

## PRESS RELEASE

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

#### A FEAST OF MUSIC AND BELLYFULLS OF LAUGHTER

The start of summer promises to be alive with laughter and music as Ellis International presents the fourth annual staging of its consistently successful series, “*International Comedy Fest*”.

“*International Comedy Fest 2K8*” is scheduled to take place over two days and cover two locations this year as the event offers a new and exciting twist with the innovative fusion of ‘*timeless music*’ and ‘*limitless laughter*’. The festival is dubbed “*Comedy Meets Rock Steady*”; and will give patrons the pleasure of one scintillating night of great music with healthy doses of laughter in between; and one night of side-splitting comedy with refreshing servings of music on the side.

Heading the list on what will, undoubtedly, be a memorable menu of superlative entertainment is the undisputed Godfather of Rock Steady, **Alton Ellis, OD**. On Saturday, June 28 at The Roof in Portmore Pines Plaza, **Alton** will be joined by the reliable, experienced, year-to-year, musical favourites, **Fab Five Inc**; and guests from New York, **Steel & Ivory**; while top local dance ensemble, **Dance Xpressionz**, will sprinkle on the spice of variety, and add touches of flavour with exciting choreography. Of course, the comedians: **Ity & Fancy Cat** and **Owen “Blakka” Ellis** will also make their presence felt. Radio personality and actor, **Rosie Murray** will host the evening’s entertainment. Doors will be opened at 6:30pm; with show time beginning at 8:30.

**Alton Ellis, OD** will treat the audience to a very special musical experience. This will be his first performance after an almost miraculous recovery from a major illness. **Alton** has been diagnosed with Cancer. He was told by doctors that his situation appears life-threatening, and everybody feared the worst. Through a combination of excellent medical attention, dedicated family support, a positive outlook and much prayer, he is surviving. This event offers a rare opportunity for him to celebrate with his many fans and thank Jamaica for the many words of comfort and support. The undisputed Godfather of Rock Steady – singer, songwriter and producer, **Alton Ellis** is a genuine icon of Jamaica's music and one of the major pioneers of the Rock Steady era. He made his musical debut in the late 1950s when he teamed up with Eddie Parkins to form the local duo, **Alton & Freddie**. They won the Vere John's Opportunity Hour Talent Competition, then went on to record the monster hit, “*Muriel*”, in 1959. **Alton** later performed as lead singer for his own group, **Alton Ellis and the Flames**, and later went solo. Producer, Clement “Coxsone” Dodd, oversaw a string of subsequent successes. Eventually **Ellis**, left for Coxsone's archival Duke Reid and his Treasure Isle label, creating some of the most enduring hits like - “*Dance Crasher*”, “*Cry Tough*” and “*Girl I've Got a Date*”.

**Fab 5**, formed in 1970, and the holder of 30 major awards between 1986-2008, is Jamaica's pre-eminent popular band – whether measured by record sales at home, hits on the charts, frequency of engagements or major awards won over the years. Their nineteen albums have been as successful as their singles. Musicianship, dedication, integrity and discipline are the hallmarks of **Fab 5**, who have earned, and retained, the respect of the music industry, critics, and general public over the past thirty-eight years and are all set for continued success in the future.

**Aston “Robot” Ellis** – “**Steel**” is the bandleader, bass player, vocalist and musical arranger for his five-member **Robanic Band**, based in upstate New York, where he resides. **Aston**, nephew of Alton Ellis, has

performed for over 20 years throughout the United States, Jamaica, Asia, and England. **Aston** also plays the steel pan which was recently added to give the band the extra Calypso and Soca flavour.

**David Oliver** – “**Ivory**”, keyboardist/composer from the Catskill Mountain region of New York is also a member of the **Robanic Band**. Aside from a 17-year tenure with Jamaican master drummer, Winston Grennan and Ska-Rocks Band, **David** has performed and recorded with the following Reggae and Jazz musicians: Karl Berger, Dan Brubeck, The Clarendonians, Pat Kelly, Paul McCandless, Tommy McCook and the Ska-Jazz Band, Toots and the Maytals, Lyn Tait, and Vic Taylor.

Special guests at both events, **Dance Xpressionz** is on the rise – locally and internationally, especially with the emergence of Dancehall. A five-member group that has been in existence for six years, **Dance Xpressionz** has managed to, successfully, merge Jamaican Dancehall with traditional Folk forms, modern Contemporary, and even Latin. It gives Jamaican Dancehall an international appeal, without losing the cultural flavour.

