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WeBeat honours Crosby

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Since the inception of WeBeat St James Live in 2001, this year will be the first occasion on which the festival will be staged without its chairman, Earl Crosby, who passed away in August 2016.



“It is a strange feeling to be planning this year’s event without Earl,” said long-standing WeBeat committee member Angela Fox. “The festival’s success over the years was largely due to his untiring efforts, and resolute willingness to forge ahead, despite the many challenges he faced during that time. So we are doing this year’s activities in his honour, even though the problems are still there.”

This year’s Panorama champions Massy Trinidad All Stars are going to be at the We Beat Festival this year. PHOTO: TONY HOWELL (insert) The late Earl Crosby was one of the founders of WeBeat and he worked tirelessly to ensure its success. This year’s week of events is dedicated to his memory.

Crosby, who had undergone serious health issues a few months before last year’s staging, had this to say at the opening: “Because of my health condition, members of the committee undertook all responsibility for producing this year’s event, and faced even greater challenges than in past years in getting sponsors to buy into this programme that has proven its worth for over 15 years.”

The WeBeat St James Live festival was developed to promote the community of St James which, due to its all-day, all-night activities, is dubbed the “city that never sleeps.” The festival provides a platform to showcase the talents of local artistes while highlighting the contribution of people who have been pivotal in the development of St James and, by extension, the wider community. A most apt phrase to describe this festival is ‘collective responsibility’ for within the perimeter of the rhythmic, are the social responsibilities of health, environment, and rewards.

However, despite all of this, according to Fox, WeBeat has always been plagued with funding problems.

“After 16 years, it seems that each year presented the same challenge,” she said.

“In conversations with the chairman we noticed how to be always ‘begging for help’ was taking a toll on his ability to produce the well-known event. But he was never short of enthusiasm and hope. In fact, he expected that one day the St James business community, having gained substantially from the annual showcase, would partner with the St James Community Improvement Committee (CIC), the producer of the festival, to ensure its continuance.”

When members of the St James CIC sat down in 2000 to consider proposals for staging WeBeat St James Live, they were under no illusions about the onerous task they had set themselves. It was a group with varying skills, energies and personalities, with expertise in a wide range of fields. They knew that the event’s future hinged upon its ability to get financial assistance from corporate sponsors and local businesses in the area that benefitted from the festival’s appeal.

For the past 16 years, it has been a stimulus for small businesses in the community, provided a forum for artistes to showcase their talents, and contributed significantly to the elevation of St James as a major entertainment venue in the Capital City. The St James CIC won the bpTT Leader Award in 2002 for its innovation of WeBeat St James Live.

One of the positives to emerge out of WeBeat St James Live is the exposure and development of young, talented artistes who literally wet their feet at the festival. Among the outstanding talents produced have been past Digicel Rising Stars winner Moricia Cagan, former national calypso monarchs Duane O’Connor and Chuck Gordon, Umi Marcano, and acclaimed vocalist Leandra Head and her sister Tylah. (The Head sisters, incidentally, will be performing their farewell show—Closing Doors; The Final Recital—at Theatre 1, National Academy for the Performing Arts, Keate Street, Port-of-Spain, at 6 pm, before embarking on their studies abroad in music.)

In addition, honoured by the festival committee with an award for its work with young people in the community was police officer Dereck Charbodie and the St James Police Youth Club.

A new WeBeat feature this year is The Road Show on Friday, June 3, produced by Earl’s brother, Victor Crosby. This is expected to revive memories of the days when Earl hosted record launches in front of the store on the Western Main Road, and DJs, steelbands, calypsonians, and other performers will appear.

Staging this year's festival is estimated to cost in excess of \$340,000, a decrease from last year's budget. It runs from Saturday, June 3 to Saturday, June 10 at the St James Amphitheatre, Western Main Road, St James, under the patronage of the Mayor of Port-of-Spain.

This year's honoree is Woo Ling's Supermarket, a family-owned business, spanning over 60 years of providing service to the community.

WE BEAT SCHEDULE

DATE: June 3

The Road Show Tribute to Earl Crosby - DJs, steelbands, tassa, African drumming, calypso

VENUE: St James Park & Amphitheatre

TIME: 6 pm- midnight

ADMISSION: Free

DATE: June 04

Pan Explosion - Massy T'dad All Stars, Samaroo Jets, PCS Nitrogen Silver Stars, Bp Renegades Youth Steel Orchestra, Scrunter's Pan Groove

VENUE: St James Park & Amphitheatre

TIME: 6 pm

ADMISSION: \$150

DATE: June 6

Health Day in collaboration with the Diabetes Assoc. of T&T - health checks

VENUE: St James Park & Amphitheatre

TIME: 9 am

ADMISSION

Film Night in collaboration with T&T Film Festival

VENUE: St James Park & Amphitheatre

TIME: 7 pm

ADMISSION: Free

DATE: June 7

JazzBeat - Elan Parle Pelham Goddard & Roots, Jason “Fridge” Seecharan, T&T Police Service Band, St James Tripolians

VENUE: St James Park & Amphitheatre

TIME: 7 pm

ADMISSION: \$150

DATE: June 8

WeConnect St James Police Youth Club Motivational Speakers for invited schools

VENUE: St James Park & Amphitheatre

TIME: 10 am

ADMISSION: Free

Youth Fest - Errol Ince & The Music Makers and Friends

VENUE: St James Park & Amphitheatre

TIME: 7 pm

ADMISSION: Free

DATE: June 9

WeKaiso - produced by Carl “Beaver” Henderson - St James Tripolians

VENUE: St James Park & Amphitheatre

TIME: 8 pm

ADMISSION: \$150

DATE: June 10

Jouvert Steelband & Traditional Mas - Invited bands steel orchestras, rhythm sections, NCBA Traditional Mas characters

VENUE: Western Main Road, St James

TIME: 7 pm – 2 am

ADMISSION: FREE