

Bob Marley Rises Like the Phoenix
by: Del Jones, War Correspondent



Bob Marley walked me to the door in his hotel room. And, as he peered at me through weary gangja eyes, he asked me, how he could get through to our people here in the United Snakes. I explained that it was a governmental conspiracy to ensure he never made that powerful connection. He had a way of looking through your words and into your eyes while investigating your soul for pure Black truth. He mumbled something in frustration knowing what I said was true. I let him know that they would deal with him like he was "The Last Poets, Gil Scott Heron, Fela Anikulapo Kuti or Nina Simone." Their massive communications apparatus was not built to allow us to use it to lift the consciousness of our people.

You ever head for the door with the intention of leaving but found yourself continuing the conversation wanting more? I continued "Why didn't you put 'Black Man's Redemption' on your new album, that jam has gentle fire in it that uplifts the spirit." Again, that far away look that accompanies this journey deeper inside himself, but the only sound produced was 'hmmmm.' I looked at the image of Malcolm X on the T Shirt that was covering his chest and said "ya know, you should do a song about Malcolm, that would get some attention. The one Dennis Brown recorded never saw the light of day, but it is a classic, stuck away gathering dust." "Seen' he said "I'm gwonna tink on dat."

As we shook hands goodbye, a burst of energy seemed to run through us established by mutual respect. I paused, looked deep into his eyes as I thanked him for yet another interview. He nodded, his locked hair shaking, it would be the last time I would see him, but it would not be the last time he would be with me as the struggle continued.

Almost two decades passed. Several months ago Bro. Jahfree I and I went to check out a concert featuring "Ziggy Marley and the Melody Makers," and also "The Marley Brothers and the Ghetto Youth Crew." I always make a point to see Ziggy and the band in concert if I was in Philly when they came through. In addition, I've kept up with their music and their growth 'n development. Unlike the spirit less Wailer Band, I enjoy their work because it has Bob's textures, qualities and hardness. The Wailers sets only takes off when they doing one of Bob's tunes. In any case, I still dig hearing them do their thing also.

Sometimes it's haunting to hear both Ziggy and his brother Stephen operate in their father's zone, in the same tone and as if they are not singing alone. It's in the genes, the DNA and the melanin that Bob travels through making sure everything is alright. At the same time, they have their own sound, approach and style that punctuates their own individuality, just as it should be.

At this concert after the hip hop laced toasting of Stephen and The Ghetto Youth Crew (Bob's other sons included) and the tight Rasta Rhythms of Ziggy and his Posse, an extraordinary thing happened. In one of the most dynamic finales I have ever witnessed, another generation of Marley children (his grandchildren) hit the stage like thunder and lightening. I'm just guessing, but I don't think any of them were over five years old. Toasting, rapping, dancing and performing with the intensity and soul of seasoned vets, they brought the house down. Later that night, I sat at my computer ready to write a piece on what I saw, felt and experienced. The words wouldn't come. Now I rarely have that problem, but I always go with the flow. Somehow the story was incomplete, so I stepped off and dealt with other things thinking "soon come."

I didn't know, at the time, I was waiting for Bob Marley's new CD "Chant Down Babylon." Now I have everything I need to complete my mission.

The Marley clan is one of the most amazing collection of talented siblings

I have ever seen.

The Jacksons however, though extremely talented, are locked in political backwardness and anti-Afrikan behavior. Consequently, their work is a tool of the slave master and tightens the collective chains around our consciousness. They are enriching themselves by using Afrikan culture, while at the same time their very existence disses their race with negative imagery and backward musical philosophies. Playing into the hands of the "Culture Bandits," their work glorifies Babylon. It's hard to big-up their talents and be proud because their work is used as a socializing tool by the forces of reaction.

On the other hand, Bob Marley's new CD project (produced by The Marley Boyz Production Company, Stephen Marley executive producer) uses his father's song catalog to connect with their generation and a people who are so wounded by Babylon's culture that they may not recognize the love encased in the labor. Traveling thru and with his children, this project has a power and a mission that comes from ancestral energy. Yes a child or children can lead when connected with their elders and ancestors. Stephen's use of elder musicians and engineers staple youthful creativity with authenticity. I do not believe music is universal, however I do believe in the communicational powers of Afrikan music when laced with political truths and Afrikan Spirituality. 90% of the world's music we ain't feelin', but the world feels all of our stuff. Afrikan music was the first and it will be the last sound heard. I'm never liberal on this point.

