

FEATURES



Today's Reggae Beachfest offers fun in the sand and good tunes with an island beat

BY **MARCUS AURELIUS**
CONTRIBUTING REPORTER

A friend of the members of Black Reign International Sound was walking around Ximending a little while back and a guy busking on a corner caught his eye. This guy wasn't doing a puppet show or playing five instruments simultaneously. Instead, he was belting out reggae tunes from the bottom of his heart. The friend then went up to the guy and got his number and passed it on to Lion from Black Reign. Lion, whose real name is Oliver Harley, called the guy to come to the recording studio that he has built in his home and when he arrived, he asked, "Why reggae?" Ice, the singer's name, told him that he loved reggae music so much that he traveled to Jamaica and when he came back, he decided that Taiwanese people needed more reggae in their lives.

Today, people don't need to go to Ximending and search the street corners for Ice. They can see him front and center on stage with the whole Taiwan reggae community, including Sunny Smalls, Matzuka, Ras Junior Alpha, High Tide, Skaraoke, Taimacia, as well as three Japanese DJs, at the first ever Reggae Beachfest at WaLiLei (哇哩咧) restaurant about halfway between Tamsui and Baishawan (白沙灣) in Cianshui Bay (淺水灣, Cianshuiwan). Lion, a founding member of Black Reign and part of Island Jam, says, "I'm particularly excited about the new and upcoming Taiwanese and locally based reggae singers who will perform, because they are the future of the reggae scene in Taiwan. It's good to work alongside Taiwanese musicians who are making roads into different music."

For the past five years, Black Reign, formerly known as the O-Brothaz, have been grinding away by throwing monthly parties in Taiwan and not selling out. Their focus, as Ice mentioned earlier, is to spread the good vibes of Caribbean music. It hasn't always been easy because sometimes people are wary of change. But now, according to Lion, "We had a lot of good events so far this year and this should be the crown jewel. We have waited a long time to do this one and the timing is right. People should expect non-stop music, exceptional live performances and great lineup of DJs. We wanted to put on a show that is good by the standards of any reggae show anywhere in the world. In reality, this is only the beginning. But if it can happen somewhere else, why not here?"

The venue, WaLiLei restaurant, serves Italian food and is run by musicians, so it will have excellent sound, chill vibes, and according to Lion, "It's good to work with people who have ideas like we do."

Even though today is a make-up day for a lot of people who have to work today to compensate for the previous week's four-day weekend, that should be even more of a reason to make the hike from wherever you are. Reggae music is fantastic in headphones, fun to see at a live house, cool to listen to in a club, but it is spine-tingling where it started — at the beach.

Be iron like a lion in Cianshuiwan

Getting there:

- >> By MRT and shuttle: Shuttle buses run from Hongshulin MRT Station (紅樹林捷運站) from 2pm to 11:30pm. Return bus from WaLiLei to Hongshulin MRT Station at 5am
- >> By Taxi: Call 55688 and get a 10-percent discount on fares from Hongshulin MRT Station to WaLiLei (哇哩咧) restaurant, and a 20-percent discount after 11:30pm from WaLiLei to Taipei
- >> By car: Take Provincial Highway 2 north towards Tamsui. Follow signs to Baishawan (白沙灣). After entering Sanjhih Township, Taipei County (台北縣三芝鄉) pass the large sign that reads Cianshui Bay (淺水灣). Continue 1.6km and WaLiLei is on the left about 100m after a small blue overpass



Above: Island Jam's Thierry Cuvillier, second from left, and Oliver Harley, second from right, with other members of Black Reign. PHOTO COURTESY OF BLACK REIGN

Right: Ras Junior Alpha blesses the mic. PHOTO COURTESY OF BLACK REIGN

Far right: Sunny Smalls gives it her all. PHOTO COURTESY OF BLACK REIGN

PERFORMANCE NOTES:

WHAT: Islandjam Reggae Beachfest

WHEN: Today from 3pm to 5am

WHERE: WaLiLei (哇哩咧) restaurant on Cianshui Bay (淺水灣), 12-1, Beishhizi, Sanjhih Township, Taipei County (台北縣三芝鄉北勢子12之1號)

TELEPHONE: (02) 2636-8515

ADMISSION: NT\$600 tickets include round-trip shuttle fare and a drink

ON THE NET: www.walileitw.com; www.wretch.cc/blog/WaLiLei/10102857



Bringing reggae to the nation

Northern Taiwan's first reggae festival represents the culmination of years of hard work by the members of Island Jam and Black Reign

BY **ALITA RICKARDS**
CONTRIBUTING REPORTER

Reggae, with its laidback beats and dominant bass lines, invites a slow rolling movement of the hips and shoulders and the feeling of dancing under the palm trees in a tropical paradise like its birthplace, Jamaica.

