

## Jazz Fest' to be lucrative for Jamaica...

In addition to three nights of fantastic music, the 2012 edition of the Jamaica Jazz and Blues Festival, which will unfold in Trelawny between January 26 and 28, is expected to give Jamaica a rather lucrative 50th anniversary gift - a major financial windfall.

"We are expecting no less than 10,000 overseas visitors. So you can do the calculation, it is going to generate hundred of millions of dollars to the local economy," said Walter Elmore, chairman of Art of Music Productions, the promoter of the festival.

"All the airlines' seats are filled, the hotels rooms are booked out. This is going to be huge. This is definitely a major financial windfall for the country at this time, and we are naturally quite pleased about it."

According to Elmore, at rates between US\$300 to US\$500 per night, he intimated that hoteliers should be smiling all the way to the bank in the aftermath of the impending rich musical experience, which will feature some of Jamaica's most outstanding artistes alongside the overseas acts.

Sponsors Jamaica Tourist Board (JTB) executive, Jason Hall, is very excited about the impact of the Jamaica Jazz and Blues Festival and the fact that the diaspora has responded so strongly to the organisation's call for Jamaicans to "come home" for Jamaica 50.

"It is a milestone year for Jamaica and, hopefully, it is going to be an incredible year culminating with the 2012 Olympic Games in London," said Hall. "We are very pleased with the projection for the Jazz and Blues Festival and we are expecting tremendous benefits for the local economy."

Hall said the JTB has been quite busy, especially in the United States, United Kingdom and Canada, urging Jamaicans to visit the island at this important juncture in the nation's history.

"The Jazz and Blues Festival is poised to provide Jamaica with positive media attention, as hundreds of overseas journalists will be attending the event," said Hall. "If you look at the head tax for 10,000 visitors, alongside hotel accommodation, ground transportation among other things, this is just tremendous."

Elmore believes that the tremendous response to the festival, which he expects to pull in between 20,000 and 30,000 patrons, is on account of the line-up, especially the presence of Canadian mega star Celine Dion, who seldom performs outside of Las Vegas.

"This is the first time that Celine will be performing in the Caribbean," said Elmore. "This is really a once-in-a-lifetime affair for her fans in the Caribbean, so I am sure this is an opportunity that many people will not want to pass up."

According to Elmore, a substantial amount of the expected 10,000 visiting fans will be coming in from Canada especially to see Celine, who is one of the biggest artistes in the world at this time, having sold over 100 million albums.

"It is now feel-good time in the diaspora with Jamaica celebrating its 50th year of Independence," noted Elmore. "A lot of the persons who are coming here for 'Jazz and Blues' 2012 are Jamaicans who want to be a part of the Independence celebration."

While the major hotels and the airlines will probably generate most of the income, Elmore expects that there will be substantial financial spin-off to benefit the small operators on account of the trickle-down effect.

"We could have staged the festival in Kingston and employed less people and probably utilised (fewer) hotel rooms," said Elmore. "However, we chose the Trelawny (Multi-purpose) Stadium because we wanted to stimulate the economy in this part of the island."

"Areas such as ground transportation will generate significant income because of the transport network we have put in for the festival," said Elmore.

"We have transportation arrangements in place with the taxi associations and other transportation groups to include the Knutsford Express, and they will be transporting patrons from all the major centres across the island.