

# Jamaica Funk slims down acts to reach bigger audience

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## Annual summer concert series cuts shows to 11 events but compensates by featuring larger bands

BY IVAN PEREIRA

When the Greater Jamaica Development Corp. began planning this year's Jamaica Funk concert series, its organizers decided to put quality over quantity.

Unlike last year, where there were several performers playing 65 concerts during the summer months, the organization decided to have 11 concerts with larger bands.

The decision to cut the shows simplified the Downtown Jamaica concert series and made it reach a wider audience, according to Andrew Manshel, vice president of Greater Jamaica.

"Last year it was mostly trios. This year we've had bands with six or eight players. It's less esoteric," he said.

The concert series, formerly known as Jamaica Jazz, began with the purpose of introducing southeast Queens' arts and entertainment to commuters and workers who frequent the area. The musicians, who either live or are based within the southeast Queens area, represent a wide variety of genres, including jazz, R&B and soul.

This year's bands, which include the York College Jazz program and the Afro-Cuban group Bobby Sanabria & Quarteto Aché, were selected by Tom Zlabinger, who runs the jazz program at York College. Zlabinger's presence not only ensured that the concert series had the best talent but also good promotion, Manshel said.

"He has a lot of connections in the music industry and he put out the word," he



Jazz band Bobby Sanabria & Quarteto Aché perform at the Farmers Market during the Jamaica Funk concert series.  
Photo by Nat Valentine

said.

The shows take place at various popular venues throughout the downtown area, including the 165th Street Mall and the Queens County Civil Court build-

ing on Sutphin Boulevard. The majority of the shows, which started in June and will run till August, have taken place outside the new Jamaica Performing Arts Center on Jamaica Avenue.

The center has been completely renovated with new stages, lighting and state-of-the-art facilities for musicians and dancers, according to Manshel.

"Our vision of Jamaica

is the center for artists and musicians to live and make art," he said.

In addition to attracting new artists to the area, the series was designed to show off downtown Jamaica's bustling commercial area to visitors.

"What we are trying to do through our Jamaica alliance is to convey the message to the people who work and shop in the area that it is a safe and fun place to be," Manshel said.

So far, the concerts have been popular among the Downtown Jamaica crowds. On several occasions, shoppers and workers in the area have stopped what they are doing to catch the full show, according to Manshel.

For more information, visit [myspace.com/jamaicafunkconcerts](http://myspace.com/jamaicafunkconcerts).

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