

TONY MEDINA

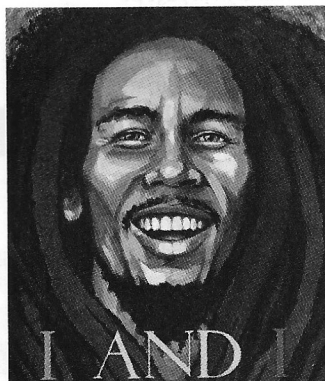
I AND I: BOB MARLEY
(Lee and Low, 2009. 48 pp.)

I and I is a visual feast, a collection of poems in Bob Marley's own voice, geared toward children. The poems are concise compositions from the pen of Tony Medina, a teacher of Creative Writing at D.C.'s Howard University. His words are supple and succinct, tracing Bob's earliest days in Nine Mile (here called Nine Miles), Jamaica through his emergence to international prominence. Regarding Marley's father, Norval, the poet writes:

*Papa is a white man
so I've been told
My face a map of Africa
in Europe's hold*

The paintings by the gifted artist Jesse Joshua Watson are compelling full-page brightly colored glimpses of Bob's trod. Watson has Bob's image down cold, a fine accomplishment in a world where many caricatures of the reggae legend fail to capture him properly. His imaginings of the light-skinned "red boy" as a child seem accurate, despite the fact that no known images from Bob's childhood have ever surfaced.

Watson gets the general outlines of the story pretty well, but there are some "facts" that are not accurate. Trench Town is two words, not one. The Soulettes did not become the I Three (spelled incorrectly throughout as I Threes). He refers curiously to ska's "slow beat." Joe Higgs did not introduce the Wailers to Coxson Dodd at Studio One, it was Seeco Patterson who did. Bob's father was not British, but Jamaican born. Bob was shot two days before the Smile Jamaica concert, not a week. The singer was 32 when his foot was injured in Europe, not 28. And the use of "Rastafarianism" is not only inaccurate, but offensive to many



Rastas, who prefer either Rasta or Rastafari when referring to the faith, because Rasta stands in contra-distinction to all "isms."

These are minor quibbles however, and the book is a lovely addition not only for a children's library but for all those who love the ongoing iconography of reggae's most profound proponent.

[leeandlow.com]

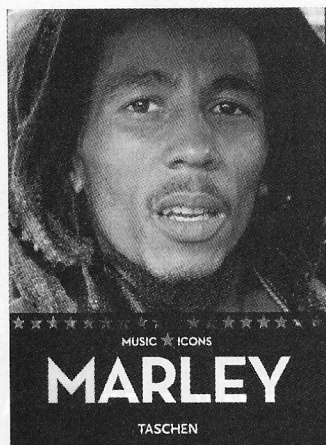
—Roger Steffens

**LUKE CRAMPTON
AND DAFYDD REES**

MUSIC ICONS: MARLEY
(Taschen, 2009. 192 pp.)

Taschen Books is highly regarded worldwide for its comforting combination of high quality at low prices. Everything from the erotic to high art and architecture, to thousand-dollar collectors items is underpinned by a commitment to graphic excellence and verbal edutainment.

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BOOK BEAT

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The latest in the *Music Icons* series honors Bob Marley with hundreds of gorgeously reproduced photos, many seen here for the first time, and a formidable timetable of his life's major events, plus an illuminating chart history of all of Bob's U.S. and U.K. rankings. (Full disclosure: I vetted the text for accuracy, and contributed six pages of illustrations.) The short paragraphs that run throughout the portably-small book are printed in English, German and French. They serve as a succinct and emotionally accurate mini-bio making this a great gift for all those solid reggae fans who want to make Marley's immortal works more widely known and overstood.

A terrific and vibrant addition to the proselytizing literature.

[www.taschen.com/pages/en/catalogue/popculture/all/05260/facts.bob_marley.htm]

—Roger Steffens

lowed N'Dour closely through Dakar, Cairo, Fes (Morocco), New York, and various European cities over something like three years to create this film. It handles N'Dour's historical biography succinctly, and comes to focus on the creation and problematic roll-out of his Grammy Award-winning 2004 release, *Egypt*. N'Dour's artful meditation on Islam has a more reflective mood and orchestral sound than his standard fare, and its music dominates the film. N'Dour's tried and true mbalax sound and his progressive rock/pop experiments mostly take a back seat. But the story of *Egypt* turns out to be an unexpectedly riveting tale, largely because the Senegalese public, and Senegalese religious authorities, initially reject the music and the impulse behind it.

Yousou N'Dour is one of Africa's most accomplished musicians, a man who understands media, business, the recording industry, the challenges of pleasing different factions of a multinational audience—in short, he is master of a very complex game. So it is most compelling to see him, in real time, faced with circumstances beyond his control and deeply threatening to his stature as an artist and public figure. Vasarhelyi could not have hoped for such profound drama. Better still—and I will give nothing away—is watching how N'Dour manages to turn this most prickly of predicaments around. He proves his ingenuity and greatness before our eyes.

Another marvelous aspect of the

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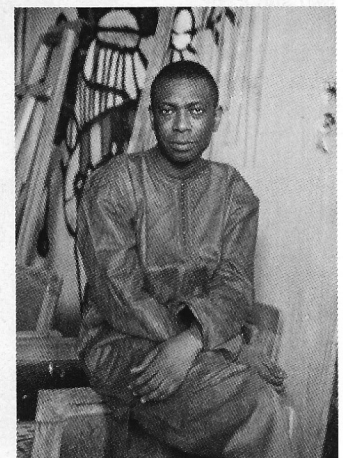
YOUSSOU N'DOUR

I BRING WHAT I LOVE

A film by Elizabeth Chai Vasarhelyi

Films about world music stars often have a too predictable feel about them. They generally present a colorful mix of star-sanctioned biography, publicist-friendly praise and testimony, some down-home material for leavening, and a bang-up concert finale. In the case of Yousou N'Dour, already the subject of at least three films, the bar is that much higher. For all these reasons, *I Bring What I Love* is a standout, a film that genuinely teaches us new things about an iconic African artist, his music, and his world, and—I particularly love this part—a film that delivers surprises that the filmmaker could never have pre-calculated or even imagined in advance.

Elizabeth Chai Vasarhelyi fol-



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