

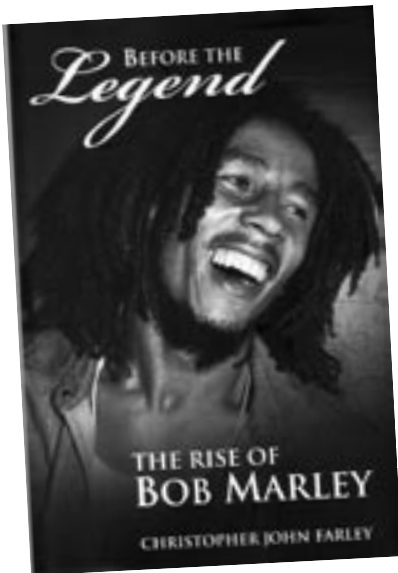


# READINGS FOR REASONING

by Justine Ketola

## Before the Legend: The Rise of Bob Marley by Christopher John Farley

Amistad, 2006



As we mark the 25th anniversary of Bob Marley's passing on May 11, 1981, there is another fresh crop of books that aim to demystify the legendary king of reggae's legacy.

This masterpiece aims to offer the more personal side of Bob Marley's experience on the planet. Written by a *Time* magazine and *Wall Street Journal* journalist, it has literary flair, is full of intrigue and has its share of embellishment.

The timeline of the book proceeds from Bob's birthplace in Nine Mile to his formative years growing up in Kingston, to the formation of the Wailers. It then moves into Bob's time in Delaware to the years with impresario Danny Sims and ends at Island Records' studios in London, where the breakthrough release, *Catch A Fire* received overdubs to help form it into a rock-crossover album.

Personal accounts attributed to Bunny Wailer, daughter Cedella Marley, lady love Cindy Breakspere, wifey Rita Marley and quotes from Aston "Family Man" Barrett help to weave the mystique that is Marley.

The writer maintains a sincere passion for his subject, drawing on an extensive bibliography that includes countless interviews and accounts that piece together the tale (including one by reggae archivist, Roger Steffens with Bunny Wailer that appeared in the *Reggae Festival Guide*).

## Train to Skaville Poems and photography by Evelyn Nathan with additional photographs by Robin Lai

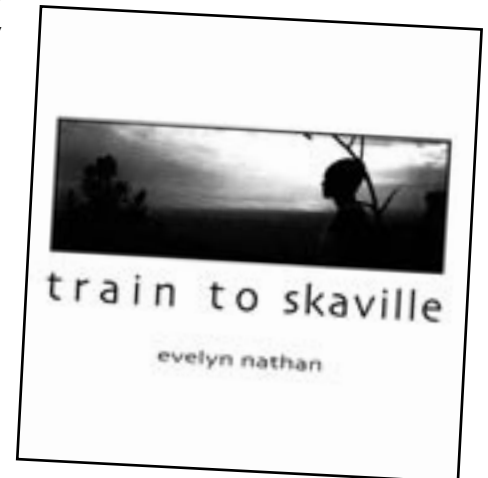
Publishing Works, 2005

This is a collection of poems, each with careful, evocative observations of Jamaican life and the natural surroundings that play such a significant part of daily living there. The author

had an opportunity to live and work teaching photography in Jamaica beginning in 1969 and returned there in the mid-90s. The environment provided the inspiration to funnel her interest in the culture and people into a wonderful blend of personal, yet inviting verses. Vivid imagery of fishing traps and painted boats, learning the sound of rocksteady, eating a mango while driving around "vine hung switchbacks" and the atmosphere surrounding cane fires in Spanish Town or swimming in Black River amongst the lilies, take the reader on the journey to the real Jamaica through poetry.

The people the author encountered inspired the use of patois language for many lines and entirely in some of the selections. Through these friendships, the subjects share their triumphs and sorrows. *The Blessed Lime* centers around a woman friend's trials such as "boys from down the hill who steal her fowl" and the redemption of the tree in her yard which bears "one crop and when it finish, next one ripen up again..."

The poems are accompanied by a collection of black and white photography by the author and her former student, Robin Lai. These photos depict scenes from Kingston such as a woman walking her dog in Trenchtown, a rainstorm in Papine with goats sheltering under the eaves of a storefront, a hand-painted restaurant sign, individual portraits and interesting details in Jamaican architecture and expansive landscapes.



## Dubwise by Klive Walker

Insomniac Press, 2005

Informed by his experience as a Jamaican now living in Canada, Mr. Walker's book covers a multitude of topics with interesting analysis of career and music from reggae's top artists from Jamaica, the U.K., the U.S. and Canada, placing attribution on those who influenced their work and vice versa.

