

A little reggae to warm our hearts at Rose Theatre

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?One good thing about music, when it hits you, you feel no pain.?

? Bob Marley

I don't consider myself a rastafarian, but I?do love a regular dose of Bob Marley.

In my travels, and exposure to other cultures, I've come to appreciate the beauty of expression. Food and music of the Caribbean is to die for! Island music, in general, is so welcoming and fun, it becomes addictive.

I've enjoyed Latin music for decades and even though I don't understand Spanish, I find it's the most delicious flavour of music. My daughter Lexie and I?had the opportunity to get up and dance in the aisles at Brampton's Rose Theatre, during ?A Tribute to the Legends of Reggae.? The show, performed by some amazing, even home-grown talent, was an infectious blend of the best of reggae. Show-goers enjoyed some Marley staples, along with songs from Peter Tosh, Burning Star, Marcia Griffiths and Jacob Miller.

While watching the various groups, I?noticed there's some jazz and brassy sounds. Reggae was first developed in Jamaica in the late 1960s and the style evolved out of the earlier genres like Ska and Rocksteady. There is also Roots reggae, a subgenre of reggae that deals with the everyday lives and aspirations of the artists concerned, including the spiritual side of Rastafari and the honoring of God, called Jah by Rastafari. It also is identified with the life of the ghetto sufferer, and the rural poor.

It was strongly influenced by American jazz and rhythm and blues, especially the New Orleans R&B practiced by Fats Domino and Allen Toussaint.

On the Rose Theatre stage were Andrew Tosh (son of late Peter Tosh, The Wailers), Exco Levi, Nana McLean, Fijahtive, Errol Blackwood and Alexi Couto.

Fijahtive, is an eight-piece reggae band based in Toronto. Their powerful, horn-driven brand of reggae makes them a gem to watch and hear.

Toronto pop singer Alexi Couto, 22, opened the show with few Marley classics in her own style. She's a rising star to be sure.

Exco Levi, a five-time Juno-Award winner, has an amazing, silky smooth voice. Levi's album Narrative was released this past fall. Levi is reported to be one of Reggae's most attractive voices delivering uplifting messages wrapped in engaging melodic compositions. The Jamaican-born Levi has performed around the world.

Veteran Nana Mclean got the crowd moving with her powerful vocals and sassy nature. She reminded the audience to ?love yourself first, but love me!?

Jamaican Errol Blackwood played with several bands in Ontario doing a mixture of RNB, Rock and Funk. His love for music comes from a variety of sources, from the church of his father who was a pastor, the Nyahbingi Drummers, the School music drama concert and the Jukebox playing from country to rhythm ?n blues. In 1980, Errol formed the band Messenjah, along with Ray Ruddock and Rupert Harvey. They recorded two albums and a video under the WEA record label. Messenjah toured extensively for 6 years traveling across Canada and the U.S.

For those who've travelled to Jamaica, or any of the islands, music is one of the welcoming features. Part of the enjoyment of

visiting another culture lies in its music, which comes from a long tradition. You come to learn a lot about people from the tunes and way they express themselves.

Enjoying music, whether it's reggae, Latin or jazz, isn't complicated. It's about how it makes you feel. If it puts a smile on your face, makes your toes tap and moves you, it's working.

Music is subjective and we are all moved by different genres. But it's universal and unique to humans.

As a writer, I've always been interested in lyrics and the meaning behind the words. Sure, I love a good beat as much as anyone. When that beat is accompanied by some deep, provocative lyrics, all the better. I want to be moved deep beneath the surface, into the depths of my soul.

We also tend to associate music with the great times in our lives.

To me, there's nothing like putting on some reggae or Latin music in the back yard while tending the BBQ and sipping some cold beverages in summer.

I have one CD that I'm particularly fond of, which contains a collection of songs by various Latin artists, throughout the last four decades. There are some time-honoured faves like Pata, Pata, La Bomba, and several Gypsy Kings hits. I used to pop on the headphones and listen to this while doing household chores like vacuuming.

I have always found Spanish to be a beautiful language. My family has visited three Spanish-speaking countries - the Dominican Republic, Colombia and Puerto Rico. My daughter is going to Guatemala this spring on a humanitarian mission.

Whether you know the language or not, a few things are fundamentally human - a smile and pleasant greeting; a wave; dancing and moving to a beat. Listening to music in another language still activates those pleasure centres of the brain.

I am not musical but like all other humans, I know the power of this great human creation. It has charms, you know, to soothe the soul and elevate the human condition.

Wherever we go, and even as we take flight into the cosmos, I suggest we take a staple of music with us.

Experiencing music, whether it's in a huge venue or intimate lounge setting, is a must. I highly recommend it, especially as a date night activity for couples today. Try something different!

The Rose Theatre has an interesting lineup that includes musical entertainment, comedy shows and plays. For more, visit www.rosetheatre.ca