

Influence of bob marley: the heroic figure



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

One of the most influential people in music is Bob Marley. He was a heroic figure and in some ways he still is. His music has inspired many people and brought happiness to many people around the world. Marley's viewpoints on racism, freedom, and love made him and his music unforgettable.

Robert Nesta Marley, better known as Bob, was born in Rhoden Hall to the north of Jamaica on February 6, 1945. His father, Captain Norval Marley, was a fifty-year-old white quartermaster attached to the British West Indian regiment and his mother, Cedella Booker, was an eighteen-year-old black woman. She became pregnant so they married to legitimize the child. Bob's mixed race wasn't uncommon but the mix of classes was. His father helped financially, but he left and he rarely saw his son. Cedella and Bob moved to Trench Town, which was one of Kingston's poorest cities. Trench Town was also known for its music and it was an inspiration for Bob's music.

Bob did not find much success at first being a solo artist, but he found more success when joining his friends to form a band. In 1963, Bob Marley, Neville "Bunny" O'Riley Livingston, and Peter McIntosh formed the Wailing Wailers. They named themselves the Wailing Wailers because of their sad background and upcoming. It was also around this time that Bob started exploring his spiritual side.

Both religious and political, the Rastafarian movement started in Jamaica in 1930s and drew its beliefs from many sources, including Jamaican-born black nationalist Marcus Garvey, the Old Testament, and their African heritage and culture. Bob eventually joined the movement in regard to using marijuana as "wisdom weed" that had grown on the grave of Solomon. Bob's belief in One

World, One Love was inspired by his belief in Rastafari. It not only influenced his music and spirit, but it also influenced his appearance. Rasta men embraced the look of long dreadlocks and beards. Bob came to embrace the appearance, the weed, the movement, and all of the powerful aspects of Rasta. Bob especially embraced the signature music of Rasta known as reggae, and then made a career of conquering it.

The Wailing Wailers released their first single, “ Simmer Down”, during the last weeks of 1963. By the following January it was number one in the Jamaican charts, a position it held for the next two months. “ Simmer Down” caused a sensation in Jamaica and The Wailing Wailers began recording regularly. Over the next few years the Wailing Wailers put together some thirty sides that properly established the group. Despite their popularity, the economics of keeping the group together was too difficult.

Bob’s mother, Cedella, had remarried and moved to Delaware in the United States where she had saved up enough money to send Bob an airline ticket. She wanted Bob to start a new life. Before moving to America Bob met a young girl called Rita Anderson and, on February 1966, they were married. Bob stayed and worked in America just long enough to finance his real ambition: music. After only eight months in America, Bob returned to Jamaica.

Marley joined back up with Neville “ Bunny” O’Riley Livingston and Peter McIntosh to re-form the group, now known as The Wailers. In the summer of 1971 Bob accepted an invitation from Johnny Nash to accompany him to Sweden. By spring 1972 the entire Wailers were in London to promote their

single “ Reggae on Broadway”. Instead they ended up stranded in Britain. Bob sought out, Chris Blackwell, the founder of the Basing Street Studios of Island Records. Blackwell knew of Marley’s Jamaican reputation. The group was offered a deal unique in Jamaican terms. The Wailers were advanced money to make an album and, for the first time, a reggae band had access to the best recording facilities. Before this deal, it was considered that reggae sold only on singles and cheap compilation albums. The Wailers’ first album *Catch A Fire* broke all the rules: it was beautifully packaged and heavily promoted. It was the start of a long climb to international fame and recognition.

Bob Marley and The Wailers were taking reggae into the mainstream. Marley had a growing political importance in Jamaica, where his firm Rastafarian stance had found a strong quality with the ghetto youth. By a way of thanking the Jamaican people, Marley decided to hold a free concert at Kingston’s National Heroes Park on December 5, 1976. The idea was to emphasize the need for peace in the slums of the city, where warring factions had brought turmoil and murder. Not everyone was happy about this. On the night before the concert gunmen broke into Marley’s home and shot him, his wife, and the band manager. Luckily, they all survived and out of defiance of the gunmen he played a brief concert anyway.

In 1978 the band capitalized on their chart success with their album *Kaya*. The album was number four in the UK the week after its release. That album say Marley in a different mood; a collection of love songs and tributes to the power of ganja. There were three more events in 1978 that were all of extraordinary significance to Bob Marley. He returned to Jamaica to play the

One Love Concert in front of the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. He was then invited to the United Nations in New York to accept the organization's Medal of Peace. Bob also visited Africa for the first time near the end of 1978, going to Kenya and Ethiopia, spiritual home of Rastafari.

The greatest honor the band ever received was in April, 1980, when the band was invited to Zimbabwe to play the country's Independence Ceremony. A month later the Wailers released a new album Uprising. The band then embarked on a major European tour, breaking festival records throughout the continent. The schedule included a 100, 000-capacity crowd in Milan, the largest show in the band's history. At the end of the tour Bob and the Wailers played two shows at Madison Square Garden, but immediately afterwards Bob became very sick.

Bob had hurt his toe while playing football three years earlier and the wound became cancerous and was belatedly treated in Miami. By 1980 the cancer had begun to spread through his body. He fought the disease for eight months. At the beginning of May Bob Marley left Europe for his Jamaican home, but it was a journey he would not complete. Bob Marley died in a Miami Hospital on May 11, 1981, only one month after being awarded Jamaica's Order of Merit, the nation's third highest honor.

His work stretched across two decades and yet still remains timeless and universal. Today you can still see his influence in many ways. There are a lot of bands that still play covers or tributes to Bob Marley. He only lived to be 36-years-old, but his legend continues.