

# Celine among jazz fest's best int'l acts

— Richard Johnson

ON Friday night, Celine Dion added her name to the list of international acts who have distinguished themselves on stage at the Jamaica Jazz and Blues Festival with stunning performances.

From the earliest days of the festival, audiences have looked forward to the delivery from the international acts, who, for the most part, have given them memories to be cherished.

Early acts such as George Benson, The Isley Brothers, Kenny G, Mary J Blige, Patti Labelle, Erykah Badu, Regina Belle, India.Arie, Jill Scott and Alicia Keys have gone down in the history of the festival as having the respects of Jamaican audiences.

However, it is acts such as Michael Bolton, Anita Baker, Billy Ocean, Kenny Rogers, Air Supply, and Babyface, who, for many have been the toast of the festival in the years they performed.

Anita Baker took to the stage on the opening night of the 2007 edition of the festival and took the evening apart with her Sweet Love and other hits from her deep catalogue garnered throughout the '80s and '90s.

Deep-voice Michael Bolton was an instant hit from the moment he took to the Jazz and Blues stage in 2007. With pulsating tracks When a Man Loves a Woman, Said I Loved You But I Lied, How Can We Be Lovers, the reggae-inspired Can I Touch You There, as well as the monster hit How Am I Supposed To Live Without You, Bolton melted the hearts of the predominantly female patrons, who turned out in their numbers to hear his guts renditions.

Lionel Richie first thrilled Jamaicans as the frontman for The Commodores, and he took his audience back there when he thrilled his jazz fest audience in 2009. Commodores and solo hits flowed like a might river, as Richie delivered a blistering nearly two-hour performance which left those gathered at The Aqueduct absolutely satisfied at the end of his set.

Trinidad-born and UK-raised Billy Ocean would save the day at the 2008 edition of the festival. Following the debacle involving the diva, Diana Ross, which ended with her exiting the stage under a hail of boos, it was up to the Caribbean Queen singer to remove the sour taste from the mouths of the thousands inside the Montego Bay venue. From the opening notes of Suddenly, Get Out of My Dreams, Lover Boy and When The Going Gets Tough, patrons were willing to embrace Ocean and forget Miss Ross. Billy Ocean was then invited back to the 2010 staging of the festival.

Babyface was another act who stole the show when he appeared on the festival. With his 'cool' demeanour and engaging vocals topped by a wide repertoire of both hits he recorded as well as those he penned for others he was a sure shot from the get go. Babyface's performance at Jazz earned him a return ticket to perform in Kingston later that year.

Jamaicans love Air Supply. The Australian duo of Graham Russell and Russell Hitchcock just spread all their charms and a popular repertoire on their Jamaican audience. But even they remarked how shocked they were when Jamaicans began singing their songs verbatim. They too would return to woo a Kingston audience with hits All Out of Love, Making Love Out Of

Nothing at All, Here I Am, and Just As I Am — made even more popular here due to the cover by local quartet LUST.



Celine Dion performs at the Jamaica Jazz & Blues Festival at the Greenfield Stadium in Trelawny on Friday night.  
(Photo: Joseph Wellington)