

## Jazz fest to celebrate Jamaica's birthday

Organisers of the annual Jamaica Jazz and Blues Festival will dedicate the first night of next year's staging to Jamaica's 50th independence anniversary and to the island's music.

Elmore &mdash; chairman of Art of Music Productions (AMP) which has been transformed from Turnkey Productions, organisers of the event &mdash; revealed discussions are advanced to offer affordable admission to patrons on the night dedicated to the anniversary celebration.

Among the entertainers scheduled to perform are Shaggy, Toots, Yellow Man, Half Pint and Marcia Griffiths.

Meanwhile, Elmore disclosed that it will cost close to US\$3 million for the staging of the event next year at the Trelawny Multi-Purpose Stadium at Florence Hall, Trelawny.

The highlight of the 2012 staging of the event scheduled to run from January 26 to 28 is expected to be Friday night's performance of Canadian songbird Celine Dion, who will join a long list of international acts who have appeared on the festival since its inception in 1996.

The overseas-based past performers include Kenny Rogers, Australian band Air Supply, Anita Baker, Ashford and Simpson, Earth Wind and Fire, Erykah Badu, Mary J Blige, Lionel Richie, Dionne Warwick, Gladys Knight, Jill Scott, Alicia Keys and India.Arie.

According to Stephen Dear, CEO for AMP, Celine Dion was selected due to the strong appeal she has among the local and international music fans.

"Celine Dion is amazing. When you listen to Celine Dion you get goose bumps right away, and one of the fantastic things with Celine Dion is the mass appeal that she has. If I go to any rural bar in Jamaica, if I sit there for a while, a Celine Dion song will be played," Dear said. "We know that the Jamaican public has a tremendous relationship with Celine Dion."

Meanwhile, Kelly Rowland, July Black, Nicole Henry are among the international performers slated to perform during the upcoming staging of the event.

In the meantime, Dear disclosed that the layout of the venue for the next staging of the Jamaica Jazz and Blues Festival "will be adjusted to make it more inclusive".

"It is going to have a nice entry as you walk into the venue that you will feel that you have arrived at the Trelawny Multi-Purpose Stadium.