

Caribbeans target African-Americans

By *Ayote Brown*
Special to *Sentinel-Voice*

Even to the casual observer/traveler it is apparent that there is a shift in how the Caribbean is being marketed to North Americans.

Where the focus has traditionally been directed at each island's natural beauty and indigenous cultures, there is now a move to using familiar North American flavors to entice the traveler.

"There's been a marked difference in how we have been marketing the Bahamas since 1992 when we had a new government come into power and opened the way for some new investments in the tourism sector," said Cordell Thompson, general manager of public relations for the Bahamas Ministry of Tourism.

"We recognized that the person traveling today wants more than sun, sand, casinos and good restaurants. Added to our strong cultural attractions, we believed the festival concept was a good way to get some excitement back into our tourism product."

And part of this excitement has been supplied by two events: the Caribbean Muzik Festival and the Bahamas Rhythm and Blues Festival.

The Caribbean Muzik Festival, begun in May 1994, is a celebration of the musical culture of the region. With artists performing everything from reggae, soca and junkanoo, the focus has been decidedly pan-Caribbean.

However, the Bahamas Rhythm and Blues Festival centers on African-American musical forms. Performers have included popular African-American artists like Regina Belle, Kool and the Gang and this year, Miki Howard, Will Downing and the Whispers.

In fact, throughout the Caribbean a growing number of islands have tagged the African-American musical genre as a money-maker. Aruba, St. Lucia, Bermuda, Cancun, Curacao, Jamaica and others have successfully held jazz, R&B, soul, funk, blues and even gospel festivals.

"The festivals across the Caribbean, going back to (Reggae) Sunsplash (in Jamaica) since 1972, have been designed to boost tourism in traditionally low periods," Thompson said. "They have really worked as a marketing tool for all of us."

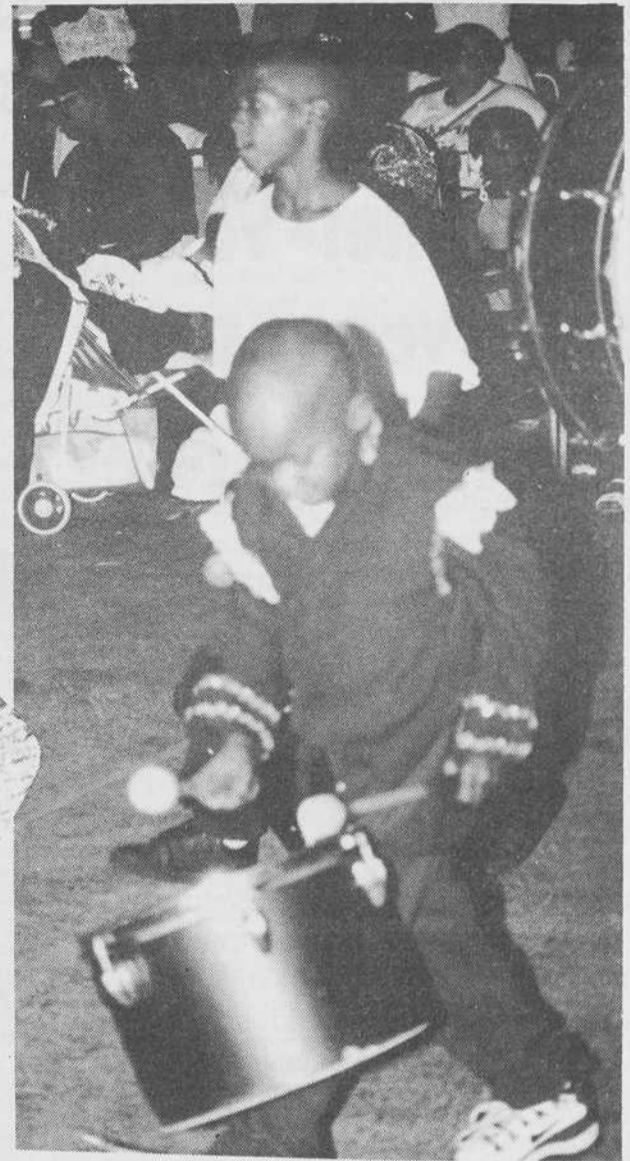
Additionally, he does not see the proliferation of these festivals as a hindrance to his agenda. "It's really healthy competition," he said. "It's a formula that is really working for all of us because it's a big pie and all of us can get our share."

And all are especially vying for a slice of the African-American pie. With a total income of over \$400 billion in 1995, African-Americans spent approximately \$5 billion on transportation, travel and lodging, according to Target Market News, Inc. Tourism ministries have taken notice.

"It's a very conscious decision to target the African-American market. They total about 150,000 of the Caribbean's travel market each year and we get about two-thirds of that," Thompson said.

"We've watched market trends over the years and we know that African-Americans basically travel from Memorial Day to Labor Day (May to September). So, we have just really expanded our focus on what was a traditional market," he said.

Feel the Funk!



Sentinel-Voice photos by Ramon Savoy

Contestants strut their stuff at a performance competition held by the Las Vegas High Steppers drill team. Mahoney's Silver Nugget hosted the July 26 competition.

Bryant hosts new weekly TV magazine

Special to *Sentinel-Voice*

Karyn Bryant is the new host of the Turner Network Television (TNT) series "Rough Cut," a new half-hour, weekly magazine dedicated exclusively to the film industry.

The show premieres Thursday, Aug. 7, at 10:30 p.m. (ET). It will also air in that time slot.

Prior to joining TNT where she has interviewed a bevy of stars - including Sylvester Stallone, Will Smith and Sandra Bullock - Bryant hosted "Sound FX," an hour-long guide to music featuring video clips and guests, and airing weeknights live on Fox's cable network, FX. In addition, Bryant reported the FX news three nights a week.

Before her stint with FX, Bryant was a video jockey for Music Television (MTV). She

hosted video programming as well as several cutting-edge programs, including "Awake of the Wild Side," "Weekend Blastoff," "Buzzcut" (the original alternative program), "Like We Care" and her own "Coffee with Karyn."

Previously, Bryant was program and music director and on-air radio personality at WBRU, a commercial radio station in Providence, R.I.

Expanded from vignettes currently airing six nights a week on TNT, the "Rough Cut" series will present in-depth and exclusive interviews with the people in front of and behind the camera.

The show will also cover the industry's newest film releases, casting news, technology breakthroughs as well as provide box-office analysis of movies.



KARYN BRYANT

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