

Cover Story: The Family, The Mission and the Music of Ziggy Marley

National Standards: 7-8, 11

The amalgam of the reggae music beat, the lyrics of protest against oppression and of love and unity, Jamaican culture and Rastafarian spirituality came together in the music of Bob Marley and a group of 70's era Jamaican musicians. This music and message spread around the world and has influenced popular music over the intervening decades.

Marley died of cancer at age 36, but remains a world music icon, with his music selling and played consistently. His large family has been musically prolific and entrepreneurial. His eldest son plays his own original music as well as the music of his father. He has been an active philanthropist, a supporter of education, good nutrition and children's causes. His latest release is a children's album, his second.

All of these strands are interwoven in this In Tune story, but the essential lesson is of the existence of reggae music and its cadence, along with Bob Marley's positive lyrics on songs like, "Get Up, Stand Up," "Redemption Song," and "Positive Vibration" in addition to love songs.

Note: Rastafarians consider "ganja" or marijuana to be a "holy herb" but our story doesn't mention this any more than we would the excessive use of alcohol or other lifestyle choices of artists – including the iconic composers of the 18th and 19th centuries. The greatest extent possible, our focus is on the music.

Prepare

Choose a reggae song to play or recommend, identifying the rhythm at the heart of the song. Offer a short history of Jamaica, from colonialism and slavery to the island's independence from Great Britain as well as music's role in rallying the people in a quest for freedom. Discuss 70's reggae and how English and American musicians adopted the form.

Key points in the article:

- Record label owner Chris Blackwell "discovered" Bob Marley and his original group The Wailers popularizing reggae music around the world.
- The cult movie "*The Harder They Come*" brings a visual tapestry of Jamaican life and Eric Clapton covers Marley's "I Shot The Sheriff" further injecting reggae into western popular culture.
- Marley's large family carries on his legacy, with eldest son Ziggy becoming a celebrity artist in his own right. Ziggy, his mother and his family establish a foundation to support children's causes, and he becomes known as a "family man."
- Ziggy records many albums of reggae music and wins awards throughout his career. He also records music for children.
- Ziggy and his siblings' touring and recording help keep reggae's music popular and continues to promote their father's music.

Begin

Review vocabulary words from the article below:

- **SKENGAY** - a guitar technique that makes the key reggae sound
- **ENLIGHTENMENT**: to awaken to knowledge or truth
- **PLEASANTRIES**: an agreeable playfulness in conversation: banter.
- **UNIFICATION**: the bringing together of people or concepts around a central idea
- **CORRUGATED**: of a material, surface, or structure) shaped into alternate ridges and grooves.
- **SCION**: a descendant of a successful or influential family

Discuss

- Have an open conversation about the appeal of reggae music and how some of the modern artists like Gwen Stefani and her original band No Doubt, Jason Mraz and Stevie Wonder have written and performed their own reggae songs.
 - Benefits could be:
 - An alternate form of rock and pop, giving artists in those genres a chance to diversify their albums and sound.
 - Drawbacks could be:
 - A sameness, as the reggae “flavor” is easily identified and relatively constant.

Play the video of Ziggy’s performance (embedded in the story) in celebration of his father’s 75th anniversary.

Play the video of Bob Marley performing live.

Ask

- What makes Ziggy Marley unique in today’s music industry?
- What is special about his children’s music?

Now play a song from Toots and the Maytals, Burning Spear or No Doubt. Then play a reggae song by Jason Mraz.

- How does the sound of Jason Mraz’s song differ from Bob Marley’s?

Expand

Now play the song “Three Little Birds” by Bob Marley and have students analyze the meaning of the lyric.

- Why does Marley suggest that there’s no value in worry?
- Relate the idea of “not worrying” to a brief summary of mindfulness.

Q&A

1. Who is the target audience for Marley’s latest album?
2. How is reggae defined in the article?
3. What sort of rhythm does the genre of ska employ?
4. When do guitar strums occur in reggae music?
5. Who covered Bob Marley’s “I Shot the Sheriff” in 1974?
6. How many albums does Ziggy Marley have as a solo artist?
7. Name at least two artists who are featured on Ziggy Marley’s latest album.
8. Did these artists co-write the songs with Marley?
9. What type of shows is Marley planning to put on in order to promote his new album?
10. According to Marley, what is the essence of reggae music?

Answers

1. Children
2. A style of popular music that originated in Jamaica in the late 1960s
3. A heavy four-beat rhythm driven by drums, bass guitar, electric guitar, and the “scraper,” a corrugated stick that is rubbed by a plain stick
4. On the up-beats of off beats
5. Eric Clapton
6. 15
7. Ben Harper, Alanis Morissette, Busta Rhymes and Sheryl Crow and Angelique (Kidjo)
8. No, they only performed them on the recording.
9. Drive-in shows