

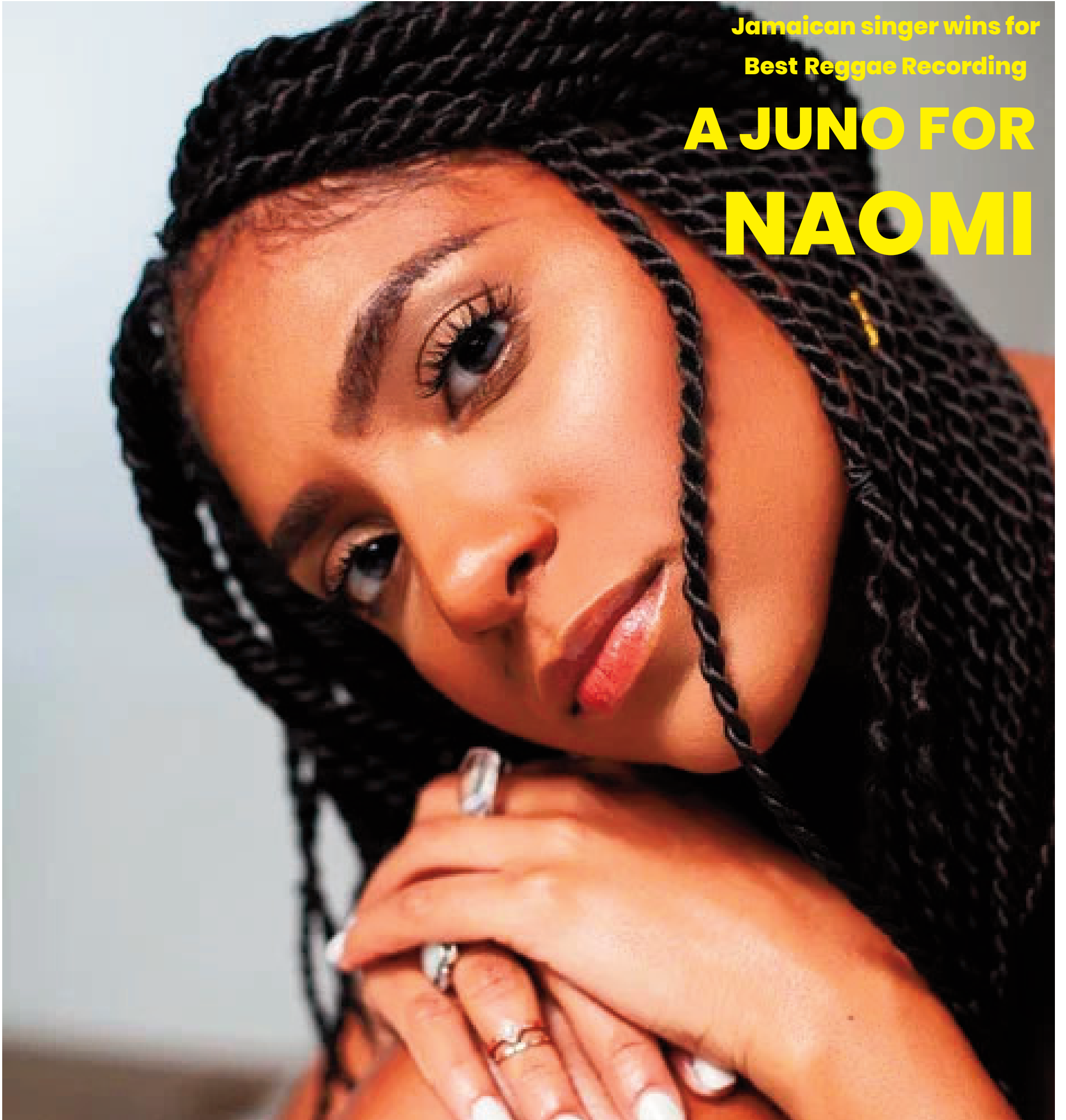


FIREBIRD

Another Marley joins the family business with new album & single

Jamaican singer wins for Best Reggae Recording

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FIREBIRD

Another Marley jumps into the family business with new album and single

For decades, the Marley name has been synonymous with reggae royalty, carried proudly across the globe by the children of Bob Marley and Rita Marley. Yet among the iconic family lineage, one voice has often remained quietly powerful rather than prominently visible: Sharon Marley.

Now, the three-time Grammy Award-winning singer-songwriter is stepping further into her own spotlight with the release of her new single “Island,” which dropped in March.

The roots-driven reggae anthem features Sharon alongside her sister Cedella Marley and vocalist Rica Newell, both former members of the celebrated family group Ziggy Marley and the Melody Makers. The track is the second single from Sharon’s debut solo album *Firebird*, which was released on March 20, 2026.

While Sharon Marley has long been part of the Marley musical legacy, her journey has often unfolded away from the brightest spotlight occupied by some of her brothers. As a member of the Melody Makers, she helped develop a sound that carried the family’s message of unity, love, and social consciousness to international audiences, earning three Grammy Awards along the way. In recent years, however, Sharon has been quietly shaping a solo identity that reflects both her lineage and her own artistic voice.

The song celebrates unity, womanhood, and an enduring love for Jamaica, with the harmonies between Sharon and Cedella recalling the family’s rich vocal tradition while allowing Sharon’s voice to take the lead.

Beyond the music, the single also reflects Sharon’s deep commitment to community up-



Sharon Marley is the biological daughter of Rita and adopted by Bob Marley

liftment. All streaming proceeds from “Island” will be donated to Humanity Ova Vanity (HOV), a Canadian-based organization dedicated to providing emergency relief, housing stabilization, and long-term community support in underserved and disaster-affected areas of Jamaica.

The new single follows Sharon’s first release

from the *Firebird* album, “Steppah,” which features reggae legend Big Youth and introduces listeners to the reflective yet powerful tone of her upcoming project.

With “Island,” she reminds listeners that sometimes the most enduring voices are the ones that have been quietly building their fire all along.

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STAYING THE Course

If you were sitting across from me right now, I would probably start by smiling and asking how you are really doing. Not the surface answer. The honest one. Because by now, something has shifted. You are not at the beginning anymore, but you are not finished either. This is the part of the journey where many people quietly lose momentum. Not because they failed, but because life got busy again, distractions crept back in, and the noise returned.

