



## **ISHOWSPEED**

**Social media influencer's  
Jamaican trip exposes a  
generational divide**



## **KES DOES TORONTO**

**Band scheduled to play massive  
concert at RBC Amphitheatre on  
July 4 as city kicks off its annual  
Toronto Carnival Season**

**INSIDE: Main Carnival events & dates**



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# SNEAKY MOVE

## Residents plead for respite for legendary Toronto venue facing demolition

Voting on the proposed redevelopment of Sneaky Dee's has been deferred to July — but community members still took the opportunity to speak their minds during a meeting in late May at Toronto City Hall.

Many of the speakers who addressed City Council discussed the significance Sneaky Dee's holds — not only to them personally, but to the different communities that frequent the bar.

One resident, Fred Tate, who has lived in the neighbourhood for 20 years, said how special it was to have a place where you could see live music, amateur wrestling and more: "When you take those away, you just can't get them back."

People shared stories about meeting their partners at Emo Night North, the legendary Canadian bands — like the Barenaked Ladies — who got their start there, and feeling like they finally belonged to a community.

Some residents came prepared with research. Speaker Nate Palmer cited a CTV News article claiming that more than 4,000 condos were completed and unsold in Toronto this year, double the amount last year, and more than five times higher than 2024.

He said, "Nearly no one who lives in this ward will be able to afford to live in these condos once they're built."

A representative of the Goldberg Group, the company proposing the development, also spoke during the meeting. She began by telling the crowd that she was listening and writing down what they were saying, and assuring everyone that the developers are working with the owner of Sneaky Dee's. "This development has



**Sneaky Dees— the heart and soul of Toronto**

had a positive ongoing relationship with the owner, George [Diamantouros, Operating Manager] of Sneaky Dee's, and there have been arrangements made," she said.

The potential highrise development has cast a shadow of uncertainty over Sneaky Dee's future for years, with the city initially receiving the proposal for a 13-storey building in 2020. An updated proposal, encompassing 419, 421, 423, 429 and 431 College Street, proposes 130 one-bedroom units, 52 two-bedroom units and 21

three-bedroom units.

But a representative for a developer working on the project, Goldberg Group, told the meeting that space in the new building would be earmarked for Sneaky Dee's.

George Diamantouros, general manager at Sneaky Dee's, said the bar has always had a good relationship with the landowners and he has no reason to doubt their assurances.

"Ideally for us, we wouldn't want anything to change," Diamantouros said.

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# WHEN YOU GET Triggered

Have you ever had one of those moments where something happens and before you even have time to think, you feel it all through your body? I know I have. Someone says something, someone's tone changes, someone does not reply the way you expected, or someone pulls back, and suddenly it is like something inside you gets hit. Your chest tightens. Your stomach drops. Your mind starts racing. You feel hurt, upset, anxious, defensive, or like you want to shut down or pull away. In that moment, it feels like so much more than what just happened. If you have ever been there, you are not alone.

I think most of us have had those moments and later asked ourselves, why did that hit me so hard? Why did something so small feel so big? Why did I react that way? I have asked those same questions. What I have come to understand is that a trigger is usually not only about the moment in front of you. A lot of times, that moment touches something deeper. Something tender. Something familiar. Something your system already knows. Maybe it is rejection. Maybe it is feeling unseen. Maybe it is feeling dismissed, not chosen, not safe, or not enough. So even if the moment looks small on the outside, what it touches on the inside may not be small at all.

That is why being triggered can happen so fast. One minute you are just in a conversation, and the next minute you are deep in a feeling. You may want to explain yourself, defend yourself, cry, go quiet, leave, pull back, or shut down. Then later, when it all settles, you look back and think, what just happened there? I have learned those moments are not random. They are connected. They are often connected to something older, something underneath, something that may have been sitting there longer than we realized.

That is why two people can go through the same thing and feel it so differently. One person brushes it off. Another person feels it all the way through their body. That does not mean one is weak and the other is strong. It usually means the moment touched something different in each of them.

Sometimes people call that fast emotional reaction an amygdala hijack. Said simply, the amygdala is like the brain's alarm system, and an amygdala hijack is when that alarm goes off so quickly that your emotional reaction takes over before your thinking mind has time to catch up. In plain language, something inside you reads the moment as unsafe, painful, or threatening, and your whole system responds fast. That is why later you may think, why did I get so upset, why did I say that, why did I shut down, or why did that bother me so much? Usually there is a reason. The reaction may have looked bigger than the moment, but the feeling underneath it was real.

You have probably heard people use the words fight, flight, or freeze, and sometimes fawn. These are not fancy words thrown around for effect. They are simply different ways the body tries to protect us when something feels unsafe. Fight can look like getting angry, defensive, sharp, or wanting to push back. Flight can look like wanting to leave, avoid, distract yourself, or get away from the whole thing. Freeze can look like going blank, shutting down, feeling stuck, or not knowing what to say. Fawn is when you try to stay safe by pleasing, calming, or accommodating others, even when you are the one getting hurt. That can look like over-explaining, apologizing too quickly, smoothing everything over, or abandoning your own feelings just to keep the peace.

When you understand that, you start to see that these reactions are not random. They are protection.

And I think that matters, because so many people are hard on themselves when they get triggered. They call themselves too sensitive, too emotional, too reactive, too much. But maybe it is not that you are too much. Maybe something in you just got touched that still needs care. That is a very different conversation.

Instead of asking, what is wrong with me, you begin asking, what did this touch in me? Maybe it touched the part of you that has felt left out before. Maybe it touched the part of you that has had to stay strong for too long. Maybe it touched the part of you that learned it was not safe to speak up, not safe to get it wrong, not safe to be fully seen, or not safe to need too much. Maybe it touched a place in you that still remembers what it felt like to be criticized, ignored, rejected, blamed, or emotionally alone. When that part gets touched, your reaction is not crazy. It makes sense. It may not always be helpful, but it makes sense.

That is also why telling yourself to just calm down does not always work in the moment. If your whole system is activated, it needs a moment. It needs grounding. It needs safety. It needs space. A lot of people become even more upset with themselves because they are trying to think their way out of something their body is still feeling. But your body is already in it. Your chest is tight. Your breathing changes. Your jaw locks. Your heart beats faster. Your whole system is saying something before your words even arrive.

So the first thing is not to judge yourself. The first thing is to slow it down. That might mean taking a breath before you answer. Not sending the text right away. Stepping away for a moment. Feeling your feet on the floor. Unclenching your jaw. Putting your hand on your chest and reminding yourself this is



## HEART & SOUL

with  
Dianne Ojar



happening now, not back then. That small pause can make a real difference.

