Reggae Sunsplash '82

On stage in Montego Bay, We The People perform for the thousands of reggae fans attending Sunsplash '82.

It has been called a cultural experience like no other. Estimates are that over 60,000 were on hand for this year's event.

By Paula Brooks

Attendance at Reggae Sunsplash '82 exceeded all official expectations. There appeared to be about 100,000 people in Jarett Park, the outdoor stadium where the concerts were held Wednesday through Saturday nights. California seemed to have the largest contigent, although the East coast was well represented.

The feeling was "One Love"—there were more black Americans experiencing part of the culture from which they have been separated, than ever before—and the Jamaican people loved it!

Not only was Reggae Sunsplash an enriching cultural experience—it was also "cook runnings!" A beach party Tuesday night at Cornwall beach officially began the festivities.

Truth and Rights, an award winning band from Canada, J. A.'s Byron Lee and the Dragonaires, the Sheena Spirit, a European woman lucky enough to come from New York to Jamaica at a time when she could have Bob Marley as her mentor "mashed it up" until the wee hours.

Wednesday's show didn't begin until 8 p.m., but by 6 o'clock the route to Jarett Park was lined with all kinds of people. People of all nationalities and walks of life were converging on Jarett Park for the love of reggae.

Inside the stadium, booths were set up around the entire circumference selll everythin from self-produ records, tee-sbirts, black iterature, Blue Mountain Coffee, Ethiopian flags and curried goat to stout.

The show started on time, and began with Byron Lee and the Dragonaires who set a bubbling pace, and backed up several other artists. Roy Shirley keptthe pace going, and Leroy Sibblies, who had been in Canada for some years, showed that he hadn't lost touch.

John Holt was also quite good, and he captured the audience with his No. 1 hit, "Sweetie Come Brush Me." Big Youth was my favorite of the evening and he had everyone singing along on his "Every Nigger is A Star."

Burning Spear never seemed to establish a rapport with either his band (who were cooking) or the audience, and it could have been part of his act, but he seemed too wasted to know or care.

Toots and the Maytals gave their usual vituoso performance, and Taj Mahal had transportation problems and had to be rescheduled.

Thursday evening was not to be missed! Johnny Osbourne got the crowd going—a real crowd pleaser was his big hit "Ice Cream Love." Long, lean Eek-A-Mouse, who claims he took his name from a winning racehouse, was great, and the audience loved his newest release "Assassination."

Israel Vibration, a group of three paraplegic brethren, were also quite good. They were followed by Aswad, from England, a group with a solid reputation, that somehow did not live up to expectations.

Macaw, a two-man team from San Francisco, consisting of a keyboard player and percussionist, were both excellent musicians and vocalists, with a progressive jazz sound, that did not really move the crowd.

Possibly this was because the y had come to hear "strictly rockers!", and nothing else would do.

Chalice woke everyone up with a performance that was dramatic, as well as solid musically. They appeared in army fatigues complete with helmets, and proceeded to create musical mayhem from their album "Blasted."

The beautiful Carlene Davis proved her talent for soft, sultry vocals-though they may have been better appreciated earlier in the evening, as people were already getting sleepy.

Eleven hours is a long time to spend at a concert, and at one time half the press section was asleep, still clutching their cameras and notebooks.

On the field behind the reserved seats, people were sleeping on folding cots and blankets, until someone with incredible energy came onstage to wake them up. One such group was the Gladiators, who played behind several groups.

At 5 a.m., the famous female D.J., Sister Nancy got the park rocking and revved up for the incomparable Yellowman!

The albino artist who currently has six records on the Jamaican charts, appeared with black, red, gold, and green beads on his inch long braids. He pranced about singing of the tribulations he has been through as a "yellowman," and the crowd went wild!

The full moon was setting at the rear of the stadium, and the first pink rays of morning light were peeking around the stage, as Yellowman brought the house down with his "Boogie Down."

Friday night was marked by pauses between groups that were too long, and several groups that could have been left off the agenda. People didn't seem to know what to make of Native, a group that sounded more like hard rock than anything else.

Deniece Williams' nightingale

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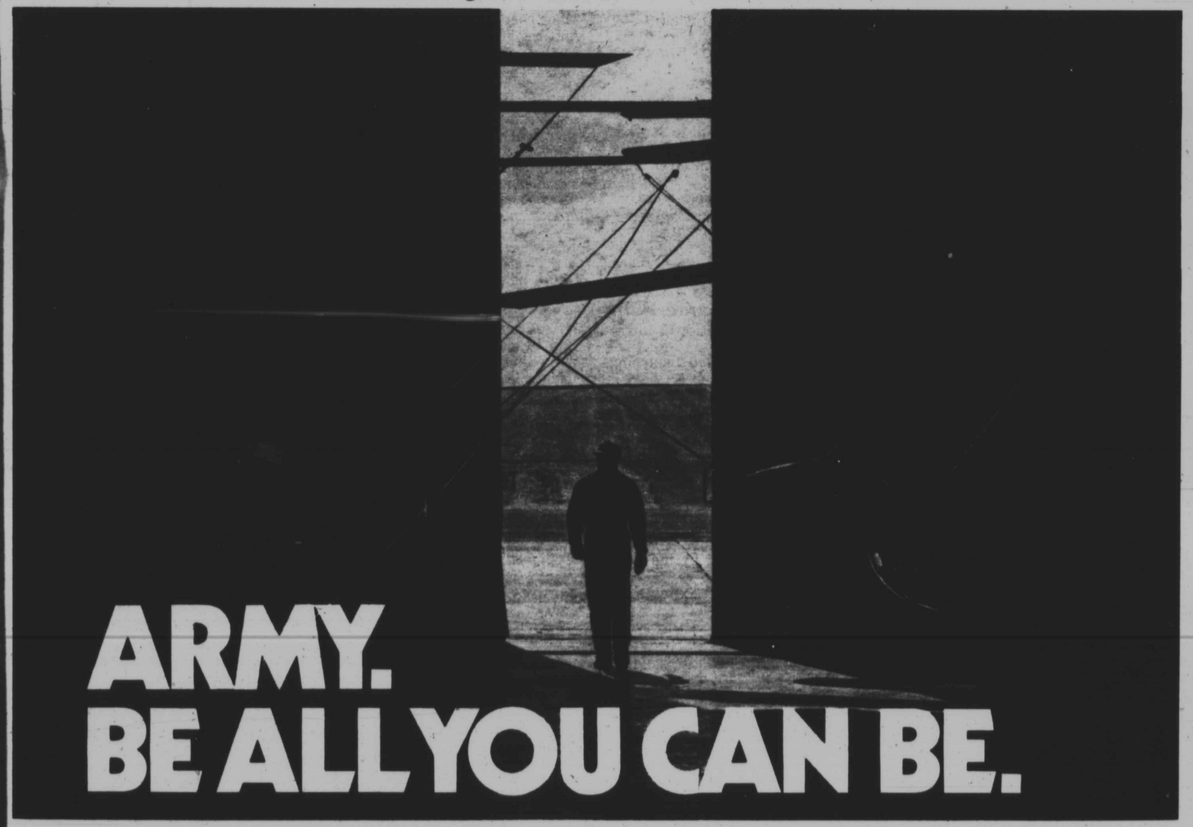

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