Last time we spoke, we talked about clarity and intention. About deciding what truly matters and being brave enough to name it. That decision was not small. When you set a clear intention, you changed the way you see yourself and your life. You moved from drifting to choosing. That alone deserves acknowledgment.

Now comes the deeper work. Staying the course.

This is where commitment becomes personal. Not loud. Not dramatic. Just steady. This is where you learn how to keep going even when the excitement fades and the results are not instantly visible. This is where growth becomes real.

Let me say this clearly. Nothing has gone wrong if things feel quieter right now. Nothing has gone wrong if you are questioning yourself a little. That is part of the process. The difference is that now, you do not abandon yourself when those moments show up.

Think about it for a moment. How many times in the past did you start something meaningful, only to slowly let it slip away because life

pulled you in a hundred directions? This time feels different, does it not? That is because you are different.

You are no longer chasing change for the sake of change. You are building something from the inside out.

This is the stage where habits matter more than motivation. Where honesty matters more than hype. Where small, consistent choices shape your future far more than grand plans ever could.

If you feel a little restless, that is normal. Growth often feels uncomfortable before it feels rewarding. You are stretching into a new way of being. You are learning to trust yourself in a deeper way.

Pause for a moment and check in with yourself. Ask quietly, what have I stayed committed to recently, even when it was not easy? Let the answer come without judgment. You may be surprised by what you see.

This is where self respect is built. Not through perfection, but through follow through.

I often remind people, and I remind myself, that confidence is not something you wait for. Confidence is created through action. Every time you keep a promise to yourself, even a small one, you strengthen that inner trust. And inner trust changes everything.

You may notice that people around you respond differently now. Not because you are trying to prove anything, but because consistency carries a quiet authority. You move differently. You speak differ-

ently. You decide differently.

This is also the moment where comparison can sneak in. You might look at others and wonder if you are doing enough, moving fast enough, or getting it right. Let me stop you there. Your path is not meant to look like anyone else's. The work you are doing is specific to you.

One of the reasons I wrote *The Strategic Goal Seeker's Handbook* was to help people understand this exact phase. The middle. The part no one glamorizes. The part where clarity must be supported by discipline, patience, and self leadership. This is where real transformation takes place.

Staying the course does not mean pushing harder. It means staying honest. It means adjusting when needed without giving up. It means listening to yourself instead of external noise.

Here is something simple you can practice right now. Each morning, before the day takes over, ask yourself one question. What is one choice I can make today that aligns with who I am becoming? Not ten choices. One.

That question keeps you grounded. It keeps you present. It keeps your intention alive without overwhelming you.

And when you have a day that does not go as planned, because those days will happen, you do not tear everything down. You do not tell yourself a story about failure. You simply return. That is maturity. That is leadership. That is growth.

I want you to hear this clearly.



HEART
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You are not behind. You are not late. You are not missing anything. You are exactly where you need to be to strengthen what you started.

If you feel tired, rest without quitting. If you feel uncertain, reflect without retreating. If you feel challenged, remember that this is the work doing its job.

This stage teaches resilience. It teaches discernment. It teaches you how to stay grounded in yourself rather than chasing validation.

And here is the quiet truth. When you stay the course, opportunities begin to meet you differently. People notice your steadiness. Doors open not because you forced them, but because you were ready when they appeared.

Let yourself feel proud of what you have sustained. Not just what you started.

If I were sitting with you right now, I would tell you this. Keep going. Not with pressure. With intention. With trust. With clarity.

You are building something that lasts. And if you ever feel like you need support, reflection, or a reset along the way, that is not a weakness. That is wisdom.

*If this resonates and you want to deepen your work, *The Strategic Goal Seeker's Handbook* offers practical tools and grounded guidance to support your next steps. Written by Dianne Ojar, it is designed to help you stay focused, intentional, and aligned as you continue forward.*

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CARIBBEAN CONNECTION

Soca's Royal couple Bunji & Fay-Ann step into the regional mas arena

Ian “Bunji Garlin” Alvarez and Fay-Ann Lyons are once again expanding their already dynamic portfolio, this time stepping boldly into the regional mas arena.

The powerhouse couple are now co-owners of Monde Mas, a brand-new band, set to debut at Crop Over 2026 in Barbados.

For the soca couple, this isn't just another business venture; it's a statement of Caribbean unity, talent, culture and entrepreneurship across borders, rooted in their shared love for Carnival.