Then, when you can, ask yourself gently, what am I really feeling right now? Not just what happened. Not just what the other person did. What am I actually feeling? Hurt? Embarrassed? Scared? Dismissed? Rejected? Ignored? Not enough? Not safe? Then ask the deeper question, what did this touch in me? That is where the real insight often lives.

I have found that when you start looking at triggers this way, they stop being only something to be embarrassed about. They become something to listen to. Not to let run your life, but to listen to. They show you your tender places. They show you where your body still braces. They show you where there may still be pain, fear, or an old belief living quietly underneath the surface. That does not make them comfortable, but it does make them meaningful.

The goal is not to become someone who never gets triggered. That is not real life. The goal is to become someone who notices it sooner, understands it better, and responds with more care. Someone who can pause instead of reacting right away. Someone who can recognize that the intensity of the moment may not be only about the moment. It may be older than that. It may be deeper than that. And once you begin to see that, you can stop fighting yourself and start understanding yourself. That is often where real change begins.

About the Author

*Dianne Ojar is an author, speaker, transformational guide and Kuan Yin Lineage Holder with professional credentials through the American Board of Hypnotherapy and the American Board of Neuro-Linguistic Programming.*

# KES DOES TORONTO

## Soca superstar concert seen as the official kickoff to the Carnival Season

Kes the Band will wrap its North American ‘Roots, Rock, Soca’ tour in Toronto on July 4 at the newly renamed RBC Amphitheatre.

The soca group previously made history as the first soca act to headline the venue when it was still called Budweiser Stage, and frontman Kees Dieffenthaler has described Toronto as a career-shaping city.

Recently, Kes unveiled the ‘Roots, Rock, Soca’ tour, set to hit cities across North America beginning May 28.

Toronto is slated as the final stop on Jul. 4, taking over the newly named RBC Amphitheatre, formerly known as Budweiser Stage. On Jun. 14, 2025, the band made history as the first soca act to headline the outdoor venue under its former name.

lead vocalist Kees Dieffenthaler revealed that the city has a special place in his heart – not only as the first city he toured outside of the Caribbean, but the birthplace of the band’s breakout hit “Wotless,” which was produced alongside Trinidadian-Canadian singer Kerwin Du Bois.

The group returned to Toronto only months later in December for its annual holiday concert KesMAS, where the frontman referred to the city as “home.”

Kes is sure to bring the vibes from Port of Spain straight to the 6ix this summer, as he did to Vancouver on May 30 at a sold out show at the Commodore Ballroom.

The July 4 concert in Toronto is being seen by many as the official kick-off of the annual Toronto Carnival, which is the largest summer festival in Canada. It takes place July 30 - August 3 in the city, and will feature a number of events.

• Official Launch: Saturday, June 13, 2026 at Scarborough Town Centre

• Junior Carnival Parade: Saturday, July 18, 2026 from Malvern Community Centre to Neilson Park

• King & Queen Showcase: Thursday, July 30, 2026 at Lamport Stadium

• OSA Panorama (Steelpan Competition): Friday, July 31, 2026 at Lamport Stadium



### Kes the Band will play RBC Amphitheatre on July 4

• Grand Parade: August 1, 2026 | 8:00 am - 8:00 pm, Marilyn Bell Park/ Exhibition Place/Inukshuk Park/ Lakeshore Blvd. bet Stra- chan & Dowling bridge. For info, visit <https://torontocarnival.ca/events/>

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# Generational Divide

## IShowSpeed's Jamaica tour shows how celebrity is changing culture

For some Jamaicans, the arrival of internet superstar IShowSpeed sparked excitement usually reserved for music royalty or Olympic champions. For others, particularly older Jamaicans, the reaction was more confusion than celebration.

"But who is this guy anyway? What is he doing in Jamaica? Can he run faster than Usain Bolt, Asafa Powell or even Elaine Thompson-Herah? Dat me wah know!" one bemused observer opined, echoing the skepticism of many older Jamaicans trying to understand the frenzy.

Ask Gen Z, however, and the response is immediate: How do you not know him?

"I've never, ever seen the red carpet thrown out to a celebrity in Jamaica before like the one that Speed is getting!" Robb Loague posted on Facebook.

NY Groovin radio host Clement Hume responded, saying, "Robb, this is a clown show in production, bro."

But younger Jamaicans see it differently.

"How do you not know him, and why don't you understand what he is doing for Jamaica?" many online supporters argued.

That generational divide has become one of the most fascinating subplots of social media sensation Darren Jason Watkins Jr.'s visit to Jamaica. The 21-year-old content creator has transformed a simple stop on his Caribbean tour into a full-scale social media phenomenon.

American streamer IShowSpeed's livestream from Kingston on Friday amassed more than 2.8 million views, with a peak of 194,805 live viewers. The broadcast also generated 696,349 live chat messages and brought in 34,692 new subscribers.

His cameraman later shared the figures on X with the caption: "Good stream."

With nearly 54 million YouTube subscribers, IShowSpeed is a digital-age celebrity with a reach that rivals traditional entertain-



IShowSpeed

ment powerhouses like NBC, CBS and CNN. Even with that global reach, not everyone in Jamaica was impressed.

For younger Jamaicans, Speed's visit wasn't just entertainment — it was validation that Jamaica matters in the new global digital culture.

Reporter Janet Silvera of the *The Gleaner* captured the magnitude of the moment, writing: "With close to 54 million YouTube subscribers, internet sensation IShowSpeed has turned his visit to Jamaica into a global spectacle, giving the island major visibility among younger travellers."

The Jamaica Tourist Board clearly saw the opportunity.

"Creators are drawn to places that produce authentic, memorable content, and Jamaica delivers that almost effortlessly," JTB executive Donovan White said, adding, "The livestream itself is just the starting point. The content keeps generating value long after the broadcast ends."

As part of the Jamaican leg of his Caribbean tour, Speed visited several iconic locations across Kingston, including Emancipation Park, the Bob Marley Museum, Devon House and the National Stadium.

The tour kicked off at Emancipation Park

with a history session led by former Miss Jamaica Universe Yendi Phillipps. Known simply as "Speed," the streamer received a brief lesson on Jamaica's national heroes and took part in a traditional Kumina dance alongside a group of local students.

He also interacted with Culture Minister Olivia Grange and several prominent Jamaican entertainers, including Jesse Royal, Sean Paul, Beenie Man, Shenseea, Popcaan, Naomi Cowan and Gyptian. The stream ended with a drone show and dancehall party featuring Ding Dong.

Jamaican-born, Toronto-based media personality Danae Peart described the visit like a producer reviewing a blockbuster.

