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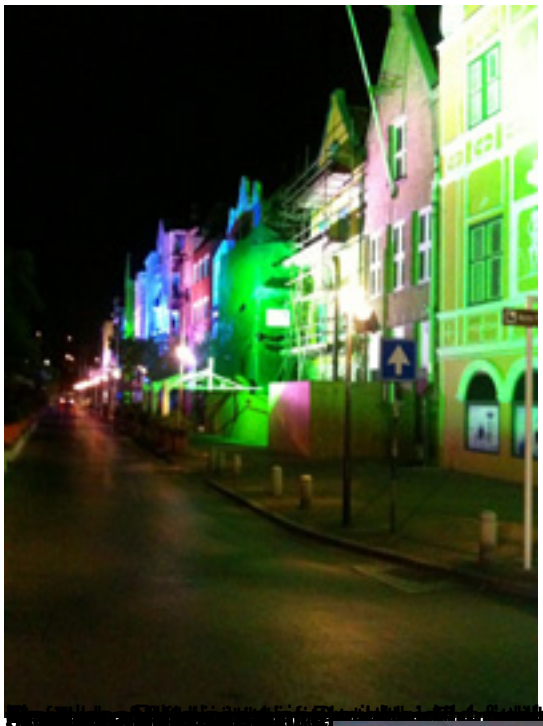
While Curaçao is a tiny country of less than 150,000 inhabitants, it pulled off an enormously successful music event for the second time on September 2&3, 2011.

If you want beautiful beaches, friendly locals, and a cultural cornucopia of Papiamento, Dutch, Spanish, English, with residuals of Portuguese, African and indigenous native Americans, set sail for Curaçao and the North Sea Jazz Festival before Labor Day about this time next year.

The venue allows you to be up close and personal at the indoor stages and within good sound and viewing range outdoors if you don't get to the front of the stage early. I kicked it down front with Kassav and sat on the floor in front of Dionne Warwick close enough to see her sweat. I wasn't fast enough to beat the crowd to Stevie Wonder, but I could see the stage, watch the flat screens, and hear him loud and clear everywhere in the World Trade Center. I had a nice side view of Sting and his backup singer.

I was impressed that every act began on time. Sound checks occurred for everyone, resulting in impeccable sounds. And I can't say enough about the cleanliness of the bathrooms, the reasonably-priced food, and events staff willing to help even when they didn't know the answer.



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