Having said all of that, I'm glad I've lived long enough to experience the creative efforts of all of these young people. Instead of watching those from other cultures pick on the carcass of our musical statements from yesterday, I watched as Afrikan contemporary cultural icons come together with a ego-less sense of purpose. In a interview in a Rap Magazine, Stephen Marley articulated the trouble he had attempting to enlist the services of Lenny Kravitz. His inclusion didn't jump off because he would have brought the wrong spirit to the project. That exclusion has helped "Chant Down Babylon" maintain credibility.

The CD begins with historical radio report from Jamaica on the wounding of Bob Marley during a crude assassination attempt.

"No More Trouble" featuring Erykah Badu acts as a spring board into

powerful dimensions of space 'n time. Her melodic thunder mixed with the plea in Bob's voice creates a marriage of positive intent. At the same time the background vocals enunciated that this was a declaration on no uncertain terms. Badu's voice evokes the ancestors anyway. Consequently, this adds a ancient righteousness.

"Rebel Music" featuring Krayzie Bone. Bone fits in here like a glove, which means he understood where Bob was going with this. Therefore his space and Bob's space were used wisely. The arrangement and production were key in making sure Bone didn't get lost. Consequently, when he began it became a new thing that was not foreign but a cultural complement. His writing was sharp and on point. "You wanna harass me, they check my trunk and I start laughin'... "Rebel Music to get ya ready for the revolution."

"Johnny Was" featuring Guru. He was an excellent choice for this piece of musical pain. Interesting mix with strong background vocals. As I suspected, Guru delivered the most dynamic verse on the CD. His shout outs to those whose blood stained concrete add an important note on the continuation of our street pain. This Marley classic rates with Linton Kwesi Johnson's "Dear Mama." Guru makes ya wanna play it over and over because his track record proves, he knows what he is talking about.

"Concrete Jungle" featuring Rakim. This song has gotten me through many hard periods in my life, it was like my theme. So having a legend like Rakim handle it suited me fine. He did not disappoint. The intro was interesting, therefore when the music dropped, it pick ya up and prepared you for extraordinary lyrical work. The machine gun syncopation rides into the brain to staple the lyrics there. Bob sings "I've got to pick my self up off the ground, in this concrete jungle, where the living is hardest, concrete jungle you got to do your best."

"Rasta man Chant" featuring Busta Rhymes & Flipmode Squad. Busta drew a difficult task, but since none of this was new to him, he represented. He seemed to have fun with it, respected it and executed it with pride and a deadly seriousness. Busta spills, "From me mother's womb they took my mind and started molding me."

"Guiltiness" with the Lost Boys featuring Mr. Cheeks. Sister Betty Wright's background vocals flavor the track with a soulful spice that is easily

digested as musical nourishment. Cheeks kicked this, "we forgot how to respect life." A solid track with a unique effect on Bob's voice. A jazz like bass run refreshed this tune as it interacts solidly with excellent drum work.

"Turn Your Lights Down Low" featuring Lauryn Hill. I always thought a good honest love song was revolutionary. The family is a cell of our nation and you if you can not build a positive relationship and family you can't build a nation. Lauryn's work is clean and honest with positive intent. Sometimes when a revolutionary artist writes to their mates he or she is criticized as soft. Wrong! Real wrong! We are an Afrikan people whose whole existence is built around family. The beauty of this song demonstrates the beauty that was in Bob's heart and spirit. Full of keyboard magic and Lauryn feasts on its melody... enjoy.

"Jammin" Featuring MC Lyte. I didn't like the arrangement, it kinda got in Lyte's way and at times there was a struggle. Repeating the drum pick up over and over was the culprit. However, she did shine on through with powerful lines like "Bob Marley, learn the man behind the name." And also, "Elvis made a bundle, while we remained poor."