For those of us who view ourselves as reggae music buffs, the

book's subtitle, *Reasoning from the Reggae Underground*, rings true. Topics covered and references made here will trigger fond memories from the various eras, from Augustus Pablo to Aswad to Shinehead. This is an interesting collection of articles for those who have been living the music "above ground" over the years, and an important contribution for those beginning the reggae journey.

Tracing the Jamaican roots of ska, in the essay *Blue Beat, Nyabinghi and Bebop*, the author addresses the significance of early Jamaican jazz musicians such as Ernest Ranglin, Tommy McCook and Joe Harriott and the direction they took the music. The percussive element of the genre is tied to its nyabinghi roots and Oswald "Count Ossie" Williams, who is credited here with creating Rasta nyabinghi drumming through teaching burru hand drum teaching sessions which date from 1949. The book tracks the progression of ska and Jamaican jazz through the work of the Skatalites and their immense influence in the development of the U.K. ska movement and the mod scene.

The author is sensitive to the contributions of women in Jamaican music including Sonia Pottinger, who produced many top-selling releases such as those in the '70s by Marcia Griffiths, *Naturally and Steppin'*. The songs of Judy Mowatt, on her self-produced masterpiece *Black Woman*, are explored for their conscious appeal and fiery musicianship.

The author also seeks to address the issues that spawned radical work from dub poet artists such as Black Panther Movement member Linton Kwesi Johnson.

Connections are clearly made between this culture of musical rebellion, the anti-racism movement of the U.K. and the how this native form – as well as reggae music in general – aided in the development of the rebel music of punk rock.

The book makes important references to Rasta teachings as an essential part of reggae and its message of "liberation theology" that informs the listener. In referring to DJ Kool Herc, a Jamaican immigrant to New York City who is widely credited with hosting the first sound system sessions to inspire and invent the hip hop genre, he points out that Herc was amongst many to catch a glimpse when Emperor Haile Selassie I visited the island in 1966. The author makes several important connections to people and events that have significance throughout reggae's history.

**Marley Legend: An Illustrated Life of Bob Marley  
by James Henke**

Chronicle Books/Tuff Gong Books, 2006

This year finds us with another batch of Bob Marley books.

Packed with copies of artifacts from the artist's career, this one is better than a kid's pop-up book for adults, whimsically unfolding the tale of Marley's legacy. Chief curator for the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and former editor and writer for *Rolling Stone*, the author has assembled an important book that is reasonable in price and easy to find on bookstore shelves.



The book has an outer box that it fits into as part of a concept series that includes similar books on Jimi Hendrix and John Lennon. Its contents include a fold-out booklet with childhood and family shots, graphics from 7-inch singles, a great chronicle of Wailers' photos and original posters suitable for framing, including one from a show at London's Lyceum Ballroom featuring a photo of Bob and George Harrison engaged in a soul-brother handshake promoting a 1975 performance. Another fine replica is the poster from the One Love Peace Concert at the National Stadium in '78. Additional pullout goodies include tickets, promotional pieces, a tour sticker and a reproduction of the news clipping from a 1977 issue of *Melody Maker*, the British magazine that spawned the name of his progeny's group. Other highlights are copies of handwritten original lyrics for "Turn Your Lights Down Low" and "Waiting in Vain."

Music industry types may be intrigued by a tour production booklet, which is a reproduction from a 1979 tour to Australia, New Zealand and Hawaii. It lists the crew members, itineraries and dining options. Neville Garrick's personal lighting and staging notes, sketches and set lists are reproduced in what appears to be his personal tour notebook as well.

Quotes from the likes of Toots Hibbert, Chrissy Hynde of the Pretenders, Ziggy Marley, as well as a 50-minute CD of compiled interviews with a transcription booklet to accompany the dialogue help to bring the story full circle through Marley's own voice.

**The Book of Exodus: The Making and Meaning  
of Bob Marley & the Wailers' Album of the Century  
by Vivien Goldman**

Three Rivers Press, 2006

Bob Marley and the Wailers' album, *Exodus* was released in 1977. It was recorded after the "invasion" that took place in 56 Hope Road the night before the Smile Jamaica concert. The author writes a sensitive treatment of Bob Marley – a.k.a. "Skip" or "The Skipper" – as he was known, and interviews important people in his life such as Mortimer Planno, Chris Blackwell, Neville Garrick and Marcia Griffiths.

