



Like Father, Like Son

***Legend* remixed by sons Ziggy, Stephen
and EDM's hottest names**

by EMILY TRACE

LEGENDS ARE TRICKY; EXALTED, CELEBRATED, they enter the public consciousness in a permanent way and yet, they're rarely as intimidating or untouchable as the word might have us believe. An album that reaches the status of a legend is almost unvaryingly a seminal one, inspiring countless other musicians to create in its wake. And as we've seen from the last decade of superhero and myth-based blockbusters, very few legends are closed off to reinterpretation.

This being said, Ziggy Marley's decision to produce a remix edition of his father's most successful album—in conjunction with brother Stephen and some of electronic dance music's hottest names— must have been a nerve-wracking one. Because there are legends, and then there's *Legend*: the world's best-selling reggae album and the second longest chart-topper

in *Billboard's* history, this 1984 collection of Bob Marley and The Wailer's greatest hits was immeasurably influential on people's lifestyle choices as well as musical tastes. It's a good thing then, that when *Legend: Remixed* drops on June 25, 2013, fans may find that it is as much a reunion as it is a remix.

Though the word "remix" might strike fear into the hearts of Marley purists, Ziggy's commissioned artists that have approached the revered tracks with thoughtful, respectful, and frequently inspired energy. With Stephen Marley and himself tackling some of the biggest hits, the team includes Pretty Lights, RAC, Photek, Beats Antique, and Thievery Corporation, all known for their experience in successfully remixing the work of fellow musicians.

When asked in a recent *Liners* interview about the concept of the album, Ziggy Marley described the approach as "an eclectic expression of artistic pieces that would take the songs somewhere else while respecting the original recordings", and it is this exact balance of respect and innovation that makes much of the album so exciting to listen to.

Ziggy personally remixed "Stir It Up" and "Redemption Song", and the two tracks are such obvious standouts that one can't help but be relieved that he oversaw the production of all the other songs. It's very clear from both tracks that he wasn't thinking of how to make his father's songs "better". What emerges in "Stir It Up" is an introspective, echoing reimagining that retains the relaxing, and subtly sexy overtures of the original, while seamlessly incorporating bluesy techno elements. But it's "Redemption Song" that's his greatest achievement, if only because the original almost never fails to make listeners cry, or at least feel lifted out of hopelessness. Despite the high stakes of remixing such a beloved song, Ziggy Marley knows what he's doing with "Redemption Song", because he's clearly paid attention to what made this piece so powerfully important to fans of multiple generations. His remix delivers every ounce of Bob's emotional content, while adding just the right amount of background percussion and a little Hendrix-esque electric guitar to complement and even enhance the elements that made the original work. It's a bull's-eye if there ever was one.

Stephen Marley is working from the same rulebook; he evidently realized not much can be improved on with "Three Little Birds", because he and Jason Bentley offer very restrained enhancements that groove with the original's simple, refreshing mood. But with "Buffalo Soldier", his skill truly shows as a creative artist who can take electrifying risks. He introduces a very well-timed and poignant piano, and even adds an undertone of contemporary dubstep that works alarmingly well with the reggae elements. It takes a perceptive ear to identify the original's capacity for such an inventive reworking, and a lot of nerve to explore that potential with such a seemingly sacrosanct song. But Ziggy Marley cites his father's own openness to the blending of genres, saying that "from the very earliest times [he] showed a willingness to be inclusive of sounds from the universe of music", and both he and Stephen seem to be very much guided by Bob Marley's belief that "music can't stick to the same t'ing otherwise it become mechanical; music have to be fluent." Mediating deftly

between homage and innovation, the Marley boys' risks have paid off with *Legend: Remixed*.

This isn't to say that the album is perfect. While an overwhelming majority of the songs evince a unified commitment to creatively honouring the reggae icon's work, there are a few tracks that fans will be divided on. Getting playful with the instruments, genre, and general rhythm of the song is expected with remixes, and for the most part, it works very well here. It's only when some of the artists try to change the mood or message of the originals that the album hits a snag. Though he's proved himself with the other tracks he collaborated on, not all fans may appreciate Stephen Marley's reworking of "No Woman, No Cry," which changes out the cosy, sentimental mood of the original for a snappy, upbeat tempo. Similarly, Jason Bentley's rendition of "Is This Love" replaces many of the simple, romantic lyrics with a recording of Bob Marley saying "good music, and dancing music, and good vibrations", which might work in another song but seems somewhat out of place here. It will depend on what is most important to fans about the original versions; you may appreciate hearing the familiar lyrics paired with a different mood, bringing a fresh perspective to the song. Either way, there is more than enough on the album to satisfy practically everyone, regardless of what you're looking for in a remix.

Other standouts include Photek's "One Love", which, like Ziggy Marley's "Stir It Up", gives a heart-warming reggae song a meandering, techno introspectively that achieves the same relaxing tenderness that the original did. But the album isn't overburdened with meditative and emotional tracks; it's interspersed with some refreshingly energetic pieces, such as RAC's "Could You Be Loved", which wisely focuses on the song's catchiness. Adding some compelling synth undertones to the beat and drawing out the vocals on the well-known refrain, making the question "Could you be loved, and be loved?" sound intriguingly rhetorical.

Another highly danceable track is Pretty Lights' "Exodus", which fills in the edges of the original with more complex instrumentals and a very appropriate beat. Like the other effective songs on the album, Pretty Lights doesn't try to colour over the spirit of the original, working *with* Bob Marley's vision instead of obscuring it inside his own ideas. Guided by Ziggy Marley's commitment to the integrity of his father's work, these artists shine because they are specifically *not* trying to outshine their source material. "Nothing will ever be better than the originals, we know that," says Ziggy. "This is just another experience and another way to experience Legend. Enjoy the ride."

Though he is remembered as one of the most iconic and influential figures of the 20th century, his music and lifestyle inspiring literal millions, Bob Marley died before his two oldest sons had a chance to form an adult relationship with him, or work with him beyond the Melody Makers. Perceptively identifying the spirit of the songs and their lyrical substance, they expand rhythmically on the original album's subtext. Because of this, *Legend: Remixed* seems to be a way for Ziggy, Stephen, and some very accomplished fans to pick up where the jam session left off, keeping the legend alive.



Legend: Remixed is available now from Universal Music