"IShowSpeed's live from Jamaica on Friday was awesome. It is clear Jamaica had a plan. It was clear Kingston is the home of culture, food and fun."

Then she detailed the whirlwind itinerary.

"He did Bob Marley Museum. Later, Romeich and them did a street dance simulation, and he went on stage with Ding Dong. They took him to Devon House, where there was lots of food, but his belly was full from eating at least three Tastee patties and coco bread beforehand. They made him do a relay at the stadium, and his team lost. Shenseea taught him how to make ackee and saltfish. He did a freestyle with Sean Paul at Haile Selassie school. Of course, he tried KFC. The stream ended with one of the lovely drone shows dedicated to him. Lots happened, and it was well planned."

For supporters, it was brilliant nation branding.

"This is free tourism advertisement! Speed is doing a Caribbean tour ... I don't know why my people want to throw cold water on this!" Robb Loague shared on Facebook.

Novlette Dias saw the visit as evidence that Jamaica understands the changing landscape.

"A de new generation ting dis. Streaming is huge."

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# An assist from Drake

## Popcaan hit debuts on Billboard's Hot 100

Dancehall artiste Popcaan and Canadian rapper Drake have collaborated on multiple songs.

Their latest collaboration, Amazing Shape, which is featured on Drake's Maid of Honour album, debuts at #76 on the Billboard Hot 100.

This marks Popcaan's first entry on the all-genre tally, which ranks the most popular songs in America.

Popcaan shared his thoughts on this milestone accomplishment.

"God is good, give thanks for the blessing," said the Unruly Boss, who spoke about the musical chemistry working with Drake. "The chemistry is undefeated, so whatever we do a straight banger."

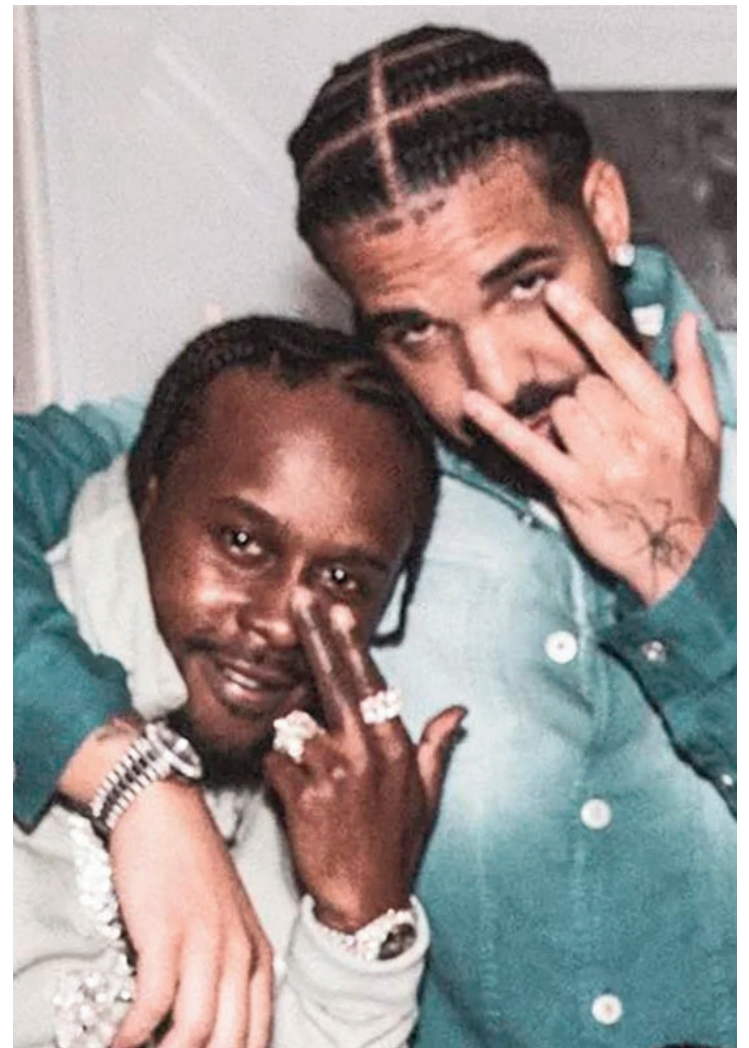
Amazing Shape contains elements of the Beenie Man hit Who Am I (Sim Simma),

a Billboard hit from 1998.

The Maid of Honour album, which sold 110,000 album equivalent units in the United States in its first week, also features the song New Bestie, produced by Montego Bay-based producer Mxssivh.

Maid of Honour has so far charted at #6 in the United Kingdom, and has made the top 10 in Austria, Australia, Lithuania, Switzerland, New Zealand, and Sweden.

Popcaan and Drake previously collaborated on We Caa Done, which peaked at #37 on Billboard's Rhythmic Airplay chart in 2023, while Twist & Turn featuring Drake and PARTYNEXTDOOR topped out at #30 on Rhythmic Airplay, #26 on Mainstream R&B/Hip Hop chart, and #36 on R&B/Hip Hop Airplay in 2020.



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Shenseea is making waves with her new FIFA anthem with Daddy Yankee

## ECHO

### Shenseea Scores 5th Billboard Entry With FIFA World Cup 2026 Anthem

While debates continue over who currently leads dancehall's global crossover movement, Shenseea is steadily building one of the genre's strongest Billboard résumés. The Jamaican star recently earned her fifth entry on Billboard's Rhythmic Airplay chart with "Echo (FIFA World Cup 2026)," a collaboration with reggaeton pioneer Daddy Yankee that is now gaining traction across international radio markets.

The achievement marks yet another major milestone for the entertainer, whose international profile has continued to rise through a string of high-profile collaborations and crossover records. According to Billboard, "Echo (FIFA World Cup 2026)" debuted at No. 39 on the Rhythmic Airplay chart dated May 30, further cementing Shenseea's growing presence within mainstream global music spaces. The track, tied to FIFA World Cup 2026 promotions, blends Caribbean and Latin influences with a stadium-ready energy designed for worldwide audiences.

Shenseea's latest chart entry adds to an already impressive Bill-

board catalogue that includes collaborations with acts such as 21 Savage, Wizkid, Moliy, Skillibeng, Silent Addy, Mariah Carey and Kehlani. Over the last few years, the singer has consistently expanded beyond dancehall's traditional boundaries, tapping into hip hop, Afrobeats, pop and Latin music markets while maintaining strong ties to her Jamaican roots.

Meanwhile, fans across social media have been celebrating the achievement as another significant moment for Caribbean representation on the international stage. Many have pointed to the Daddy Yankee collaboration as proof of Shenseea's growing global demand and versatility, especially as she continues to secure placements alongside some of the biggest names in music.