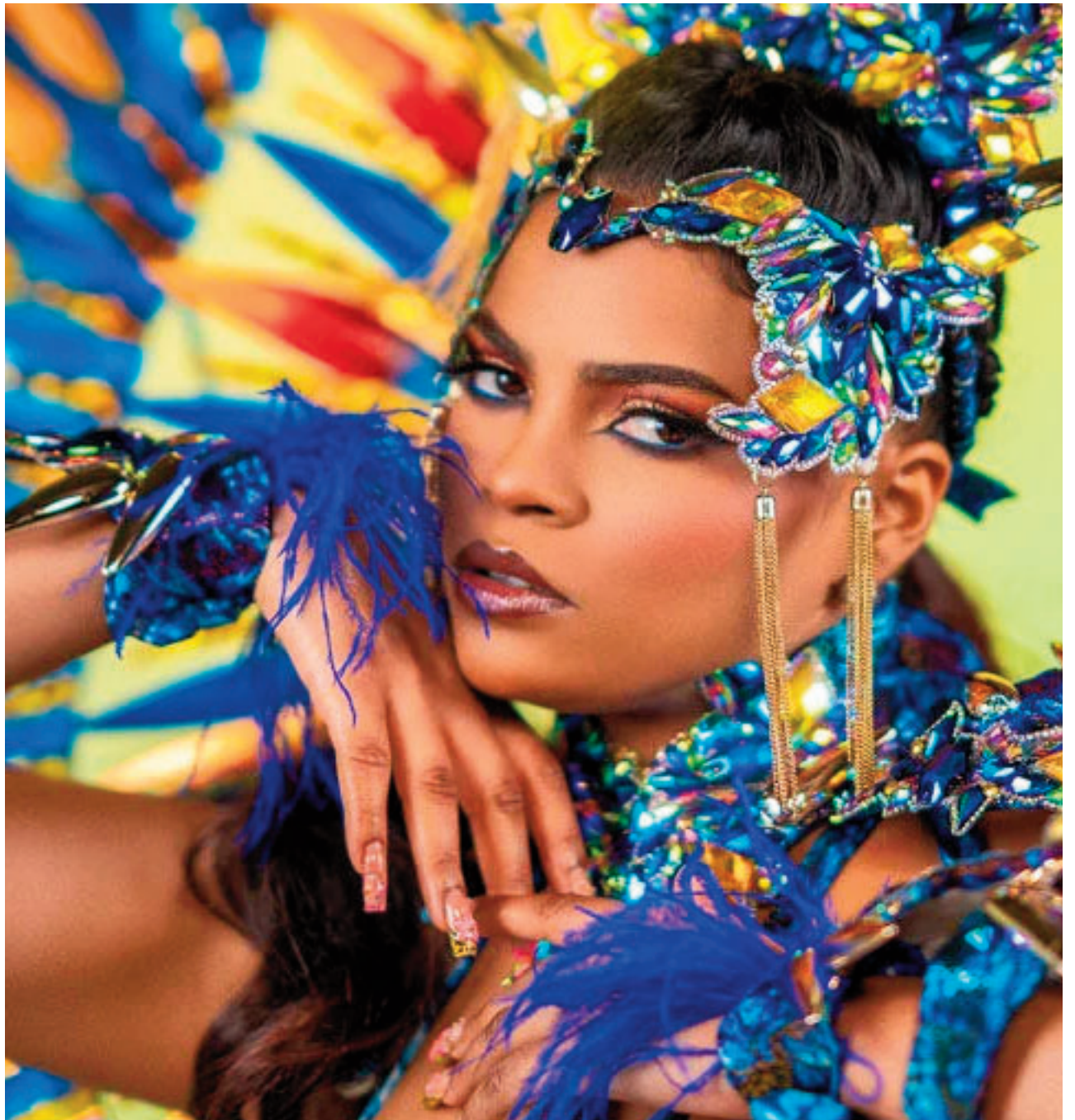
With a promise of a premium, VIP-style experience on the road, Monde Mas is already generating buzz across the region. At the helm is bandleader Corey Garrett, a tourism and entertainment professional with decades of experience, along with a diverse and accomplished team that includes finance expert Craig Hinds, Bunji Garlin and Fay-Ann Lyons, and entrepreneur David Blanc.

For its debut year, Monde Mas will present Dance with Dragons—a concept rooted in renewal, reinvigoration and cultural storytelling. The band will feature five distinct sections, each designed by top Caribbean creatives, including Regalia and Muma, both designed by Barbadian Kadeem Hinds; Solaris by Solange Govia; Luxora by Natalie Fonrose; and Thalassa by JP Richardson.

The sections will pay homage to a significant part of Barbados' heritage—from Bridgetown and Speightstown (“Spice Town”) to Chalky Mount and Holetown—bringing a strong sense of place and identity to the road.

According to Garrett, Monde Mas was born out of both passion and purpose. After more than 20 years working with one of Barbados' leading bands, he saw a gap in the market following its exit. That void sparked a vision to create a fresh, innovative Crop Over experience that merges cultural authenticity with elevated production and service.

The mission is clear: deliver a high-quality, immersive mas experience, from costume de-



One of the costumes from Monde Mas

sign and band launch to the road itself. For its first year, the band is intentionally keeping numbers tight, focusing on efficiency, value for money, and an unmatched masquerader experience.

While Monde Mas begins its journey in Barbados, the ambition stretches far beyond. With over 20 Carnival markets worldwide, the team is already eyeing regional and international expansion through partnerships and collabo-

rations.

Even the name carries deep meaning. “Monde” is a tribute to Kadooment Day, the grand finale of Crop Over, traditionally held on a Monday. It's a nod to the day Barbados truly comes alive, anchoring the band firmly in the island's cultural heartbeat while positioning it for global reach. As plans unfold toward 2026 and beyond, Monde Mas is not just entering the mas scene—it plans to set a tone.

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Road March King of the World

Machel Montano breaks Kitch's 50 year record of most wins

"What an absolute honour and joy it is to celebrate this 2026 Road March win!!!"

This is how soca superstar Machel Montano has described his 12th Road March title, surpassing the 50-year record set by calypso legend Lord Kitchener (Aldwyn Roberts).

Montano's "Encore" registered 171 plays as mas bands crossed the judging points on Carnival Monday and Tuesday. His win was announced by Trinidad and Tobago Unified Calypsonians Organisation president Ainsley King at the Queen's Park Savannah in Port of Spain.

In the 2026 Road March competition, which featured 18 songs, Montano sealed first place with "Encore".

Voice (Aaron St Louis) placed second with "Cyah Behave", which was played 127 times; while Bunji Garlin (Ian Alvarez) secured third place with "Still a Road Man", amassing 97 plays across the official judging routes.

In a post on social media, Montano wrote: "What an absolute honour and joy it is to celebrate this 2026 Road March win!!! I am beyond words, and the feeling is only comparable to my first win in 1997."

He thanked his fans and masqueraders for their passion and support, saying: "To everyone that played a role, writers, producers, musicians, DJs, promo teams, etc, well done! The spirit of the Carnival rode on the wings of the music, and it was euphoric. I am grateful to be part of the historic breaking of this 50-year record and hope it will be inspiration to all, especially to the upcoming young men and women in our industry."

He advised them to "keep dreaming and setting goals while working hard, being determined and dedicated. You can and will achieve anything you put your mind and efforts toward."

Montano also congratulated all other contenders, particularly Voice and Bunji Garlin, saying: "I extend my congratulations and gratitude for a most challenging race. All great songs



Machel Montano — broke Kitchener's 50-year-old record

and valiant efforts to reach the finish line."

He further expressed gratitude to his team, family and friends for their support and encouragement.

Montano's winning Road March hits have included "Big Truck" in 1997 (his first) and "Pardy" last year.

