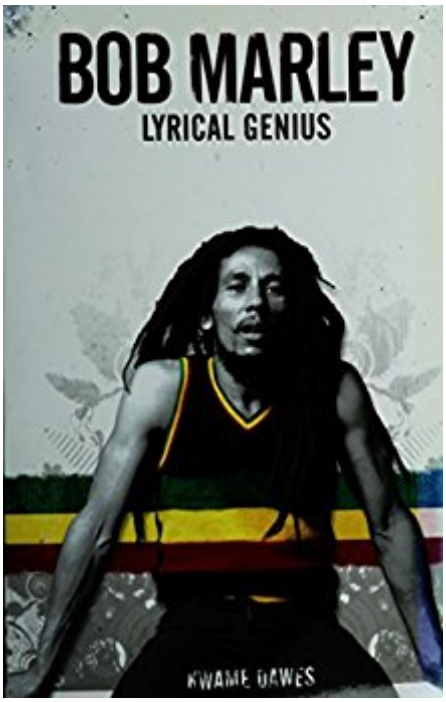
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Bob Marley: Lyrical Genius



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Synopsis

This in-depth analysis of the reggae superstarÃ¢â ¬â„¢s poetry in lyric form delves into the songwriterÃ¢â ¬â„¢s intellect and spirituality with scholarly precision usually more associated with Bob Dylan or John Lennon. Thought of as the folk poet of the developing world, Marley influenced generations of musicians and writers throughout the Western hemisphere. He was a performer who held true to his heritage, yet is still awarded the status of world rock star.Bob Marley: Lyrical Genius features interviews with key people and musicians who knew the man. ItÃ¢â ¬â„¢s the perfect companion to Bob MarleyÃ¢â ¬â„¢s recordings.

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Customer Reviews

Kwame Dawes, as demonstrated in his book on the Reggae Aesthetic (Natural Mysticism, Peepal Press), knows the music, the principal personalities like Marley, understands the Jamaican and Caribbean history out of which Reggae comes, and is himself a fine poet, musician, editor and reviewer. He is one of the founders of the now famous Calabash Literary festival. So this book on

Marley’s lyrics is written from several perspectives by someone familiar with the literary, musical and historical ground. The writing is entertaining, informative, strengthened by absorbing autobiographical touches. Dawes will send you back to the lyrics and music of this great poet/singer/composer that Marley was. Highly recommended.

Fascinating read about some of Bob Marley’s song lyrics and the context in which they developed, written by a Jamaican who grew up watching Bob playing football with friends near his home. Mr. Dawes translates some of the lyrics’ vernacular to explain little puns which a Western reader probably wouldn’t pick up on. The only thing I would change about this book if I could would be to print the lyrics of the songs in the book. The author suggests having them out in front of you when you read, and i really should have done that. I know this is a book I’ll go back and read again and again.

I think this book is great so far. However- whoever published this book needed to have used spell check. I don’t understand how a book could be published with so many misspellings. It is very distracting and is taking away from my enjoyment of the book.

Love it

Thanks for the book! It was delivered on the communicated date!

Bob Marley was clearly a lyrical (not just musical) genius in league with Lennon or Dylan, and it’s about time someone did an in-depth analysis and homage to the words of the master. Kwame Dawes is just the man to do it. He’s a poet by trade with a very lyrical prose style of his own, making this book a very enjoyable and pleasant read. And unlike Western critics who often miss the point of reggae, Dawes is a native Jamaican who came of age during Marley’s most productive era, and even lived in Bob’s neighborhood for a time. Dawes uses his homegrown perspective to extremely good effect throughout this book, showing us that Marley’s work was not as "exotic" or even "groundbreaking" as Westerners usually thought. Instead, it was based solidly in the long-term cultural, political, and musical traditions familiar to real Jamaicans. Dawes also has an even-handed take on Rastafarianism, explaining that it really is a rather undeveloped belief system (even in the eyes of the Rastas themselves), but it lent great strength and willpower to its devotees, most notably Bob himself. Ultimately, Dawes is very passionate about his subject matter, especially in terms of

