

## Changing the World: *Bob Marley: One Love*

Colm ó Cionnaith  
April 7, 2024



“Bob Marley: One Love” is a film I had greatly anticipated, but probably I’m the last person who should write a review, so besotted was I, no doubt along with much of my generation (“Xers”), by Marley, since coming into contact with his hypnotic reggae beat in the mid-1980s.



*Colm ó Cionnaith*

Since then, of course, and after playing the obligatory (since its release in the 1980s) “Legend” greatest hits album to death, I have not had that much interaction with Marley, apart from admiring his image in Dalymount Park, Dublin, where our local club, Bohemian FC, cherishes its connections to historical figures who played there, such as Bob.

However this movie is very much for the music fan, which might disappoint some who might have been eager to get deeper into the politics or even the spirituality of Bob Marley, the “Godfather of Reggae.”

The story focuses on a short period in Marley’s life, from just before his attempted assassination in Jamaica in 1976 to his premature death at 36 in 1981. The opening scenes teleport us into a Jamaica erupting in political turmoil as opposition parties are causing the nation to explode in violence and unrest.

Marley is portrayed throughout the film as a potential unifier and peacemaker, as he attempts to headline a “Smile Jamaica” concert in an effort to bring some healing and unity to the post-colonial tropical nation, still trying to forge an independent identity. His sweet, soulful, music and powerful gospel lyrics seem to point to him as a putative messianic figure of sorts, who might bring the island nation together, if only they can “Catch the Fire” of his inspired message rather than the one that threatens to burn everything down.

However, in the early scenes we learn that neither he nor Jamaica are ready for this message: divisions are still too raw and his levels of self-doubt don’t yet permit him to transcend his normal human needs for self-preservation and success.

Enter the legendary Chris Blackwell, pioneer owner of the small Island record label, who assembles a team of musicians and support staff around Marley who will launch him to worldwide acclaim, but only after he goes into an exile of sorts in an unsuspecting London, in the throes of Punk and no little racial tension, it seems.

The cross-pollination provided by the Islanders will be central to new musical innovations in other genres: rock, pop, punk, and everything in between as they fuse with reggae, launching one of the most creative and distinctive eras in popular music ever seen from the British Isles, that of the late 1970s and 1980s — notably The Specials, The Police, UB40, and Soul II Soul — waves which carried on into the

1990s with the emergence of Hip Hop, the ripples of which can still be seen today.

Marley's stint in London launches him to global stardom and although he has to deal with the usual problems of success — fidelity, family problems, greed, and artistic integrity, etc. — he is able to achieve greatness for a few short years at least. Nagging away at him, however, is the desire that he should tour Africa, the “land of his faith.” Rastafarianism is an ever-present feature of the film, as you would expect given Marley's background. At times its mix of orthodox biblical hope and redemption (and ganja) threatens to take over the movie.

However, we are brought back out of this marijuana- and “Spirit”-induced “high” just in time, as near the end we see how this “Black Messiah” redeems himself (any more info and I'd be giving away spoilers). Even though we know how this ends, watching the film is “all about the journey” as the cliché goes, “not the destination.”

As a music fan, I adored the faithful rendition of tunes I have loved for so long and was never bored. As a movie fan, I could see that the story was interesting, while not captivating, cleverly showing the political environment from which Marley emerged without getting too much into detail, which might distract from his greatness as an artist. While virtue signalers and woke warriors everywhere will no doubt be let down by this aspect, I was thrilled that my precious memories of the man and his music haven't been prostituted or sold to the highest bidder like so much art is today.

The cast gives excellent performances, especially the lead, Kingsley Ben-Adir, who seems to have been born to play “Skipper” Marley. Given that he resembles Marley so well in appearance, he exuded a confidence that allowed him to give a laid-back performance, without ever having to overly exert himself. A Londoner of Trinidadian parents and Jewish converts, Ben-Adir was incredibly fluent (at least to my admittedly untrained ear) in the *patois* of the musical Jamaican “language,” which is always very enjoyable to listen to and evokes in me, at least, a deep spiritual culture of joy, pain and longing for the “original homeland,” a recurring theme of Afro-Caribbean, Jamaican and reggae culture.

