

# DEBUT

CONTINUED FROM D1

response and there is now regional, international and local response to support it and have it continue next year”.

She said the “CaribbeanTales Film Festival wants to be a conduit and vehicle for the proper structure, development and distribution of Caribbean film, both within the region and worldwide, whose activities will go far beyond just the festival”.

With that in mind, the global distribution symposium was a critical part of the festival and was placed in pole position on day one. Wells said that it was very successful. “We wanted no ‘talk shops’. We wanted action and practical know-how to move forward as an industry and that’s what we’ve ignited,” she said.

## DIRECTING EXPERIENCES

Julie Dash is the director of **Daughters of the Dust** and **The Rosa Parks Story**. The objective of her directing master class was “to share her pertinent directing experiences on a Hollywood film set and the various important nuances of film directing. She did this by showing film clips of some of her most prolific films and we chatted and were able to get a sneak peek of her everyday experiences and challenges as a film director. It was interactive and shared, as participants could ask questions and share their experiences as well”.

“It was a very full session and very well received,” Wells said. The schedule of films included **Africa Unite** (Stephanie Black), **Calypso Dreams** (Geoffrey Dunn), **Carmen and Geoffrey** (Nick Doob), **Tribes** (Ras Kassa), **Rain Nurse** (Maria Govan), **Fighter Boy** (Charles Officer), **The Solitary Alchemist** (Mariel Brown) and **Coolie Pink and Green**, an experimental short exploring Bollywood images in a Caribbean context (Pat Mohammed).

Wells said there were no comedy or action movies “in the traditional sense”.

“There was a lovely Barbadian kind of musical that was funny, but not really a comedy, called **Trapped in an Elevator** by an emerging Barbadian filmmaker, Rommel Hall,” Wells pointed out, “and a small documentary from Trinidad, **The Power of the Vagina**, by Jimmel Daniels. Again, not really a comedy, but very interesting, enlightening and amusing.”

“There were many wonderful film entries. Many,” Wells emphasised. “One film that comes



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Film-maker Ras Kassa on the set of a music video shoot with Christopher Martin.

to mind is a short film called **The Legend of Buchi Fil**, a high-quality short drama from Curaçao, a beautiful slave story, beautifully shot, that deals with the careful undermining of the Black man and Black dignity in the New World. And there were so many others.”

The film-makers who had films screened at the first Best of CaribbeanTales have not come away with awards. Wells said “as the festival is a first in the Caribbean (but celebrating five years having operated in Toronto), it does not yet have competitive categories for ‘awarding films’, but in the marketplace we wanted to give cash awards. Unfortunately, it was very difficult to raise all the funds we needed to do this, but for next year this will be done!

Regardless, we managed to have a local Barbadian production house donate for an ‘in-kind’ prize, two weeks’ worth of equipment and personnel with a ‘RED’ camera to any film project that qualified, so as to get an idea fully shot or going to the next stage! A wonderful Barbadian film project, a famous murder mystery, won that prize”.

Having made its debut and the signs for next year’s staging appearing positive, Wells said the festival “is en route to becoming bigger, better and bolder, an important vehicle for the production, exhibition and distribution of Caribbean film”.

## Regional awareness makes film-making difference

RAS KASSA and Franklyn ‘Chappie’ St Juste were among the Jamaicans involved in the inaugural The Best of CaribbeanTales Film Festival, and though the output has been sporadic at best, with Perry Henzell’s **The Harder They Come** (1972) through to the late 1990s **Dancehall Queen** and **Third World Cop**, Jamaica can lay claim to some of the more noted movies made in the Caribbean.

However, Mary Wells cautions that “films from Jamaica have been international trailblazers no question about it, but the rest of the Caribbean region is exploding with the making of all kinds of films and incredible talent. And it’s not because they have better economies and more access to money. It’s because their headspace is very different”.

She mused, “Some reasons could be that they haven’t had to weather all the heavy social ailments and political upheavals that Jamaicans have had to bear and wear every day on their sleeves.” However, she continued that film-makers in the rest of the region “come across as far more mature in their handling of films around sensitive issues. There’s far more exploration and understanding of their very Creole heritage and ‘Caribbeaness’ and, most of all, they are far more aware of each other”.

This is “unlike Jamaicans, who often don’t know the rest of the region (or Jamaican film-makers who don’t know or care about other film-makers from the rest of the Caribbean) and feel the world

revolves around them and only them and their popular culture and music”.

Wells reaffirmed, though, that “Jamaica is still edgy and hip. We have a ton load of stories to tell and bring to ‘the Caribbean table’. We have another wicked Caribbean experience and sensibility. No question about that.”

— Mel Cooke

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**SANDRA BULLOCK** **THE BLIND SIDE** **PALACE CINEPLEX** 2:45 PM  
**TOOTH FAIRY** **PALACE CINEPLEX** 3:00 PM

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