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Grace Jones, D'Angelo for Tobago Jazz Experience

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Grace Jones, Shabba Ranks, and D'Angelo are the notable names headlining the 2017 Tobago Jazz Experience.

The festival which runs from April 22 to 31 at venues across Tobago, will also feature for the first time a film component as the T&T Film Festival hosts a fringe film festival that will run alongside the Jazz Experience. The organisers said 2017 “will bring film, music and networking of the creative industry together in one space”.

Speaking to the T&T Guardian, festival organiser John Arnold said because of the cuts in the festival’s budget, they sought collaborations with other stakeholders to present an interesting and more diverse package.

“We are collaborating with the T&T Film Festival, Villa Being for a fashion event called Leve and of course, Fashion Coda is already a staple event.

“Our budget is now down to \$12 million from \$16 million last year,” Arnold said. “Even though we have less money, we still want to maintain a festival of a high



Trudy De Verteuil, director of Communications and Stakeholders Relations, Flow, left, and THA secretary for the Division of Tourism, Culture and Transport Councillor Nadine Stewart-Phillips at the media launch of Tobago Jazz Experience at the Kapok Hotel, Maraval, on Thursday night. PHOTO: ANISTO ALVES

standard, keep the brand going and produce a week that will show the best of Tobago.”

Jazz In the East, a concert in Speyside featuring Jamaican reggae band Morgan Heritage will kick off the eight-day extravaganza. During that time, there will be showcases featuring live bands at events like Jazz on the Waterfront at the Scarborough Esplanade, Jazz on the Move—a collaboration with the Tobago Hotel and Tourism Association—which takes place at hotels across the island, and Jazz in the Garden which is happening at the Kariwak Hotel.

The T&T Film Festival’s Tobago Film Festival will host free screenings of music-themed films like Junkyard Philharmonic, Chico and Rita, and Dancehall Queen.

The Tobago Jazz Experience has been running since 2008 and is one of the leading events on the nation’s entertainment calendar. The big weekend—April 28 to 30—starts with World Music Night on April 28. American neo-soul singer D’Angelo tops the cast along with veteran Jamaican dancehall star Shabba Ranks, and local stars Kes the Band and KI.

Because of the budget cuts, the Saturday night concert at Pigeon Point has been scaled back. There will instead be a jazz event at Pigeon Point beach featuring top local jazz acts.

On the final evening of the Tobago Jazz Experience, Jamaican diva Grace Jones brings her eclectic routine to Pigeon Point for Heritage Night. At 68, Jones is still rocking the festival circuit in Europe and a new generation of fans are enjoying her big hits like My Jamaican Guy, Slave to the Rhythm, Pull Up to the Bumper, and Nipple to the Bottle.

Young saxophonist Elan Trotman is also set for the Tobago Jazz finale. Trotman is emerging as a force in the jazz world and has worked with acclaimed performers like Roberta Flack, Kirk Whalum, Brian Simpson, Tony Terry, and Cindy Bradley.

Arnold said more acts will be added and those will be announced by the end of the month.
