

Few strong legs at 'Pass The Baton'

Mel Cooke

Freelance Writer

THERE WERE 85,000 filled seats in the Helsinki Olympic Stadium, Finland, when Herb McKenley was part of the Jamaican quartet that won the 4x400m men's gold in a world record 3:03.9.

On Saturday night this was not the case, as most of the chairs provided were empty in the VIP section at 'Pass The Baton', the fund-raiser for and at the planned Herb McKenley Stadium in May Pen, Clarendon. This was even after MC Culture UB invited all present behind the barriers to be VIPs for the night.

With sparse attendance inside the huge, walled, cleared grounds, 'Pass The Baton' was strong on Clarendon talent, including Everton Blender, Freddie McGregor, Warrior King and The Clarendonians. However, with the musical runners not placed in the best order, there was an uneven exchange throughout the night and the already small audience dwindled.

And when the Mystic Revelers came on for a smooth coast to the tape, Billy Mystic shaded his eyes, smiled and said, "weh de people dem deh?" to laughter from those who were left.

Getting off to an 11:00 p.m. start, 'Pass The Baton' was two steps behind the 'vibes' and a string of Clarendon-based performers, including Blaze, Honey & Milk, Millennium Kid and Celsius did not make up much ground. Lord Have Mercy brought a lively soca beat with

Ole and also paid lyrical homage to McKenley (*and everywhere you go/people love the Herb from Jamaica so*), with the Rastafarian lyrics of Ivowaiser and a vocally robust Mosiah preceding a burst of applause for a full white-clad former Rising Star contestant DJ Face.

When she deejayed *when we a roll a straight motorcade* there was cheering; the same came for "up to the time Kartel love me," Face getting an encore in her home parish.

BAND CHANGE

Scorpion, who sat on the stage with his legs hanging off and jerking frenetically, came before a change of band from Yard Beat to Gumption. Jerry D introduced Freddie McGregor to deliver a good, extended set, worthy of McKenley's 45.9 seconds before the 1948 London Olympics, which brought many of the few to stand before the stage. **To Be Poor Is a Crime** and **Prophecy** rolled out before his greeting; **Push Come To Shove** and **Big Ship** hit home and he honoured Dennis Brown with **Here I Come** and **Revolution**. McGregor left with **Just Don't Wanna Be Lonely**.

It was back to a below par Yard Beat and home talent with Guinea Pepper and Sister Marie, the former singing of the 'good life' and the latter asked to come back as she ended her stint with **Come Back**.

Everton Blender got the baton and jogged steadily through **Blend Dem**, **Little Green Apples** and **Family Man**. He ended with

Ghetto People Song before a cool Lone Ranger cracked the house with **Rosemarie**. The applause also sparked a restart of **Love Bump**. Kulcha Knox started out with **One Word**, calling on Excellent to get an ordinary touch of the baton, and when Knox ended 'set yourself free' without music, just as claps urging him off the stage had started in the rear of the VIP area.

With leaps and bounds. Warrior King made it a short steeplechase affair momentarily on **Dem Cyaan Keep Me Down** and **Empress So Divine**, doing stretches before he demonstrated lyrically how to 'check' a lady. After **Virtuous Woman** King combined with Persistence, who he said taught him how to ride rhythms, and the crowd supplied the claps for **Hold The Faith**.

Coming down the stretch, The Clarendonians had the small audience jiggling to **Yard Can't Be**

Happy and **What A Bam Bam**, Peter Austin leaving Ernest Wilson to take the audience on a soulful high under a full moon with **Dreams To Remember** (singing 'wet dreams' at one point) and **My Lady Soul**.

SATISFYING DEMANDS

Ricardo Suave intervened in the final leg with an original and **Left With A Broken Heart**, before the loping musical strides of a calm but still intense Billy Mystic, with original Revelers' members on drums and bass and a helping hand from generation next on keyboards, delivered **Righteous**. Mystic played the harmonica at the start of **Simple Living**, a deejay joined on **Religion** and the band satisfied an insistent demand for **Borderline**, warm applause from the few greeting each well-delivered song.

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BLENDER