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2nd RUPUNUNI MUSIC & ARTS FESTIVAL ENDS ON A HIGH!

Music was the message as the Mighty Gabby rounded off a weekend of diverse, interesting, popular and dynamic melodies from around the world at the 2nd Rupununi Music & Arts Festival. The Brazilians shared capoeira, samba and Brazilian 'jazzed up' popular music to the delight of the audience; Suriname's quintet, MAYA performed with panache captivating the audience with their soulful renditions; nine time calypso monarch in Barbados, the Mighty Gabby had both the young and old grooving late into the night; JJ Kent, from the Oglala band in the USA, served up a mixture of traditional music and chants and country music that left the crowd wanting more and these were all complemented by dozens of young, talented, Guyanese artistes who danced and sung from their souls to add style to the weekend's activities. Over thirty-six hours of music, dance, spoken word, arts and craft workshops, food and glorious sunshine!

For Gavin from the band, O B E, "the festival was a huge success, a beautiful weekend that brought together so many different people from different cultures for one collective experience. Each day had a unique glow about it, and for those as adventurous as my group, the days were made even better by our own agenda - such as exploring the savannahs and swimming in the river".

It was Friday evening and the sun was slowly bidding farewell as Rock View came alive with sounds, rhythms and movements when the audience was invited to share a slice of Amerindian life in the specially built Macushi Village on site. The Village scene was the setting for the opening of the

festival with music, dance and poetry with cultural groups from Surama, Rupertee and Wowetta, culminating with the Minister of Indigenous Affairs, Hon. Sydney Allicock, entering on horseback to share one of his powerful poems, his memories of cattle ranching in the area. Tradition with modernity in music and dress and you knew you were in a Macushi area. The Village activities gave way to a few words of welcome lead by Ewout Sandker, followed Minister Allicock and Minister of Tourism Hon. Cathy Hughes who assured the audience that they were fully supportive of the festival becoming an annual event!

The evening continued in a traditional cultural vein with Group Capoeira Angola Palmares enriching the space with skills, chants and movements that started slowly and gradually accelerated to show dexterity and agility. And then.... O B E, a young band from Georgetown with some 'wicked' Rock 'n' Roll that evolved into Guyanese folk and more 'up tempo' rock music. The high energy evening mood was set and Ras Camo 'on pan' took the audience to another level around the Pool Side Bar and many folks, including friends from various Government Ministries were observed 'moving and swaying' to the rhythms of calypso. The youthful RegioJazz added their special Brazilian flavor to keep the night 'rocking' but it was "Chuckie" from Buxton Fusion and Gavin Mendonca from O B E who belted out some punchy Guyanese folk songs to close curtains in the wee hours of Saturday morning!

For Ramona, "I wanted to thank you for the amazing opportunity you've given us as volunteers to participate in the Rupununi Music and Arts Festival. It was a wonderful experience and it's safe to say that I've fallen in love with the Rupununi!"

Saturday and Sunday mornings were particularly special; J J Kent (flute) and Ras Camo (pan) were programmed to start at 5.30 am on top of Inspiration Rock andthey did. Sunrise greetings,

blessings for another beautiful day and lilting musical sounds that spoke to the power of creation, surrounded those on the Rock and those in bed. An experience of a lifetime!

Saturday early morning activities continued in spiritual mood as Monica Brinn and the Capoeira group offered open classes in Yoga and Capoeira. Bodies and minds were being catered for and nourished!

When the music activities began in the afternoon, the hot sun had many sitting in the shade, a distance from the main stage, but still enjoying the quality music and having opportunities to meander around the site. Visitors were able to participate in a wide range of activities, including Indian, Brazilian and African Caribbean dance and movement classes and afternoon yoga and interact with a range of arts and crafts workers, observing many at work plus having the opportunity to attend some of the information sessions offered by the EU Guyana, Conservation International, Iwokrama, The Cobra Project, Pantain Storytelling and the President Youth Award Republic of Guyana. George Simon, Patron of and performer at the festival, also worked alongside a range of visual artists and craft workers, engaging visitors in the shady space they occupied.

Sunday very much followed the Saturday model with the early morning session attracting more folks to the Rock to share in the experience and an even larger audience throughout the day. A packed, possibly over-packed programme, awaited everyone.

Inevitably there were hiccups and issues but when these were brought to the attention of the organisers, they were positively, quickly and satisfactorily remedied, allowing the thousands who attended over the weekend to enjoy themselves. Given the logistics involved and appreciating that it was only the 2nd event of this nature, the festival was a huge success on many levels and so said hundreds of visitors from within Guyana and the visitors from abroad.

Alas..... it had to end on Sunday evening and what better way to do so than with the Mighty Gabby who closed the event by sharing his many calypso hits with the excited audience. Sponsors, artistes, staff, volunteers, tutors, vendors, families and friends – a big thank you to ALL – as almost everyone who spoke to and contacted ussent out the call...see you in 2016..... and so they shall!

Of course no festival could survive without the support of loyal and committed friends, families, volunteers and, most of all, sponsors and those herein we thank you for generous support: The Government of Guyana, Archie Pool, ASL, Banks DIH, Cara Lodge, EU Guyana, Giftland Mall, GTA, Guyana Goldfields, Iwokrama, Jerries, mapz, Namilco, NCN, Rent-A-Tent, Republic Bank, Rock View, Roraima Adventures, Scotiabank, Silverbait Design, TGA, The USA Embassy & Vanda Radzik

Finally, with so much positive feedback, Liz and Arthur from Georgetown added the icing on the festival with their beautiful summary....

“Thank you for an awesome lifetime experience! For us the festival was the bomb - the content was great, the atmosphere fabulous and the people wonderful! What more is there to say!”