

Neville Garrick was a friend, a lighting man and sometimes an additional percussionist in the Bob Marley family of musicians and believers. A University of California graduate, he met Marley when he was art director on the *Jamaican Daily News*. Today, Garrick continues to work for the Marley Estate.

Garrick remembers fondly his New Zealand visit with the Bob Marley world tour.

"It won't be something I'll forget very easily. It was a great concert and because it was a day concert, I got to play percussion instead doing the lighting. It was quite fun for me. I've seen clips of some of the songs. It was really a great high energy day. It was the first time we'd played on a mobile stage, that unfolded. Bob was so impressed he wanted to get one like that."

Are you a good percussion player?

"I wouldn't consider myself a great percussion player, but I can keep time. The reason I got involved with that was because Bob was the type of person that, if you were around him, you'd eventually be musically inclined. He figured that the more I got into the music, the more I'd be able to visually interpret what was happening, which helped with lighting, because I used to light not just on aesthetics, but really trying to highlight all the little special notes in the songs."

"I played percussion on quite a few of the recording tracks. When we recorded percussion, there were normally about four people playing simultaneously. It was very difficult for Seeco, the percussionist, to do live so I'd help him out during the day festivals."

Did you see Bob as a musical leader or a spiritual leader?

"Well, you'd have to see him as both, as music was the vehicle he used to deliver his message. I think he was a messenger, which he found out later in life, that he was put on earth to deliver a message of unity. I wouldn't separate the two, but I think music would come before."

When you travelled with Bob was he a very private or a very social person?

"Bob was a moody person. Bob could be very, very sociable, and he could also be withdrawn. It all depends on the occasion. I know he was most happy around children, 'cause he felt their spirit was very innocent. Bob grew up a very hard life, where he was burnt so many, many times it wasn't easy for him to trust people."

Was it hard for Bob to communicate with a big record label like Island?

"I don't think it was hard for Bob because I think Bob knew what he wanted, unlike most artists, who go to the record company and the label decides what direction they are going to go in. Basically, 'cause Bob had a one on one relationship with Chris Blackwell, who was running the company, the only person he had to communicate to was Chris. So, once the project was approved by Chris, the rest of the company just had to follow through in promotion and sales. Island is now a big record company owned by Polygram, but remember it was a growing independent label."

Was he pressured by Island to make reggae acceptable to a wide audience?

"No, I don't think he was ever pressured by the record company. Bob was the kind who would resist pressure. I would say maybe there were occasions when Bob might have turned in 10 titles for an album, and Blackwell might say: 'These two are not so strong, they are weaker

than the rest. Has he got any others he could replace them [with], or could they go in and rework those songs?' I think, in terms of creativity, he had a pretty free hand. The only time the company came in was at the last stage, when Chris liked to be involved in the mixing of the songs. That's more for the public ear than really changing any creative structure in the record."

Do Marley's family or Island now control his recordings?

"Rita Marley, who is head of the Marley clan, has a basically somewhat similar, if not the same relationship that Bob had with the record company. In other words, Island doesn't really do anything without our consultation and we are very much involved, to the extent that you are interviewing me now."

Did he write and record his music in isolation?

"Bob was the kind of person who liked to have people around him — if not a big crowd, some special people. I shared some special moments being around him when Bob was writing songs. Like when Bob was recuperating in Miami after that toe injury in 1977. I spent about five months with him, and he wrote about 15 or 20 songs during that time. He was a very prolific songwriter. He would bounce things off you. 'How do you feel about this verse? Should it be stronger to the argument?' — that he was trying to put forth in the song. He would compose the song by himself, with people like Seeco and myself around. Then, if it was something he really wanted to go in the studio with, he would call together the band, play it with acoustic for them, let them get the feel for it, and then sometimes the same day they'd go into the studio and rehearse for a day."

"It was always fresh for the band and the band were not around him when he was structuring the songs, except for the period when we all lived in England and we did *Exodus* album and *Kaya*. All those songs were recorded in a four month period in Basing St. studios. We were living in England for seven months, all in the same apartment, so there was a lot more collaboration in the initial stage of developing the songs than before."

Did it upset Marley to have to leave Jamaica for his own safety, after gun men entered his Jamaican home to shoot him?

