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Press Release

For Immediate Release!

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Virgin Islanders United's Caribbean Cultural Fest 2016: *Platinum & Gold - Soca's Timeline* Delivers Caribbean Music Hits from *Yesteryear, Today, & Tomorrow.*

U.S. Virgin Islands – Our favorite music represents an integral part of who we were, who we are, and who we want to be... In the Caribbean, the music of the islands help to define the people, culture, and heritage. For many, our favorite music literally plays like a soundtrack to our lives, and actually helps us to mark time. For example, can you remember where you were when you first heard your favorite classic Caribbean hit song? Do you remember classic hits like “*Archie Buck Me Up*” by Prince Galloway, “*Ra ti Ray*” by Designer, or more contemporary fare such as “*Ah Dohn Care*” by The Spectrum Band or “*Play Me Like Pan*” by Nikki Brooks? Well, this summer be prepared to be taken both backward and forward in time – musically that is, as this summer’s sizzling summer concert ticket is **Caribbean Cultural Fest. 2016: *Platinum & Gold - Soca's Timeline*** presented by *Virgin Islanders United, Inc.* The event will pay homage to hit soca and calypso music of yesteryear, today, & tomorrow. This popular, free, and annual, outdoor music concert takes place on **Sunday, September 4, 2016 from 2:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., in the Jackie Robinson Park (85 Bradhurst Ave., 145th St.), in Harlem, New York City.** The festival is an established, crowd-pleasing event, which attracts over 6,000+ loyal fans annually, and will be broadcast “live” to the U.S. Virgin Islands on WSTA radio (1340 a.m.), and to the world via www.lucky13wsta.com. Caribbean Cultural Fest 2016 is proudly powered by USVI based sponsors: *The U.S. Virgin Islands Department of Tourism, Innovative, The West Indian Company, Ltd., SmartNet, Alliance Data Services, First Bank, Children's Dental Care, Inc., Havensight Medical Laboratory, V.I. Oncology & Hematology Center, The Virgin Islands Daily News, WSTA Radio -1340 a.m., and Virgin Islanders United, Inc.*

“Caribbean Cultural Fest. 2016: *Platinum & Gold – Soca's Timeline* is going to be a truly amazing event as we have hit upon a brand strategy and concept, which works for us, by keeping the music of our past alive, while also placing a heavy emphasis on today’s hit music,” says Janet Parris, President of Virgin Islanders United, Inc. “Our festival’s intent is to first take you on a trip down memory lane, and provide you with unforgettable calypso classics from the past, and then later in the day provide you with current hit music from the present, as well as new music you will be hearing within the near future. We are literally bridging the old with the new, bringing classic calypso artists together with current popular soca artists, and placing them all together in one satisfying show,” Parris said. “We can’t have every hit or every artist from every island, but I think that we have done a great job of providing a great cross section of music from throughout the

Caribbean, with a special nod to music from the V.I. and the eastern Caribbean. I look forward to seeing the many Virgin Islanders who attend the event each year from all over the U.S., as well as those who come directly from the Territory joining many other Caribbean Nationals for this exciting show. So, come out with your island's flag, represent your Caribbean Nation, and be prepared to enjoy an authentic Caribbean music experience and fun for the entire family," Parris said.

Platinum & Gold – Soca's Timeline as the theme and title suggests, denotes an actual timeline of recognizing hit Caribbean songs from the past and present. However it is also an *unofficial* play on the Recording Industry Association of America's (RIAA) award certification for music based on the number of albums and singles sold through retail and other ancillary markets. This measurement determines whether a music artist achieves *gold* or *platinum* status based on sales. However arguably, while today this critical measure of music success accurately charts the sales of music artists from on-line downloads to retail CD sales, there is a feeling among some, that many of the unit sales of the older more traditional calypsonians and soca artists of the past, may have never truly been accurately tracked or recognized. As a result, many artists although clearly famous and household names within Caribbean circles, have never truly received the recognition based on unit sales, that they so richly deserve within mainstream circles. This is because in the past, within many U.S. mainland markets, calypso and soca music simply did not receive much airplay on the formats of most radio stations, and so there was not much data to track. Similarly within the Caribbean, although the music may have enjoyed the airplay, there was no unified and accurate tracking based on unit sales of hit songs. As a result, many of the great pioneers of calypso and soca, have more than likely achieved *platinum* or *gold* status *unofficially* many times over, but never actually received notable recognition for it... As the parent organization of Caribbean Cultural Fest., Virgin Islanders United Inc. felt that in the absence of that international recognition for Caribbean artists, punctuated by calypso & soca music not having their own categories at the Grammys, that it was proactively a good idea to put together a show which demonstrates true fan appreciation to the many talented musicians and artists who produce these musical art forms.

