

Music lovers show up for International Jazz Day

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A section of the crowd in the groove at International Jazz Day

Jamaica's fulsome participation in the celebration of International Jazz Day last Thursday was a story sonically crafted in the spirit of resilience, and all those involved in the production should gloriously take a bow.

"After Hurricane Melissa, the Ministry of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) experienced fiscal challenges, casting doubt on the Jazz Day concert. Yet to silence this celebration would rob us of hope; jazz was forged in the heat of life-and-death challenges, music that refuses the silence of defeat and

inspires endurance through the spirit of resistance," director of the Jamaica Music Museum, Herbie Miller, declared, as he expounded on "the unyielding 'never-say-die' spirit", which is at the heart of jazz.

It certainly proved to be a "one heart, one love" moment as jazz-lovers showed up in their numbers at Ranny Williams Entertainment Centre along Hope Road, flipping the venue - which accommodated more than 70 art, craft and food vendors - into jazz and culture central, as they savoured the music and the cuisine on offer, under a bright full moon, and not even a drop of the forecast rain.

The event showcased an inspiring mix of local and international talents, including New York-based, multi-instrumentalist Mike McGinnis, pianist Dennis Rushton and his quintet, bass player Dale Haslam, also with his quintet, and the JaMM Big Band, with special guest vocalist Tony Gregory.

Minister of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport, Olivia Grange, was in the house with a smile on her face as she enjoyed the syncopated rhythms, the soulful melodies and the dynamic, interactive solos. She pointed out that "jazz has always been integral to the Jamaican musical experience, so hosting the local event has been a standard on the calendar for many years".

The minister told **The Gleaner** that this year marks the 10th anniversary of Kingston being declared a UNESCO designated Creative City of Music, and this achievement "gave us yet another opportunity to demonstrate the diversity of Jamaican creativity".

"Whenever you learn a new person's music ... especially his ... that's like learning their life and getting inside their head. And that's what's cool about music, because even though I never met him and we lived in different places ... he died the month that I was born in January of 1973 ... but through the music, it's like I know him," McGinnis said.

He noted that Harriet's reputation "is well deserved".

"A lot of people tried to copy Charlie Parker, but he really got the essence of it without being a clone. He's a heroic figure, great innovator and great saxophonist."

His advice to younger musicians who may not have heard or have gone in depth with Joe Harris is simple.

"Check out his free-form album and the movement album sit down with it, put some headphones on and really let it absorb you and you will find a whole beautiful world of expression," McGinnis said.

It was 9:47 p.m. when the JaMM Big Band took charge of the stage and was later joined by Tony Gregory, who fans noted "still have it". International Jazz Day is chaired by the UNESCO director-general and is led by legendary jazz pianist and composer Herbie Hancock.