Also taking to social media, Voice said: "What a season it has been! My heart is full. To everyone who supported my music, thank you from the bottom of my heart. The love this year was unmatched. In such a short season, we experienced more growth than ever before. To my family, my team, and my entire support system,

thank you for being my strength and steady foundation when I needed it most.

"Trinidad and Tobago, thank you for making "Cyah Behave" what it is now. The energy and response were beyond anything I could've imagined. As I prepare to take the show on the road, know that I'm carrying all of you with me every step of the way. I love you."

In a release, Voice acknowledged Montano's enduring influence on the culture and his continued excellence on the road.

"Congratulations to Machel on this achievement," said Voice. "His contribution to soca over the years has set a standard for all of us."

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Bullets for Rihanna

Woman arrested for shooting at singer's LA home

A 35-year-old Florida woman was arrested Sunday on suspicion of attempted murder after shots were fired at the Los Angeles residence of Bajan singer Rihanna and hip-hop star A\$AP Rocky, police said.

The Los Angeles Police Department identified the suspect as Ivanna Ortiz. Authorities said she was taken into custody following a traffic stop about three miles from the couple's Beverly Crest home in the west San Fernando Valley community of Sherman Oaks. Ortiz remains in custody on a \$10 million bond.

The shooting occurred at around 1:30 p.m., with Ortiz reportedly firing seven to nine rounds from an AR-15-style rifle at the property, which Rihanna shares with A\$AP Rocky and their three children.

No injuries were reported, and all

family members were inside the home at the time, the LAPD confirmed.

Video from the scene showed bullet holes in the front gate, and investigators were seen examining an Airstream trailer parked on the driveway.

Police have not released details on a possible motive.

Authorities said Ortiz was the sole occupant of the vehicle and that she has a criminal history in Florida, including arrests in 2023 for domestic violence battery and violation of a domestic injunction in Orange County. Social media posts from Ortiz, including one on February 23, referenced Rihanna.

Police continue to investigate the incident.



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Two members of the Marley family smash the gong to symbolise the reopening of Tuff Gong Studio

THE GONG IS BACK

Historic Marley studio reopens after extensive upgrades

Tuff Gong International Studios has officially reopened its recording facility on Marcus Garvey Drive in Kingston following extensive upgrades aimed at modernizing the historic music production hub.

The relaunch took place on March 5 with an invite-only event attended by musicians, recording artists, media professionals, and political figures. Guests included Cedella Marley, CEO of Tuff Gong International; reggae singers Marcia Griffiths and Judy Mowatt; musicians Richie Stephens, Lukie D and Sangie Davis; keyboardist Robbie Lyn; percussionist Bongo Herman; bassist Donald Dennis of the Firehouse Crew; and political figures Mark Golding, leader of the Opposition People's National Party, and Member of Parliament Anthony Hylton.

The upgraded facility features modern production suites, improved acoustics, and a redesigned lobby displaying photographs of Bob Marley, Rita Marley, and other local and international artists

who have recorded at the studio. A new artist lounge offers seating and recreational amenities, including table tennis, table football, a pool table, and a pinball machine.

The property originally housed Federal Records, founded in 1957 by music entrepreneur Ken Khouri. Federal Records was among Jamaica's first fully integrated music production facilities, providing recording, mastering, design, and vinyl pressing.

In 1981, Rita Marley purchased the building, fulfilling a promise made by her late husband, Bob Marley, who had been denied entry to the studio in the 1970s while visiting with musician Johnny Nash.

Over the years, Tuff Gong has hosted regional and international artists including Gilberto Gil, Alpha Blondy, Youssou N'Dour, and Sinéad O'Connor.

The reopening marks a new chapter for the studio as a creative hub for Jamaican music and international collaborations.



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VYBZ FESTIVAL

Kartel tries his hand at tourism with a luxury travel event in 2027

Dancehall star Vybz Kartel has announced the launch of the “Vybz Island Experience 2027,” a four-day, three-night immersive event blending luxury travel with Jamaican dancehall culture.

The inaugural staging is scheduled for

April 9 to April 12, 2027, and will feature a private island takeover alongside accommodations aboard Royal Caribbean cruise ships departing from Port Everglades and the Port of Miami.

Kartel is set to headline the event, which organisers say will include performances by more than 40 DJs, artists and entertainers. The programme is designed to offer a structured mix of daytime activities and curated nightlife experiences.

According to organisers, the Vybz Island Experience will operate on a fully inclusive hospitality model, dividing activities between land-based and onboard events.

Daytime programming will take place on a private island, featuring main-stage dancehall performances, beach arenas, private cabanas,

Caribbean cuisine and curated rum bar experiences. VIP yacht access and exclusive beach environments are also planned.

In the evenings, activities will shift to the cruise ships, which will host themed celebrations, celebrity DJ-led sessions and after-dark entertainment.

The event marks Kartel’s latest venture following his 2024 release from prison and a 2025 run of sold-out international shows.

Organisers describe the experience as a “luxury dancehall and private island experience” aimed at merging music, culture and upscale travel.

Registration for early access is now open via the event’s official website, with tickets already on sale.

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REGGAE LAND ON FIRE

Nigerian superstar Burna Boy to headline July festival

Following a record-breaking and fastest-ever sellout of its 2025 edition, Reggae Land says it is matching demand by expanding into a three-day festival for the first time.

Reggae Land said that its July 31 edition will headline global superstar Burna Boy, who plays the festival for the first time.

“One of the most influential artists of his generation, Burna Boy’s appearance represents another landmark moment for Reggae Land,” the entertainment promotional company said. “The newly added Friday transforms the festival into a three-day celebration for the first time in its history.”

Reggae Land said the event takes place at Milton Keynes National Bowl ahead of the sold-out weekend complete with the high production values.

“The award-winning Nigerian singer and songwriter blends Afro fusion, dancehall and hip-hop into catchy, indelible hits that have soundtracked summers for the last decade,” Reggae Land said.

“Expect to hear favorites like ‘Last Last, Ye’ and ‘City Boys’, with magnetic charm and smooth flowing rhythms opening the weekend with a statement show and setting the tone for what is already shaping up to be the festival’s biggest year yet,” it added.