As a Unificationist, I must confess that I had, a little shamefully, overlooked Marley as being one of the pantheon of what I like to call the “Cultural John the Baptist figures,” *à la* the Beatles, Elvis, Mohammed Ali, and Bruce Lee. This might have been due to Marley not living long enough. If nothing else, this movie reminded me of the necessity of his inclusion into that group.

Marley certainly had a charismatic swagger and a message of truth, giving much hope and joy to many people. His legacy is a kind one and overall shows a positive image of a man of faith and of faith in general. Even if Rastafarianism is not regarded as a “serious” religion by many, it is certainly seen as “cool” by the masses, no doubt due at least in part to the practice of imbibing the “holy” weed.

Nonetheless, if we strip out the “weed,” then it's really nice to see that the “Devil does not have all the good tunes” and that God has a great catalogue if only, like Bob, those talented musicians among us can become the mediums to channel it.



The official trailer for “Bob Marley: One Love” (courtesy Paramount Pictures).

Overall, there is a bit of hagiography, hinting that maybe Marley himself might have been the “Chosen One.” I wasn't too put off by this, as it is a fitting tribute to such an influential figure who opened so

many of us up to, especially in the confrontational monochrome '80s, a bright new world of tolerance and a celebration of the sunshine island culture of his actual homeland, and to the soul of his spiritual homeland.

Perhaps some older Unificationists have been at Marley concerts, especially when he toured Europe from his London base in those few short years when he was at his peak and before he passed. His talent was certainly God-given, and reggae has much to commend it in terms of how the beats allow us to commune, "heavenly" trance like, with the Creator. There is, of course, a whole other subtext to the movie which perhaps calls us to explore more about the nature of Rastafarianism, Black Liberation and Afro-Caribbean spirituality.

"Stolen from Africa, brought to America...": The lyrics of "Buffalo Soldier" especially, but so many other Marley tracks chronicle the poignant pain and suffering of the struggle and journey of Black people and has much more power to win people to this cause, struggle and fight, through its redemptive beauty and transformative power rather than the venomous, retributive approach we see in neo-Marxist "social justice" campaigns, which seem more intent on sowing division and destroying our families and societies. This divisive narrative and "othering" of brothers and sisters based on skin color is the exact opposite to the spirit of the music, if not the rhetoric at least, of Marley's message.

Achingly beautiful tracks such as "Redemption Song" and "No Woman, No Cry" are the "Holy Songs" of many of my generation and, along with the rest of Marley's "canon," should be required reading in any school's history curriculum. While Bob was no messiah and was far from perfect, there is much to admire in his life and legacy, the honoring of which this movie does well. Like Bob, none of us can or are ever likely to claim perfection, but we can do everything possible to ensure we fulfill some sort of successful (no matter how minor) "influencer" role in our communities.

I like to believe that Bob is serving this function in the great beyond today, "jamming" with the other greats and assisting in the "Exodus" to a new Zion of peace and harmony.

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*Colm ó Cionnaith is UPF Secretary General for Ireland and currently an MA candidate in Peace Studies at the HJ International Graduate School for Peace and Public Leadership. He and Yordanka were blessed in marriage in 1998 and reside in Cavan, Ulster, the Northern province of Ireland, where they raised their family of three children.*

"Bob Marley: One Love" (rated PG-13): Running time: 104 minutes. Directed by: Reinaldo Marcus Green; written by: Terence Winter, Frank E. Flowers, Zach Baylin, and Reinaldo Marcus Green. Main cast: Kingsley Ben-Adir, Lashana Lynch, James Norton, Tosin Cole, and Umi Myers. See IMDb for full details. The film is still in theaters, is also for rent or purchase from major streaming services, and will be released on Blu-ray and DVD in late May.

