



## JAMAICA FILM FESTIVAL – TRANSFORMING JAMAICA

When **Sundance** started in Salt Lake City in 1978 the intention was to attract more filmmakers to Utah. After 37 years, that has happened. It was founded by the head of Robert Redford's company, Sterling Van Wagenen, who was part of the Utah Film Commission at the time. Back then films like *Midnight Cowboy*, *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *Deliverance* were featured. Redford and the Utah Governor made it mandatory to focus on only USA films. There was a competition and a series of panel discussions with business match making sessions were done.

The **Jamaica Film Festival** is pretty much that. One missing element, we do not have a Robert Redford, yet. We are hopeful and optimistic. Sundance used their first/premier year to set up what has become the Sundance Institute; another opportunity for the expansion of the Jamaica Film Industry a Jamaica Film Festival Institute. The institute would support the emerging independent screenwriters and directors through the development of their feature film projects, documentaries, short films, there is also a theatre.

Several factors helped propel the growth

- The involvement of a star of/from Utah – Redford
- The Utah Jazz (NBA Franchise) was founded in 1974 and was one of the only major attractions in the city at the time

- There were ongoing collaborations with other Institutions
  - Brooklyn Academy of Music
- The Festival had a Europe edition, New York City edition
- The Festival programme focused on capacity building, networking and business meetings

How does the Jamaica Film Festival become a notable festival? There are a few options. The Festival can offer:

- An opportunity for independent filmmakers from Jamaica and the Caribbean
- A destination for a marketing event for super stars in the industry worldwide
- A destination for filming
- All of the above

Jamaica's history though has seen the location encompass two of the variables above and while the destination remains known, the real value has not yet been explored. The Film Festival can and will fix that. If we were to even take a page from the Sundance model, it is appropriate to suggest, Jamaica, with its brand equity and recognition, can assert the location as an important player in the Business of Film.

An important element in the mix is how the practitioners who have toiled for years with scripts/treatments/stories have enough resources to individually or collectively produce top-rated products to appeal to the rest of the world either widely or in niche markets?

Up to 2012, Sundance was recording over 46 thousand visitors to Utah to what has now become a month long event. In simple math term, 46,000 X 21 days at US\$150 a day is monumental. If Jamaica starts off with 200 visitors in the first year X 5 days with a spend of US\$200 a day, not including hotel costs, that is a good start.

In drawing the comparison with Sundance, it was used because Utah is not geographically in a place where you have to pass to get anywhere (so to speak). Jamaica on the other hand is in a strategic location with all the other factors.

**Jamaica, with its brand equity and recognition, can assert the location as an important player in the Business of Film.**

## TALENT IS READY!

The **Jamaica Promotions Corporation (JAMPRO)** has selected 13 of the top Jamaican Directors/Writers to screen their films at the Jamaica Film Festival 2015, scheduled to take place July 7-11 in Kingston. The filmmakers include well-known music video and film director, Gerald 'Ras Kassa' Hynes; award winning writer/producer/director, Chris Browne; Theatre writers/directors/actors, Dahlia Harris and Aston Cooke; Educator and producer Franklyn St. Juste; make-up artist extraordinaire/director, Cecile Burrowes. The list also includes talented newcomers, Kyle Chin, Donovan Watkis, Sabrena McDonald-Radcliffe, Audrey Williams, Kevin Jackson and Alison Harrison. Jamaican & Hollywood actress, Shauna Chin, who recently made her debut on CBS' Criminal Minds, has also made the short list.

### INVESTMENT PARTNERSHIPS NEEDED

The collective cost of all 15 pieces require a total investment of up to **US\$200,000** and are open to private and public investment. There will be approximately 300 minutes of original content being made. The 15 projects currently in production will include Jamaican actors, shot on location in Jamaica and could create temporary employment for up to 300 people.

The entries will make their first stop at the Jamaica Film Festival and will be a part of the international circuit from as early as September 2015.

Film Commissioner, Carole Beckford says "JAMPRO intends to seek funding partners for the films being produced while committing to facilitate entry into the international film festival market. The investment is well worth it and with a national film festival coming to Jamaica, the image of the industry can attract a wide range of attention from other filmmakers and media across the world."