As for the analysis of the making of *Exodus*, Vivien Goldman extracts the essence of the very moment a lyric or line was created, with accounts from the individuals who were actually

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there with Bob Marley and the Wailers. Goldman was working first as Bob Marley's London-based publicist for Island Records and then as feature writer and editor for *Sounds* magazine. Her keen sense of the art within the context of the times helps shape the story of Bob Marley and *Exodus* for the world in the early stages and has formed a great book on the subject.

Besides accounts of those who made *Exodus* what it is, *The Book* concept centers in the conditions leading up to the release of *Exodus* and its clear links to the biblical concept of the "movement of Jah people." The idea (or perhaps his ideal) is that Bob Marley was the peacemaker, his home being neutral ground for the downtown warriors who were aligned with both the JLP and the PNP parties. It was a place for people (many of whom were his childhood friends) to reason through an alternative to the violence of the streets, discussing concepts of Rasta and African unity.

Setting the historical stage in Jamaica, the author addresses the period of promise that independence created, with a mass exodus of people moving from the country to Kingston city or "Town" as it is known in patois, seeking a new life.

"Slavery which had once meant bondage and now meant power" Goldman writes, and as a comparison, "Enslaved Africans on the plantations of the American South turned to the *Exodus* story and called on Moses to *Let My People Go*," as in the spiritual song.

The crucial link between the *Book of Exodus* and the development of Rasta as a worldwide movement is addressed by Goldman.

"Not many islands can boast their own belief system, particularly not one that has gone on to sweep the world as has Rasta." The author points out the conditions that helped bring forth this movement. "At a time when black heroes were all too few, Selassie was a supreme and incomparable black king whose speeches were as noble and uplifting as Martin Luther King, Jr." And the author includes Marcus Garvey's significance stating, "Garvey was absolutely tuned in to the ideas of the *Book of Exodus*."

The author working as Bob's publicist and a guest at his Hope Road backhouse, left for London a day before the shooting in December 1976, in her own type of exodus. She gives a play-by-play account from the perspective of many of the people who were there that day. The book then goes into the exile period of Bob's life, first to Nassau, Bahamas where the band followed and on to London. Recording sessions progressed on songs that had been started in Jamaica and new songs developed.

While in London, Bob Marley was "constantly processing the 'invasion,'" Goldman notes. There is detailed analysis of

the songs and their origins, such as "So Much Things To Say" which was a result of many months of deep meditation and time, reasoning with the family he had created through music to deal with this life-changing event.

Goldman joined the European tour for *Exodus*, some 15 years after the start of the Wailers' journey in the music business. She points out this tour was the first to have a full-scale budget that allowed for a tour bus, production gear and personalized tour jackets. The book ends with Bob Marley's triumphant return to Jamaica in 1978 for the One Love Peace concert and the following few years he had left in the physical state.

This book maintains an honest, insider's perspective of the conditions in Jamaica at the time of the shooting and subsequent exile and the ways in which Bob Marley acted to bring about change and the concept that Rastas must forward to Africa.

### Koll Pekude:

#### Word-Sound & Poems of Vaughn Benjamin (Midnite) by Vaughn Benjamin

Rastafaria Group, 2005

Anyone who has ever had the opportunity to listen to the words of Vaughn Benjamin speak when he is not in performance with Midnite knows that he is indeed an orator of the highest order when his lyrics flow in the spoken word form.

In this luminous collection of poems, Benjamin vaults the canyons of human existence, drawing in elements from life's myriad experiences and the nature of spirit, with writings that are built in the context of his questioning framework as a seeker of truths and rights.

At times Benjamin takes idioms and reconfigures them, making the meaning shift and the rhythm of the poem take shape around these recognizable phrases. There are interesting sketches and photographs of woodcarvings to accompany the poetry which flow from this mosaic.

Vaughn Benjamin is in the planning stages for a spoken word tour for this new direction of his artistic life. Look for tour dates in your area soon! ♡

*Justine Ketola has been a music business professional since her days in college radio. She is in her fifth year with sales and second year as Marketing Director for Reggae Festival Guide. She also works with record labels and as an agent for several reggae artists. Her work in publicity and production in the reggae community has included the Trade Roots 20th Anniversary in October, 2005 and the Ragga Muffins/Tribute to the Legends Festivals in February, 2006. She currently edits the weekly Reggae Festival E-Guide. Contact her at [justine@ReggaeFestivalGuide.com](mailto:justine@ReggaeFestivalGuide.com).*

