

DAMIAN MARLEY Biography

The bustling Halfway Tree area of Kingston, Jamaica is the geographic intersection of the city's uptown and downtown areas, the meeting ground of Kingston's privileged and it's poor.

Damian Marley, the son of Reggae icon Bob Marley and Jamaica's 1977 Miss World Cindy Breakspere is the offspring of a union between two distinctive and disparate worlds.

Damian calls his new album HALFWAY TREE because "my father is from the country and the ghetto and my mother is from uptown so I come like a half way tree, like a bridge because I can relate to both sides." HALFWAY TREE is the first release from the recently signed distribution deal between Motown Records and Ghetto Youths International.

Born in Kingston, Jamaica on July 21, 1978, Damian Robert Nesta Marley a.k.a. "Junior Gong," Bob's youngest son, began performing as a child as the vocalist for a group called The Shepherds. Comprised of other well-known Reggae artists' children including Shiah Coore (son of Third World guitarist Cat Coore) and Yashema Beth McGregor, the daughter of Freddie McGregor and Judy Mowatt, The Shepherds performed at several shows in Jamaica including the Reggae Sunsplash music festival in 1992.

After The Shepherds' demise, Damian turned his vocal talents to deejaying (the Jamaican equivalent of rapping). In 1993 Damian's debut single "Deejay Degree" was released on Tuff Gong Records (the label founded by Bob Marley) and the following year he released "Sexy Girls On My Mind" for the Main Street label.

Damian's next release 1999's "School Controversy" was featured on the Epic\Sony Wonder compilation, POSITIVELY REGGAE with all sales proceeds going to Jamaica's Leaf of Life Foundation, an organization which assists children who are HIV positive. Although he was still a teenager, Damian was selected as the POSITIVELY REGGAE spokesperson, a role that introduced him to the international press and record buying public.

The same year Damian performed at select dates on the Shabba Ranks World Unity tour and with his brother Julian performed at Jamaica's Reggae Sunfest and Sunsplash festivals.

Damian was a high school student when he began recording MR. MARLEY at the Marley Music 48 track-recording studio. Produced by Stephen Marley (head of the Marley Boyz production team), MR. MARLEY delivered a fusion of contemporary Reggae grooves and infectious dancehall rhythms alongside tough edged hip-hop beats, an ideal complement for Damian's versatile deejay-rap style. The album included several updates of Bob Marley classics as well as the single "Me Name Junior Gong" which went to the number one in Hawaii and held that position for several weeks.

"When we went to Hawaii in 1997," Damian recalls, "WP had three songs on the charts there: 'Me Name Junior Gong,' 'One Cup of Coffee' and 'Now You Know,' a tune from Julian's debut album." Damian and Julian's burgeoning popularity earned them featured appearances an the 1997 traveling alternative rock festival Lollapalooza which provided invaluable exposure among a new sector of music fads.

In the five years since MR. MARLEY's release, Damian has matured as a performer, songwriter, recording artist and Rastafarian, his unwavering convictions reflected throughout his new album. Stephen Marley produced HALFWAY TREE for Marley Boyz productions; Stephen's previous production achievements are crowned by 1999's critically acclaimed CHANT DOWN BABYLON featuring Bob Marley in duets with a galaxy of hip hop's brightest stars and selling more than 1 million copies worldwide. Stephen's innovative approach to HALFWAY TREE incorporates spoken word introductions and dramatic vignettes as song interludes, creating a conceptual cohesiveness lacking from most Jamaican albums. Stephen also adapts traditional Reggae elements (forceful drum and baselines, committed social commentary) to 21st century hip hop's synthesized beats and sometimes defiant stances while utilizing the talents of Jamaican

singers, deejays and musicians alongside American rappers, each underscoring Damian's impassioned delivery.

A spoken intro by Bunny Wailer (of the original Wailers), the ghetto grammar of Jamaican deejay Bounty Killer, Treach of rap group Naughty By Nature and Damian's blistering vocal beats unite in their criticism of the "Educated Fools" who continue to brainwash the youth.

Stephen's sung vocals are looped around Damian's deejaying on the haunting "It Was Written," complemented by the combustible talents of Dancehall's arsonist Capleton who along with rapper Dragon assists in burning (lyrical) fire upon the oppressors. The pulse of classical Reggae's drum and bass enhances Damian's sing-jay style throughout "More Justice," a condemnation of the suppression of the Rastafarian sacred herb marijuana. Contemporary percussion patterns inspired by ancestral African drumming provides the sturdy musical foundation for "Give Dem Some Way" which fully supports Damian's hard edged, fast past verse.

A hardcore Jamaican dancehall vibe is represented in "Mi Blenda," a recipe for natural Viagra (or Jamaican "strong back") which might be necessary to satisfy the two women Damian is "Stuck In Between." "Where Is The Love?" conveys a responsible approach to relationships with Ruff Ryders' Eve providing a succinct rap aimed at those who engage in irresponsible sex: "I wish you cats would understand procreation instead of using it as recreation."

Damian abandons those "just for one night fun things" as "an indecent something" on "Still Searching" while the rollicking "Cool and Dandy" with deejay Daddigan is a tribute to the fit and bouncy girls. "She Needs My Love" boasts Jamaica's premier drum and bass duo Sly Dunbar and Robbie Shakespeare and their La Trenggae (Latin Flavored Reggae) fusion accentuating Junior Gong's vigorous rhymes.

"Stand A Chance" with Stephen on harmonica, Treach's rap and the harmonizing of Jamaican singer Yami Bolo is a modern roots Reggae gem shimmering with an inherited Rastafarian spirit. Stephen is assisted on the title track production by New York producer Swizz Beats (Kaseem Dean) who has constructed rhythms for rappers including DMK, Busta Rhymes and Jay-z.

Bob Marley's music is also featured on HALFWAY TREE, "Could You Be Loved" is metamorphosed into "And Be Loved" with samples from the 1979 original woven into Damian's dazzling deejaying and the impressive rap from an upcoming artist called Izzy. The Wailers 1973 masterpiece of suppressed anger "Slave Driver" becomes "Catch A Fire" with Stephen duplicating Bob's original vocals and Damian's chanting providing a bold critique on guns, drugs and other forms of mental slavery. Bob reiterated "none but ourselves can free our mind" and Damian raps "if dem could, dem would tax you for saliva, how much more mus' we die for?"

With the release of HALFWAY TREE on Ghetto Youths International Motown, Damian presents his bold musical identity to the global community, updating the Marley musical legacy for the 21st century.