Photo at top: *A movie still from "Bob Marley: One Love" (courtesy Paramount Pictures).*



# Bob Marley: One Love

2024 · PG-13 · 1h 47m

IMDb RATING  
★ 6.4/10  
19K

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Biography Drama Music

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Director [Reinaldo Marcus Green](#)

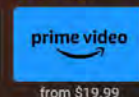
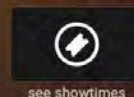
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Stars [Kingsley Ben-Adir](#) · [Lashana Lynch](#) · [James Norton](#)

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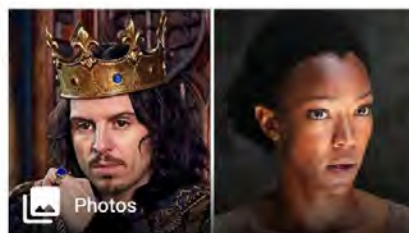


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**Kingsley Ben-Adir**  
Bob Marley



**Lashana Lynch**  
Rita Marley



**James Norton**  
Chris Blackwell



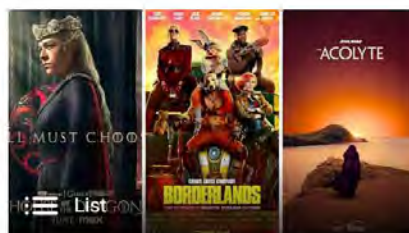
**Tosin Cole**  
Tyrone Downie



**Umi Myers**  
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**Nia Ashi**  
Teen Rita Marley



**Aston Barrett Jr.**  
Family Man Barrett



**Anna-Share Blake**  
Judy Mowatt (as Anna-Shar...



**Gawaine 'J-Summa' Camp...**  
Antonio 'Gillie' Gilbert



**Naomi Cowan**  
Marcia Griffiths



**Alex A-Game**  
Peter Tosh



**Michael Gandolfini**  
Howard Bloom



**Quan-Dajai Henriques**  
Teen Bob Marley



**David Marvin Kerr Jr.**  
Junior Marvin (as David Kerr...



**Hector Donald Lewis**  
Carly Barrett (as Hector Roo...



**Abijah Livingston**  
Bunny Livingston (as Abijah...



**Nadine Marshall**  
Cedella Malcolm

**Director** [Reinaldo Marcus Green](#)

**Writers** [Terence Winter](#) · [Frank E. Flowers](#) · [Zach Baylin](#)

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**Motion Picture Rating (MPA)**

Rated PG-13 for marijuana use and smoking throughout, some violence and brief strong language. >

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**Trivia**

[Bob Marley's](#) son, [Ziggy Marley](#), approved the casting of [Kingsley Ben-Adir](#) as his late father. >

**Goofs**

[Bob Marley](#) calls the USA from a UK payphone in 1977. DDI was available in 1971, but it wasn't available at payphones until 1981, when calling cards became available in the UK. >

**Quotes**

[Bob Marley](#): One love, one heart, one destiny. >

**Crazy credits**

There are several clips of the real Bob Marley from the actual concert depicted in the film as well as clips from press conferences, home movies, etc. being played as the end credits are rolling. Also there are text blocks explaining what happened after the events of the film. >

**Connections**

Featured in [The Project: Episode dated 23 February 2024](#) (2024) >

**Soundtracks**

Redemption Song  
Written by [Bob Marley](#) >  
Published by Fifty-Six Hope Road Music Limited/Primary Wave/Blue Mountain  
Administered by Universal Music Corp. (ASCAP)  
Humming by [Angélique Kidjo](#)

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FEATURED REVIEW

★ 6/10

### An interesting movie, but a bit all over the place

We went to see this movie on a whim and although I am not someone who listens to reggae music, I would like to learn more about it and see what Bob Marley was in our world. The story was not the easiest to follow because it jumped around in time, which isn't usually difficult to follow, but it was in this movie. There were aspects missing that would have brought this movie together much better.

I found I enjoyed the music very much and I did get a sense of why Bob Marley was an important figurehead in the attempt of taking away hate at teaching love to all.

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## Details

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Release date February 14, 2024 (United States)

Country of origin United States

Official site [Official Site](#)

Language English

Also known as *Bob Marley: Một Tình Yêu*

Filming locations [Kingston, Jamaica](#)

Production companies  
[Paramount Pictures](#) · [Plan B Entertainment](#) · [Tuff Gong Pictures](#)

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## Box office

Edit

Gross US & Canada  
\$96,588,635

Opening weekend US & Canada  
\$28,659,004 · Feb 18, 2024

Gross worldwide  
\$176,888,635

## Technical specs >

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Runtime 1 hour 47 minutes

Color Color

Sound mix Dolby Digital

Aspect ratio 2.39 : 1

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