The latest Billboard recognition arrives at a time when dancehall's influence on global pop culture remains stronger than ever. With FIFA exposure, international radio support and a steadily growing catalogue of crossover hits, Shenseea appears poised to push her career to even greater heights in the months ahead.



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# MONTREAL TO BIM

Barbados secures new nonstop Air Transat service



Barbados has secured a new nonstop air service from Montreal with Canadian carrier Air Transat, further expanding the island's connectivity with the Canadian market.

The seasonal service is scheduled to begin on Dec. 13, 2026, and will operate twice weekly on Wednesdays and Sundays using an Airbus A321 LR aircraft with seating for 199 passengers.

Tourism officials said the new route represents a major expansion in the Quebec market and follows sustained efforts between Barbados tourism authorities, the airline and trade partners to strengthen visitor access to the island.

Officials noted that Quebec remains one of Barbados' strongest and most reliable sources of Canadian visitors, making the direct service a significant boost for tourism arrivals and overall connectivity.

"This new service from Air Transat reflects the continued demand for Barbados within the Quebec market," said Ian Gooding-Edghill, Barbados' Minister of Tourism and International Transport.

"Increasing airlift and ensuring consistent, reliable access to the island remains a key priority, and this service is a direct reflection of our strategic focus on markets that deliver strong and sustainable growth," he added.

Chief Executive Officer of the Barbados Tourism Marketing Inc., Andrea Franklin, described Quebec as a cornerstone of Barbados' Canadian tourism strategy.

"This new service with Air Transat allows us to deepen our reach within a market that has consistently delivered strong performance for Barbados," Franklin said, adding that the route would help support long-term tourism growth



**Air Transat will fly two flights weekly to Barbados starting in December**

and strengthen demand for the destination.

BTMI's Director for Canada, Eusi Skeete, said the expansion was the result of a targeted strategy focused on building relationships within the Quebec travel trade sector and aligning with the preferences of Quebec travelers seeking immersive vacation experiences.

The Air Transat announcement follows a re-

cent expansion by Air Canada, which earlier this month unveiled a new nonstop route from Halifax to Barbados.

Both services are slated to begin in December and are expected to strengthen Barbados' position as a leading Caribbean destination for Canadian travelers while supporting continued growth in the tourism sector.

## ...while Jamaica welcomes Porter

Jamaica is set to expand its airlift from Canada with the introduction of new direct routes by Porter Airlines to Sangster International Airport in Montego Bay, adding nearly 5,000 seats to the market for the 2026-27 winter tourist season.

The service will connect Montego Bay with three major Canadian gateways — Toronto, Ottawa and Hamilton — marking a significant boost in accessibility for Canadian travelers. Tourism officials say the move reflects growing demand for Caribbean travel, particularly from Canada, one of Jamaica's key source markets.

Minister of Tourism Edmund Bartlett described the development as a strong endorsement of the island's appeal.

"This new airlift from Porter Airlines is a powerful affirmation of Jamaica's standing as Canada's premier winter sun destination," Bartlett said. "Connecting Montego Bay directly to Toronto, Ottawa and — for the first time for Porter — Hamilton opens our island to an even wider circle of Canadian visitors."

Under the new schedule, Porter Airlines will operate flights from Toronto Pearson starting November 23, 2026, with up to five weekly services. Flights from Ottawa will begin on November 25 with twice-weekly service, while

Hamilton service will launch on December 20 with two weekly flights. The airline will be the only carrier offering non-stop service between Hamilton and Montego Bay.

Tourism Director Donovan White said the additional routes will make it easier than ever for Canadians to access Jamaica's tourism offerings.

"Three new non-stop gateways to Montego Bay give Canadian travelers unprecedented ease of access to our beaches, culture and hospitality," White noted.

The expansion is part of Porter's broader push into sun destinations, with the airline increasing its warm-weather network by more than 150 percent year-over-year. The growth includes the addition of four new countries and more than 15 new routes across its network.

Regional Director for Canada at the Jamaica Tourist Board, Angella Bennett, said the airline's investment reflects strong and sustained demand. "Canadian travelers have a deep and enduring love for Jamaica, and demand from markets like Toronto, Ottawa and southern Ontario has never been stronger," Bennett said, adding that efforts are already underway with travel partners to ensure strong bookings for the upcoming winter season.

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# BACK INSIDE

## Dancehall artist Flippa Mafia remanded on drug charges ... again

Jamaican dancehall artist Andrew Kendrick Davis, popularly known as Flippa Moggela or Flippa Mafia, is once again facing serious drug trafficking allegations in the United States, only four years after his release from prison in a previous federal drug case.

Federal prosecutors in New Jersey have charged Davis alongside Damion Jones, Clifford Brown, and James McBride in a drug conspiracy case involving methamphetamine, fentanyl, and cocaine.

According to the criminal complaint, the men are accused of conspiring to possess and distribute at least 500 grams of methamphetamine, at least 400 grams of fentanyl, and at least five kilograms of cocaine between August 2025 and May 2026.

Investigators said Davis became linked to the alleged drug trafficking operation on August 18, 2025, when surveillance cameras allegedly captured him dropping off a heavy bag at Jones's residence and leaving approximately two minutes later carrying an empty bag.

Two days later, authorities searched a storage unit connected to Jones and reportedly seized more than 5,300 grams of methamphetamine, nearly one kilogram of fentanyl, as well as carfentanil, xylazine, and a suspected cutting agent.

Federal agents also cited evidence allegedly recovered from Davis' Apple iCloud account, including an August 1 video showing him filming bags of suspected narcotics and photographs of shipping labels. Prosecutors said one of the labels matched a FedEx package intercepted in Pennsylvania containing five pounds of methamphetamine and one kilogram of cocaine.

As part of the investigation, a judge authorized the interception of communications from two phones allegedly used by Davis. Prosecutors said the intercepted conversations included exchanges with an unidentified woman and discussions with his co-defendants.

The investigation culminated on May 9 when law enforcement officers observed a U.S. Postal Service employee deliver a package mailed from California to a home under surveillance. Authorities later executed search warrants at



**Flippa Mafia: remanded into custody**

multiple locations.

At a residence on Oak Lane, investigators allegedly recovered about 10 pounds of suspected methamphetamine and two kilograms of suspected cocaine. More than one kilogram of suspected cocaine was also reportedly seized from McBride's residence.

The complaint alleges the drugs recovered at the Oak Lane property included methamphetamine that Davis had intended to supply to Jones for further distribution.

