

## Marley's legacy remembered on the day he died

While millions are sending greetings, postcards and gifts to mothers today, Mother's Day, many are observing the 33rd anniversary of the passing of legendary reggae king, Robert Nesta Marley. He made the transition on the morning of May 11, 1981 in a Miami hospital, surrounded by members of his family.

He had barely passed his 36th birthday, the age at which it was reported that he prophesied his passing during a conversation with friends in Delaware, United States, 12 years before. Since then, Marley has proven to be much more of a prophet than those private rants suggest, transmitting prophetic and moral messages to the entire world through his albums for Island Records: *Catch a Fire*, *Burning*, *Natty Dread*, *Rastaman Vibration*, *Exodus*, *Kaya*, *Survival* and *Uprising*, all released between 1973 and 1981. Escaped death The passing of Marley often rekindles memories of a December evening in 1976, when the singer escaped death by a hair's breadth. It was while rehearsing on December 3 with band members at his Hope Road residence, for a concert labelled 'Smile Jamaica' at National Heroes Park, that the drama unfolded. During the incident, Don Taylor (Bob's manager), Rita Marley, and a friend, were also shot. It occurred during the height of an intense political campaign and general election due December 20 of that year. The show was a peace concert designed to quell tensions between opposing political factions, but some, mistakenly or mischievously, tried to turn it into a political football, and Marley's inclusion became a source of controversy. Rumour has it that Marley foresaw the incident in a vision two nights earlier and had the 'Powers of the Most High', come to his rescue when the gunman pointed a gun at his heart, only to realise that the bullet had slashed across his chest and lodged in his left arm.

It was an ambush in the night and Marley immortalised the event with a recording of the same name: See them fighting for power, but they know not the hour, so they come with their guns, spare-parts and money, trying to belittle our integrity now. They say what we know, is just what they teach us, and we are so ignorant that every time they can reach us, through political strategy, they keep us hungry, and when we gonna get some food, your brother got to be your enemy. Well, ambush in the night, all guns aiming at me, they open fire at me. Despite injury, Marley performed at the concert, and had the nerve to return two years later (April 22, 1978) for a similar concert at Jamaica's National Stadium, in which his never-to-be-forgotten heroics, the joining of hands of the two political leaders, Michael Manley and Edward Seaga, provided an example to be embraced by their followers. Natural leader The peacemaker, the revolutionist and the lover are some of the titles that come readily to mind as we remember Bob Marley, the king of reggae, on this, the 33rd anniversary of his passing. But one of his main attributes, even as a teenager, was his ability to lead. Born to an English marine officer named Norval Sinclair Marley and a Jamaican black woman named Cedella Malcolm from Rhoden Hall, St Ann, Bob spent his early years in the parish with his mother before moving with her, at about age 10, to Trench Town in Kingston. There, he grew up under tough conditions among young street anarchists. But Marley had a mind of his own, and revealed from very early that he was a sensitive child, possessing an innate ability to lead others. He was also instrumental in getting the early Wailers together and organising rehearsals. When the group (Bob Marley, Peter Tosh and Bunny Wailer) were on the verge of breaking up in late 1966 because of financial difficulties, Marley returned from Delaware with new ideas. Ultimate revolutionist They involved the establishment of their own record label and doing their own production. The result was the recording of some of their best work in the rocksteady mould, tracks like *Bend Down Low*, *Nice Time*, *Hypocrites*, *Mellow Mood*, *Thank You Lord*, *Stir It Up*, *Bus Them Shut*, and *This Train*, leaving immense musical footprints. Marley has, almost invariably, been portrayed through his recordings as the ultimate revolutionist, the man whose lyrics provoke the destabilisation of the status quo while providing solace, comfort and hope for the downtrodden. With so much emphasis being placed on the serious side of Marley's music, the lighter side may easily have been overlooked. One of his earliest love songs was a slow 1960s Studio One cut titled *I'm Still Waiting*, in which he admits: My feet won't keep me up anymore with every little beat, my heart beats girl, it's at your door I just wanna love, and I'm never gonna hurt you girl So won't you come out to me girl Can't you see, I'm under your spell. Lonesome Feeling, Love and Affection, Just Another Dance, Love Won't Be Mine, and I Need Your Love, were also big romantic recordings by the Wailers during the 1960s. The album of the century, *Exodus*, contained two of Marley's most romantic efforts in, *Wait In Vain*, and *Turn Your Lights Down Low*. The album *Kaya* contains the romantic tearjerkers, *Is This Love*, and *She's Gone*, while *Rastaman Vibration* contains *Cry To Me*, a call for a cheater to face retribution. Some of the most startling revelations about Marley's life were made in a thought-provoking lecture by his best friend, footballer extraordinaire, Allan 'Skill' Cole, at the third International Reggae Conference at the University of The West Indies, in February 2013. Cole described Marley as a workaholic, a man who slept little, as it was his view that "any man who sleep much, miss out". Among other revelations, Cole described Marley as psychic, arousing his Natural Mystic inclinations by reading palms as a youngster in St Ann. Source: Jamaica Gleaner broyal\_2008@yahoo.com