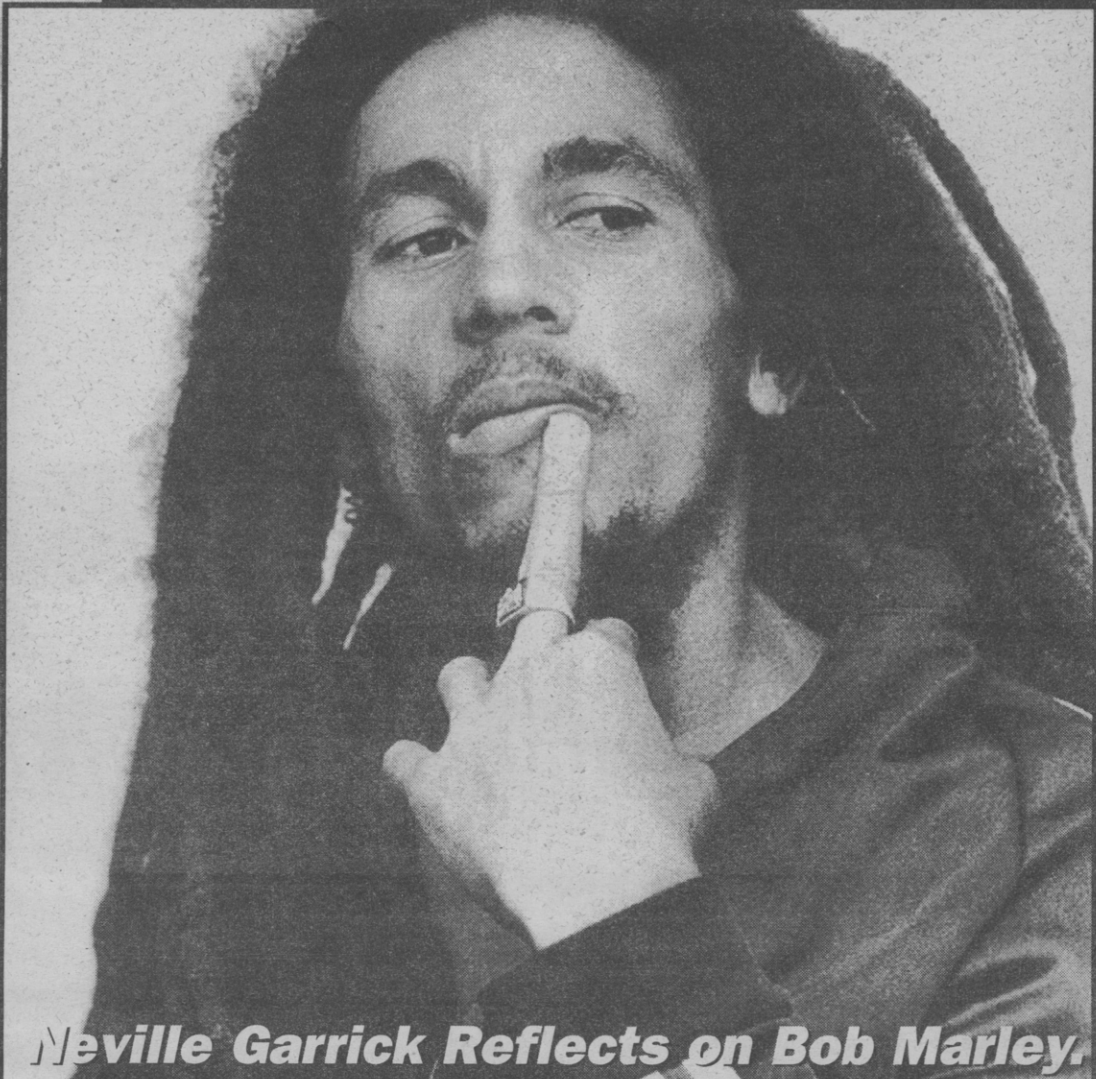
"I think you can answer that question for yourself. Wouldn't you be upset? Yes, he was, but he knew [he had to leave], for the protection of his own life."

"You listen to the words from 'Running Away' on *Kaya*, that's speaking to that issue a little bit — 'I'm not running away, please don't say that' — but it says: 'It's difficult to live in a house full of confusion, so I left you.' [Those were] poetic ways of [referring] to that shooting."

Marley was not seriously injured. He simply turned sideways to the bullets — he "made himself small", an eyewitness later said. His manager, at his side, was seriously injured.

