

ENTERTAINMENT

House of Blues hosts festive reggae party

Catisha Marsh
Sentinel-Voice

The House of Blues may soon become the House of Reggae, judging by a phenomenal House of Reggae jam session last month.

A club official estimated that more than 700 people came out to hear local artists Asheba and Bonafide in the first of what has become regular concerts.

People were rub-a-dubbing on the main floor in front of the stage and dancing in the aisles. The atmosphere was electric.

It seems that there is a rash of caribbean-inspired musical talents that now have venues to play in.

Roots, reggae, lover's rock, dancehall, soca and calypso and ska music are the trend right now in Las Vegas.

For instance, there's reggae every Tuesday at the Hop nightclub, with soca and calypso at

Mandalay Bay's Rumjungle on Tuesdays. You can also hear live reggae on Friday's at Gordon Biersch and Saturdays at the Drink.

Asheba opened at the House of Blues with a medley of classic reggae hits including "Brown-Eyed Girl," "Now That We've Found Love," "Stir it Up," "Could You Be Loved" and a remix version of the jazz standard "Fever."

Unique about this three-man group is its ability to change styles midsong. For instance, the group will start out singing a song that has a steady reggae beat, and switch to a dancehall beat after the first chorus and then change to a ska beat when they get to the bridge.

When the chorus returns and the song is nearing its end, the group reverts to the original reggae style. It's wicked.

The group, started by David Asheba Wilson, with drummer Walter Wasta

Gonzalez and bass player Rickey Wade, was formed in New York. Wilson sang in subways and somebody from Avalon, a popular nightclub, invited him to do a gig there. Wilson showed up and met Gonzalez.

"We went to the bathroom, figured out what all of us knew and put the set together right there," Gonzalez said later backstage. "We just went out and played and we've been together ever since."

Bonafide, the three brothers from Montego Bay, Jamaica, with special guest Kerry from the group Flexstyle, got the crowd hype. Groupies worked themselves into a tizzy making sure they danced an extra step for each beat the band played.

The smooth, rich harmonies boomed through an incredible sound system. All the siblings need to do is exchange one millisecond-long glance and they know

exactly what song comes next, what key to play it in and what tempo to play it at. It's amazing.

"We've been playing together all our lives," said Junior Stevens, drummer and lead singer when asked why they blended so perfectly.

"It comes from the love, 'cuz we're brothers," keyboardist Robert Stevens said.

"Yeah," said Wayne, the magician on bass. That would be the only word he said during the entire interview.

With the recent surge in interest in island music, the House of Blues may just be destined to change its name, especially since the event, featuring Bonafide and various opening acts, will take place each Wednesday. It will be interesting to see how long this latest trend will last and, being a lover of reggae vibes, I do hope it will do so for a while.

Hines first black to star in 'Radio City Spectacular'

Dianna Saffold
Sentinel-Voice

Take me back, way back: to black-and-white television, big-budget dance musicals with dozens of well-costumed white dancers, elaborate sets and a fleet-footed Fred Astaire dancing as only he could.

Fast forward to the future: to digital television, million-dollar musicals and a black man in Fred's spot.

That's right, a black man in Fred's spot.

That man is Maurice Hines, brother of entertainer Gregory Hines, and the group is none other than the Radio City Rockettes, the world's most famous precision dance

troupe. Maurice Hines is the first African-American director and choreographer to appear with the dance troupe in "The Great Radio City Spectacular" at the Flamingo Hilton.

Noted dance instructor Henry LeTang, Hines teacher when he was 5 and owner of a Las Vegas dance studio, joined his protege for a recent performance.

A 50-year veteran of stage, screen and television, dance, the multitalented Hines paid homage to LeTang and others who helped him along the way. In an interview with the Sentinel-Voice, Hines said his future goals concern educating young, up-and-



Maurice Hines (left) stands with dance instructor, studio owner Henry LeTang, his former dance teacher.

comin entertainers in the next millennium.

HINES: That is what I am about now: to get the young people to understand their options. I find that myself and George Benzene, choreographer and director of the Wiz, great choreographer, find that we're both still auditioning dancers for shows that are not as trained as we were, or the Debbie Allens or the people like that, that were trained to do everything.

We find that kids come in and do one thing, what they see on the videos, and they think that's going to get them over. But for shows and the kind of shows we want to do

and keep doing, or the kind of dance companies like Alvin Ailey and the Dance Theater of Harlem, you got to be able to dance. You can't just do hip hop. That is one of the things that I am going to try (to do) — to go back into the schools.

That is really what my focus is: to get the kids to know, you have to sing, you have to dance, you have to act, know all kinds of dance, tap, jazz, ballet, ethnic, do everything, so that you can work in the business and create for as long as you want. Once you get to be creative, it's the most important thing to keep those creative juices going.

Aretha Franklin to open once-in-a-lifetime concert

DETROIT (AP) — Aretha Franklin isn't usually an opening act, but this is no ordinary concert.

The Queen of Soul has agreed to sing the national anthem to kick off the Three Tenors concert at Detroit's Tiger Stadium on July 17. She may even join Luciano Pavarotti, Jose Carreras and Placido Domingo for an encore.

"What could be better in Detroit than having Aretha Franklin sing the national anthem?" said Frank Stella, a friend of Pavarotti's and a board member of the Michigan Opera Theatre. The Detroit concert will be the first Midwest concert by the tenors, and their only scheduled North

American appearance in 1999.

Stella said Pavarotti suggested having Franklin join the concert and said she "was absolutely delighted" at the invitation.

The two entertainers became friends after Ms. Franklin stepped in to sing Pavarotti's signature aria "Nissan Dorm" when he became ill before the 1998 Grammy Awards.

Separately, Pavarotti announced last week that he will open the SuperDome Olympic Games venue in Sydney, Australia, with a Nov. 6 concert. The \$132 million SuperDome will host basketball and gymnastics during next year's Summer Olympics.



ARETHA FRANKLIN

Campbell charged with battery

MIAMI BEACH, Fla. (AP) — Rapper Luther Campbell was charged with aggravated battery last week after he allegedly struck a man in the face with a whiskey bottle at a nightclub.

Police said the former front man of 2 Live Crew became angry when a man and his friends blocked the rapper's view of a show at Club Zen early last Monday.

Campbell began arguing with Mathieu Fabrice, then smashed a bottle of Jack Daniels whiskey against his

face, said Lt. John DiCenso of the Miami Beach Police Department.

Fabrice suffered cuts and a possible broken nose.

Campbell was taken to Miami-Dade County Jail and later released.

Campbell gained notoriety nine years ago when he was acquitted of giving an obscene performance at a south Florida nightclub after a federal judge declared 2 Live Crew's "As Nasty As They Wanna Be" album obscene.

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