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Reggae Icon Bunny Wailer Dies at 73; Jamaica Prime Minister Says Country Has Lost a Reggae Pioneer

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Bunny Wailer By. DANCEHALL MAGAZINE

KINGSTON, Jamaica, CMC – Jamaica is mourning the death of reggae legend Bunny Wailer who passed away on Tuesday morning at the age of 73.

The three-time Grammy award winner, whose given name was Neville Livingston, died around 9:00 a.m. at Andrew's Memorial Hospital in Jamaica, Minister of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport, Olivia Grange confirmed.

Bunny Wailer, a founding member of iconic reggae group The Wailers, that also included Bob Marley and Peter Tosh, had been ailing for several years.

He suffered a stroke in 2018 and another in July 2020 and had been hospitalized several times since.

“Today, the last surviving Wailer has passed. His son, Abijah, said to me this morning that ‘Bunny Wailer cannot die, he has transitioned’,” Ms. Grange said in a statement.

She added, “We mourn the passing of this outstanding singer, songwriter and percussionist and celebrate his life and many accomplishments.”

In 2017, the Jamaican government awarded him the Order of Merit, the country’s fourth highest honor. Then in February 2019, the Government recognized his contribution to Jamaican music again, with a Reggae Gold Award.

“We remain grateful for the role that Bunny Wailer played in the development and popularity of reggae music across the world. We remember with great pride how Bunny, Bob Marley and Peter Tosh, took reggae music to the four corners of the earth,” the Culture minister said.

“What Bunny Wailer has done for reggae, as one of the pioneers and standard-bearers of our country’s music, lives on. Let us hold dear Bunny’s music, his memory and his family,” Ms. Grange added.

Prime Minister Holness Reacts

Prime Minister Andrew Holness has expressed sadness at the death of Bunny Wailer, saying the country had lost a reggae pioneer.

In a statement issued hours after the 73-year-old died Tuesday morning at Andrew’s Memorial Hospital, Mr. Holness said he had “made a tremendous impact on the world, setting the stage for a global movement, a love for rocksteady and reggae music.”

“His legendary performances have touched the hearts and souls of millions of fans in Jamaica and across the world. Many generations have been privileged to have been exposed to his conscious music,” the prime minister added.”