Davis appeared before U.S. Magistrate Judge Ann Marie Donio in Camden, New Jersey, last week as proceedings continue. He was remanded in the custody of the United States Marshal pending a bail hearing in the United States District Court for the District of New Jersey.

Federal prosecutors successfully moved for Davis to remain in custody pending trial. The dancehall artist consented to detention and was remanded to the custody of the US Marshal Service.

Court documents, however, noted that Davis has not waived his right to apply for bail at a later stage in the proceedings.

The "Dem Yah" deejay previously served several years in prison following his 2016 conviction in a major U.S. drug trafficking and money laundering investigation known as Operation Next Day Air. Although he was sentenced to 25 years in prison, Davis was released early in 2022 and later resumed his music career, releasing tracks including Inna Mi Zone and Own Don in 2025.

# SUPPORTING DE CULTURE

## Sean Paul donates JMD\$1 million in instruments to High School

International dancehall artist Sean Paul is proving that his impact stretches far beyond music, this time through a meaningful contribution to Jamaica's youth and creative future.

The Grammy-winning entertainer recently donated JM\$1 million worth of musical equipment to Haile Selassie High School through the Sean Paul Foundation, reinforcing his commitment to education, youth empowerment and community development across the island.

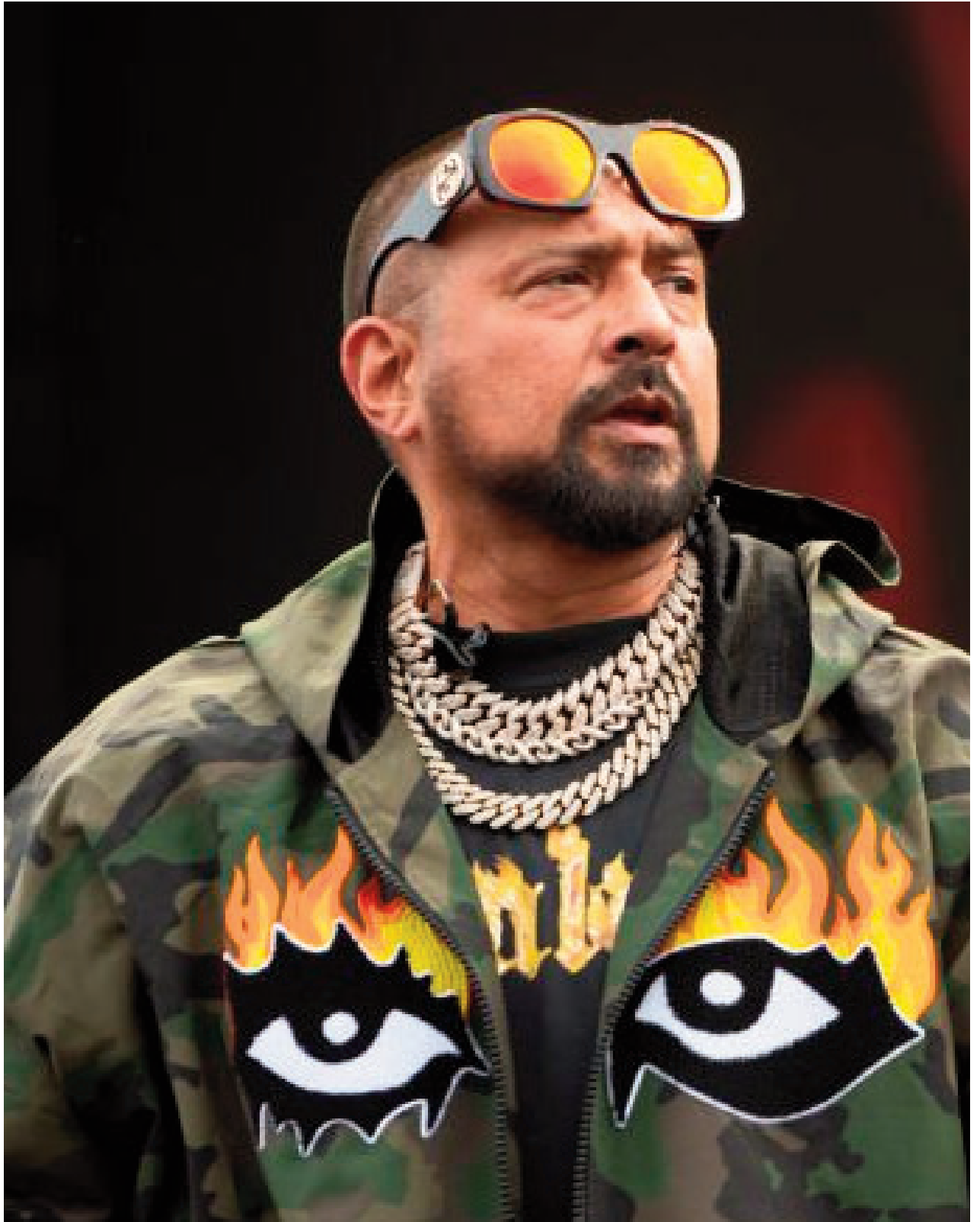
The special presentation became an even bigger moment as the Grammy Award winner was accompanied by popular American streamer IShowSpeed, who joined Sean Paul during a visit to the St. Andrew-based institution on May 8 while on the Jamaican leg of his Caribbean tour. The visit generated major excitement among students, many of whom gathered to witness the crossover between the global streamer and Jamaican entertainment excellence.

IShowSpeed, whose online broadcasts routinely attract millions of viewers across platforms and whose global fan base spans North America, Europe and the Caribbean, has become one of the internet's most recognizable personalities. His stop in Jamaica formed part of a wider Caribbean tour that has been heavily documented online, giving international audiences a glimpse into Jamaican culture, music and energy through his livestreams and viral clips.

However, while the streamer's appearance brought global attention, the heart of the visit centered on Sean Paul's investment in the students themselves. The donated equipment is expected to strengthen the school's music program and provide young creatives with tools to nurture their talents in performance, production and musical expression.

In a social media post reflecting on the initiative, Sean Paul shared, "We know that music can change lives, build confidence and open doors. Blessings to everyone who made this moment happen. Keep playing, keep creating, keep dreaming."

For many, the gesture is a reminder of Sean Paul's longstanding role not only as an ambassador for Jamaican music, but also as a cultural game changer who continues to pour back into



**Sean Paul: made the donation via his charitable foundation**

his homeland. Since emerging in the late 1990s and exploding internationally in the early 2000s, Sean Paul has remained one of the most commercially successful Jamaican artistes in history. His influence helped usher dancehall music into mainstream global markets, opening doors for countless Caribbean entertainers to follow.

