

## ENTERTAINMENT II

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 Bin-Marley, Bob  
 THE  
 MARLEY LEGACY

 By ROGER STEFFENS  
 Special to The Gazette

**K**INGSTON, Jamaica — Bob Marley, the Third World visionary who took reggae out of Kingston's ghettos and established it as one of the world's most powerful musical forces, died five years ago tomorrow.

Marley was an international superstar and a multi-millionaire when brain cancer killed him at the age of 36. He was merely popular in North America (the resistance of black Americans to reggae was a constant source of frustration to him), but he was idolized in Europe, and worshipped in much of the Third World.

He left behind a powerful and solidly established musical empire, a legacy of songs that continue to be the best-selling reggae records in the world, a wealth of unreleased material, assets valued at about \$7 million U.S., and at least 11 children by seven different women.

What he didn't leave was a will.

### Hard times

And the absence of any formal arrangements for what would become of his estate ("Rasta no deal with death," he often insisted), has had consequences bordering on disastrous.

Bitter legal battles are shaking the very foundations of the House that Bob Built and holding up the release of much of the music he left behind. And many members of the loosely knit Marley musical family have fallen on desperately hard times, even while the songs they helped create continue to be heard around the world.

With no formal Marley will, his wife, Rita, inherited everything.



It's been five years since the king of reggae died — his Wailers are broke and legal battles are holding up release of the music he left behind

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He drew 180,000 people in Dublin — Protestant and Catholic alike — to hear his insistence on the brotherhood of man. "Until the philosophy which holds one race superior, and another inferior, is finally, and permanently, discredited and abandoned, everywhere is war," he chanted, echoing the words to the United Nations of Ethiopia's Emperor Haile Selassie I. Selassie is worshipped as god (or Jah) by the Rastafarian religion that was the greatest passion of Marley's life, overshadowing even the music he made, the free and easy sex he indulged in, the copious amounts of marijuana he smoked or the soccer he loved to play whenever there was a ball and a field available.

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prove the ultimate salvation in this story, for music has provided a vehicle for many in Marley's immediate family to ease the burden of mourning, and make new statements that carry on his work.

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### Fierce fervor

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With no formal Marley will, his wife, Rita, inherited everything. "Everything" included businesses and properties in several countries, and control of the royalties from Marley's 10 (now 12) Island albums.

At his death, Marley had achieved sales on those 10 records of more than 20 million copies. His posthumous 1984 greatest-hits package, *Legend*, became the biggest hit Marley ever had — entering the British pop charts at No. 1 and firmly ensconcing itself there for the next three months. A trickle of re-mixed 12-inch singles have come from Island and a few other labels, but the bulk of what Marley left in the can is still untouched.

There is much bitterness among Marley's former bandmen, the Wailers. Guitarist Al Anderson, the only American in the group, puts it bluntly: "All the members of the band who worked for Bob Marley are broke."

## Suing Rita

The problem is compounded by the fact Bob had no written agreement with his musicians. According to one insider, it is "only through the goodness of Rita's heart" that the Wailers have shared in any of Marley's royalties since he died. Now the Wailers are suing Rita for alleged unpaid shares in Marley's profits. Their anger is increased by the fact that Rita, who controls the label that releases Wailers' music, has not put out so much as a seven-inch single by the band since Bob's death. Rita's side claims that nothing was ever delivered by the band. Band members deny the accusation.

