

Celebrating Marley

The major Kingston-based celebrations marking Bob Marley's 69th birthday were slated to get under way at 5:30 this morning with a Nyabingi drumming session at his former home, 56 Hope Road (now the Bob Marley Museum).

Organisers at the museum said some of Bob Marley's children and grandchildren will be cutting his birthday cake, which will be shared throughout the day. Robert Nesta Marley was born in Nine Mile, St Ann, on February 6, 1945. He died in Miami, Florida, USA, on May 11, 1981, from cancer. Initially with The Wailers in Jamaica's immediate post-Independence period and then as Bob Marley and the Wailers during most of the 1970s, Marley was key to reggae's internationalism. In 1999, Exodus, Bob Marley and The Wailers' 1977 album for Island Records, was named the best album of the 20th Century by Time Magazine. One Love/People Get Ready, a version of which was the 10th and final track on Exodus, was named Song of the Millennium by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). In 1999, it was the media house's official anthem on the eve of the new millennium, that version featuring Ziggy Marley, the Gipsy Kings, and the Boys' Choir of Harlem. Among Marley's Jamaican performance highlights are the One Love Peace Concert at the National Stadium on April 22, 1978, where Marley famously got then Prime Minister Michael Manley and Leader of the Opposition Edward Seaga to clasp hands onstage during a fractious political period. Two years earlier, on December 5, 1976, Marley performed at the Smile Jamaica concert, held at National Heroes Park, shortly after being shot at his 56 Hope Road home. As part of today's activities at that home, now turned museum, there will be guided tours of the premises which will be open to the general public. At 1:30 p.m. photographer Howard Moo Young will unveil a picture of Bob Marley when he was 18 years old, which has never been made public previously. Organisers at the museum also said Marley's former photographer, photojournalist Lindsay Oliver Donald, will present his book Portraits of a Legend and Other Folks. Live streaming Radio stations will also pay tribute to Marley by playing his music throughout the day, while the museum will be hosting a live outside broadcast of IRIE FM's 'Elise Kelly Easy Skanking' programme between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. The Bob Marley Museum will be providing live streaming of all the day's activities. Other activities in the Corporate Area for the day include the Trench Town Festival's Nyabingi Night at the Vin Lawrence Park. Outside of Kingston, there will be a Bob Marley Birthday One Love Celebration in Negril, Westmoreland, as well as a concert at the Bob Marley Mausoleum in his Nine Mile, St Ann, birthplace. The Negril event closes off the 22nd annual Bob Marley Bash at MXIII Lawn, a five-day celebration which started last Saturday with Can-Jam. Tonight features Marcia Griffiths, Luciano, Kenyatta Hill, Hezron, History Man, and several other performers. Jamaica's Bob Marley's 69th birthday celebrations will not all be packed into today. Tomorrow, telecommunications company Digicel will present its Wake Up and Live concert at the National Stadium car park, in partnership with Headline Entertainment. Head of Headline, Jerome Hamilton, said that he and his team are honoured and are looking forward to a great night. "We are proud to be a part of this event, as we have worked closely with the Marley family over the years and believe that we're the right persons for the job. We are inspired by the work Digicel has done and are grateful to be associated with an event that gives back in such a way," Hamilton said. Hamilton says he expects an overwhelming turnout and believes the concert is being held at a historic and ideal location. "This was where Marley performed at the One Love Peace Concert, so it is a significant place and we expect the turnout to be as good as usual, and anticipate another successful event," he said. In 1990 February 6, was proclaimed Bob Marley Day, in recognition of his contribution to Jamaica's cultural development and the evolution of reggae.