

Death leaves Third World hurting

With the death of their lead singer William 'Bunny Rugs' Clarke, Third World's future hangs in the balance.

In 2013, Third World had numerous performances around the world, including festivals in Germany, Belgium and Poland, as part of their 40th anniversary world tour. Singer AJ 'Boots' Brown replaced the ailing Clarke on Reggae Geel in Belgium and Reggae Sun Ska in France, as well as numerous shows in the United States. Third World also has numerous concerts scheduled for 2014, including the Blue Mountain Music Festival in rural St Andrew later this month and several shows in California, USA, slated to run from July to August 2014. Herbert McDonald, who is intricately involved with Third World, said Jamaica and the world have lost a great human being, adding that Clarke was the voice of reggae music. "He was a personal friend and was like a brother to me. He has a voice no one can mistake. He's like Tessanne Chin, but on the male side - the voice of reggae music," McDonald said. DIFFICULT PERIOD McDonald also said this period will be difficult for the surviving members of the band, who will undoubtedly be affected by his passing. "Third World has been around for 41 years and, although each member has not been around for all of the years, they will miss him, and it affects everyone equally," McDonald said. He said only time can determine how future shows will be handled and who - if anyone - will replace Clarke. "Only time will tell how they (Third World) decide to deal with it, but as I said the group has suffered a great loss, and it is affecting everyone," McDonald said. Founding member of Third World, Ibo Cooper, who is no longer with the band, told The Gleaner that he could not comment on the group's upcoming performances and how they will handle future shows. "We have not only lost one of the greatest singers in Jamaica, but one of the greatest singer/songwriters in the world and he will be missed," Cooper said. Formed in 1973, Third World made their debut with the self-produced single Railroad Track in 1974. When the Jackson Five came to Jamaica later that year, they (along with The Wailers) supported the famous Jackson tribe in their performance at the National Stadium. Chris Blackwell of Island Records signed the band and offered them a record deal and a chance to go on a European tour, on which they opened for The Wailers. Their debut album, Third World, was released in 1976, but the band's big break came the following year with the release of the album 96 Degrees In The Shade.