

Irie Jambore not Jamming this year

Irie Jamboree, North America's premier reggae festival will not be held this year. The executive team made the agonizing decision to forgo the seventh annual staging this year. We will instead focus our resources on planning for the 2011 festival on Labor Day Sunday and promise another spectacular, exciting presentation then.

To set the record straight about why this beloved annual concert was forced into hiatus this year, we list 5 reasons that are the cold facts.

The Recession

There's a well known adage in the Caribbean that "if America sneezes, the Caribbean gets a cold". This has never been more severely evidenced than over the past few years as the economic recession being experienced by the U.S. economy has had a grueling disproportionate effect on the diaspora Caribbean community.

Artists visa cancellation/incarceration

To restate the obvious, while Reggae is an entire philosophy, the heart of reggae is the music; the soul of reggae is that of the artists' expressions. Reggae artists whose inspiring performances are usually at the core of any successful festival, have been affected by a number of well-publicized events that will hinder the delivery of an event that meets the usual high standards of an Irie Jamboree type, and the equally lofty inherent expectations of its concert goers. Primary among these are visa revocations and artistes incarcerations. Buju Banton- Incarcerated; Beenie Man-No Visa; Bounty Killer-No Visa; Busy Signal-No Visa; Movado-No Visa; Vybz Kartel-No Visa; Ninjaman- Incarcerated; Jah Cure-No Visa; Sizzla-No Visa and Luciano-No Visa.

The 8pm Shutdown

Irie Jamboree is staged at the Roy Wilkins Park in Queens. The New York City mayor's office through the 113th precinct in Queens, has issued orders for events in area parks to be concluded by 8pm (EST). This puts tremendous pressure on particular promoters. The event is generally scheduled to end at 10pm. It is unreasonable to expect the team of professionals who plan and organize the concert, and whose resources are already strained to terminate the show at 10pm even under the best of circumstances. This 8pm cut off equates to nothing short of production suicide. Additionally, to limit performances in order to meet this timeline represents a gross disservice to patrons and artists alike of the event, and significantly affects a critical subscribing feature that has been created for Irie Jamboree, the reputable "brand" by which it is now widely known and respected.

The overall climate in the Industry

Overall, the reggae industry is at an all time low. The music seems to have become relatively stagnant. Those promoters (particularly in the North-east) who have ventured to host outdoor events these past 2 years have reported significant losses due primarily to unprecedented low attendance numbers. Amongst other salient reasons, not unlike what Jamaica's Usain Bolt did for the sport of track & field, the music industry needs to be potently re-energized; an adrenalin shot of sorts. Irie Jamboree is one of the many casualties of the arguably recent lull in the music, and by extension the industry at large that breathes life into it.

Other Variables

Irie Jamboree is produced as a collaborative effort together with valued partners whose sponsorship support is critical to its successful staging each year. Staging the number one reggae concert in the Northeast USA is amongst other things a very costly undertaking. All (not a few) but ALL traditional corporate sponsors of these type events have at best, dramatically slashed their marketing budgets, if not totally eliminating them. Irie Jamboree has not been spared the ravages of these budgetary realignments, not the least of which has been the recent acquisition of Air Jamaica by Caribbean Airlines which has resulted in the loss of one of the event's greatest allies.

As we make plans for the 2011 staging of Irie Jamboree, we are hopeful that the Government of Jamaica will see the need to allocate a portion of the US\$10 million for Jamaican festivals in the Diaspora. This money we are told is earmarked for the tourism sector to be used to improve Jamaica's image in the post "Dudus" disaster.

Fact is that international festivals like Irie Jamboree has opportunities for valuable public relations exposure for Jamaica. The festival boast a solid track record of quality production and enjoys popular support in the community. Like the Jamaica Jazz & Blues festival that received US\$40,000 a few years ago from the JTB, Irie Jamboree is well positioned and can continue to help to promote Jamaica's music and culture. The success and longevity of this festival will go a long way in helping to repair Jamaica's tarnished image in New York, regard as the media capital of the world. We at Irie

Jamboree wish to extend a heartfelt thank you to all our devoted patrons; tireless staff; reliable vendors; committed sponsors, partners and investors; members of the media fraternity, New York's finest - the NYPD; our loving families and friends; and all others who have been associated with this world class concert over the past seven years here in New York City. Your support is what has sustained and motivated us to keep presenting our beloved music, and the true virtues of our culture at the highest level. We remain committed to bringing you a show that you deserve, and of which you can always be proud. God bless. Sincerely