Today is Island Jam's Reggae Beachfest at WaLiLei (哇哩咧), an Italian restaurant owned by four surfers on Cianshui Bay (淺水灣, Cianshuiwan), a beach about 15 minutes away by car from Danshui (Tamsui) MRT Station (淡水捷運站). The venue has large outdoor seating areas facing the long strip of sand and sea directly in front of it, so the party will be half indoors and half outdoors.

"The feeling of that place is so good when you get there you feel relaxed directly," said Oliver Harley, half of Island Jam, the organizers of the event.

Harley, aka Lion, is Jamaican and has been working on bringing reggae to Taiwan for the last six years: "A lot of people who newly come to Taiwan — we make reggae music, they say, 'Reggae in Taiwan!?' But that's island music, man. You forget you live on an island — especially in the north ... but people are getting it, Shao Chu [Chu Jian-hui (朱劍輝) one of the owners of WaLiLei] and those guys they really get it, you know they work and that but they know you got to relax, unwind, go the beach and take a break."

Island Jam's Thierry Cuvillier, aka Taiili, of Martinique is confident about the festival and said people here "Are getting it, man," relating a tale about a show at The Wall (這牆) where revelers were taking off their shoes to dance on the wooden floor: "After 20 minutes they are totally free, people are smiling. You see them later asking, 'Hey, have you seen my shoes?'"

That today is a makeup day for last week's holiday doesn't seem to concern them: "Even if you miss two or three bands, it will be okay, the party will really get going around 10pm," said Taiili. "There are DJ sets between bands, then later from midnight to dawn is Black Reign, big sound system, big party. People who work Saturday, you tell them Taiili says don't worry, 3pm to 10pm is the warm-up, you get there after, then the party gets going!"

This is the first reggae festival in northern Taiwan, featuring the "most popular reggae bands in Taiwan since Red-I doesn't play anymore," said Taiili. They were worried Taiwan wasn't ready to accept reggae on a larger scale, but "High Tide [and] Skaraoke are doing larger shows," said Lion. "Now we can see where this thing will take off a bit more. Guys back home or in Japan say it's the same path, it's good for everybody."

Katzu, who was a reggae DJ in Tokyo, joined their crew after his job moved him to Taiwan. "He was just walking up and down the streets looking for reggae," said Lion. "Then he heard the music coming from Jahmuna's [Lion's now-defunct restaurant on Yanji Street (延吉街)] ... every night after that he'd be in there, couldn't speak English ... then his wife moved here and translated for him and we could figure out that he was a DJ."

Since then he has been part of their sound system and has helped bring other Japanese artists over for the reggae festival, including Selectah Super Taro, who has come twice before, Selectah Saru and DJ Sister Mie.

Other artists include Selectah Zion (France), and local acts Taimaica, Matzka, Pan Africana, High Tide, Skaraoke, Sunny Smalls, Ice, Ras Junior Alpha, Black Reign International Sound and DJ Marcus Aurelius.

"Music is my life, it's my food," said Lion. "Listening to reggae, it's like taking a break. Yeah you want to express, like Bob [Marley], but it's a way to free yourself from the hardship of daily living."

SCHEDULE:

3pm to 6pm	Selectah Zion (France) and Selectah Saru (Japan)	9:45 to 10:30pm	High Tide (US, Canada, New Zealand, roots)
6pm to 6:45pm	Taimaica (Taiwan, dub, reggae)	10:30 to 11pm	Selectah Super Taro (Japan)
6:45pm to 7:15pm	DJ Sister Mie (Japan, roots)	11 to 11:45pm	Skaraoke (Taiwan, ska, reggae)
7:15 to 8pm	Matzka (Taiwan, reggae, roots)	11:45 to 12am	Sunny Smalls, Ice (Taiwan, reggae)
8pm to 8:30pm	DJ Sister Mie (Japan, roots)		and Ras Junior Alpha (Guinea, reggae)
8:30 to 9:15pm	Pan-Africana (Afro-Caribbean drums)	12am to 5am	Black Reign International Sound (dancehall, soca, classics, remixes) with guest DJ Marcus Aurelius
9:15 to 9:45pm	DJ Katzu (Japan, roots, dub)		