the background and influences that shaped Marley’s art. But when it comes to analyzing the lyrics, Dawes is often too passionate.Around 80% of this book is dedicated to the lyrics, and the result is an often repetitive and worshipful over-analysis, as Dawes believes that Bob can do absolutely no wrong. On average, songs receive at least four or five pages of line-by-line analysis that is often overkill, maxing out with a very unnecessary sixteen pages for "Concrete Jungle." Dawes often digs deeper into word-by-word coverage, and even syllable-by-syllable in "No Woman No Cry." The problem is that his analyses rely on the unproven assumption that Marley actually put the utmost care into every single word as if he were a straight-ahead poet, rather than a songwriter who also had to worry about rhythms and melodies. Dawes’ contention that every single aspect of a song’s lyrics had the utmost deep meaning really starts to weigh this book down. He even assumes total meaningfulness in the pop/rock clichÃƒÂ©s of lighter-weight songs like "Waiting in Vain."There is also regular conjecture and opinionating on the biblical or cultural references that inspired Marley, and as usual, their weighty significance. This backfires with at least a few noteworthy songs, like the strangely short analysis (just three paragraphs) for "Three Little Birds." In the booklet for the Songs of Freedom box set, Marley is quoted as saying that this song really was inspired by three little birds on his doorstep, but here Dawes unconvincingly makes references to the Trinity with no evidence. Dawes is clearly qualified to tackle this analysis of Marley’s art, but his lofty conceptions of constant significance in the lyrics often threaten to collapse under their own weight. Imagine if someone did an in-depth word-by-word analysis of Dawes’ poetic works. He would surely appreciate the student’s efforts, but would he necessarily agree with that person’s opinions on every single word? [~doomsdayer520~]

This book is remarkable in a few ways. It’s one of the few books on Bob Marley that is written by a Jamaican. It’s one of the few books on Bob Marley that’s written by a black person. And it’s one of the few books that actually pushes the envelope of what we thought we knew about Bob Marley. I have a healthy appreciation for a ’home-grown’ perspective and I’m grateful to read a black Jamaican’s interpretation of Marley’s art and life. There are contributing factors in Marley’s world that are shared by others in similar conditions and of similar make-up. These ’others’ are best equipped to speak on the cause-effect relationship of life to expression. Unfortunately, the myth of "objectivism" lends more credence to a total outsider’s perspective to the detriment of a more intimate account. This author lays that to waste. He doesn’t shy away from discussing Marley as a black man, as a member of a global black identity, as a Jamaican, as a musician, as a Rasta, etc.Kwame Dawes is an excellent writer and he strikes me as someone I’d enjoy sitting down to talk

with. This is dense subject matter and it easily could have turned into an encyclopedia. He condenses a lot of background and tangential relationships into this examination of Marley's poetry, and he does so skillfully. I did feel that the book was a bit rushed near the end, and the last chapter seems to lack some of the polish of previous chapters, but other than that, I have no complaints.I consider myself a fairly good student of The Wailers, and I feel capable of exploring the references and cross-references with others, but I have to submit to Mr. Dawes' superior insight. There were cases where I disagreed with his lyrical interpretation on minor points, or his overlooking of "Bend Down Low" and "Bad Card" (one of my favorite Wailers songs) but for the most part I found myself paying closer attention to ostensibly small nuances of the lyrics and the delivery. I even found myself digging back into my long-forgotten copy of Kaya to re-evaluate my relationship with that album.The most valuable aspect of this book, for me, is it's ability to extract even more mileage from Marley's considerable legacy. The arrangement of the book into Marley's musical "periods" while associated with Island Records is quite interesting. I didn't buy it at first, but the author presents a strong case. His analysis of Confrontation was equally compelling. His ability to reposition 'posthumous' releases into earlier periods gave me a lot to think about and reconsider.We need more books like this, for example, the poetry of both Peter Tosh and Bunny Wailer deserve equal treatment.If you are a Marley fan, do yourself a favor and buy this book, read it cover to cover. Write in it. Mark it up. Disagree with it. Keep it for reference. Then read it again. The only thing that would have improved this book would be an accompanying website for public discussion of the material.

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