

Musical collection traces Marley's history

Reviews



Bob Marley
"Songs of Freedom" boxed set
Tuff Gong Records

"Ole pirates yes they rob I, sold I to the merchant ships, minutes after they took I from the bottomless pit/But my hand was made strong by the hand of the Almighty.

"We flowered in this generation, triumphantly/Won't you help to sing another song of freedom. . . it's all I ever had. . . redemption songs — these songs of freedom."

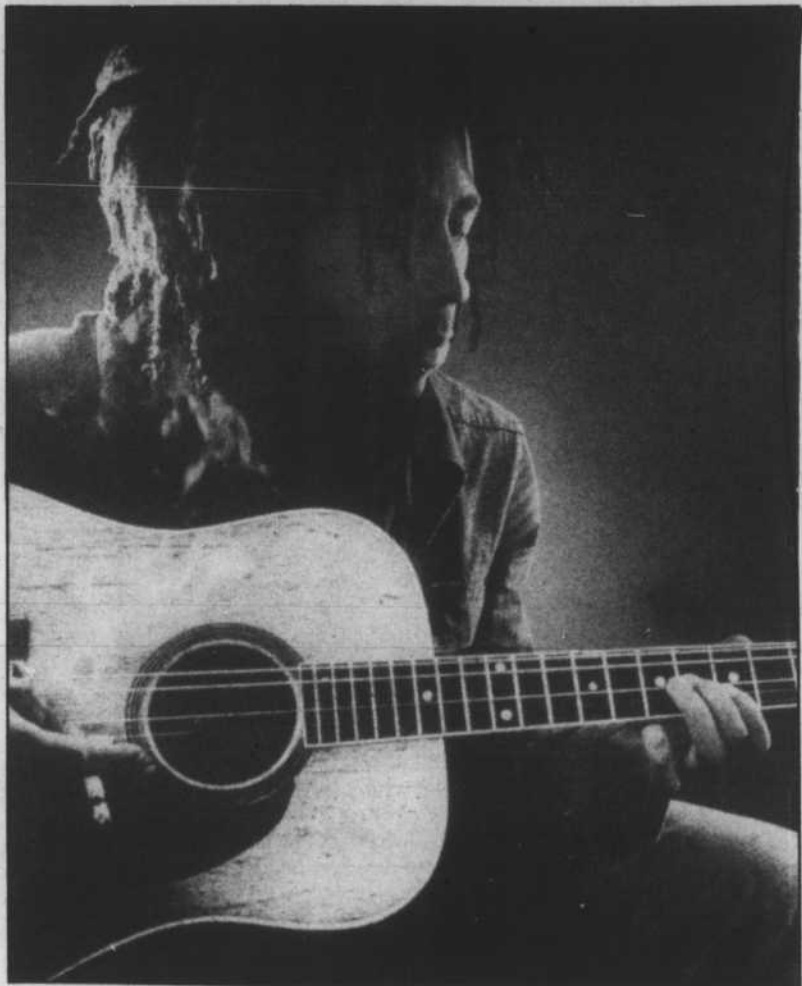
Robert Nesta Marley never knew happiness. He was born into a world in which he took part in a battle between right and wrong, good and evil — a struggle that he fought to his dying day.

Marley was more than a man, he was a modern prophet. He was a prophet who rose from one of the most unlikely and impoverished parts of the world to sow the seeds of awareness that he could only hope would one day grow and flower into his vision of world peace.

"Songs of Freedom" is a glimpse of the life and musical power of Marley. The four compact disc set traces the history of the Jamaican legend from his first recording in 1962 to his last concert in 1980.

The four discs of the set each highlight a distinct period in the career of Marley. The first disc contains tracks from 1962-1970, a period in which Bob matured from a Kingstonian "rude boy" nicknamed "Tuff Gong" to a young convert to Rastafarianism — the following of the teachings of Jamaican scholar Marcus Garvey and the worship of former Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie as God.

The period was marked by the raging popularity of Jamaican ska



Courtesy of Tuff Gong Int'l Records

"Songs of Freedom," a retrospective Bob Marley collection, features both classics and rarities.

throughout the dance halls of the Caribbean and England. The young Wailers, composed of Marley, Peter McIntosh and Bunny Livingston, recorded some of the era's most enduring hits including "Simmer Down," "Bus Dem Shut" and "Mellow Mood."

By 1970, Marley's music had taken the spiritual and social tone found in enduring tracks like "Small Axe,"

"Duppy Conqueror" and "Soul Rebel." These tracks signaled an ominous warning of things to come for any who dared oppose the forces of Jah Rastafari.

The years between 1971 and 1975 marked the most deeply spiritual and revolutionary period of Marley's career. Reggae music's "one-drop" rhythms and Rasta radicalism were

taking the world by storm.

Tracks like "Slave Driver," "Get Up, Stand Up" and "Burnin' and Lootin'" became, and have remained, anthems of the downtrodden.

In addition to the standouts just mentioned, disc two of "Songs Of Freedom" contains two additional treasures previously unreleased.

The first is a 12-minute acoustic medley that Marley recorded for Johnny Nash in 1971 that includes passionate versions of "Guava Jelly," "This Train," "Cornerstone," "Comma Comma," "Dew Drops," "Stir It Up" and "I'm Hurting Inside." The track shows a solo side of Marley rarely seen before and makes the whole set worth obtaining.

The second gem of disc two is a bouncy rock-steady anthem called "Iron Lion Zion" that Marley's widow Rita Marley recently "discovered" in her vaults. The fact that the existence of such an excellent song could be forgotten for 20 years is a testament to the massive size and quality of the Marley catalog.