Another lawsuit is even more serious. In 1984, former Marley manager Danny Sims charged that Rita Marley and Chris Blackwell, the head of Island Records, had defraud-

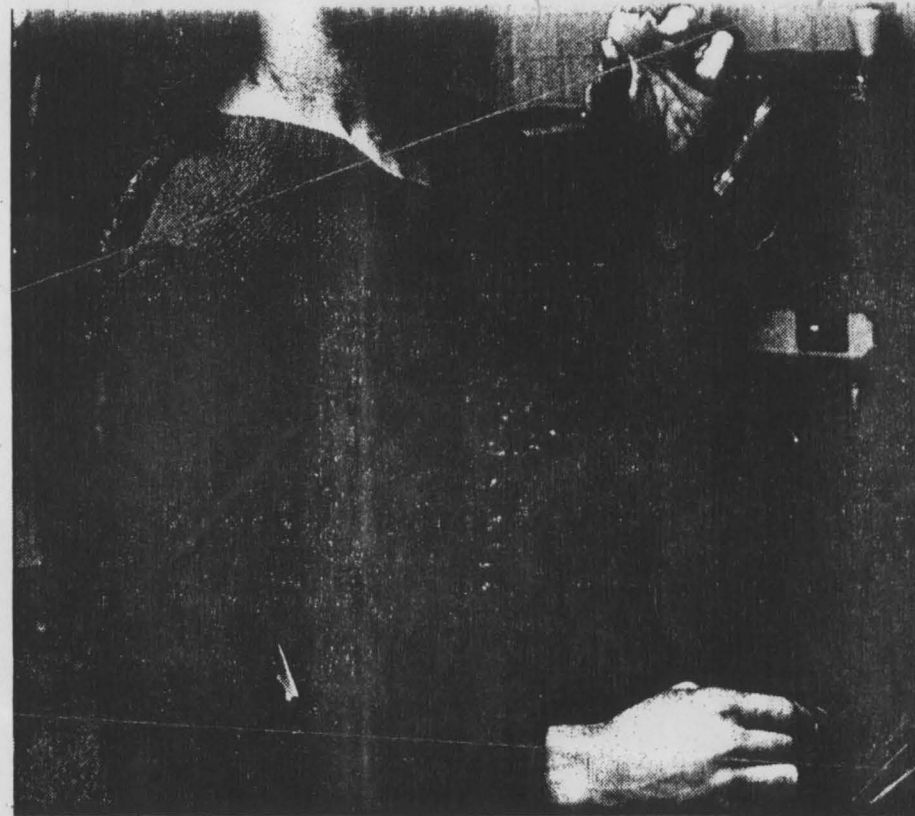


Photo by Roger Steffens

**Marley: Best-selling reggae records in the world, and a wealth of unreleased material.**

ed him of royalty payments rightly due him, and asked for damages that could reach as high as \$45 million. Sims had been the Wailers' original manager and music publisher from 1966 to 1972, when he sold the band's contract to Blackwell's company. He was promised a percentage of the publishing rights on everything Bob Marley would write through October, 1976. Sims claims that Marley hid such successful compositions as *No Woman No Cry* and *Jah Live* under other people's names to avoid paying him his royalties, and the case has dragged on for almost two years without coming to trial. A few weeks ago in Los Angeles, Solar Records president Dick Griffey mediated a face-to-face session between Rita Marley and Sims, but no results have been reported.

A third lawsuit comes from one of the co-founders of the Wailers back in 1963, Bunny Wailer, who is suing Rita over what he claims is the premature release of *Music Lesson/Nice Time* from the long-term *Original Wailers Together Again* project.

In 1966 Bob Marley went to America for nine months to earn money to start his own record label. Upon his return to Jamaica in October of that year, he laid down dozens of tracks, many of which have never

been released in any form. Bunny Wailer has kept the tapes for two decades, and a couple of years ago, decided the time was ripe to resurrect them. He cajoled Peter Tosh, and other original Wailers Junior Brathwaite and Constantine Walker into the studios, backed by the cream of modern reggae musicians like the rhythm twins, Sly Dunbar and Robbie Shakespeare. In this way, Marley's old vocals were paired with current rhythms and harmonizing.

## Astonishing work

The result is an astonishing piece of work, the answer to all the "what ifs?" Wailers fans have been asking for years. What if Bob, Bunny and Peter, estranged since 1973, had got back together again? What if Sly and Robbie had worked with the Wailers? The current litigation is tying up release of the project, and its on-again off-again status has frustrated reggae fans since they first beard of its existence.

