

# Motown remembers Bob Marley

by Norman [Otis] Richmond

Island Records will commemorate the second anniversary of the passing of Bob Marley with the release of *Confrontation*. The first single from the album, *Buffalo Soldier* is already available in the stores as an import. Its hard to believe that Marley hasn't been with us for two years. It seems like yesterday that I saw Marley laughing and listening to reggae music with friends in a downtown Toronto hotel.

The death of Marley, on May 11, 1981 in Miami of cancer, shook people all over the globe. When the news reached Stockholm Steve Wonder remarked, "When I heard that Bob (Marley) had died I wished I had died instead."

The impact of Marley's music on people of African descent in North America has never been properly analyzed. While it is true that Marley's music is aimed at oppressed people, he had a special message for Blacks in North America particularly those in the United States.

Marley almost fanatically stressed the importance of linking his music with New Africa (Black America). This was made crystal clear by Marley on his Rastaman Vibration album when he sang, "Play I on the r'n'b..Want all my people to see" on the song *Roots, Rock Reggae*.

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"Play I on the r'n'b..Want all my people to see" on the song *Roots, Rock Reggae*.

Neville Garrick, the Art director of Tuff Gong Records, explained "There was a line in *Roots, Rock, Reggae*, which, because the song was so long, wasn't included on the original recording, which says, 'I feel like preaching on the streets of Harlem.'"

While Marley never had the opportunity to preach on the streets of Harlem he did sing to a thousands of New Africans (African-Americans) when he shared the bill with the Commodores at Madison Square Gardens in September 1980.

In an interview with this columnist days after

the show, Lionel Richie talked about the chemistry the concert created. Says Richie, "There was magic on the stage. There was magic in the room and ofcourse there was a lot of magic backstage." Richie gave a glowing account of who was backstage for the Marley-Commodore affair. Theisley Brothers, Mick Jagger, Kool and the Gang, Bette Midler, Dionne Warwick and Slick Rick James were some of the names that the world's hottest balladeer dropped.

Last year about this time I spent the day with Rick James at his home outside Buffalo. One of the things James talked about was his respect for Marley.

"Bob Marley had a lot of convictions. He believed in Jah. He believed in the Rastafarian doctrine. He believed in Black people being together and he believed in the unification of people. He was serious about Haile Selassie, Marcus Garvey and the whole Back to Africa Movement," James said.

"He was a man of convictions and he would live and die for those convictions. And that I think sums up the man.

He wasn't full of shit. We (recording artists) say things and write about things but we really don't believe them. So Bob Marley has all my votes."



Bob Marley

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