The third disc of the set contains tracks from 1976 to 1978, another transitional period in Marley's life.

Part three leads off with a previously unreleased live version of "No Woman, No Cry" recorded at The Roxy in Los Angeles on May 26, 1976. The ballad recounts Bob and Rita's hope amidst the impoverished agony of living in Trenchtown's government yard in the 1960s.

Two of the most fundamental songs of the period involve Rastafarianism. The tune "War" from the "Rastaman Vibration" album is a moving musical adaptation of a 1968 speech by His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie in which Jah told his audience that there would be war until "the color of a man's skin is of no more significance than the color of his eyes."

"Jah Live" is undoubtedly the most important song Marley ever recorded for his Rastafarian brethren. In the

spring of 1976, Emperor Selassie died and Marley immediately went into the studio to cut this track to console the Rastas that "yuh cyant kill God."

Also included on this disc are more obscure alternate versions and dance mixes of Marley standouts like "Waiting In Vain," "Jammin'," "Keep On Movin'" and a previously unreleased version of "Three Little Birds."

The final disc rounds out the anthology with some of Marley's greatest work. During this period of his life, the ravages of the cancer that consumed his body were beginning to take their toll.

Most of the "Survival" album from 1978 is included here. Songs like "Survival," "One Drop," "Zimbabwe" and "Babylon System" combined to make what is considered one of the greatest reggae albums of all times.

The monumental "Zimbabwe" was so widely cherished in Africa in the late 1970s that it not only became the anthem of the freedom fighters in Zimbabwe, but it intensified fighting in Angola and Mozambique as well. Marley had truly become a world political force.

The most moving track of the entire set is the last song on disc four, a momentous live version of "Redemption Song" recorded at Marley's last concert in Pittsburgh, Penn., on Sept. 23, 1980.

At that point of "Uprising" tour, the Tuff Gong was barely strong enough to take the stage, yet his vocals rang through on this piece as powerfully as at any time in his career.

"Emancipate yourself from mental slavery, none but ourselves can free our minds/Have no fear for atomic energy for none of them can stop the time/How long shall they kill our prophets while we stand aside and look?"

— Carter Van Pelt



Courtesy of High Street Records

Downy Mildew

'Moldy' band to perform at Duffy's



By Stacey McKenzie
Senior Reporter

Pop the beer tops tonight at Duffy's Tavern, 1412 O St., and you will find Downy Mildew.

No, the health department won't bust the place when this band from Los Angeles takes the stage, because Downy Mildew comprises a healthy musical lot that's appeared in Lincoln

before. They can boast eight years of togetherness; now that's healthy.

They also can boast about their latest release on High Street Records, "An Oncoming Train."

The five-piece band has an upbeat sound with slightly darker lyrics. One great thing about this band is the give-and-take between female and male vocals. It adds a dimension not often heard.

They've opened for 10,000 Maniacs, Concrete Blonde and were lauded by R.E.M.'s Michael Stipe, who directed a video for the band's track, "Offering."

The line-up is: Nancy McCoy, bassist; Jenny Homer, vocalist/guitarist;

Charlie Baldonado, vocalist; Rob Jacobs, drums; and Salvador Garza.

Downy Mildew has been strong on the underground band scene for a long time, and the signing on a major label was a long time coming.

But Downy Mildew wasn't dissuaded. It kept up its local play, toured nationally, and put out records on a do-it-yourself level.

This curtain from stardom kept out the limelight, they say, and helped them to develop as songwriters and musicians.

By the way, Downy Mildew is a type of cabbage fungus; no further explanation was available as to how cabbage fungus relates to music.

Jazz album puts listeners in the mood for relaxation

Reviews



"Just Between Us"
Norman Brown
Motown Records

In the mood for some relaxation? Then Norman Brown will serve you up a dose with his jazz.

"Just Between Us" features Norman Brown, a man with his acoustic guitar, who bring the listener some jazz fusion that has a little bit of sass, a little bit of funk and a little bit of seduction.

"Stormin'," the first tune off "Just Between Us," is an up-tempo tune featuring saxophonist Gerald Albright. The interplay of these two, with Albright on saxophone and Brown on the guitar, mixed with a conga sound, starts this LP on the right track.

"It's a Feeling" also features Albright.

The title track, "Just Between Us," is a smooth ballad that will let the listener get a feel for Brown and the style and grace with which he plays.

"East Meets West" is a funky track on which Brown incorporates some percussion into his sound. Brown is able to use a variety of instrumentation in his music, and this makes his music go because he is able to work well within this framework.

He also does a good job of not overshadowing the guest performers.

"Love's Holiday," featuring Perri, and "Sweet Taste," featuring Tony Warren and Della Miles, are prime examples where Brown features other artists who complement his style.

"Too High" is by far the best song on the album. With Boyz II Men providing the background and Stevie Won-



Courtesy of Motown Records
"Just Between Us"

der singing the lead, they bring it all together and come up with a tune that will catch the listeners' attention.

The blend of Boyz II Men harmonizing and Wonder's harmonica playing complement Brown and his guitar playing.

This is a remarkably good LP. The remaining four tracks on "Just Between Us" have the same quality as the others, with Brown bringing the listener into his world of jazz and turning them on with his fusion, funk, sass and seduction.

If listeners are in a mood to relax, Norman Brown — a man and his guitar — will provide them with about an hour's worth of relaxation.

— Anthony D. Speights