



Live Review: RBMA Festival New York Rages The 'Larry Levan Way'

Jorge Hernandez Posted May 12, 2014



The children don't call it church for nothing. On a hot Mother's Day under a bright blue sky, thousands of die-hard dancers poured into the stretch of King Street in front of [nightlife](#) @ mecca Paradise Garage's former space to pay tribute to one of DJ Culture's defining founders - Larry Levan. The giant street party/pilgrimage was presented by [Red Bull Music Academy Festival New York](#) in tandem with an international campaign to get King street renamed Larry Levan Way.

By noon, the lines at both ends of Larry Levan Way had already snaked around the corner and yet, despite the heat, wait, and lack of bathrooms, there were no incidents amongst the crowd that included multiple generations of all ages, races, nationalities, languages and genders. Joceyln Brown turned the crowd out with a live performance of her biggest hits including "Somebody Else's Guy" that was no less sweeter for being brief. DJs David DePino, Joey Llanos and François K threw down a master class in soul, funk, disco, electro, new wave, no wave, boogie, and early house, cutting the sound to let the crowd chime in during the timeless hooks. An afternoon full of nostalgic high notes hit a crescendo when the turntable triumvirate dropped the Intruders' "I'll Always Love My Mama", leading the crowd in a massive sing-along, before chasing the holiday afternoon's inevitable anthem with crowd-moving crate essentials like Modern Romance's angular, syncopated rug-cutter, "Can You Move" and Bohannon's transcendent eargasm, "Let's Start the Dance."

Paradise Garage, opened in 1977 and closed in 1987, was one of the few clubs in history custom-built for a specific DJ. Fortunately, that DJ was Larry Levan and thanks to his vanguard approach to mixing, his legacy lives – mythic as ever, 40 years after the fist card-carrying soul shuffled up that long, dark, infamous ramp into music history.