The announcement follows extraordinary demand for Reggae Land 2026, which sold out in record time after tickets went on sale last week.

With over 120 artists already confirmed across seven stages, Reggae Land said its rapid rise continues to position it as one of the UK’s fastest-growing and most culturally significant festivals.

From roots reggae and dancehall to dub, jungle and carnival energy, Reggae Land said it has become “a defining platform for Caribbean music and culture in the UK.”

It said the addition of Friday underscores the festival’s evolution, “driven directly by fan demand and community momentum.”

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Burna Boy

DOUGLA KITCHEN

Oklahoma City gets an authentic taste of the Caribbean

For decades, Oklahoma City's dining identity was largely defined by steakhouse culture and traditional American fare. Today, diners are lining up for escovitch fish, Trinidad-style doubles and whole roasted jerk chicken, a shift driven in part by award-winning Jamaican-born chef Andrew Black.

The 2023 James Beard winner for Best Chef: Southwest has long been known for his acclaimed tasting-menu restaurant Grey Sweater. But with the opening of Dougla Kitchen in February at 100 NE 4th St. in Oklahoma City, Black is introducing something even more personal: a restaurant rooted in Caribbean heritage and memory.

Dougla Kitchen, which occupies the former Black Walnut space, presents a refined interpretation of Caribbean cuisine that blends West Indian and Indo-Caribbean influences. The concept is both culinary and cultural, shaped by Black's upbringing and the woman who first taught him how to cook, his grandmother, Ely-sabeth Badoo.

"This restaurant is a note to my grandmother," Black said. "Every dish reminds me of cooking beside her. I'm hearing her voice the entire time, reminding me that the food, the culture, and the integrity behind it all have to stay real."

Black named the restaurant Dougla, a term used across the Caribbean to describe people of mixed African and Indian heritage, an identity that reflects his own background.

"I started thinking about my roots," he said. "In Jamaica you're cooking Caribbean food and you're cooking Hindu food. I began asking myself if there was a word that tied those cultures together. Then I found 'Dougla.' It was once used as a derogatory term for mixed people in the Caribbean, but now it's something we embrace."

Born in Jamaica to an Afro and Indo-Jamaican family, Black grew up cooking over clay ovens built by hand. As a child he often helped construct those ovens for his grandmother before learning to cook the dishes that would shape his culinary identity.

From the kitchens of Caribbean resorts, Black eventually traveled the world, training in Europe — including at the Ritz in Paris — and



Story and photo courtesy Caribbean Life

Andrew Black is a James Beard award winning chef

working throughout Cuba and the Turks and Caicos. Nearly two decades ago, he arrived in Oklahoma City, a place he initially knew little about but would ultimately help transform.

Through his hospitality group Culinary Edge Concepts, Black introduced a new level of culinary ambition to the city with restaurants such as Grey Sweater and Perle Mesta. His James Beard Award helped place Oklahoma City on the national dining map.

While Grey Sweater celebrates global technique through a fine-dining tasting menu, Dougla Kitchen returns Black to the food of his childhood.

The menu is bold and deeply personal. Whole roasted jerk chicken arrives with mint and tamarind chutneys. Wiltshire escovitch

whole branzino is served with bammy. Trinidad-style doubles, a beloved Caribbean street food, appear in a polished dining-room setting. Other dishes include Guinness stout-braised oxtail and Falmouth pepper street prawns.

Black admits he was unsure how Oklahoma diners would respond to the flavors.

"I didn't know if people here would embrace it," he said with a laugh. "Now I'm standing in the kitchen wondering if I made enough curry goat for the night."

Black refers to his staff not as employees but as "ambassadors," responsible for introducing guests to Caribbean culture through food.

"We have a responsibility to tell the story correctly," he said. "We can't water it down. Caribbean food is history, spice, love, and culture."

IS A JOKE!

Jamaican comedian set for role in Netflix comedy festival

Jamaican comedian Dale Elliott Jr. continues his upward trajectory on the global stage, securing a major milestone with his inclusion in the Netflix Is A Joke Festival set for May 7 in Los Angeles.

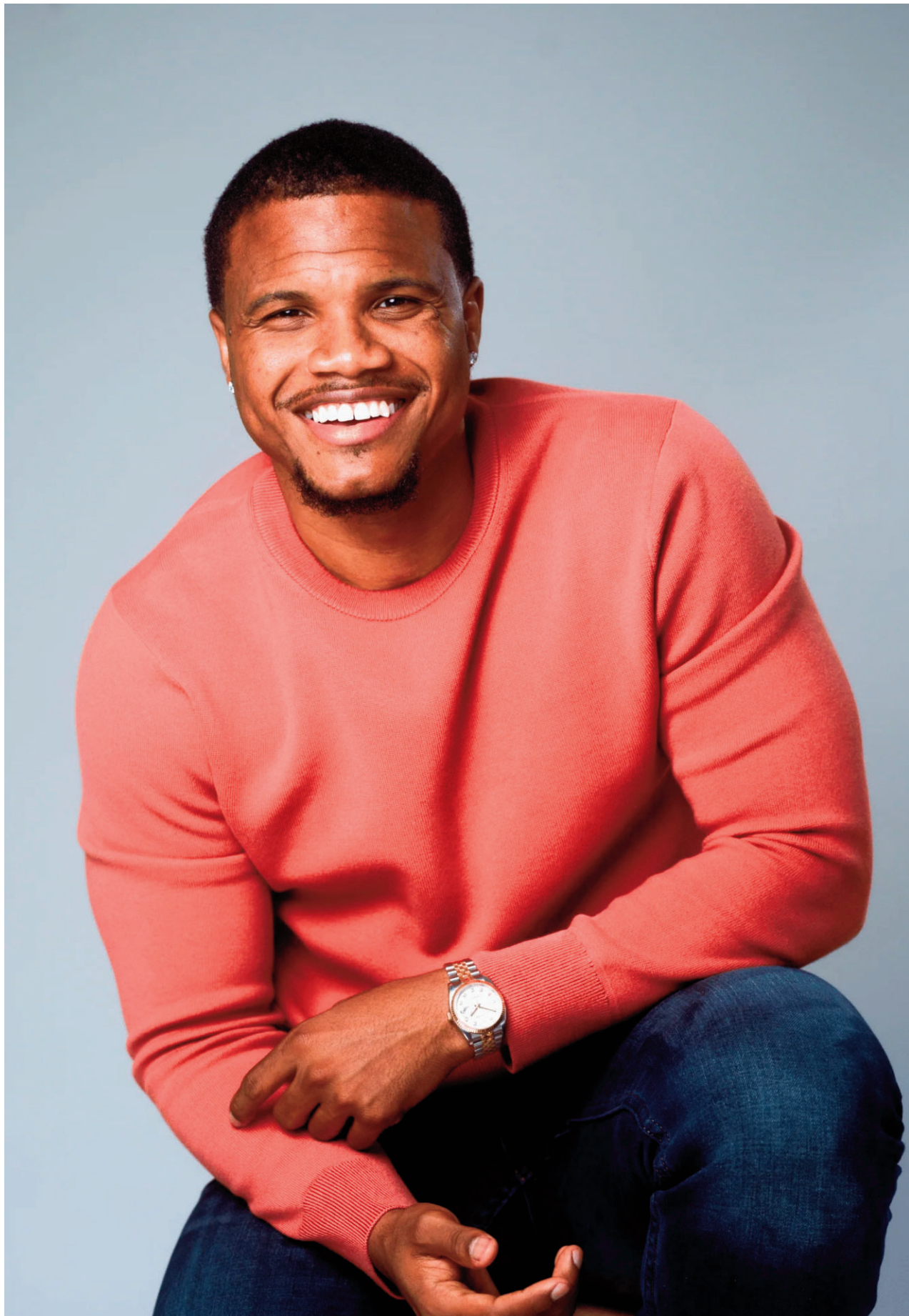
The fast-rising entertainer, who built a loyal following through social media, is among a slate of international acts tapped for the high-profile comedy showcase. His selection signals a significant breakthrough, placing him alongside some of the biggest names in stand-up comedy.

