

Just Another Day In PARADISE

STORY AND PHOTOS BY JORDAN MITCHNICK

HO-HUM, ANOTHER ST. BARTHS BUCKET.... As if! It may be 13 years old, but in my extensive research into fun to be had on the water, the Bucket has never wavered in its unique temptress-esque appeal. There are *other* tried-and-true sailing regattas, in *other* superlative locales with noteworthy festivities and stunning yachts...but, for reasons beyond the tangible, the joie de vivre-infused, rosé-saturated weekend that is the annual St. Barths Bucket stands alone. After all, it was founded on FUN, and first and foremost winning the party is the name of the game.

No matter what the conditions – be it a totally windless non-regatta as in 2006 or the biggest Bucket ever in 2007 – even the most trying circumstances can't alter the tenacious Bucket spirit. I had to wonder what surprises would be thrown our way in 2008....

After waking up to cacti bending sideways in extreme howling winds, I thought for sure a Mistral had made its way to St. Barths and the 28-strong fleet would remain in the harbor to host champagne-sipping wannabe race enthusiasts. At 9:00am, however, the skippers' meeting confirmed that we would indeed be hitting the Around-the-Island course with an on-time start. Pursuit-race style, the start is staggered in hopes that everyone finishes near to each other and the first boat to cross the line is the day's winner (all three days are calculated to determine one final result). Somehow the Mistral segued into perfect 25-knot-ish conditions and made for a quick spin around the island. The fleet – ranging from the elegant classic Fife design *Altair* to the brand-new sleek-as-Farr design *Leopard 3* – finished the course before 3:00pm. This allowed adequate time for the chefs to prepare beautiful bites for the evening's raucous yacht hop, which was a smashing success as sailors libated from passerelle to passerelle.

Saturday's Wiggly Course was graced with a near repeat performance in weather, if a wee bit less swell. Saturday night, however, was definitely in a class of its own. On one side of the harbor, at the owners' party at La Marine, an auction successfully raised €175,000 for St. Barths' F.E.M.U.R, the non-profit that seeks to purchase medical equipment for the drastically needy St. Barths hospital. And under the marquee was the "Bucket Bash," where a swing band dance party and very civilized buffet dinner transpired. To cap off the evening, local Jimmy Buffett and his band played a free concert.

Needless to say, Sunday morning may have been a bit rough for some.... At any rate we were out sailing *The Other Way Around* in the same ideal conditions once again. The last finish was considered by many to be the most exciting in Bucket history, with *Ranger* over the line a split second before *Windrose*, followed very, very closely by a cluster of *Rebecca*, *Gliss* and *Leopard 3*. After the lively prize giving, accompanied by Jimmy Buffett's gift of a case of his Landshark beer for each yacht, all set off into the night, the spirit of the Bucket thriving on. ✪

>> [more photos on the next page]



The fleet in Gustavia Harbour



Visione steams by



Race crew Mark, Chef Esme, First Mate Simon and race manager Godfrey of Ranger



Engineer "Yoyo" and yacht manager Dan of Ranger



Leopard 3 on the prowl

Earl Williams, race skipper aboard *Ranger*



M/Y Vita crewmember Jemma helps the *Ranger* race crew.



Myalere



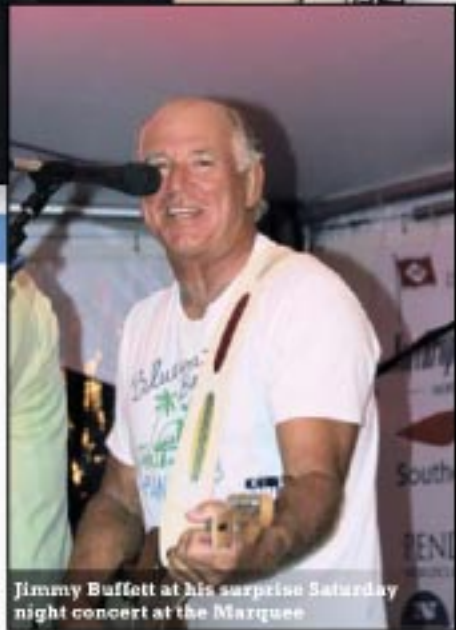
Winner overall *Windrose* heads for the line.



Race crew Bertie on *Sapperton*



2008 Winner overall, the crew of *Windrose*



Jimmy Buffett at his surprise Saturday night concert at the Marquee

REGATTA RESULTS

Walter Huisman Memorial Spirit of the Bucket:
Visione

Perini Navi Cup:
Antara

Alloy Cup:
Paraiso

Vitter's Shipyard Polished Performance Award:
Ranger

All Star Crew Award:
Avalon

Grande Dames (First):
Windrose

Gazelles De Mer (First):
Rebecca

First Place Overall:
Windrose

Handicappers Cup:
Axia

Escargot Cup:
Perseus

Skulduggery Award:
Rebecca