The state's export and investment promotions agency, under whose responsibility the Film Festival falls, is lining up with its partners to put on a spectacle in Kingston, celebrating the theme - **Art meets Business**.

JAMPRO has so far been able to attract and is partnering with Tuff Gong International, the home of Reggae Music and the largest distributor of music in the Caribbean for the five-day event. A music day is planned during the Festival and will feature a music video component that will be launched soon.



## Jamaica has to strengthen its effort...

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We suggest the Film Festival should be supported to boost economic activity, to expose the talent, to create new relationships, to boost old ones, to energise the creative sector to grow into an industry and to engage as many people locally as possible into worthwhile meaningful work.

At the time of writing this article, US President, Barack Obama was visiting **56 Hope Road** in Kingston, location of the Bob Marley Museum. From all accounts, the US President said he has all the albums. How then can we translate that kind of attention to create meaningful dialogue to action to exhibit the true value of not just music, but the creative arm of Jamaica?

Less is sometimes more, but we have so much more than others and in so doing, now's always a good time to make better use with what we have. The Jamaica Film Festival is an opportunity to combine all the creative elements of Jamaica into an economic model of value for the nation's benefit.

This is really where '**Art meets Business**'.

#OneLove

### Directors signing contracts – Aston Cooke and Cecile Burrowes with witnesses



### Chairman, Milton Samuda (right) with Marie Bruce – Tuff Gong International



### Allison Harrison – signing on the lines



## KINGSTON COMES ALIVE July 7 – 11, 2015

The **Jamaica Film Festival**, scheduled to be held in Kingston, July 7 – 11, 2015, is shaping up to be an exciting one, which will showcase the talents of the best and brightest in the Jamaican film industry. The festival promises to be a dynamic cinematic and cultural event, featuring both local and international movies.

There will also be a music day, to include: workshops; and a live reggae concert, at the Tuff Gong International Recording Studios. An exclusive beach party is planned for Saturday, which is geared to be a celebration of “*fun in the sun*,” against the visual bliss of the majestic Blue Mountains, as a backdrop in the distance.

The city of Kingston will come alive as the patrons of the festival enjoy the unique opportunity to experience why the Jamaican culture is so infectious. The capital city offers unparalleled culinary experiences; a vibrant nightlife; museums and galleries rich in culture; as well as, the warm hospitality of the Jamaican people. Kingston boasts restaurants owned by and named after three of our iconic sports superstars, including Usain Bolt’s *Tracks and Records*, Courtney Walsh’s *Cuddyz* and Chris Gayle’s *Triple Century*. In addition, the metropolis is home to the fourth best place to have ice cream in the world, available at Devon House. This Great House was built in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century as the residence of the first Black Jamaican millionaire; and, it is a masterpiece of Caribbean Victorian architecture and elegance.

Jamaica is also home to the world-famous Blue Mountain coffee and Reggae Music, therefore, Kingston’s energy and vibe will revitalize anyone. And, as a city with the seventh largest harbour in the world and numerous historic sites, Kingston has a variety of unforgettable experiences to offer, visitors and production crews that will last a lifetime.

The festival seeks to promote Jamaica as a location, which is more than a magnificent backdrop. And, will reveal that the country is currently experiencing a creative revolution; given its recognition as the cultural powerhouse of the Caribbean, producing outstanding cinematic creative products of international standard; with its breath-taking locations; state-of-the-art technical services, and a wealth of local talent.

These attributes have led to a deeper focus in the development of local creative industries, in particular film, with the goal of becoming one of the regional thought leaders in the industry. Therefore, our objective is to position Jamaica as the regional hub for creative talent and services; and, hosting a *bona fide* national film festival will assist us to solidify the directions and growth necessary.

The island is home to five production houses, each with more than four decades of experience in film and video production; and their technical skills are considered to be of world and industry standards. Our technical expertise ranges from world-renowned directors to the warmth and hospitality of our drivers, all of whom maintain the passion and desire to make crews comfortable during their work in Jamaica.



## CONTACT US

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