

Bequia's best kept secret is now out!

BEQUIA Mount Gay Music Fest 2011: "I was blown away...!"

These were the words on the lips of just about everyone who attended the Bequia Mount Gay Music Fest last weekend. Last year the event was described as "the best kept secret in the Caribbean." The huge audience figures this year made it clear that the secret is now very much OUT!

Bequia began filling up with visitors and yachts many days before the event, and a real buzz of anticipation was in the air. Music lovers from all over the world, from neighbouring Caribbean countries, from Bequia, and especially from St. Vincent, came by sea and air to enjoy a superb weekend of top-class musical entertainment. Those who could not attend enjoyed a live broadcast and internet stream of all the performances on Cross County Radio and Nice Radio, reaching a truly global audience.

Bequia Mount Gay Music Fest Director Wilfred Dederer put together a programme of music which catered for all tastes and all ages, ranging from Country & Western and traditional Bequia string music, to blues to jazz to reggae to hip hop to rock to soca, with some superb pan-playing thrown in for good measure.

"The blend of artists was extraordinary, and the coordination of the show was superb, which speaks to a very high level of professionalism and a lot of advance planning," commented Vincentian Duane Arthur, who was one of hundreds who journeyed from the mainland to attend the event. "There was really something for everyone; the music brought people of all types together. I looked around and saw all these different faces - from Bequia, from abroad, from the mainland, and I knew something very special was happening - it was like "Woodstock's little brother!"

With the Elite Steel Orchestra kicking off the event on Thursday at the Frangipani Hotel, Friday night belonged to the Mustique Blues Festival, with Dana Gillespie and her London Blues Band, who wowed the crowd with their amazing line-up of guest artists, including Jamie Little on drums, Dino Baptiste and Paddy Milner on keyboard, guitarists Lewis Cohen and the ever-popular Ian Siegal, and the amazing vocals of Detroit-

born Blues giant Marcus Malone. Basil Charles' Mustique Blues musicians graciously volunteered their performance in Bequia in exchange for a generous contribution by the event organizers to the Basil Charles Education Foundation.

Music Fest main sponsor Bequia Beach Hotel in Friendship provided the perfect venue on Saturday afternoon for a relaxing Jazz and Blues Jam by the beach with impromptu performances by close to twenty musicians, including the hugely popular Music Fest co-founder Louis O'Neil on piano and Jan Smith on sax, trumpeter Jim Coleman, guitarists Bob Berlinghof and Wry Worry, "Patches" Knights and David Maxwell on piano, Stan and Cora on piano and sax, Thomas Richards on bass, Kenville Jack on pan, "Flour" Haddaway on drums, and vocalist Marie Claire from Dominica. With no admission charge and the perfect setting to draw the crowds, over six hundred people gathered to eat, drink and enjoy the music.

Down at De Reef, the 1000 plus crowd on Saturday night enjoyed a perfect evening, with the option to lime outside under the stars and watch the action on the 20ft live feed screen, or get up close to the stage in the packed nightclub atmosphere created inside the venue.

After excellent opening sets on Saturday night from Bequia's Country Relatives, outstanding young singer/songwriter Amanda Gooding, and the band Adrehnalín, it was the turn of the "Bajan Invajan" led by the Caribbean's smoothest, saxiest horn man Arturo Tappin, MTV award-winning NEXCYX, guitar virtuoso Toby Armstrong's Blues Explosion and multi-talented Look Hooz Left to stun

the audience with their talent and bring the excitement to fever pitch.

"Arturo Tappin's individuality and range of material transcended all the musical events I've seen in my life," enthused Duane Arthur. "What he played in 90 minutes spanned about ten music generations. I was blown away!" Many more were lost for words just watching him play.

Music Fest favourite guitarist Toby Armstrong won ever more fans with his extraordinary performance, along with award winning pan virtuoso and percussionist Ziggy Walcott and drummer Jamal Browne, joined by Garvie Griffith on vocals and acoustic guitar and Marius Charlemagne on bass.

The phenomenal NEXCYX, back again in Bequia by popular demand, closed out the night with another



ARTURO TAPPIN (left) up close and personal with the Bequia Blues Festival audience.

stellar performance, drawing comparisons with the likes of Rihanna and Kevin Lyttle as standard bearers for the future of Caribbean music and pop culture.

Sunday afternoon at De Reef in Lower Bay saw a relaxed and varied crowd enjoy the closing day with

great performances by the de Real Ting, Denzil Bacchus Blues Band from St. Vincent, The Honky Tonics with Jim Coleman, David Maxwell and the Bequia Blues Band.

As the sun went down there was a surprise appearance by Toby Armstrong before handing the stage over to Barbadian Look Hooz Left, led by Scott Zimmerman on guitar who was judged to "play Hendrix better than Hendrix".. by one passionate, newly-won admirer.

After calling for encore after encore, the crowd was treated to an impromptu appearance by NEXCYX who joined their friends from Look Hooz Left on stage for one fabulous last number. A truly fitting climax to a fabulous weekend.

Pascale Sold-Rangel, Caribbean Area Manager for Remy Cointreau Caribbean/Mount Gay Rum declared after the event: "Mount Gay is delighted to be headline sponsor of such a high-profile event in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, with such international appeal... where Mount Gay is drunk by music lovers from the Caribbean and beyond."

The four day event was attended by larger-than-ever numbers from the

mainland, with the last ferries on Saturday packed to the max with vehicles and music fans. Attendees included Tourism Authority COO Faylene Findlay-Scrub, Chairperson Lucille Cozier, Deputy Chairman and LIME Marketing Director Fitz Huggins, Director of Tourism Vida Bernard, Minister for Foreign Affairs Douglas Slater, sponsors Karib Cable Managing Director Kelly Glass, Director Jankie Glass and Group General Manager Ian Mulhern, LIME St. Vincent Country Manager Angus Steele, Lorne Holder from Bryden's representing Mount Gay Rum and St. Vincent Brewery Limited Sales and Marketing Manager Wayne Murphy.

"The 2011 Bequia Music Fest has been a highly successful event that has created a unique place in Vincentian music history as one of the must-see-events", said Murphy.

The Bequia Tourism Association and the Bequia Mount Gay Music Fest organisers wish to thank headline sponsor Mount Gay Rum (Barbados), and major sponsors Basil Charles, SVG Tourism Authority, CRS Music & Media, Barbados, Hairoun Beer, Karib Cable, LIME, LIAT, Air Adelphi, SVG Air, Admiralty Transport, Bequia Express, BDS Music, Nice Radio, Cross Country Radio, IK TV, Quik-Print (St. Vincent), Bequia Beach Hotel, Frangipani Hotel and De Reef, Bequia. Thanks, too, go to all the Bequia and St. Vincent businesses and individuals who supported the Music Fest in so many ways, and to all the musicians who made the 2011 Bequia Mount Gay Music Fest one which will be remembered for years to come.

Bequia Music Fest 2012 will be held from Thursday 26th to Sunday 29th January.



LEGENDARY BLUES VOCALIST Dana Gillespie in action at the Bequia Blues Festival.



AN APPRECIATIVE BLUES CROWD at De Reef in Bequia.