Caribbean Cultural Fest. 2016 will dazzle fans with *platinum* and *gold* performances, which will take spectators down nostalgia road and up hit maker avenue, beginning with the standards from classic calypso masters with performances from musical pillars and royalty hailing from St. Croix: ***Prince Galloway, King Derby, and King Generic, and culminating with classic hit tracks from Trinidadian Calypso icon - Designer***; the show then segues into performances from a triad of super-powered soca sirens featuring show stopping performances from today's soca hit makers: ***Laurena Davis & the TKO Band representing Antigua/Barbuda, and USVI powerhouse divas, chart-topping Nikki Brooks & the sensational-Rudy Live!*** The show concludes with its heavyweight headliner, guaranteed to please in ***7X USVI Carnival Road March Champions - The Awesome Spectrum Band!***

The show will be hosted by U.S.V.I. television personality, co-founder and past president of Virgin Islanders United, Kevin Hughes, and N.Y. Caribbean Radio Personality, and

host of “*The Avril Show*”, Avril Francis. The event will also feature, a New York based dance group, an appearance by NYC’s Carnival Queen, and the world-famous mocko-jumbie review. The festival also boasts a bustling vendor’s market complete with delicious Caribbean dishes, beverages, novelties, and much, much, more.

“Caribbean Cultural Fest. 2016 has truly become a popular staple of Carnival in New York City during the popular Labor Day Weekend, where so much of the focus is on Caribbean heritage and pride. As one of the few Caribbean events taking place within the borough of Manhattan, we are proud to do our part to help positively promote Caribbean culture,” says Kevin Hughes, Past President of Virgin Islanders United, Inc. “V.I.U. is extremely thankful to all of our V.I. based sponsors that consistently see the value and importance of supporting a Virgin Islands event of this magnitude from a purely nationalistic and patriotic perspective in terms of representing our culture abroad, but also to help to actively get attendees to experience the VI first at our show, and then later visit and experience the Territory for themselves. We specifically encourage event attendees to visit St. Croix for Carnival, which is the next major event within the Territory after the Festival,” Hughes said. “Caribbean Cultural Fest. is the signature event of Virgin Islanders United, Inc., and is the largest celebration of USVI pride and culture in North America. However, at V.I.U. we believe in a spirit of inclusion rather than exclusion. As a result, at our show we mix our solid V.I. foundation, with a strong dose of artists from other islands including Trinidad, the BVI, Antigua/Barbuda, St. Kitts/Nevis, and elsewhere within the eastern Caribbean, resulting in a rich musical mix, and a dynamic show,” Hughes said. “For Virgin Islanders United as a civic organization, one of our goals is to assist with driving vital tourism based traffic to the Territory. With a substantial portion of visitors to the V.I. coming directly from the New York and eastern seaboard corridor, and with our event taking place in New York, we are able to leverage our festival to specifically promote visits to the Territory, and help stimulate the V.I. economy. We accomplish this through the pursuit of event attendees who are in large measure second and third generation Virgin Islanders who in some cases have never visited the islands of their ancestry, from other Caribbean Nationals, and from African-Americans which are all groups that attend the event, have disposable income, and are very interested in visiting the U.S. Virgin Islands,” Hughes concluded.

Virgin Islanders United, Inc. is a member of the USVI Department of Tourism’s Ambassador Program, which enables the Department of Tourism to partner with V.I. based groups and individuals based on the U.S. mainland, with regards to assisting with the promotion of the Territory. The USVI Department of Tourism currently offers a “**Family Reunion Promotion**,” designed to specifically encourage V.I. Nationals and others to visit the V.I., which includes a number of booking incentives, including \$350 in spending credits for family-focused activities and a free night at participating hotels. As part of the promotion, each participant will also receive a customized family T-shirt and welcome gift bag. **Travelers must use booking code FR16 to secure room blocks, and all bookings must be made by December 15, 2016, for travel through December 15, 2017.** Participating hotels on St. Croix include: *The Buccaneer Hotel, Divi Carina Bay Beach Resort & Casino, The Palms at Pelican Cove, Sand Castle on the Beach, and Mount Victory Camp Eco-Lodge.* Hotels on St. Thomas include: *The Green Iguana*

Hotel, Galleon House, Frenchman's Reef & Morning Star Marriott Beach Resort, and Windward Passage Hotel.

Virgin Islanders United, Inc. was founded in 1999, and has been publicly recognized by elected officials from both the U.S. & the U.S.V.I. V.I.U. even has its own theme song, “*Virgin Islands In Town For Labor Day*”, which was written and sung by Calypso Rose, the undisputed Calypso Queen of the World. As a civic organization, the mandate of the group remains clear, to represent the rich culture and heritage of the USVI and the Caribbean.

Interested persons seeking vendor information for Caribbean Cultural Fest. 2016, or for membership in Virgin Islanders United Inc. or to make a donation can call (212) 713-5787. Follow VIU on Facebook & Twitter or visit www.virginislandersunited.org