

**O**n a balmy Friday afternoon, April 5, 1991, I met with the Melody Makers at L.A.'s Century Plaza Hotel. They were in town shooting a video of "Kozmik," the first single from their new album, *Jahmekya*. Traveling with two other Marley children, young Robert and muscular Rohan, the next generation of Marleys were in a playful mood, happy to be away from the pressures of touring for the moment and excited about their new project, the first with their new all-Jamaican band. The cast of characters shifted constantly over the course of an hour and a half, so certain questions were left unasked. The result is a scattershot look at their father through their eyes, 10 years later, and how papa's lessons are being passed on to their own children, including Stephen's new son, Joseph.

INTERVIEW BEGINS ON NEXT PAGE

# Bob, our father.



PHOTO COURTESY OF ROGER STEFFENS REGGAE ARCHIVES

At least seven of Bob Marley's children are visible on stage at Miami's Gusman Hall in a birthday tribute to him on Feb. 6, 1982.

**ROGER STEFFENS:** Would you compare two experiences for me? First going to Zimbabwe in 1980, then 10 years later going to Namibia and you're the headliner this time, you and the Melody Makers—what was that like?

**STEPHEN MARLEY:** Well, nice experience still but it never come as nothing new to us because we experience Zimbabwe before, at a much younger age too. So it never really come in a way weh something new, but it feel good.

**ROGER:** Was it the same size crowd?

**STEPHEN:** Big crowd!

**ROGER:** I heard you and Sonny Okosun were the headliners. An all-day concert, your mom told me. So what was it like? How long did you perform and what was the people's reaction?

**STEPHEN:** People dem love it because we tell the truth. See, right now, long time we say, "Africa fe free all about." And we is black people, and people dem love we.

**ROGER:** You did "Get Up, Stand Up" and "War."

**STEPHEN:** "No More Trouble."

**ROGER:** And you did a little toasting.

**STEPHEN:** Yeah. "Look Who's Dancing."

**ROGER:** Did you have a chance to see any of the country when

happening for you and your family?

**STEPHEN:** Yeah, well, we're working towards [it] from ever since.

**ROGER:** Where would you like to go in Africa?

**STEPHEN:** All over. I want Africa like anywhere else, where you can go anywhere free. Homeland. Just like in America you can go to Santa Re and go to Miami freely, you don't have this or that. That is how me want to see it.

**ROGER:** You've changed a lot since the last time we sat down to talk. I can see you've begun to grow locks? Or you just haven't had a haircut for a while?

**STEPHEN:** Both, both!

**ROGER:** Have you thought about locksing up?

**STEPHEN:** Yeah mon, me a locksmen.

**ROGER:** What was the turning point for you?

**STEPHEN:** Long time! From a longer time, I mean, turning point. Me born in this thing here, we know it. So is not a turning point.

**ROGER:** But is it a vow?

**STEPHEN:** Yeah mon! And the time of decision is not really turning, 'caw we don't turn. I wasn't a wrongdoer, see me. So is just acceptance and say yes, you think you're ready for this responsibility so you take it.

**STEPHEN:** No, no! Not to me neither. But it's true. You have all sorts of levels, you have this level, you have that level, you come down. Is just a low level of this thing but we not going to reject it. 'Cause is we, is we the people, is our thing that. Reggae music is people music. Anyone. Is not like classic or jazz where is only certain people. Anyone music. Don't run no wire fence. Or prejudice. But then again, me personally, me no really like [it]. That is not the message right now what need to get across. We see this thing happen over and over in different forms, and the people no really accept fe dem own people. So we not surprised. We just come fe do what we come fe do.

**ROGER:** Another change in your life is that you're a father.

**STEPHEN:** Yeah.

**ROGER:** What's the child's name?

**STEPHEN:** Joe.

**ROGER:** Joseph! Did you have your father in mind when you called him Joseph? Because so many people thought of your father as Joseph.

**STEPHEN:** Must, must!

**ROGER:** What's the whole name?

**STEPHEN:** Joseph and the rest. Joseph Robert Nesta Marley.

**ROGER:** When was he born?

**STEPHEN:** March oneth or twoth, some of them days there.

**ROGER:** Bob had at least 12 children. Does it ever come to you like you are the disciples? I mean, Bob had his own 12 apostles, he made them!

