

Party Preview: The Best Music Festivals of 2006

The menu of Caribbean music festivals grows longer every year. Here's a select preview of the most noteworthy events on the 2006 calendar, from established mainstays to interesting new additions. Dates, artists and ticket prices have been included where available, but consult festival websites and the *CT&L* Calendar page for updated information as the dates approach.

BARBADOS JAZZ FESTIVAL

January 9-15

barbadosjazzfestival.com

A sophisticated show of international jazz and R&B talent, this fest roves from venue to venue: an indoor stadium, a historic plantation house and the breathtaking Farley Hill National Park. Fit for fans, families and their lawn chairs.

Headliners include Lionel Richie, Jill Scott and Roy Hargrove. Ticket prices start at \$25; a season pass is \$250. Recommended rooms: Accra Beach Hotel & Resort (800-448-8355; accrabeachhotel.com) and Almond Club & Spa (800-4-ALMOND; almondresorts.com).

MUSTIQUE BLUES FESTIVAL

January 18-February 1

basilsbar.com

For 10 days — and at no charge to patrons — Basil's Bar gives the Caribbean the blues: cocktails and top-notch performers delivering smoky guitar riffs in a beach bar overlooking sand and sea. A sunset show welcomes families; Wednesdays feature buffets.

Recommended rooms: Cotton House Resort (800-223-1108; cottonhouse.resort.com); Firefly Mustique (784-488-8414; mustiquefirefly.com); private villas (mustique-island.com).

AIR JAMAICA JAZZ & BLUES

January 26-28

airjamaicajazzandblues.com

This Montego Bay fest delivers jazz and

blues, of course, but also R&B, soul and reggae. On the majestic grounds of Rose Hall's Cinnamon Hill Ocean Course, an upscale crowd of tourists and locals sways to an array of smooth and soulful music that's tinged with Caribbean flavor.

Headliners include Shaggy, Al Green, Air Supply, James Ingram and Maxi Priest. Individual tickets start at \$50; a season pass is \$160. Recommended rooms: Sandals Montego Bay (888-SANDALS; sandals.com) and Half Moon (876-953-2211; halfmoon.com). Package deals available through Air Jamaica Vacations (airjamaicavacations.com).

MOONSPASH MUSIC FESTIVAL

March 16-19

bankiebanx.net

Anguilla is tranquility, reggae is revelry — Moonplash is both. This four-day festival, held under the full moon, overlooks the sterling shores of Rendezvous Bay and features old-school reggae and soul acts hosted by Anguilla's resident music legend, Bankie Banx. Daily events conclude with a grand beach party on Sunday afternoon.

Headliners include India.Arie and Slightly Stoopid. Recommended rooms: Kú (800-869-5827; ku-anguilla.com) and Malliouhana Hotel & Spa (800-835-0796; malliouhana.com).

BARBADOS REGGAE SPLASH

April (dates TBD)

Get two Caribbean cultures for the price of one: setting courtesy of Barbados, sound courtesy of Jamaica. A calmer, more contained reggae fest than Jamaica's, the Splash highlights roots-and-culture music, uniting party-going locals and a smattering of tourists.

Recommended rooms: Hilton Barbados (877-GO-HILTON; hiltoncaribbean.com/barbados); Accra Beach Hotel & Resort (800-448-8355; accrabeach.hotel.com); Savannah Hotel (800-868-9429; gemsbarbados.com).

ST. LUCIA JAZZ

May 5-14

stlucijazz.org

This festival comes close to being all things for all people, offering a variety of venues and an eclectic R&B, jazz and reggae booking policy. (Last year's artists included UB40, Beenie Man, the Isley Brothers and Pharoah Saunders.) The fest sprawls over the island, but the main stage is outdoors on scenic Pigeon Island, where the headline events take place on the second weekend.

Recommended rooms: Coco Kreole (758-452-0712; coco-resorts.com); Coco Palm Resorts (758-456-2800; coco-resorts.com); Windjammer Landing Villa Beach Resort (800-958-7376; windjammer-landing.com).

ST. KITTS MUSIC FESTIVAL

June 29-July 2

stkittsmusicfestival.net

Whatever your musical taste — smooth jazz? frenetic soca? — you'll find it at one of four nights on the grassy grounds of the historic Fort Thomas Hotel, where the vibe alternates between boisterous and mellow. Daytime activities — a kids zone, an outdoor performance space — are for those who skip the nightly after-parties, which end at breakfast. Before the show, enjoy a buffet of local cuisine at the Ocean Terrace Inn, across from the venue.

Recommended rooms: Ocean Terrace Inn (800-524-0512; oceanterrace.inn.com); Timothy Beach (800-288-7991; timothybeach.com).

RED STRIPE REGGAE SUMFEST

June 29-July 2

reggaesumfest.com

For devoted reggae fans, a slice of heaven in Montego Bay: a week of parties and concerts showcasing what's young, hot and current in Jamaican music. Rest before you go — not while you're there — because night after night, thousands of international tourists and Jamaican revelers dance, drink