

people never thought would be possible."

It was a fitting voice to headline the launch of the 2026 edition of *Beyond The Canvas*, an initiative by Reach A Hand Africa focused on nurturing tal-

ent among young people living with and without disabilities.

Formerly known as Sauti Canvas, the platform has evolved into something bigger than a talent competition. It now positions itself as a space where creativity, visibility, and inclusion intersect,

particularly for young people often excluded from mainstream opportunities.

This year's edition runs under the theme "*Abilities Beyond Limits*," a phrase familiar in disability advocacy circles but one that carried more

weight because of the conversations surrounding it. The competition, open to young people aged 30 and below, will feature categories including music, dance, spoken word, visual arts, theatre, fashion, cosplay, and garment design.

The finale is scheduled for December

edge and celebrate their voices, talents, and experiences."

In many ways, the event reflected a wider shift across Uganda's creative and social spaces, where conversations around inclusion are becoming more visible, though still uneven in practice.



Poate closing night lives up to its billing

BY TREVOR LUTALO

The 2026 edition of the Pearl of Africa Tourism Expo (Poate) ended in style on Saturday night, with music, fashion, culture and celebration taking centre stage at Speke Resort Munyonyo.

As the curtains fell on the three-day tourism showcase, revellers streamed to the lakeside venue, turning the clos-

ing night into a colourful carnival filled with glamour, dance and Ugandan entertainment.

Guests from different countries mingled with local tourism players, creatives and partygoers under the cool breeze from Lake Victoria.

The night's entertainment featured performances from Selector Jay, media personality Sheilah Gashumba and DJ Lavet, who kept revellers on their feet

Some of the standout experiences at this year's Poate exhibition were the cultural performance.
PHOTO/TREVOR LUTALO

with a mix of chart-topping hits and popular Ugandan jams.

Music lovers danced late into the night as the DJs created an atmosphere that reflected Uganda's vibrant nightlife and entertainment culture.

One of the standout performances came from Ugandan instrumentalist Brian Aliddeki, whose unique sound reconnected many guests to their cultural roots.

Aliddeki fused traditional African instruments with modern sounds, occasionally introducing his guitar to create a rich musical blend that resonated with the crowd.

Against the calm waters of Lake Victoria, his performance reminded guests of Uganda's cultural richness. Another crowd favourite was Ssewa Ssewa, who impressed with his self-created Janzi musical instrument.

His performance drew admiration

TOURISM RECOGNITION

Winners

Among the notable winners from this year's Poate edition was NMG journalist Edgar Batte, who won the Best Tourism Storyteller award.

from both local and international guests.

Fashion also took centre stage during the evening's cultural showcase. Models dressed in creations by Ugandan designers transformed the venue into a moving runway, briefly shifting attention from the music to bold African-inspired designs.

The showcase blended modern style with traditional influences, highlighting the growing role of Uganda's creative industry in tourism and culture.

At one point, Sheila Gashumba left the DJ booth and joined revellers on the dancefloor, exciting fans who rushed closer to dance alongside her. Her interaction added to the lively atmosphere that defined the evening.

Away from the entertainment, the night also celebrated excellence within Uganda's tourism industry.

The Ministry of Tourism, together with the Uganda Tourism Board and the European Union delegation in Uganda, hosted an awards dinner honouring individuals and organisations contributing to tourism growth.

Speaking during the awards dinner, Permanent Secretary Doreen Katusiime praised enterprises investing in sustainability and community development, and thanked all businesses that participated and congratulated the winners for promoting Uganda's tourism potential while supporting communities and environmental conservation.

The closing night capped off another successful edition of Poate, leaving guests with memories of music, culture, fashion and the warmth that continues to define Uganda as the Pearl of Africa.