"I think it was something that changed him, because when someone makes an assassina-

Hit Me With Music



Neville Garrick Reflects on Bob Marley.

tion attempt on you, then there's a lot of re-evaluation you have to go through in your own life, to pick up why this would happen to you and what you do to deal with it."

But he was so loved by many. Why was someone angry with him?

"My interpretation of it was political entrapment, which a lot of people have seen. The whole thing came about when Bob wanted to do a free concert for the people of Jamaica. He met with the government to facilitate this. When Bob approached them, [the idea] was basically co-opted. The Prime Minister's office said: 'Great idea. We'll do all the promotion, all you'll have to do is just rehearse.'"

"When the Prime Minister Manley called an election for about 10 days after the concert, people started to read into it that Bob would be politically supporting the government party. That was basically the driving reason why we were attacked. It was misinterpreted that Bob was taking a side. Bob being a folk hero, if it looked like Bob was leaning to either side, they would get the endorsement of the people. Whereas Bob was saying: 'I neither go left, I neither go right, Rasta go straight ahead.' So, he never was endorsing the PNP, but it appeared that way to the opposition party. As a result, he was attacked."

Does Ziggy Marley carry Bob's mantle?

"Ziggy carries that torch in his own way. He's a prolific songwriter, like his father. In terms of the style in which Bob wrote, dealing with social consciousness, Ziggy is right on target. He has done more to glorify his father's name. He's followed in his footsteps in his own style. He's from a different generation from Bob; he couldn't be like Bob reincarnated, but Ziggy is, for this time."

Were Bob Marley's pre-Island recordings important?

"Bob recorded, especially with the Wailers, a wealth of great songs before his Island days, which he did go back into the past and rerecord again. The first two CDs on *Songs Of Freedom* are all pre-Island Records; they're very important, from the very first song he wrote, 'Judge Not'."

What one lyric means the most to you from Bob's work?

"I keep getting asked this question, maybe a million times, and I answer: 'I love all of the songs, but one of the most important songs and lyrics is 'Redemption Song'.' I think the most important line in [that] song is: 'Emancipate yourself from mental slavery / None but ourselves can free our minds.' I think [that] is a very powerful, charged statement, which if people really take seriously, universally, not just Jamaica or just black people, [says] that you can't keep blaming other people. Even though others may have misjudged you in the past and did you wrong, it's up to you to free

yourself. The whole freedom thing now is not necessarily that you're a slave by chains, but more mental slavery, because people are now programmed by television and what you have out there — it's a more soft means of slavery. I think: 'Emancipate yourself from mental slavery,' is the most important line, followed up by: 'None but ourselves can free our minds.' You can't expect somebody else to free your mind."

I express my concern about tracks being completed after an artist's death, but note how 'Iron Lion Zion' is now enjoyed as a classic Marley song of celebration.

"I think he would have liked it. It was something scary, but I think a good job was done."

On the subject of 'Iron Lion Zion', Neville is enthusiastic about Marley's latest incarnation.

"Are you aware of the Bob Marley comic put out by Marvel comics? There's a series of three — one called Iron, one called Lion and one called Zion — there are three parts."

Do you think Bob achieved all his ambitions?

"It would be difficult for me to know what were Bob's ambitions. It would be 'in my opinion'. When Bob passed he was so young, at 36, he was not finished what he was about to do. He was on the peak of real success, internationally."

"But when I look back now, I think he did his work and he did his work well, and he didn't necessarily have to write another song, because 14 years after he has passed we still appreciate his songs, and they still have very meaningful lyrics."

"For example, the *Songs of Freedom* photo exhibition is now in Bosnia, which I think is remarkable. It was taken there by two firemen from Essex in England. It's the only exhibition they've had in that war torn country in years, and the radio station is playing 'War and So Much Trouble in the World'."

"What I'd like to ask you is, I noticed that when we were there in New Zealand, besides the welcome we got from, I think, the Maori Indians, there were also some radical Black Power groups that came to visit Bob while we were there for that brief stay. Are there still militant groups seeking civil rights in New Zealand?"

Garrick's question leads to a brief discussion of the Moutoa gardens protest, after which he says: "That means they're still very active. That's good to hear. That would make Bob happy. When we came there, he was treated as a real hero by them, based on the strength of what he'd sung about 'get up, stand up', and lyrics like that. That's good to hear, as we don't get much news about that kind of thing happening in New Zealand, in Jamaica."

MURRAY CAMMICK