

Extension on Copyright?

This would be music to the ears of artistes, composers and publishers.

This has been at the heart of an ongoing discussion between the government and the Jamaica Association of Composers Authors and Publishers Ltd. (JACAP).

At the recent funeral of Mr. Rocksteady, Alton Ellis, Minister of Information, Culture, Youth and Sports, Olivia Grange, said that consideration is now being given to amending the Copyright Act, to lengthen the amount of time that royalties are paid on artistic works after the death of an artiste. "At present, royalties may be paid for up to 50 years after the death of an artiste. This period would be extended to 100 years in order that income may be generated from the work of an artiste as a songwriter after his passing for the benefit of the family," Minister Grange said.

Minister Grange echoed what is a popular sentiment within the music fraternity – the fact that it is unfortunate that many early musical pioneers have passed on without full recognition and rewards for their work. She described Alton's legacy as "rich", noting that his music transcended politics and class. "As an artiste he gave his all and his talent cannot be replaced - he brought joy and pleasure to all Jamaicans from all walks of life."

Veteran journalist, Ian Boyne, who delivered the remembrance, declared himself "the greatest Alton Ellis fanatic". As Mr. Boyne passionately sang several of Ellis' hits, he praised the philosophical depth of the messages in his work, adding that despite the fact that Ellis was from the inner-city, he rose above the "Rude Boy" culture.

Mr. Boyne emphasized that "Alton Ellis did not glorify badness, he did not toast dons and 'shottas', he used his music to speak out against negatives in society. Alton Ellis stood up against the takeover of violence, demonstrating that good can come from the inner-city." The ceremony was interspersed with musical tributes from celebrated rock steady musicians from London and Jamaica, including several of Ellis' children. Owen "Blakka" Ellis, nephew of the deceased, remarked that 18 members of the Ellis family were entertainers.

The musical tributes were well received by the singing and dancing congregation. Entertainers who performed included Boris Gardener, Tinga Stewart, Carlene Davis-Cowan, Joan-Andrea Hutchinson, Ken Boothe, Christopher Ellis, Alton Ellis Jr. and Dennis Alcapone.

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