**STEPHEN:** All right, sometime this happen when we sit down together and we really check out one another. Him have this thing where him good at this, and he's good at . . . we say, he knew what he was doing when he was making us.

**ROGER:** Do you ever talk among the bunch of you about what tendency each of you might represent? Like the Twelve Tribes supposedly represents the 12 tendencies.

**STEPHEN:** Yeah, that's what I was just saying. When you check out his qualification, Bob and Rohan, everyone of us lead up to this thing.

**ROGER:** Do you know the rap song by Bob called "Black Progress"?

**STEPHEN:** Yeah.

**ROGER:** Did you ever consider doing that?

**STEPHEN:** Yeah. As a matter of fact, we was a go do it 'pon this album here.

**ROGER:** Who decided to do "Rainbow Country" on the new album?

**STEPHEN:** We. We decide everything together.

## Ziggy: Biggest lesson we learn from Gong is to be strong and watching things around. Just to be strong. Even in the face

you were there?

**STEPHEN:** Yeah, actually we was kinda staying in the country. Far, far from the city. It nice. We go watch some man shoot some wild cow. You know, experience a little of this life and a little of that life.

**ROGER:** So much of what your father sang about and so much of what the Melody Makers continue to sing about is an African consciousness, isn't it?

**STEPHEN:** Inborn concepted.

**ROGER:** Does it involve repatriation, physically moving back to Africa?

**STEPHEN:** Yeah, mon!

**ROGER:** Do you foresee that ever

**ROGER:** To me, reggae is music that has to have a message. Does it bother you that so many young people back home in Jamaica seem to be ignoring the message of Rastafari these days?

**STEPHEN:** All right. Message now. Me is a person weh you know my father and you know real message. But you have all sort of message. 'Caw if me tell you seh, this thing ain't happenin'. That is a message me a tell you weh—so you can't really seh this punanny is nothin', 'caw it's a true thing. It's true!

**ROGER:** But it's not very uplifting.

**ROGER:** That's a heavy responsibility. How does it feel?

**STEPHEN:** Feel good, mon.

**ROGER:** What lessons you've learned from your father do you feel are really worth passing along to your own children?

**STEPHEN:** Personal lessons? Well, just the way we were brought up. I couldn't really say . . . I can, but, a lot of things. Just the way we are here together.

**ROGER:** Unity is strength.

**STEPHEN:** Yeah. It never really have this one here and Robert there, although we had different mothers and things, no! Togetherness.

**ROGER:** You now have three ex-Wailers in your band—Vision, Tyrone Downie and Chinna Smith, all of whom were Wailers at different times.

**STEPHEN:** Yeah mon. The whole a we are Wailers.

**ROGER:** Oh yes! So tell me the difference between the new band and Dally.

**STEPHEN:** Difference is Jamaican musicians we using now, full. Which them grow inna de music weh we deal with, and as you say, three Wailers what you know of in deh, so them come from my father and re-re. We no really fly far from the blocks, so is the same

thing we need, same kind of vibes feel in music, everything. Dem just right.

**ROGER:** What does Bob Marley mean 10 years after, in May 1991? Who is Bob Marley to the world in your opinion, Stephen?

**STEPHEN:** To the world? Gong say we not to listen to what people say you know. We only know what him mean to we.

**ROGER:** Then tell me what he means to you 10 years later.

**STEPHEN:** Me couldn't tell you that.

**ROGER:** Do you ever hear him in your head?

**STEPHEN:** Yeah mon. All the while.

**ROGER:** What does he say to you?

**STEPHEN:** "Jah Live," "One Love," all sort of thing.

**ROGER:** Just before he passed, he said to you, "Money can't buy life."

**STEPHEN:** Yeah, that was a song.

**ROGER:** When are you going to sing it?

**STEPHEN:** When?

**ROGER:** Do you plan to record it sometime?

**STEPHEN:** Yeah mon, we're going to do it.

**ROGER:** Was it a fully worked-out song?

**STEPHEN:** No, just that him say. Just sing that song there. Said,

time in Jamaica Rastafarian start dread, originally it have a whole heap fe do with the identity. That is how we originate, you understand, before any white man ever talk about Rastafari or anything. It was originally from the roots. So that alone me a say, now, that the original was from I and I as black man. And me know seh that if a man stay away in America, and you expect say him can feel same thing what we a go feel in Jamaica when it comes to Rastafarianism, a man might just think me a talk about just dread. 'Cause people, me read it, and sometimes it seems as if they thought I was just talking about dreadlocks. But me a talk about Rastafari.

