

Sandals Celebrates the Opening of Reinvented Dunn's River Resort

Posted on May 23, 2023 by Business Editor



Under the transformational light of a new moon, Sandals Resorts International (SRI) unveiled its latest resort, the all-new 260-room Sandals Dunn's River, with a celebration befitting its legendary lore in Jamaica's tourism history. The night brought together leaders in the Caribbean, valued members of the Sandals Resorts family, and Jamaica's most quintessential performers – including GRAMMY-Award winning artist Shaggy and *The Voice* winner Tessanne Chin – to commemorate the next chapter in the new resort's storied history.

“This is the place where everything began for Sandals Resorts, and from where we stand, it's a stunning representation of where we're headed,” said Adam Stewart, Executive Chairman of Sandals Resorts. “Sandals Dunn's River is the continuation of my father's journey to better. It is a hero's tale about an ambitious boy who began selling fish to local resorts and how he went on to change how people prefer to vacation, making Jamaica and the Caribbean the centerpiece of his efforts. It is an epic story about an incredible person who continues to inspire us to dream bigger, do more, be better. It is the stuff of legends and that is what this evening is all about,” said Stewart.

Prime Ministers, including The Most Honourable Andrew Michael Holness of Jamaica and The Honourable Ralph Gonsalves of St. Vincent and the Grenadines; Ministers of Government including Minister of Tourism of Jamaica The Honourable Edmund Bartlett; and local dignitaries from across the Caribbean region, as well as other distinguished guests, joined together with Stewart, SRI CEO Gebhard Rainer and other members of the

Sandals Resorts team for an official invocation of the resort and a momentous ribbon cutting ceremony, toasting to the future of luxury tourism in Ocho Rios.

Prime Minister Holness in his main address recalled his conversation with the late Gordon ‘Butch’ Stewart about purchasing the property. “It is such an impressive thing to see a dream come to reality and if there is one thing you could say about Gordon ‘Butch’ Stewart, it’s that he was a dreamer. He was also a doer that will bring that dream to fruition, a man who will always get the job done. We are standing here literally living in ‘Butch’ Stewart’s dream,” he said.

A Tribute to a Legendary Past, A Celebration of the Future

Surrounded by the sounds of flowing water and tropical birds and under a canopy of thatched branches invoking the lush Jamaican rainforest, guests were met with cocktails expertly crafted with local ingredients paired with an array of cuisines from the resort’s restaurants, including concepts entirely new to the Sandals brand. The evening was a nod to the resort’s earlier days as the Arawak Hotel, built in 1957, and originally designed by visionary architect Morris Lapidus, whose joyful, flamboyant designs defined the epitome of 1950s and 1960s Caribbean chic. The event themed the “Return of a Legend,” featured an experience and vibe artfully recreated for the event. The outdoor spaces of the luxury all-inclusive resort were transformed into a retro supper club, complete with lounge music, glittering gold accents, vibrant green palms and SWAG servers – a new take on the ‘cigarette servers’ from decades past. Melodies from a 40-member choir from the University of the West Indies, the Edna Manley College and the Ashe Company, featured a spanning tribute to Sandals late founder, Gordon ‘Butch’ Stewart, honoring a life well lived, a dream realized, and a legacy that will never be forgotten.

Echoing the Heartbeat of Jamaica

Like the resort itself, whose design inspiration is pulled from the flowing water of the nearby Dunn’s River Falls, the event infused and celebrated the soul of Jamaica throughout the festivities. Guests were treated to the sounds of a steel-drum band; ribbon dancers; aerial performances, with costumes matching the vibrancy of the island’s culture, in front of a state-of-the-art video mapping of the Falls; as well as local musicians such as the Jamaican instrumental trio, *Touch of Elegance*. Mimicking the pathway of the flowing water from Dunn’s River Falls, entertainers also performed within the pool, floating on original bamboo rafts custom made by Jamaican artisans. An electrifying performance from the renowned cast of STOMP, fresh off their Broadway run, brought the ‘beat’ of Jamaica to the stage with a wordless percussion spectacle.

A Star-Studded Beginning

The celebration culminated in awe with a crowd rousing performance from the ever-iconic *Mr. Boombastic* himself, Shaggy. Capping off the evening, an impressive fireworks display lit up the Ocho Rios sky, and – moved by the momentum – a lunar after-party continued with a beach bash under a new moon, signaling yet another phase in the story of Sandals Dunn’s River.

“Now, with the future before us, we stand on solid ground, committed as ever to celebrating our Caribbean heritage and delivering to the next generations of Sandals customers the unsurpassed level of innovation, excitement and unparalleled service they have come to expect and that they so well deserve,” Stewart concluded.

