

Jazz and Blues launches in style

BY JARMILA JACKSON Observer writer

THE soothing sounds of The Orville Hammond Trio filled the air at the Wyndham Hotel in New Kingston as guests arrived at Tuesday night's launch of the 2012 Jamaica Jazz and Blues Festival.

"This will be the most memorable event we have ever staged as a company and maybe even as a country," said Walter Elmore, chairman of the organising group, The Art of Music Productions (AMP).

"Getting Celine Dion as the headline act was a dream come true and it was no easy feat. To see her perform on stage will be truly unforgettable. This is the only show she is doing on the planet that is outside of Las Vegas," he continued.

This year's annual show is set for January 26 to 28, 2012, at the Greenfield Stadium in Trelawny and will mark the 16th anniversary of an event known for bringing a variety of top-notch musicians to the island. The lineup of artistes slated to perform includes five-time Grammy Award winner Celine Dion, Ceelo Green, Jully Black, Richie Stephens and Gentleman, Destra Garcia, Earl Klugh, Tami and Tessane Chin, Shaggy, Nicole Henry and The Temptations Review featuring Dennis Edwards and many others.

Minister of tourism, Edmund Bartlett and minister of youth, sports and culture, Olivia Grange, who were in attendance, spoke glowingly of the festival.

"I wanted a lineup that would befit our 50th, one that would excite the world and give me what I wanted, and that is what we are getting with next year's festival," said Bartlett. "We are still the most exciting destination on planet earth and we are proud of the leadership of music, of art, of sports and of culture in Jamaica."

Minister Grange was also beaming with excitement at the promise of what is to come.

"To be able to host such an acclaimed artiste as Celine Dion is an achievement for Jamaica Jazz and Blues, and we are extremely proud of our Jamaican artistes who will be sharing that stage," she said. "Jamaica Jazz and Blues will be the first stellar event where we will highlight our local talent and launch the celebration of Jamaica's 50th anniversary of independence."

The night saw a rocking live set by the band In 2 Nation who was joined on stage by Digicel Rising Star Cameal Davis, a guest performance by Richie Stephens and some electrifying roots, rock, reggae music from 2010 Global Battle of the Bands winners, Dubtonic Kru.

Staged annually during the last week in January, each year the festival attracts more than 30,000 patrons from all over the world to Jamaica's shores to enjoy legendary local and international musical acts in performance.



Stephen Dear, CEO of AMP — organisers of the Jazz and Blues festival. (Photo: Jarmila Jackson)