**ROGER:** It was the vow of the Nazarite that you were talking about, as opposed to fashion dreads.

**ZIGGY:** Yeah, you understand me.

**ROGER:** So if a white man sights up Rasta and grows locks, you have nothing against him?

**ZIGGY:** Not against him, no.

**ROGER:** The new album has some real different sounds on it. Is that KRS-1's doing?

**ZIGGY:** No, that a Melody Makers still. 'Caw what it was we did go out for with this album, to make it different; that we haffe try to keep the music interesting to people, not just have it sound

**ZIGGY:** Me nuh know.

**SHARON:** We had a lot of good people around us. Auntie was there, and she kind of take up the reins and bring us up certain way that. Parents being away, they used to write and so on. We didn't realize they were away until they came back and we didn't have to go to school today because Bob and mommy coming home.

**ROGER:** Cedella, tell me about the lessons you learned from Bob.

**CEDELLA:** Oh, not to go anywhere! We could not go anywhere. It was like: "Don't go anywhere. You don't really need too many friends." And it's true. At that time when you're growing up everybody wants to have thousands of friends, but we weren't allowed to.

**ROGER:** Did you resent that?

**CEDELLA:** Of course! You're a child, you want to be able to run across the street. We had to sneak across the street when Daddy was gone. And it was like, everytime he would get back he would know.

**ROGER:** Well, he chased Ziggy one time, beat him, and then he bought you ice cream?

**ZIGGY:** [Laughs] Yeah.

**CEDELLA:** You know, he does things like that. I think it's true, because sometimes when you have . . . you can never trust a lot of friends. You know, "man to

using "Tomorrow People" as a graduation song? They're singing it like it's some real happy thing—"we're tomorrow people"—and then I read that you wrote it about robots! [Much laughter]

**CEDELLA:** Everybody has their own meaning because I didn't think he wrote it about robots.

**ZIGGY:** Well, yeah. Hear how me write it now. And it good, you know, because that is why music is not only a personal thing, everybody make up dem own mind 'pon what you saying. And not even me sometime know exactly what me saying, because somebody might think something else.

**ROGER:** Bob said the messenger carries the message but he doesn't always understand the content of the message he carries.

**ZIGGY:** Yeah. So, when me did write this now, me a think about all the scientific things that was going on. At the time, we was hearing about how them going to replace human beings with, how you call them? Something or another in the work place. And I was saying that these things don't have no past, becaw' them don't come from nowhere, so dem no have no future. Is just that still.

**ROGER:** Even that line, it's a pretty straightforward line: "You don't know your past, you don't know your future," and to have a

## still. Though not by any verbal teaching but just by living life of death, as them would say, you haffe be strong.

"Money can't buy life," and say, "You fe deal with it." Yeah. He will do the rest.

[Ziggy, Cedella and Sharon Marley enter the room.]

**ROGER:** Last fall, in Boulder, I found this button and I wore it today especially for you, Ziggy. It says, "The world is not ready for white people with dreadlocks."

**ZIGGY:** [Laughs]

**ROGER:** Have you been reading the letters in *The Beat*? Do you have any comment? Were you misinterpreted initially?

**ZIGGY:** Misinterpreted? Me nuh know. Maybe . . . What me really try fe deal with is that, any-

the same way every time. We want create and create.

**ROGER:** What lessons that you all [Cedella, Sharon and Ziggy] had from Bob as a father do you want to pass along to your own children?

**ZIGGY:** Biggest lesson we learn from Gong is to be strong still. Though not by any verbal teaching but just by living life and watching things around. Just to be strong. Even in the face of death, as them would say, you haffe be strong.