Over the years, the entertainer has consistently used his platform to support charitable

and community-based initiatives. Beyond music, Sean Paul has participated in outreach programs, youth support efforts and relief initiatives for communities affected by hurricanes and other natural disasters.

The recent donation to Haile Selassie High School — an institution gifted to Jamaica by Haile Selassie I — symbolizes encouragement, opportunity and belief in the transformative power of creativity for the students impacted.

# A HUMANITARIAN

## TIME Magazine honors Rihanna for philanthropic impact

For years, Rihanna has dominated headlines through music, fashion, and business, but her latest recognition spotlights her humanitarian impact across the Caribbean and beyond.

The Barbadian superstar has been named to TIME magazine's inaugural TIME100 Philanthropy list, alongside global figures such as Elton John and Shakira for her ongoing charitable work through the Clara Lionel Foundation.

Rihanna earned her place in the publication's "Trailblazers" category, making her the only Barbadian artist on the prestigious list and solidifying her status as one of the Caribbean's most influential global figures.

While the world often associates Rihanna with chart-topping hits, a billion-dollar beauty empire in Fenty Beauty, and her Super Bowl halftime performance, TIME's recognition highlights another side of the entertainer—one dedicated to service, resilience, and regional uplift.

Founded in 2012 following the death of her grandmother from cancer-related complications, the Clara Lionel Foundation was named in honor of Rihanna's grandparents, Clara and Lionel Braithwaite. Its first major initiative was deeply personal: donating a modern radiotherapy machine to the Barbadian hospital where her grandmother received treatment.

Over the years, that act of giving evolved into one of the Caribbean's most impactful philanthropic organizations. According to TIME, the foundation has directed more than US\$100 million toward causes including climate resilience, healthcare, education, arts and culture, and women's entrepreneurship across the Caribbean, the United States, and East Africa.



### Rihanna: started the Clara Lionel Foundation

The publication also noted Rihanna's efforts in disaster preparedness throughout the region. Following devastating hurricane seasons in 2017 and 2018, the Clara Lionel Foundation began strengthening Caribbean health clinics by reinforcing infrastructure and introducing solar-powered systems to help communities better withstand future storms.

That mission became even more urgent following the destruction caused by Hurricane Melissa last year, which displaced thousands across the Caribbean and severely impacted several hospitals in Jamaica. The foundation has since launched support initiatives focused on rebuilding healthcare systems, improving water access, and restoring educational opportunities in affected communities.

Rihanna's philanthropic influence has continued to gain international recognition in recent years. Earlier this year, she was announced as a recipient of the 2026 Edison Achievement Award, becoming the first woman of color to receive the honor for her

contributions across music, business, and philanthropy.

For many across the Caribbean, however, Rihanna's humanitarian work simply reinforces what Barbados officially recognized years ago. In 2021, she was conferred the title of National Hero of Barbados during the country's transition to a republic—one of the highest honors the island can bestow.

Though she has spent nearly a decade without releasing a full studio album, Rihanna's impact has hardly slowed. Instead, her influence has expanded far beyond entertainment, transforming her into a symbol of Caribbean excellence, cultural pride, and purposeful leadership on the world stage.

With TIME now celebrating her humanitarian contributions alongside her global success, Rihanna continues to show that her legacy is being built through music and business, as well as through the lives she continues to touch across the region she proudly calls home.

# T&T vs GRENADA

## Mr Killa sparks controversy over whose carnival is better

A spirited regional debate surrounding Caribbean Carnival culture has erupted online after Grenadian soca artist Mr Killa made comments describing Trinidad Carnival as “big and commercialized” while praising Grenada’s Jab Jab tradition for maintaining what he called a more raw and ancestral authenticity.

The comments, made during a recent Caribbean tour appearance alongside popular online streamer IShowSpeed, quickly ignited passionate reactions across social media platforms, drawing responses from Carnival enthusiasts, cultural commentators, and soca fans throughout the region.

During the discussion, Mr Killa contrasted the global scale and structure of Trinidad’s Carnival with Grenada’s traditional Jab Jab culture, which is widely known for its deep spiritual symbolism, resistance themes, and intense folkloric expression rooted in emancipation history.

While some social media users interpreted the remarks as criticism of Trinidad and Tobago’s internationally recognized Carnival product, others defended the artist, arguing that he was simply highlighting the differences between the Caribbean’s various Carnival traditions rather than attacking one culture in favor of another.

The backlash intensified as Trinidadians rallied to defend what many consider one of the world’s premier cultural festivals. At the same time, several Grenadians and regional supporters applauded Mr Killa for openly championing indigenous Caribbean traditions that they believe have sometimes been overshadowed by mainstream commercialization.

As the online discourse escalated, Mr Killa later issued a public clarification via social media, insisting that his comments were misunderstood and never intended as disrespect toward Trinidad and Tobago.

“At no point did I ever say that Trinidad and Tobago Carnival is fake. That is not my word, and not my position,” the artist stated.

He went on to explain that describing Trinidad Carnival as commercialized was not meant negatively, but rather as recognition of the festival’s global expansion and massive infrastructure.

“It is one of the most powerful cultural movements in the world, with global reach, major investment, and world-class production,” he wrote. “Commercialized does not mean fake or inauthentic. It means expanded, structured, and operating at a world level, and that is something to be respected.”

Mr Killa also emphasized Grenada’s unique



**Mr Killa: Grenada’s Jab Jab has a different vibration**

Carnival identity, noting that Jab Jab culture carries “a different vibration” rooted in ancestral traditions, raw expression, and freedom.

“That doesn’t make one better than the other — it shows the strength and diversity of Caribbean culture,” he added.

The controversy also reignited wider conversations surrounding the evolution of Carnival culture and the globalization of soca music — discussions that have frequently been addressed by Trinidadian soca icon Machel Montano over the years.

Montano, often regarded as one of soca’s leading ambassadors on the international stage, has consistently spoken about balancing the commercialization and global growth of Carnival

while preserving its cultural meaning and spiritual roots. Though he was not directly involved in the original exchange, his name became part of the online discussion as fans referenced his longstanding views on the future of Caribbean culture and soca music.

Despite the heated exchanges online, many observers believe the debate ultimately highlighted the richness and diversity of Caribbean Carnival traditions rather than division.

From Trinidad’s globally celebrated spectacle to Grenada’s deeply rooted Jab Jab expression, the conversation has once again underscored how passionately Caribbean people protect and celebrate their cultural identities.



Countree Hype produced songs for artistes including Chronic Law

## LESS HYPE

### Jamaican producer Countree Hype pleads guilty to arms smuggling in the USA

A Jamaican national who performs under the stage name “Countree Hype” has pleaded guilty to smuggling dozens of firearms, ammunition and magazines from the United States to Jamaica by hiding them inside office furniture, U.S. federal prosecutors said.

