



Don Omar, Nas to Headline Soulfrito Festival

By Judy Cantor-Navas, Los Angeles | January 22, 2014 3:03 PM EST



Reggaeton kingpin Don Omar and multi-platinum hip hop artist Nas will share the stage at Soulfrito, an urban Latin music festival coming Feb. 22 to the grounds of the Sun Life stadium, home of the Miami Dolphins and the South Florida festival's new production and marketing partner.

Memphis rapper Juicy J, Pitbull collaborator Sensato, salsa Victor Manuelle, and merengue and bachata artist Hector "El Torito" Acosta are also on the bill.

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Soulfrito began in 2002 as "a way to bridge the gap between the African American and Latino communities in South Florida," says founder Melissa Giles. "We were ahead of the curve in identifying that Latinos don't live in an exclusively Latin world," musically speaking.

"Prior to any census numbers coming out or millennial networks launching we were talking about the second generation Hispanic market," she adds.

The grass roots event championed reggaeton early on, and spotlighted bilingual artists like Pitbull and Aventura before they became Latin chart fixtures. After six years, and as sponsorship dollars waned with the impending economic crisis, Giles put the festival on hold and turned her attention to running an arts education foundation and consulting for brands.

Soulfrito is making a comeback into a highly sought after market for brands and venues.

"The fact that Soulfrito reaches the young bicultural Hispanic audience is very interesting to us," George Torres, VP of Events for Sun Life Stadium told Billboard. "Hopefully it will open the doors for them to come back for other events."

Stadium executives are committing five years and a "sizable investment" as a fifty-fifty partner with Giles in the festival. Soulfrito joins other music festivals held in the stadium's parking lot, including Jazz in the Gardens, which last March attracted an audience of 50,000, according to Torres.

"[Music festivals] are an opportunity to bring more audiences to the stadium and connect with the Dolphins brand as well," Torres comments.

Giles says she expects to attract 12,000-15,000 to this year's Soulfrito in Miami. She is also producing the first international edition of

festival this year, to take place in July in Estepona, Spain, just outside of Marbella.

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