**ROGER:** Bob and Rita were away a lot of your childhood. How did that affect you?

man is so unjust/. . . your worst friend" bla bla. So it's true. So I think that would be one of my main things, because people can be unkind. Even your own friends. 'Cause I've had friends that want to be my friends for different reasons. If it's not to get introduced to Ziggy it's just to come to my house or meet Sharon, whatever. So you can be used and abused by friends, and I think that's what he was trying to let us know from such a long age. So that's one thing I would teach the kids.

**ROGER:** Are you aware of the fact that people all over the world are

bunch of kids graduating from high school, the whole class is singing "Tomorrow People."

**SHARON:** They're singing their interpretation of it. Because even in Jamaica they use it for some commercials.

**ROGER:** Without your permission?

**SHARON:** [Laughs] Yeah mon.

**ROGER:** They don't ask for permission in Jamaica, do they?

**SHARON:** No. [Laughs]

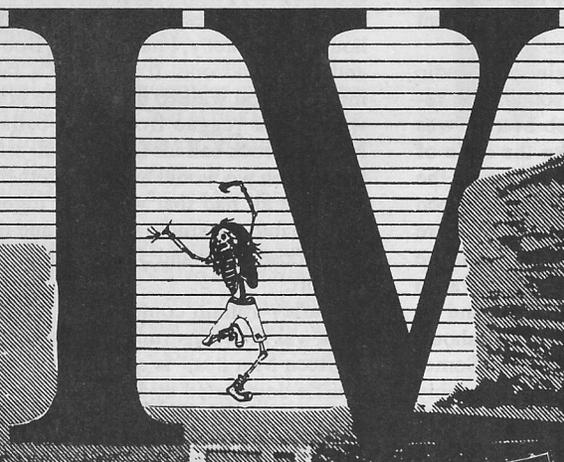
**ROGER:** Can I ask each of the three of you the same question now? We're coming up to 10 years after Bob's passing. What

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MELODY MAKERS *Continued from page 41*

PHOTO BY EDDIE GARCIA



Ziggy and Stephen Marley at a press conference in Los Angeles at the start of the Melody Makers' *One Bright Day* tour.

does Bob Marley mean to you, and what do you think he means to the world in May 1991, 10 years later?

**ZIGGY:** He mean the same thing weh him always mean to me. He's a father and an inspiration fe continue doing the music, and struggling fe see the freedom of black people, and fe continue to see the unity of all people. So he give me inspiration still as my father. But not only as my father, but as a man like Marcus Garvey. Not only as my blood, but somebody who me look up to as that type of person who give me inspiration fe do what me a do. And so it go for the whole world. Gong was a man who him music still mean a lot to everybody out in the world there. And it still up to date, it not outdated.

**CEDELLA:** To me, it's still daddy. It's still, "Don't do that." [Laughs] But to other people, to the world, daddy is almost like a force. I realize that sometimes when people talk about him. It's like I don't really realize what they're talking about because I didn't see that part of him. When you're growing up with your father, he's just your father. And maybe those things that he did, they all seem natural to me, the natural thing for him to do. But to other people it was like, "Wow!" I think he was a really nice guy, a really nice person, and I think even up

to this day, especially with the release of his new album, it's good. I can imagine what the Grammy's going to look like this year. A bunch of Wailers. And mommy's getting her new album out.

**ROGER:** Can you imagine that, if all five reggae nominees end up like Melody Makers, Bunny, Bob, Rita, maybe Andrew Tosh again. Sharon, what about Bob 10 years later?

**SHARON:** Ten years later, you see, Bob and mommy has always been examples for me. I was always the eldest, so I always saw things in a more mature sense, and even now it's still helping to open my eyes to certain things that I learned from their life. Things I hear. People I see that used to be around them, and I know that they say, "Well, we were good friends and me and Bob used to do this," and I'm saying, "But look at that!" These are all the people who say they were friends with Bob, and now look at them. So it teaches me not to really put your whole into one—don't really trust anybody totally. You must always have that reservation. That's what he's still teaching me at this day. Never trust a person with your whole. Always leave that little bit to cover yourself.

**CEDELLA:** Yeah, is like, if you needed anything, you could always get it in the family. ★