

Reggae's Bob Marley Wanted To Look 'More African'

Legendary Jamaican-born reggae singer, Robert Nesta Marley, wanted to look 'more African,' his wife says in a new book

Widow Rita Marley is quoted in a new Bob Marley biography, 'I & I: The Natural Mystics: Marley, Tosh and Wailer,' as saying the star struggled with insecurities over his mixed heritage as the son of a Caucasian father and Jamaican mother.

She told author Colin Grant that Marley would use shoe polish to darken his hair in a bid to appear 'more African.' Rita Marley also disclosed that the singer was very racially sensitized and aware of bullying for having a fairer complexion.

As Grant explained: 'When Marley moved to Trench Town in Kingston aged 13 he was thought of as a white man and would have got a lot of grief for that.

His father was a so-called white man, who moved in white circles, and it was unusual... to marry a black lady. But he did. It's interesting that Marley went on to do that as well. He married a very black lady, Rita, and that was a time when people married up and out of colour. He did exactly the opposite.'

Marley remains the most widely known and revered performer of reggae music, and is credited with helping spread both Jamaican music and the Rastafari movement to a worldwide audience.

Marley's best known hits include 'I Shot the Sheriff', 'No Woman, No Cry', 'Could You Be Loved', 'Stir It Up', 'Jamming', 'Redemption Song', 'One Love' and, together with The Wailers, 'Three Little Birds', [2] as well as the posthumous releases 'Buffalo Soldier' and 'Iron Lion Zion.'

The compilation album Legend (1984), released three years after his death, is reggae's best-selling album, being 10 times Platinum (Diamond) in the U.S., and selling 20 million copies worldwide.

Marley was born in 1945 in the village of Nine Mile, before moving to Kingston. He died of melanoma in 1981 at age 36.