



**Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago**  
**Ministry of Trade and Industry**

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# ***The Gospel Music Awards of Trinidad and Tobago***

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## REMARKS

SENATOR THE HONOURABLE PAULA GOPEE-SCOON  
MINISTER OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY

JULY 7<sup>TH</sup>, 2024

## **SALUTATIONS**

- Dr. the Honourable, Nyan Gadsby-Dolly – Minister of Education
- Mr. David Roberts, Permanent Secretary (Ag.), Ministry of Sport and Community Development
- Mr. Ian Haywood Jr. – Managing Director, Celian Group
- Ms. Melissa Jimenez, General Manager, Music TT
- Distinguished religious leaders and representatives
- Awardees
- Members of the Media
- Ladies and Gentlemen

Good evening

It is indeed a pleasure for me to deliver the Feature Address at the 2024 instalment of the Gospel Music Awards of Trinidad and Tobago-GMATT. I am delighted to see so many of you here this evening which underscores the significance of this annual event on the music calendar. This evening's showcase recognizes the abundant talent and contribution of our local Gospel artistes who have excelled in this genre of music over the past year.

We are always excited to participate in events like these which bring together an infusion of stakeholders from the public and private sectors, as well as non-governmental organizations. The involvement of the Ministry of Trade and Industry in GMATT, through MusicTT, demonstrates the Government's continued support for our Gospel artistes.

I am particularly thrilled by the theme of this year's Ceremony "Septennium of Gratitude". This year represents a Septennium, which symbolizes a period of 7 years for GMATT. In Scripture, 7 often symbolizes completion or perfection. This is indeed a remarkable accomplishment and I congratulate Mr. Ian Haywood and the Celian Group on achieving this milestone. The Ministry of Trade and Industry, through MusicTT, has been supporting this event over the years and is pleased to continue our partnership with Celian Group.

According to the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI) in its 2024 Global Music Report, revenue from traded music was valued at US \$28.6 billion in 2023 and grew by 10.2% from its 2022 value representing nine consecutive years of growth. It is also anticipated that revenues from the global recorded Music industry will rise exponentially to approximately USD\$53.2 billion by 2030.

These figures reflect a truly global and diverse Music industry, with revenues growing in every market, every region and across every recorded music format. This industry performance reaffirms how lucrative the global Music industry is and the significant opportunities that are available for our local artistes. On account of this, the Government has identified Music as a targeted industry to advance the country's diversification agenda.

Christian music is one of the fastest-growing genres internationally that has also been positively influencing the local music landscape. In Trinidad and Tobago, the growth of this type of music has been quite impressive, with Gospel now being the 2nd largest subset of the local Music industry (after soca/calypso), which is a testament to its popularity.

The rise of Gospel music is also creating a useful platform for our local artistes to capture greater commercial opportunities globally. On account of this encouraging trend, our Gospel artistes such as Blessed Messenger, Jaron Nurse, Positive and J Prince are generating millions of e-views on YouTube and TikTok globally. In 2022, Trinidad and Tobago received over 130 nominations and copped 18 awards at the Caribbean Gospel Music Marlin Awards in The Bahamas. We received the highest number of awards by a country at the Festival in that year.

More recently, Sherwin Gardner's latest song, "Find Me Here" which was only released in January this year, has already received over 1.8 billion e-views on TikTok. This is simply phenomenal and is a clear demonstration of the significant talent and international appeal of our local artistes and music. He is also the first black Gospel artiste to achieve over 1 billion e-views on TikTok and we are very proud of him for this accomplishment.

The Ministry of Trade and Industry, through MusicTT, has also been quite supportive of the Music industry through dedicated programmes and an attractive incentive framework. Many Gospel artistes have benefitted from this outreach by the Government. For instance, since the launch of the Live Music District (LMD) Programme in 2018 to 2024, over 330 Gospel music performances were financially supported. Additionally, 21 artistes benefitted from the Music Business Development Grant Facility during the period 2022-2024, of which 6 were Gospel artistes. But while we have achieved many successes, more must be done if Trinidad and Tobago is to be recognized globally as a major producer of Gospel music.

While there is no shortage of talent in Trinidad and Tobago, the opportunities for our local Gospel artistes are yet to be fully optimized. We must create a platform for Gospel music and artistes, not only to minister through song, but also to earn income. We must build on

the popularity of our Gospel music and aggressively pursue greater commercialization opportunities for this type of music. How can we achieve this?

At last year's Awards I reiterated the importance of International Standard Recording Code – ISRC Registrations, as well as opportunities for Sync licences. While these matters are still relevant today, we must also build on this and focus on the growing international trends and infuse them into our local music landscape to enhance our musical prowess.

### ***Collaborations across Worship Movements***

There has been an increase in collaborations in 2024 between artistes from various Christian denominations and backgrounds. These collaborations transcend beyond traditional boundaries, promoting unity and celebrating diversity within the worship space. For example, Tobago-based Positive, collaborated with Grammy-Award winning American Gospel legend, Kirk Franklin, through an open call in 2023. This move is a tremendous milestone of which other artistes must follow to bring greater recognition to Trinidad and Tobago and the Caribbean for gospel music.

### ***Genre-crossing and Blends***

Additionally, an increasing number of producers and musicians are creating music that are not clearly aligned to a single style, diminishing the significance of genres and sub-genres. For instance, playlists centred around moods are gaining even more popularity, reflecting a shift where listeners choose music based on their emotions rather than strict genre preferences.

Relatedly, Gospel music can be infused with other popular local genres such as calypso, soca, rapso, chutney, chutney soca and, of course, the steelpan. This reflects an embodiment of our ability to create, innovate and adapt to other trending music and cultures.

Continued dominance of short-form videos (TikTok, Instagram Reels and YouTube shorts)

2023 witnessed a continued surge in the dominance of short-form video platforms, notably TikTok, Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts. These bite-sized platforms are not just trends but integral components continually shaping the future of Gospel music. TikTok remains a powerhouse for Gospel music with over 2 billion active users and Instagram Reels have become a harmonious space for Gospel artistes while YouTube Shorts has helped diversify the content available to gospel enthusiasts. These are platforms that we must constantly embrace and utilize to showcase our talent and music.

### ***Using Artificial Intelligence in Music***

The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI), like in many other areas of our society, has become more popular in the Music arena. For example, YouTube's introduction of a new Application called Dream Track in late 2023, allows users to generate song snippets using the voices and styles of famous artistes. These AI-generated snippets can be legally used in YouTube Shorts, and when combined with our local talent, the output would be a truly amazing musical product.

I extend congratulations to all nominees, and awardees on your achievements. This year I understand there are 21 categories of awards which is very impressive. Your persistence in creating and promoting Gospel music is a source of encouragement and solace to many. Once again, I congratulate Mr. Ian Haywood and the Celian Group for their dedication and commitment in hosting the 2024 GMATT.

In closing, I leave you with the inspiring words of American singer and actress Laura Allen: "Gospel music is really any music that's a testimony and tells a story of what God has done in your life". I encourage you to live by these words and express them through your melodies.

I thank you.