Elliott Jr., whose comedic voice draws heavily from his Jamaican identity and experiences abroad, shared his excitement with fans online, noting the achievement as a testament to years of consistency and dedication. “Within three years, I am now an official headliner at the biggest comedy festival in the world,” he wrote, encouraging supporters to turn out in full force for his May 7 performance.

The comedian has long credited platforms like Instagram for helping him connect with audiences globally, transforming short-form skits into a springboard for live performances and international recognition. His upcoming set is expected to draw heavily from his personal journey, offering humorous reflections on life as a Jamaican navigating new cultural spaces.

Beyond stand-up, Elliott Jr. has also stepped into acting, most notably for his role as Akeem Sharp in Storm Saulter’s critically acclaimed 2018 film *Sprinter*. His previous comedy special, *Problem Child*, has further strengthened his reputation as a dynamic storyteller with cross-cultural appeal.

Despite his growing international presence, Elliott Jr. remains committed to his roots. He has indicated plans to bring his upcoming tour to Jamaica, giving local audiences the opportunity to experience his evolving craft



Dale Elliott Jr.

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With this latest Netflix partnership, Dale Elliott Jr. continues to position himself as one

of Jamaica’s most promising comedic exports, bridging digital success with mainstream global recognition.



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Chronic Law has reportedly been released from ICE custody

CHILLING OUT

Chronic Law reportedly released from ICE custody in Florida; Rygin gets held

Jamaican dancehall artist Chronic Law appears to have been released from U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) custody, after posting photos on social media from Florida on March 26.

The entertainer, whose given name is Ackeme Jermane Campbell, shared a series of photos on Instagram with the caption “God bless,” while tagging his location as Florida.

The post marks the first time the artist has shared images on social media since January, and comes weeks after reports surfaced that he was being held in ICE custody in South Florida.

Campbell had previously been listed in the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement on-

line detainee locator, which indicated he was being held at the Florida Soft Side South detention facility in Ochopee.

At the time, authorities had not disclosed the reason for his detention, and neither the artist nor his representatives had publicly addressed the matter.

The facility, located at the Dade-Collier Training and Transition Airport inside the Big Cypress National Preserve, is part of the South Florida Detention Facility complex.

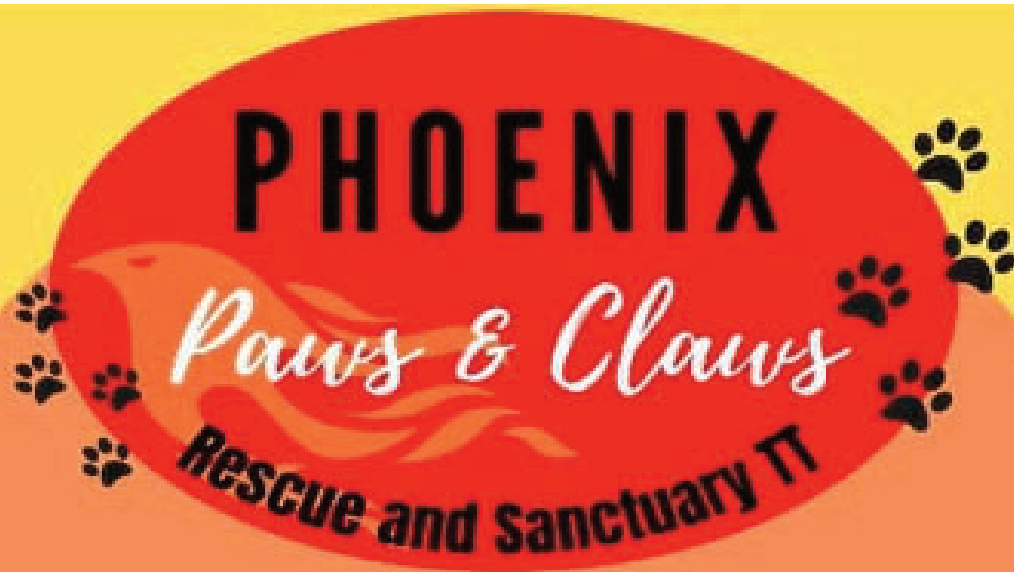
Prior to his reported detention, Chronic Law had been arrested in November 2025 on a reckless driving charge, with details published by the Georgia Gazette.