Taugea Uberty Dayes, 33, pleaded guilty to one count of smuggling goods from the United States and one count of delivering a firearm to a common carrier without written notice, according to the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of Florida.

Prosecutors said that on March 7 and 8, 2025, Dayes concealed 30 firearms, 32 magazines and more than 100 rounds of ammunition inside five office chairs. Authorities said the weapons and ammunition were wrapped in tin-

foil and foam before being sewn into the cushions of the chairs.

On March 10, 2025, the chairs were shipped from the United States to Jamaica using a freight shipping service, according to court records. Jamaican law enforcement officers later seized the firearms in Kingston eight days later.

“Illegal firearms trafficking fuels violence far beyond our borders,” said Jason A. Reding Quiñones in a statement. “This defendant concealed dozens of firearms inside furniture and attempted to ship them overseas to evade detection and arm the black market in Jamaica,” he added. “Firearms smuggling is not a paperwork offense. It is a public safety threat that fuels violence, empowers criminal organizations, and destabilizes communities.”

Federal prosecutors said Dayes faces a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison. Sentencing will be determined by a federal district court judge after consideration of U.S. sentencing guidelines and other statutory factors.

The case is being investigated by Homeland Security Investigations Miami with assistance from the HSI Kingston Attaché, the HSI Transnational Criminal Investigative Unit and the Firearms and Narcotics Investigation Division of the Jamaica Constabulary Force.

Outside of the criminal case, Dayes is known in Jamaica’s dancehall industry as music producer “Countree Hype,” founder of Countree Hype Entertainment and producer of songs for artistes including Alkaline, Intence, Masicka and Chronic Law.


# PHOENIX

## Paws & Claws

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# Crossroads

## T&T Film Festival marks its 20th anniversary with screening in the UK

The Trinidad and Tobago Film Festival (TTFF) has marked its 20th anniversary with the successful launch of a UK screening series, Crossroads: Where Caribbean Cinema Meets the UK, highlighted by a sold-out premiere of *Queen of Soca* in Hertford in partnership with BEAM.

The screening forms part of TTFF's wider anniversary programming, which celebrates two decades of championing Caribbean cinema, filmmakers and regional storytelling since the festival's founding in 2005.

TTFF Director Mariel Brown said the UK launch reflects the festival's broader mission as it enters its milestone year.

"As TTFF marks 20 years, we are proud to celebrate not only the films and filmmakers that have shaped Caribbean cinema, but also the connections, audiences and cultural spaces that will sustain it into the future. The UK premiere of *Queen of Soca* was everything I hoped Crossroads could be, full of heart, Caribbean diaspora spirit and a strong sense of community and connection through film," she said.

The opening night attracted members of the Caribbean diaspora, film enthusiasts, cultural stakeholders and media representatives. Guests were welcomed with Caribbean food, drinks and a soca soundtrack, creating what organisers described as an immersive cultural experience ahead of the screening.

*Queen of Soca*, which explores Caribbean musical heritage and identity, received an enthusiastic response from audiences. Following the screening, viewers took part in a virtual Q&A with director Kevin Adams, who discussed the film's themes and production process.

BEAM Hertford Venue Director Steve Sargeant said the collaboration underscores the venue's commitment to cultural inclusion.

"BEAM is more than a venue; it's a vibrant home for artists, ideas and community, where everyone can belong. We therefore couldn't be prouder to host the Trinidad and Tobago Film Festival, an extraordinary series of screenings that celebrate bold storytelling, global voices and



### 'Queen of Soca' director, Kevin Adams, participated in an online Q+A at the UK premiere of his film in Hertford

the joy of shared cultural experience," he said.

Cinema Programmer Patrice Robinson said the event helped spark meaningful cultural exchange.

"The UK premiere of TTFF Crossroads was a unifying experience, bringing together audiences from Hertford and beyond to enjoy the vibrancy of *Queen of Soca*. The standout post-film Q&A with Kevin Adams provided invaluable behind-the-scenes insight, while the launch itself sparked

rich conversations celebrating Caribbean culture," she said. "Audiences can expect even more cinematic gems from across the region throughout the season."

The Crossroads series continues across four venues in the South East of England until June 18. Brown said this year's programming also includes 10 for 20, a monthly anniversary screening series at the Little Carib Theatre in Port of Spain.



# GOD & TIME

## Vybz Kartel releases first album since his prison stint

Dancehall star Vybz Kartel is set to release a new album, *God & Time*, on June 5, marking what the artist describes as a major new chapter in his career following his release from prison in 2024.

The album is now available for pre-order alongside the release of its title track, "God & Time," and an accompanying music video filmed in Miami and Kingston and directed by Ruppi.

The project follows a strong run for Kartel, whose recent albums *Party With Me* and *Heart & Soul* both received Grammy nominations for Best Reggae Album. His 2025 anniversary project, *10th Anniversary: Viking (Vybz Is King)*, also added to renewed global interest in the dancehall entertainer.

According to a release announcing the

album, *God & Time* will feature collaborations with several major artists, including Puerto Rican star Farruko and Jamaican entertainers Skillibeng and Shenseea. Shenseea previously appeared on the single "Panic," which was released ahead of the album.

The album is described as blending dancehall, crossover sounds, personal reflections, and more introspective themes. The title references the Jamaican phrase "God & Time," often associated with faith, patience, and destiny.

Produced by longtime collaborator TJ Records alongside Kartel, the album reunites the team behind *Viking (Vybz Is King)* and *King of the Dancehall*, the latter of which included Kartel's RIAA Gold-certified hit "Fever."

Kartel, born Adidja Palmer in Portmore, spent 13 years in prison before his conviction

was overturned by the UK Privy Council and Jamaican courts. He was released on July 31, 2024, and returned to performing later that year at Kingston's National Stadium before a crowd of thousands.

Since his release, Kartel has expanded his international profile with collaborations, major media appearances, and back-to-back Grammy nominations. He has also remained one of dancehall's most influential figures, credited with helping launch the careers of artists including Spice, Popcaan, and Shenseea.

This summer, Kartel is also scheduled to headline Reggae Sumfest on July 18 alongside fellow dancehall artist Mavado, marking a highly anticipated reunion between two of dancehall's biggest rivals from the 2000s era.



