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GRAND BAHAMA

Tenner looking to put Grand Bahama on the map

By Nathaniel Lewis, Freeport, Grand Bahama

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Marketing and branding innovator, Lisa Tenner is no stranger to the island of Grand Bahama. Being a local homeowner, a community socialite, and the producer of one of the largest celebrity concerts on the island, she says she believes she has what it takes to assist in successfully branding Grand Bahama and giving the island the much needed exposure it deserves.

Tenner, who owns the global branding and marketing firm specializing in entertainment, Tenner and Associates, Inc, started from humble beginnings in Los Angeles and traveled often to New York before working her way up the marketing ladder. "I actually started in the New York City Ballet which most people don't know, and I loved being in the theatre and studying with the Ballet Master Balanchine. My father, Morrie Ratner, insisted that I would be better studying and working in business than attempting to be a prima Ballerina so I took him up on his offer and really started at a very young age in the food business," she recalls. "I knew that was not my calling and went into the fashion business which I loved. Music called me and that call created the opportunity for me to become an accountant and start a business management practice that serviced the entertainment industry, from recording artists to TV studios and their owners, and a few film industry professionals and actors."

In 1994, she then moved to Las Vegas where she says she found her life's purpose. "When I moved to Las Vegas from Los Angeles, the industry of music was changing and I decided to create a music festival and conference called Emerging Artists and Technology in Music. I am proud to say that was a calling and a very special moment in my life. The ability to bring so many influential Music professionals from the Russell Simmons Hip Hop summit and combine that with a formatted Rock , Pop, Country music conference and festival is a crowning achievement for anyone and it took an entire team to make this happen. I just saw what it should look like and what it should offer and I was fortunate to have great partner and staff that could execute this and launch many careers of new artists" she said.

Tenner has received many awards and achievements extending as high as the Governor of the State of Nevada. "If you ask me what I think my major accomplishments would be I would eagerly say winning the Governors Award for tourism in Las Vegas, as no single individual had ever been able to do that before I brought in EATM to the city." She also formed the Queen of Hearts which was a team of famed women poker players who played the ladies event at the World Series of Poker and who committed to donate winnings to charities for both the Heart Foundation and for the Cancer Foundations.

Tenner then decided to bring her skills and expertise to Grand Bahama Island at a time when the largest hotel on the island, then known as Our Lucaya, was in the process of re-branding. This exercise she noted, was her first major project in the country and she says that while it was successful, it could have been even better. "When we moved part time to The Bahamas I knew I had some knowledge to share and I was very fortunate to work on the rebranding and marketing of the Grand Lucayan. I think with proper advertising, the event that took place in November 2011 could have had a much larger turn out. It's not often we have headliners from Las Vegas, coupled with a few finalists from American Idol, and the runner up of Americas got talent."

In addition to the Grand Lucayan, Tenner noted that she's also worked with other companies that have a presence on Grand Bahama and last year she met a client in Freeport who runs a US based online social play site company and she was hired to be their marketing consultant. "I very much enjoyed that work and they sponsored one of my clients on ESPN. I do think they got a lot of branding exposure for a good price," she said.

Moving forward, Tenner noted that she would love to get even more active in the marketing and branding of Grand Bahama and thinks that the island and its people makes it the perfect hub for fun signature turnkey events. She said, "We did the best we could given our short window of time and I only wish I could have continued, as I know what that property could be used for as a backdrop for many high end as well as signature events. Feedback from the community here has been mixed. People are aware of my background. I think some appreciated the efforts a new person has had to work through to accommodate and bring a project to excellence in this country. I pride myself on my work and my events, and I know those who were in attendance at the Grand Lucayan event wish we could have more entertainment here on Grand Bahama Island. If I could have the ears of the decision makers for The Bahamas, there is no doubt in my mind I could increase the tourism here. I recently visited the new build out at the port and I know the Ministry of Tourism is doing as much as they can to create Freeport as a must stop port. I am proud that this expansion is happening as its a jewel of a stop in the Caribbean."

Among her many ideas, she said that she believes a Music Festival would be perfect to enhance the island's tourism product and put Grand Bahama on the map. "One thing I would love to bring here would be a music festival, not only to showcase artists but to also have workshops and panels so these local artists, who are so very talented, can land on a tour that gives them a taste of appreciation for their talents.

She also noted that a televised gaming event would also be perfect for the island "We have a very nice casino here, and since I am from Las Vegas, I do have the experience to know that the hotels can feed the casino, and the casino can drive occupancy, and that combination drives down the unemployment rate."

Moving forward she said she wants to create a partnership with the Ministry of Tourism in hopes of facilitating bigger and better events, as well as fostering a long-term relationships with the businesses and residents of the Grand Bahama community. "One has to be accepted by the community and it takes a lot of determination and persistence to break the barriers. Let's hope the Ministry of Tourism will take a meeting. If I can make a contribution, someone will call upon me.. I love it here and the community."

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