

## Jamaica Jazz and Blues Flashback

For three nights in January, the 2013 edition of the Jamaica Jazz and Blues Festival offered performances and moments leaving little doubt as to why it is one of the island's premiere events.

On Thursday, crowds lined up in anticipation of a jam-packed opening night lineup at the Trelawny Multi-Purpose Stadium as Jazz and Blues kicked off its 17th staging of the event. A decent turnout accompanied a bill headlined by legendary Reggae band, Third World, who were celebrating their 40th anniversary as a group. Third World closed out an all-Jamaican opening night roster with a rousing set including hits such as Now That We Found Love, Forbidden Love, amongst a host of others. They were also honored for their vast contributions to the Jamaican music industry along with fellow Reggae legend, Ken Boothe, who celebrated his 50th year as a recording artiste. Boothe, along with Rootz Underground, Nadine Sutherland and Cocoa Tea all gave typically resounding efforts as they warmed up music fans for the heat that would be on display over the weekend. Night two featured a buzzing crowd and with that, some stinging sets as some international flavour added taste to the Jazz and Blues show. The queen of R&B/Soul, Mary J. Blige made a sparkling debut on Jamaican soil as she interacted with her audience through classics like No More Drama, Be Without You and a host of others. Fellow Grammy-winning singer, Michael Bolton also left fans in awe as he combined with prominent singer/songwriter, Kelly Levesque for a rendition of The Prayer, a famous joint effort by Andrea Bocelli and the headliner of last year's Jazz and Blues show, Celine Dion. There was some local sizzle on stage on this night as 'The Strong One,' Etana gave her loyal fans a preview of what to expect once her upcoming album, A Better Tomorrow is unveiled in February while entertaining the audience with hits like Wrong Address, People Talk and Jah Jah Blessing. However, it was the final night of Jamaica Jazz and Blues that made for the most memorable moments of the three-day event as arguably Reggae's new superstar once again stepped up to the forefront. It seems as with each performance at a major stage show, Romain Virgo shows the world bits and pieces of his maturity and growth and Saturday night would be no different as he sang his hits, Rich In Love, I Know Better and The System. He even ventured into different genres as he poured out all emotion in classics like Marvin Gaye's Let's Get It On and Percy Sledge's When a Man Love a Woman. As fans were still wowed by Virgo's brilliance, a pair of veteran international stars kept the momentum going as Monica and Dionne Warwick delivered positive performances, albeit with some material unfamiliar to fans while highly-praised newcomer, Chronixx did not disappoint as his hits, Warrior and They Don't Know were definite crowd pleasers. Additionally, Raging Fyah proved why they are one of Reggae music's ascending live bands with their slew of hits, including Judgement Day. But the highlight amongst the international stars on display was R&B/soul crooner, John Legend, who belted out classics like Save A Little Room, Ordinary People and others to a demanding and fully-engaged audience. However, Legend truly ingratiated himself to the Jamaican public as he called upon a number of Reggae stars during his set, notably Gramps Morgan as they performed Psalms 23, the classic sang by Morgan and incarcerated Dancehall/Reggae icon, Buju Banton. Legend also called on Tarrus Riley as they melodized to another classic, I Will Stay With You, done by Riley in 2006. Overall, Jamaica Jazz and Blues was a success, once again proving how well an intimate setting can elicit the true emotions music fans hold towards many of music's most soulful genres.

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