One of Nollywood's highest grossing movies is now available on Netflix

# Your Excellency

EbonyLife Films, creators and producers of Fifty, The Wedding Party movies, The Royal Hibiscus Hotel and Chief Daddy, is pleased to announce that Your Excellency, one of Nollywood's highest-grossing movies, is now exclusively streaming on Netflix. The announcement follows recent news of a groundbreaking deal between Nigeria's most successful studio and the world's largest video-streaming service. This is EbonyLife's sixth consecutive title to be acquired by Netflix.

Mo Abudu, founder and CEO of EbonyLife, is excited about their deepening relationship with Netflix. "Your Excellency did very well in Nigeria because of its funny but earnest look at a

Trump-like, political underdog trying to become president – it's sure to strike a chord with viewers around the world. The quality and popularity of movies like this made it possible for our recent deal, which calls for us to produce several Netflix-branded films and two series," she said.

Your Excellency tells the story of a bumbling, billionaire businessman and failed presidential candidate, who becomes a credible contender when his dance moves and gaffes ignite social media. Helmed by Funke Akindele-Bello, making her directorial debut, the movie boasts a star-studded cast of Nollywood favourites, including: Funke Akindele-Bello, Akin Lewis, Kemi 'Lala' Akindoju, Shaffy Bello, Kunle

Coker, Eku Edewor, Emmanuel 'EmmaOMG' Edunjobi, Alexx Ekubo, Oreka Godis, Osas Ighodaro, Mike Iheuwa, Aletile 'Seyi Law' Lawrence, Bimbo Manuel, Deyemi Okanlawon, Ini Dima-Okojie, Chioma 'Chigul' Omeruah, Ikechukwu Onunaku, Helen Paul and Toni Tones.

Your Excellency broke into the top 10 chart of highest-grossing Nigerian movies, earlier this year, making it the fourth EbonyLife title to achieve this feat. It joins The Wedding Party, The Wedding Party 2 and Chief Daddy, which hold the top three spots on the all-time list.

For more information, visit [www.netflix.com](http://www.netflix.com), download the Netflix app or visit [www.ebonylifefilms.com](http://www.ebonylifefilms.com)

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# JAMMYWOOD

## Jamaica eyes partnerships in global film industry

Jamaica's growing ambitions in the global film and television industry were on full display recently as LAB Studios hosted its "SLATE | Jamaica on Screen" showcase at Carib 5 Theatre.

The event, held in partnership with Jamaica Promotions Corporation and the Jamaica Screen Development Initiative, brought together government officials, international film executives, creatives, investors and entertainment stakeholders for discussions centered on storytelling, investment and the future of Jamaica's screen industry.

The evening featured a private screening of the Jamaican-made feature film *Love Offside* starring Judi Johnson, Mike Merrill, Victoria Rowell and Sundra Oakley.

A fireside discussion titled "Building the Future: Jamaican Stories on the Global Stage" featured LAB Studios Chief Executive Officer Kimala Bennett and Mika Pryce, senior vice president of development and production at Paramount Pictures.

Pryce, whose production credits include *Get Out*, *Good Boys*, *Little* and *Pacific Rim: Uprising*, discussed the growing demand for culturally authentic stories and the opportunities for emerging production markets like Jamaica.

The showcase also unveiled trailers and previews for several upcoming LAB Studios productions, including *Christmas in the Tropics*, *Jenna In Law*, *SEEN*, *Happily Ever Awkward* and *The Marriage Clause*.

The event also marked a major funding milestone for LAB Studios, which received J\$50 million through the Jamaica Screen Development Initiative to support productions including "Love Offside," "Christmas in the Tropics" and "SEEN."

Bennett said the investment reflects a wider opportunity for Jamaica and the Caribbean to build a stronger presence in the global content economy.

"The global media and entertainment industry is now valued at more than US\$2.8 trillion, and as audiences continue searching for stories that feel authentic and emotionally connected, the opportunity for culturally driven storytelling has never been greater," Bennett said.

She added that Jamaica's global cultural in-



**Prime Minister Andrew Holness (third left), keynote speaker at SLATE | Jamaica on Screen, joined dignitaries and leaders across film and the culture**

fluence places the country in a strong position to develop a sustainable film and digital content ecosystem capable of creating economic opportunities while bringing Jamaican stories to international audiences.

Prime Minister Andrew Holness, who delivered the keynote address, said the government sees film and storytelling as part of Jamaica's next phase of economic growth.

"This is the latest signal that Jamaica has the talent, the stories, the locations, and the cultural appeal to build a serious film industry," Holness said.

The prime minister also referenced the government's recently announced J\$1 billion commitment to the creative industry, saying the funding would be distributed in a "transparent and competitive way" to support filmmakers and strengthen Brand Jamaica internationally.

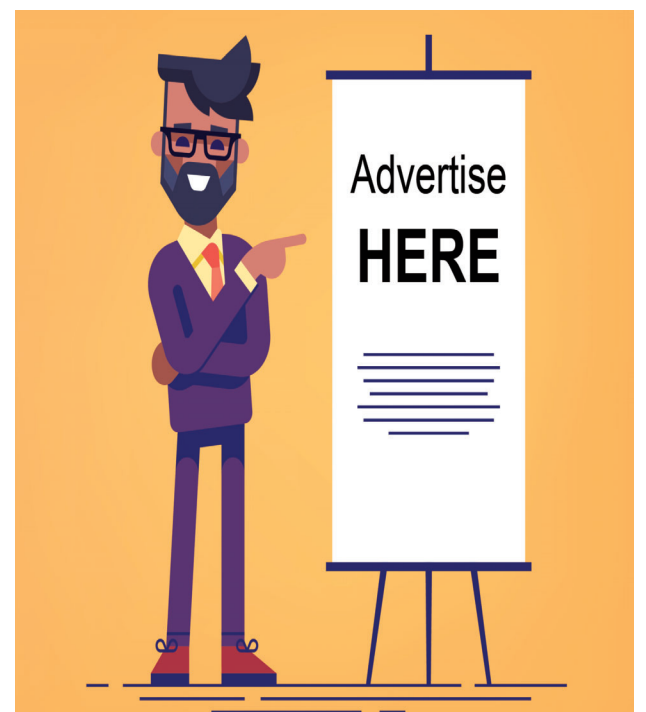
Also addressing the audience were Olivia Grange and Aubyn Hill.

President of JAMPRO, Shullette Cox, said the showcase reflected the broader vision of the Jamaica Screen Development Initiative by helping local creators bring Jamaican stories to global audiences.

LAB Studios said its long-term goal is to

build what it describes as a "Caribbean-first global studio," focused on turning Jamaican stories into exportable intellectual property across film, streaming and digital platforms.

The company said its strategy also includes talent development initiatives aimed at creating sustainable opportunities for Jamaican creatives in writing, production, editing, marketing and distribution.





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