

Early laughs at Hilton

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Ity (left) and Fancy Cat will host International Comedy Fest 2K6.

THERE WAS a preview of the line-up for International Comedy Fest 2K6 and a head-start on the laughter expected in the Hilton hotel's Grand Ballroom on Sunday, July 26, as details of the stand-up comedy show's second staging were outlined on Wednesday evening.

David Arnold from the U.S., Slim from the U.K., Wil Sylvince, who was born in Haiti and grew up in the U.S., and Trinidad and Tobago's Rachel Price are the overseas guests. They will be greeted with laughter by Owen 'Blakka' Ellis, Johnny (performing without partner Donald 'Iceman' Anderson this show), Elva, Lemon and Ity and Fancy Cat Comedy Search winner Nadine Rodriguez, with Dance Xpressionz providing the moves.

Ity and Fancy Cat will host the show, which is the second of a two-day laughter fest. On Saturday, July 22, there will be 'Come-A-Di-Party' at Backyaad, Constant Spring Road, where Arif Cooper is the official selector for the night.

But he will not be the only one.

Renaë Excell, administrative manager of Ellis International which is staging the festival, said that two of the comedians have compared themselves to Tony Matterhorn and Sky Juice, and that there will also be selections from Francois of FAME FM's collection of humorous music.

"To use the latest street terminology, comedy in Jamaica sell-off," Excell said.

It has 'sold off' to corporate Jamaica, as Sonia Davidson of headline sponsor Supreme Ventures Ltd. said "The line-up looks very impressive, the production should be impressive as well." Celia Steele of Hilton Kingston hotel, speaking on behalf of the other sponsors, expressed pleasure at being a part of a "good initiative".

With Paula-Ann Porter of FAME FM hosting there was many a chuckle at comments from the audience, but the laughter got on in earnest with main speaker, gynaecologist Dr. Michael Abrahams.

"Sometimes people are presenters and they bring photos and stuff, but it would be inappropriate," he said, to laughter. He got down to the serious issue of stress, saying "basically, it is something that can sick you".

"Too much stress can actually kill you," Abrahams said.

He pointed out that it is a stressful world, with bad news from Darfour, North Korea, Israel and Palestine, among other places abroad, and car crashes and shootings at home. Still, "we have a good sense of humour," Abrahams said, noting sayings like "stress in me lef' breas" and "whata stress", to laughter from the audience.

While some people deal with stress through playing music, yoga and meditation, Abrahams said "Laughter is great for stress... It has no side effects. It releases certain negative emotions like anger, boredom." He said that laughter can lower blood pressure, strengthen the immune system and lowers a persons perception of pain. And he cited several studies that showed the benefits of laughter to the ill.

"We need more of this in Jamaica, because laughter is good. Comedy is good," he said.

And he proceeded to do a bit of stand-up comedy himself, pulling peals of laughter from the audience.

However, Blakka Ellis was serious as he started to say the official thank you. "My family has been in the business of entertainment since the late 1950s," he said, adding that as an entertainer himself he yearned to be in a position to make a difference and own a piece of the action. "We want to thank you all for helping to make that happen ... we cannot only be the employed act, but those who are instrumental in getting it all together," Ellis said.



Left : Wil Sylvince, who will perform on International Comedy Fest 2K6. Right: Rachel Price, comedienne from Trinidad and Tobago.