In addition to not recording, the Wailers band that toured with Marley on his triumphant world tours has also had individual tragedies. Mental problems have bounded at least two of its members. Last summer, the father of the Barrett Brothers (drummer Carly and bassist

"Family Man") was brutally murdered in the hills above Kingston. Carly checked himself into a mental facility and "Family Man" is reported to be in morose seclusion. From being the top band in the history of reggae music, filling arenas in Asia, Europe, South America and Africa as well as North America, the Wailers went into sudden retirement, broken only by the unsuccessful *Legend* tour of 1984.

To fully appreciate the irony of the troubles that have befallen the Marley empire, it's important to appreciate the influence his work had on people around the world.

Honors were showered on Marley during his lifetime — and well after his death on May 11, 1981.

He was instrumental in arranging a brief truce between rival factions in the warring ghettos of Kingston in 1978, an action which won him, the next year, a Medal for Peace from the United Nations. It was presented to him officially "on behalf of 500 million Africans."

He headlined Zimbabwe's independence celebrations at the new government's request, and paid half a million dollars of his own money to get himself, his band and his equipment there, considering it the high point of his career.

His final tour of Europe in 1980

# the music he left behind

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Later in the summer of '80 Marley performed in a soccer stadium in Milan in which The Pope had appeared a week earlier — and Marley outdrew The Pope. A hundred thousand Italians sang along with him that day, and they seemed to know all the words to his songs.

When he died, the island of Jamaica was so grief-stricken its parliament recessed for 10 days of national mourning. At the end of that time, the largest funeral in the history of the Caribbean was held, with eloquent tributes from the very politicians whose actions Marley's songs had frequently vilified.

Those same politicians had grudgingly awarded Marley the island's Order of Merit while he lay on his deathbed. Once he was safely buried they issued six postage stamps and a souvenir sheet in his honor, and commissioned a statue. When it was unveiled, it looked so little like the singer that it was immediately pelted with fruit and shot at. They had to lock it away in the heart of a military base to keep it from being demolished. A second, more acceptable, version was commissioned and stands now in Kingston's National Heroes Park.

## Marley museum

Tomorrow, in Kingston, Tuff Gong, his former headquarters-cum-studio on Old Hope Road, is being dedicated as a Marley museum. On display will be a recreation of a tiny record shack he once owned on Beeston Street; his guitar; tour memorabilia; even the socks he wore on the road. It is expected to become a prime tourist attraction.

The museum is the latest project undertaken by Rita Marley to keep the memory and work of her husband alive.

Despite all the problems and the ill will that have engulfed the Marley empire, it is music that may

prove the ultimate salvation in this story, for music has provided a vehicle for many in Marley's immediate family to ease the burden of mourning, and make new statements that carry on his work.

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Bob's half-sister Pearl, who is also half-sister to Bunny Wailer, is a young woman in her early 20s who has an active singing career in clubs, particularly in the southern part of the U.S.

Even Bob's mother, the formidable Cedella Booker, has got into the act, recording a gospel-reggae album called *Redemption Songs* in honor of her son.

As for Bob himself, there are at least five albums' worth of uncollected singles from the pre-Island period that could be released. There are piles of tapes with finished or nearly completed songs. Long rehearsal tapes could be turned into releasable product, in much the same way 1983's *Confrontation* LP contained a track manufactured from a 24-minute jam on *Mix Up Mix Up*.

Then, too, there are sound board tapes of nearly every concert Marley did from 1973 onward. These include historic moments such as the *Smile Jamaica* concert held in the aftermath of the assassination attempt on his life in December of 1976; the *One Love Peace Concert* in 1978, when he returned to Jamaica from voluntary exile abroad; Boston's *Amāndla* concert in Harvard Stadium in 1979, when he made an uncharacteristic series of speeches to the audience who had come to attend a benefit for African freedom fighters; the Zimbabwe Independence concert, and much much more.

Carefully husbanded, the musical legacy can continue to satisfy Marley fans for another decade.