Meanwhile, dancehall artist Rygin King has been detained by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, according to information listed on the agency’s official website.

Rygin King, whose given name is Matthew Smith, was reportedly taken into custody on Monday. However, no further details have been provided regarding the circumstances surrounding his detention, and U.S. immigration authorities have not publicly disclosed the reason for his custody.

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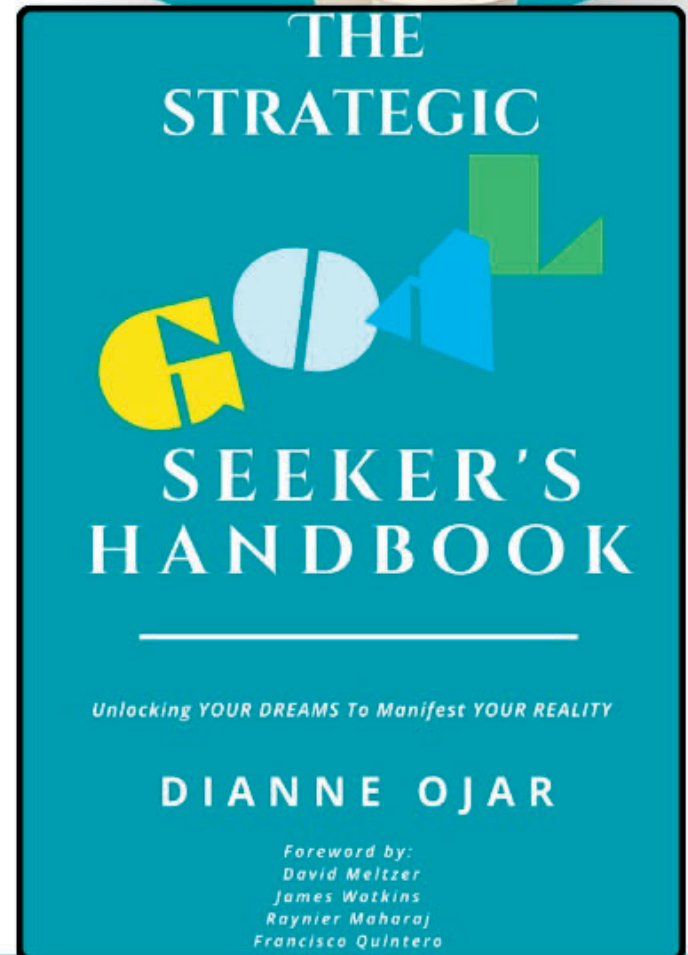
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When Nicki met Kamla

Singer and Trinidad & Tobago PM hang out at Trump's Summit of the Americas

A moment that blended global pop culture with hemispheric diplomacy unfolded in South Florida in early March when Trinidad-born superstar Nicki Minaj met Trinidad and Tobago Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar during a reception following U.S. President Donald Trump's Shield of the Americas Summit in Doral.

The brief meeting between the world-famous rapper and the Caribbean leader quickly went viral after Minaj shared a video and message with her more than 26 million followers on social media.

"She's in the 'boys club' of politics & I've been in the 'boys club' of Hip Hop," Minaj wrote on X. "It was such an honour to meet the Prime Minister of my birth country @ President Trump's Shield of the Americas summit today in Doral, FL."

The post immediately sparked widespread reactions online, with thousands of fans celebrating the moment as a meeting of two influential Caribbean women who have each navigated male-dominated arenas – global music and national politics.

Prime Minister Persad-Bissessar later reposted Minaj's message, responding: "Thank you Nicki Minaj for your kind words. Your global success continues to make Trinidad and Tobago proud."

The encounter took place at a reception following the inaugural Shield of the Americas Summit hosted by President Trump at the Trump National Doral resort near Miami on March 7th.

The summit brought together leaders and representatives from roughly a dozen Latin American and Caribbean countries to launch a new regional initiative aimed at strengthening cooperation against drug cartels, organized crime and other transnational security threats.

Trump used the meeting to formally launch what his administration called the "Shield of the Americas," a new multinational framework designed to coordinate intelligence sharing, law-enforcement cooperation and potentially military support among participating countries to combat



Kamla Persad-Bissessar with Nicki Minaj

criminal networks operating across the hemisphere.

Among the lone Caribbean leaders attending the summit were Prime Minister Persad-Bissessar, Guyana's Irfaan Ali and Dominican Republic President Luis Abinader.

Major regional powers including Brazil, Mexico and Colombia were notably absent from the gathering. During his remarks, Trump emphasized a more aggressive approach to combating drug trafficking and organized crime in the region, including expanded military cooperation among partner nations.

But while the summit focused largely on geopolitics, security and regional strategy, the unexpected appearance of Minaj at the reception added a cultural dimension to the gathering. Born in Trinidad and raised in the United States,

Minaj, once a Trump critic has now according to her own words, become "his biggest fan." She is widely considered the best-selling female rapper of all time, with more than 100 million records sold worldwide.

Across social media platforms, many described Minaj and Persad-Bissessar as "two queens" of the Caribbean – one dominating global hip-hop and the other navigating the complex arena of international politics. Others highlighted the symbolism of two Trinidad-born women succeeding in spaces historically dominated by men.

The viral moment may have been brief, but it illustrated how Caribbean culture, diaspora influence and global politics increasingly intersect in unexpected ways.



IT WAS HIM

Shaggy plays host to NBC's Today Show crew during a girls' trip to Jamaica

Grammy-winning hitmaker Shaggy proved why he remains one of Jamaica's most enduring style icons when he appeared on NBC's TODAY Show with hosts Jenna Bush Hager and Sheinelle Jones during their special "girls trip" to Sandals Dunn's River.

The "It Wasn't Me" DJ, who recently found himself at the center of a viral fashion conversation, did not shy away from the topic. Instead, he did what seasoned entertainers do best — leaned into it.

"I've always been about expression," Shaggy shared with Jenna and Sheinelle during the NBC interview, declaring, "Style is just another way to show who you are, no boundaries."

