

‘BIG SHIP’ SAILS FROM JAZZ FEST

SINGER Freddie McGregor has pulled out of this year’s Jamaica Jazz and Blues Festival scheduled January 26-28 at the Multi-purpose Stadium in Trelawny.

According to him, he did it in protest, as he is disgruntled with the organisers’ handling of the programme.

The organisers said they are using the festival to commemorate Jamaica’s 50th year as an independent nation. And, the opening night, Thursday, January 26, is dedicated solely to the country’s Golden Jubilee through music.

McGregor, however, believes a better programme could have been put in place to reflect and represent Jamaica 50.

“I don’t like the way the 50th celebration is put together,” McGregor said. It should be a concept programme.”

McGregor said if he had been involved with the planning, he would have ensured that the night encompassed the 50 years of Jamaican music.

“I would have opened with The Jolly Boys doing a skit of Miss Lou and Mass Ran [Louise Bennett and Ranny Williams]. After that the Skattalites, followed by rocksteady, reggae and dancehall,” said McGregor, who owns Big Ship Recording Studio and the label.

That line-up, he said, would have effectively covered the Jamaica 50.

In his opinion, the current line-up does not do justice to the evolution of the country’s music. The line-up includes Shaggy, Mykal Roze, Etana, Yellow Man, Marcia Griffiths, Derrick Morgan, Maxi Priest, Assassin, Half Pint, Pluto Shervington, Kymani Marley, George Nooks, Christopher Martin, AJ Brown, Lloyd Parks and We The People, Bryon Lee’s Dragonaires, and Marcia Barrett.

McGregor’s other grouse stems from what he claims is the lack of respect given to him as an international artiste.

“If someone bills me for a festival abroad, I get top billing and paid reasonably,” he said, adding that he did not believe he was adequately promoted for the event and he expects better.

At its recent launch at the Wyndham Kingston Hotel, one of the festival’s promoters, Junior Taylor, disclosed that a special committee of music historians were assigned to select which artistes would best represent the evolution of Jamaican popular music.

Taylor said some of these acts proved difficult to find.

“The reality of the matter is that a lot of the classic, veteran artistes whom we would want for an event of this magnitude are no longer with us,” Taylor explained.

“The panel went through a long list of names which we narrowed down based on the availability of the artistes as well as how well they would work with the flow of the festival. Those we have selected will speak to different eras of music and as a bonus will narrate their performances with stories about those eras as well.”

We have tried several times to contact a number of other popular legendary acts but have thus far, we’ve been unsuccessful,” he continued.

Jerome Hamilton, director of Headline Entertainment which handles the public relations for Jamaica Jazz and Blues Festival, said the festival represents Jamaica’s musical heritage.

“The festival is presenting a snapshot of Jamaica’s musical heritage; where possible, as many genres and highlights will be represented,” he said.





MCGREGOR... disgruntled with the organisers' handling of the programme