

## Reggae series brings big acts to Jamaica

By Ivan Pereira

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Singer Daria Primus (c.) leads Impack2 during a performance at Jamaica Performing Arts Center. The concert was part of Greater Jamaica Development Corporation's Caribbean Music Festival. Photo by Christina Santucci

Jamaica streets have been filled with the sounds of lively reggae music and the organizers of the outdoor event are just getting started to jazz up the neighborhood.

The Greater Jamaica Development Corp. will hold its final show this Thursday as part of its reggae concert series with a performance by Mighty Sparrow, the calypso king of the world. In addition to providing listeners with his hit tunes at Rufus King Park, the Queens artist will get a special proclamation from Borough President Helen Marshall for his work, according to Reuel Daniels, Greater Jamaica's program manager.

Since its start three weeks ago, Daniels said the outdoor concert series has grown popular among pedestrians, with nearly 300 audience members attending.

"People would just come off the street and it was very organic. We were catching the flow of Jamaica Avenue," she said.

This is the third year of Greater Jamaica's concert series and for this season's round of shows, Daniels said the organization decided to do something different. In the past shows, the music was predominantly jazz-based, but after getting some feedback from residents, the series' organizers changed the genre.

Southeast Queens is home to many immigrants from nations such as Trinidad, Jamaica and Guyana that brought their sounds to New York.

"This community loves jazz, but there is a different population now. You hear a lot of the kids blasting reggae now," she said.

Unlike previous years, where there was up to 30 concerts throughout the summer, Greater Jamaica had five shows for its program. The first took place outside the Jamaica Performing Arts Center on Jamaica Avenue.

"This year we wanted to do something different, we wanted to do fewer concerts and pack a lot of people into these events," she said.

Jazz fans will still be able to get to bebop to their favorite hits this summer, too. Starting next Thursday, the three-part jazz series starts with performances at the Queens County Supreme Court House. Daniels said the shows, which will feature bands from York College, would benefit from the location since it had its large, iron fence taken down back in the winter.

"The fence is now down, so now we have this wonderful public space and it creates a new environment to bring people in," she said.

In addition to showcasing local talent, Daniels said she hopes the series encourages pedestrians and visitors who come to Jamaica to explore what it has to offer.

"We want to change the perception that you can't hang out after work. There are a lot of fun things around," she said.

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