enjoyed further success at the ceremony. Ghizlane Chebbak, who plays in Saudi Arabia, was named Women's Footballer of the Year, while Yassine Bounou of Al-Hilal received Men's Goalkeeper of the Year.

Nigeria's Chiamaka Nnadozie claimed Women's Goalkeeper of the Year for the third consecutive time following her move to Brighton & Hove Albion in the Women's Super League.

Cape Verde's national team coach Bubista was awarded Coach of the Year, after guiding the island nation to its first-ever World Cup qualification ahead of the 2026 tournament in the United States, Mexico and Canada.



Hakimi lifting the 2025 CAF Men's Player of the Year Award







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