He said he reposted memes, including one featuring his dog wearing his now-famous outfit, telling viewers, "There's always going to be opinions, but confidence? That's the real style."

At Sandals, dressed in a brown fitted, short-sleeve crewneck T-shirt tailored to show off his physique, along with his now-famous pearl necklace and trademark confidence, Shaggy added, "Music is about freedom, and so is fashion," adding, "If you feel good in it, wear it. Simple as that."

Shaggy also promoted his new single, "Looking Lovely," featuring American R&B star Robin Thicke. He also spoke about his philanthropic initiative for hospitals in Jamaica following Hur-

ricane Melissa, discussing his dedication to raising funds for Bustamante Hospital for Children in Kingston and highlighting the importance of giving back to his country.

Also making an appearance was Jamaican-American actress Sheryl Lee Ralph, who spoke about her Jamaican pride and self-love, emphasizing the importance of staying true to oneself.

"Keep showing up. Keep being your authentic self. Keep speaking the truth," she shared.

Jenna and Sheinelle also leaned into a culinary feature with Chef Andre Fowler, who brought local Jamaican flavors to the Sandals resort. While in Jamaica, the NBC hosts also experienced bobsledding at Mystic Mountain.



Naomi Cowan accepts her Juno Award for Best Reggae Recording on March 28

A Juno for Naomi

Jamaican singer Naomi Cowan has won the 2026 Reggae Recording of the Year at the Juno Awards for her 12-track debut album *Welcome to Paradise*. The award was presented March 28 at the 50th staging of the awards, held in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, at the TD Coliseum.

Other nominees in the category included *Deh Ya* by Kirk Diamond; *Dagga Riddim Cypher* by Jojo, *You Made That*, *Yung 2Ruff*, Erin B, *Topman Meeko*, *One Don and Enzo*; *Ready For You* by Exco Levi and Kheilstone; and *More Reggae (Funk it Up)* by Samora and Ammoye.

In accepting the award, Cowan thanked sev-

eral individuals, including Toddla T, producer of the album, as well as her parents, reggae veterans Tommy Cowan and Carlene Davis, and her management team.

“It has been the honour of my life to be a reggae artiste. Reggae is a genre that has healed thousands of people around the world and has transcended many boundaries. So, this award is for the genre of reggae music. To my mom and dad, thank you so much for choosing each other over and over, for unconditionally loving me, because you inspired this album. To God, my ultimate creative director, thank you,” Cowan said.

She added, “I also have to thank the Government of Canada, my producing partners, my team, Rob, Jeff, Nate the Great and everyone who played a part. Big up Jamaica.”

Cowan’s win marks the 10th time a female artist has captured the Reggae Recording of the Year category, which was formerly known as Best Reggae/Calypso Recording and Best Reggae Recording. Born into Jamaican musical royalty, Cowan is the daughter of reggae icons Tommy Cowan and Carlene Davis. She also portrayed Marcia Griffiths in the film *Bob Marley: One Love*.

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FENTY DOES GUYANA

Rihanna a no-show as her brand takes flight in Georgetown

Rihanna may not have been in Guyana on March 28, but her presence was unmistakable.

Fenty Beauty, the globally recognized cosmetics brand founded by the Barbadian superstar, officially launched in Guyana on March 28th, marking a significant milestone for the country's retail landscape and highlighting a broader shift in how global brands are engaging with Caribbean markets.

The highly anticipated launch took place at Glamour Beauty's MovieTowne location in Georgetown, drawing strong crowds despite inclement weather. For many customers, it was a long-awaited opportunity to access a brand that has already built a loyal following across the Caribbean diaspora.

The rollout was spearheaded by Glamour Beauty, one of Guyana's premier retail chains, founded by entrepreneur Varsha Sharma. According to Sharma, the launch followed a year-long effort to secure a contract with Fenty Beauty – a process that reflects both the complexity of global brand partnerships and the growing readiness of Guyana's retail sector to meet international standards.

"This launch proves that Guyana is no longer on the sidelines of beauty," Sharma told News Room Guyana. "We're part of it now. We're not just launching a brand. We're making a statement that Guyana is ready – that we deserve global brands and that we can deliver world-class experiences right here at home."

The expansion was supported by Miami-based distributor Essence Corp, which is helping drive Fenty Beauty's growth across the Caribbean. While the brand has long been accessible through online purchases and informal distribution channels, its direct retail presence in Guyana marks a new level of accessibility for local consumers.

Guyana now joins more than ten Caribbean territories where Fenty Beauty products are available, reflecting a steady expansion strategy aligned with rising consumer demand across the region.

At the launch, customers were able to test products on-site, with professional makeup artists providing personalized shade matching and recommendations. For many, the experience represented more than convenience – it signaled a shift in what is available locally.



A display at the new Fenty Store in Guyana

"It's like knowing that Fenty is here means I can explore skincare and makeup without having to order overseas," News Room quoted customer Matthew Jeffrey as saying. "We've had options before, but mostly drugstore brands. This is different."

The brand's emphasis on inclusivity – particularly its wide range of shades designed to serve diverse skin tones – has been a key factor in its global success and strong resonance within Caribbean communities. Local influencers and beauty professionals have long advocated for its availability in Guyana.

Makeup artist and influencer Chantelle Sewett described the launch as transformative for the local beauty industry. "I'm ecstatic," she was quoted by News Room as saying. "From a makeup artist's perspective, this is a huge deal. It's big for our country. The fact that we are being recognized – that matters."

Beyond beauty, the launch carries broader economic significance.

As Guyana continues to experience rapid growth driven by its expanding oil sector, rising incomes and increased consumer spending are attracting greater attention from international brands. The arrival of globally recognized names like Fenty Beauty reflects growing confidence in the country's economic trajectory and its potential as a viable retail market.

For consumers, the benefits are immediate: access to premium products without the added costs of international shipping, and the ability to purchase new releases in real time alongside global markets.

For the Caribbean, however, the implications are even more profound.

The launch underscores a shift in how the region is viewed – not as an afterthought, but as a market worth investing in.

Rihanna may not have been there. But her brand's arrival makes one thing clear: Guyana – and the Caribbean – are no longer on the sidelines.



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