"Kinky Reggae" featuring The Marley Brothers and the Ghetto Youth Crew. I waited a long time through the CD to hear Bob and his sons kick it together and I was not disappointed. It's a happy jam and it's delivered in unison not harmony which lends to the energy and their togetherness. However, I'm greedy and if I had the nerve to tell Bob what he should make or release in Amerikkka you know I'm gonna drop a vibe on them. Y'all should have done "War" also with Bob and Ziggy. This jam, however is definitely in the pocket.

"Roots, Rock, Reggae" featuring Steven Tyler and Joe Perry. This was done by some tokens. Sit 'em over by the door... seen?

"Survival" (Black Survivors) featuring Chuck D. This powerful piece of music survives as a testimony of our strength and longevity. Chuck's vocal power was a correct choice as it kicks Black power every time he opens his mouth. Bob sings "some people got every thing, some people have nothing." Chuck blasts out "Got to get mine, got to get mine." Also, the track was tight, hard and in ya face. It works on many levels, excellently done. Needed more Chuck D in this one.

"Burnin' and Lootin" with The Roots featuring Black Thought. Another anthem of mine, Black Thought handled it with the clarity he possesses in every lyric line. Intelligent rhymes on point. Brother Ahmir's live drums fatten a very interesting track. The background vocals are in the pocket, it is a good track to close the set. I'm proud of my homies from Illadelphia.

What does all this mean? I've said this over and over, don't underestimate the cultural power of our youth. Don't underestimate their consciousness. We must clear some space so they operate, only then will we get more than an occasional Afrikan centered gem. To the producers, engineers, writers, singers of songs and players of instruments, I send my revolutionary congratulations on a job well done. Old heads are always proudest when we see ya'll working together for the people's benefit.

To the Marley clan I want them to know we respect and love them. It is time now to hear from the daughters (women), we hunger to hear them fronting some songs as the power of their female voices must seduce and instigate the growth 'n development of our young girls and women.

Brother Bob, for the first time in my life I envy you. The greatest reward a father can have is that his children follow his path. It is a reward that can not be bought, many of us in the struggle and many of us victimized because of our fidelity to our people would be thrilled to have one or two of our children represent. Most of us are not so lucky.

I echo back to the Philly concert when the Marley Fam unveiled the next wave of cultural soldiers heading this way. Marley's children and grandchildren are not just a source of pride for our ancestors but also for their beneficiaries who are tumblin' into the year 2000. Millions of dollars worth of talent worked together to solidify our direction, our collective mission. I enjoyed traveling thru their endless creativity of our young cultural warriors. Let us all remember that "It is a privilege to be Afrikan, but Afrikans must unite."

On my new CD "Dance of 'de Elder" I wrote and recorded this tribute to brother Bob.

"HEY BOB"

by: Del Jones

Hey Bob, why did ya leave me? So much pain, so much pain,
so much, I can't see, I can't see...

Hey Bob, why did ya leave me? Children trapped in disappear
lunching outta garbage heap, garbage heap.

Wasting us with biological chemical warfare,
trapping us in ignorance more 'n more...

Mass media foundations devil sent,
off this earth we'll disappear, I fear!

Sister in the village cry the tear,
Baby dead, all burned down
peace flees the scene, why they make our world so damn mean?
We need you Ras Marley.

Kickin truth you help solidify we, Pan-Afrikan vibe strong ya see.
You were taken away, I don't trust the dirty games they play.
Hey Bob, why did ya leave me? so much pain so much pain,
so much I can't see, I can't see.
The truth you left still rebounding around the world

your seed is strong every boy 'n girl.
So my message is over I-Man is thru, we'll carry on, tell Malcolm I spoke
to you. Hey now Bob, why did ya leave me,
there is some much rumblin' to do, but for now peace unto.

Soon come Bob, I-Man soon come
prepare a place for me lets get together Bob Marley.
Soon come, I-man soon come,
we'll jam together Ras Marley.

Gully Ranks Rap

Hey now bob, hey now bob we need, we need you Bob Marley
Respect for Bob Marley, All Praises Ras Marley

Produced by : Del Jones
Family Tree Records, inc.
Artist: Del Jones, featuring: Gully Ranks

(D.Jones, T.Sanders, B.Richards, C.Richards)
Copyright 1999 by Del Jones Books 'n Music