The elegant ball room of the Hilton Kingston hotel will reverberate with howls of laughter on Sunday, June 29 as some seasoned comics, all with extensive international experience, will serve up steamy, sumptuous, courses of hilarity. Our appetite for amusement will be addressed by the likes of highly successful USA comic **Chris Spencer**, **Trixx** (a Ghanaian now residing in Canada), **Ron Josol** from the Philippines, and Canadian **Jay Martin**. **Blakka Ellis** and **Ity & Fancy Cat** - Jamaica's two most 'internationally active' comedy acts, will represent the local laughter league. **Miss Kitty** returns as Host; after her extremely successful debut at last December's “*Christmas Comedy Cook-Up*”. Show time is scheduled for a 7:30pm start, with doors opening at 5:30.

**Christopher Spencer** is an African-American actor, comedian, writer and producer. He was the first host of the syndicated late night talk show, VIBE. He has gone on to star in several film projects such as: “*The Sixth Man*”, “*Significant Others*”, and “*Postal*”. **Chris Spencer** is also one of the most sought after writers having done projects with Wayans family, Jamie Foxx; and was significant in helping Nick Cannon create MTV's “*Wild 'N Out*”. **Chris** also travels the country as a stand-up comedian and has performed on “*The Chris Rock Show*”, “*Jimmy Kimmel Live*”, and HBO's “*Def Comedy Jam*”.

With everything he touches, **Frank “Trixx” Agyemang** is a natural. He is a born entertainer. **Trixx** has been hard at work, this last year, cementing his reputation as one of the hottest new comedians; and expanding his reach as a brand. In just his first year of comedy, **Trixx** has already shared the stage, and held his own, with some of the country's big names in comedy including: Mark Trinidad, Jay Martin, and Ron Josol. He has also gone on to headline Toronto's number one super Comedy Club, Yuk Yuks, on numerous occasions, proving to be a definite comedic force to be reckoned with.

**Ronald Josol** is a professional stand-up comedian performing across the globe. In 2000, **Ron** won the Craven A's funniest, home-grown competition for the “*Just For Laughs*” comedy festival in Canada's search for funniest new comer. **Ron**, a Filipino, is, undoubtedly, the most recognizable Asian comedian in Canada. He has produced, co-wrote, and starred as the lead of a short film based on his true story entitled, “*Rolling Longaniza*” which aired on the CBC. Currently, **Ron** is a writer and performer on the Much Music hit show, “*Video on Trial*”.

**Jay Martin** is an explosive and charismatic face in Comedy; described as hilarious – and that is just an understatement! In his first year of comedy, **Martin** had the pleasure of performing on stage with well-known comics such as: Canada's Jean Paul, Marc Trinidad, and Russell Peters; and BET's “*Comic View*” comedians: Honest John, Damon Williams, Earthquake, and many more. He's opened for Brian McKnight. **Martin** has hosted many shows over the years such as: “*The Harry Jerome Awards*” and “*The Ice Cream Concert*”. On all occasions, **Jay** has more than held his own.

**Blakka Ellis** has established a reputation as one of the finest comic minds in the Caribbean; and is acknowledged as Jamaica's King of the Stand-Up genre.

Everyone in Jamaica knows "**Ity & Fancy Cat**". After all, the duo – **Ian Ellis** and **Alton Hardware** – respectively, is an integral part of the entertainment scene throughout the island. What many people in Jamaica do not know is that "**Ity & Fancy Cat**" is also a household name in the entire Caribbean region; as well as in England and North America. Yes, for the past decade, or so, the Jamaican comedic duo has been creating waves as the major drawing card in the regular "*Caribbean Comedy Festival*" events in Trinidad & Tobago; Barbados; Antigua; St. Lucia; London; Toronto; and the USA.

"*Limitless Laughter*" is Rated "M" for Mature. Pre-sold tickets, for both events, will be available at: Western Sports – Liguanea; Courts Jamaica Limited – Portmore; Hilton Hotel; and The Card Centre – Cross Roads, at a cost of \$1,500.00 each/show. The cost on Show Dates will be \$2,000.00 per person. Sponsors for "*International Comedy Fest 2K8 – Comedy Meets Rock Steady*" are: FAME 95FM; TVJ; RJR 94FM; Hilton Kingston Jamaica; Courts Jamaica Ltd., Air Jamaica; Superior Parts Limited; Turnkey Productions; and Hype TV.

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