

Jamesie, King of Scratch, is a new DVD produced and directed by Andrea E. Leland. The film is excellent. The complex cultural context of quelbe, the official music of the US Virgin Islands, is demonstrated brilliantly. The important context of this music is imbedded throughout the film. This music teaches in two ways: first, it's a way for important stories of the Virgin Islands culture to be passed on to the next generation, and second, it's a way to teach outsiders about that heritage. Both roles are critical in cultural heritage and preservation. Andrea Leland has done a tremendous service to the Virgin Islanders by documenting Jamesie and all that he stands for. Translations of the song texts are provided, with musicians then explaining the historical context of those songs. The intensity of the musicians when they play and speak about this music is a clear indication that Jamesie's legacy is honored and respected by the younger generations. The differences between Jamesie's style and that of the younger musicians gives hope that this important musical tradition will maintain its roots while evolving over time. Quelbe is a living art form, not an antiquated piece to be studied in isolation as something that "once was". This film brings the vibrancy and character of the islands and their music to life. Nice work, Andrea!

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