

The Bob Marley Workout Video: Just Spin in Your Grave

BY STEVE HEILIG

"The Marley estate plans to use (Bob) Marley's name or image on a vast array of products, from Marley coffee (the slogan: 'Stir it Up') to soccer balls, bedsheets, and a Grand Theft Auto-ish video game. 'He worked out,' daughter Cedella says. 'Great abs. He would make a great action hero'."

—Rolling Stone, March 19, 2009

"Birds found to 'dance' to music, but dogs and cats lack rhythm."

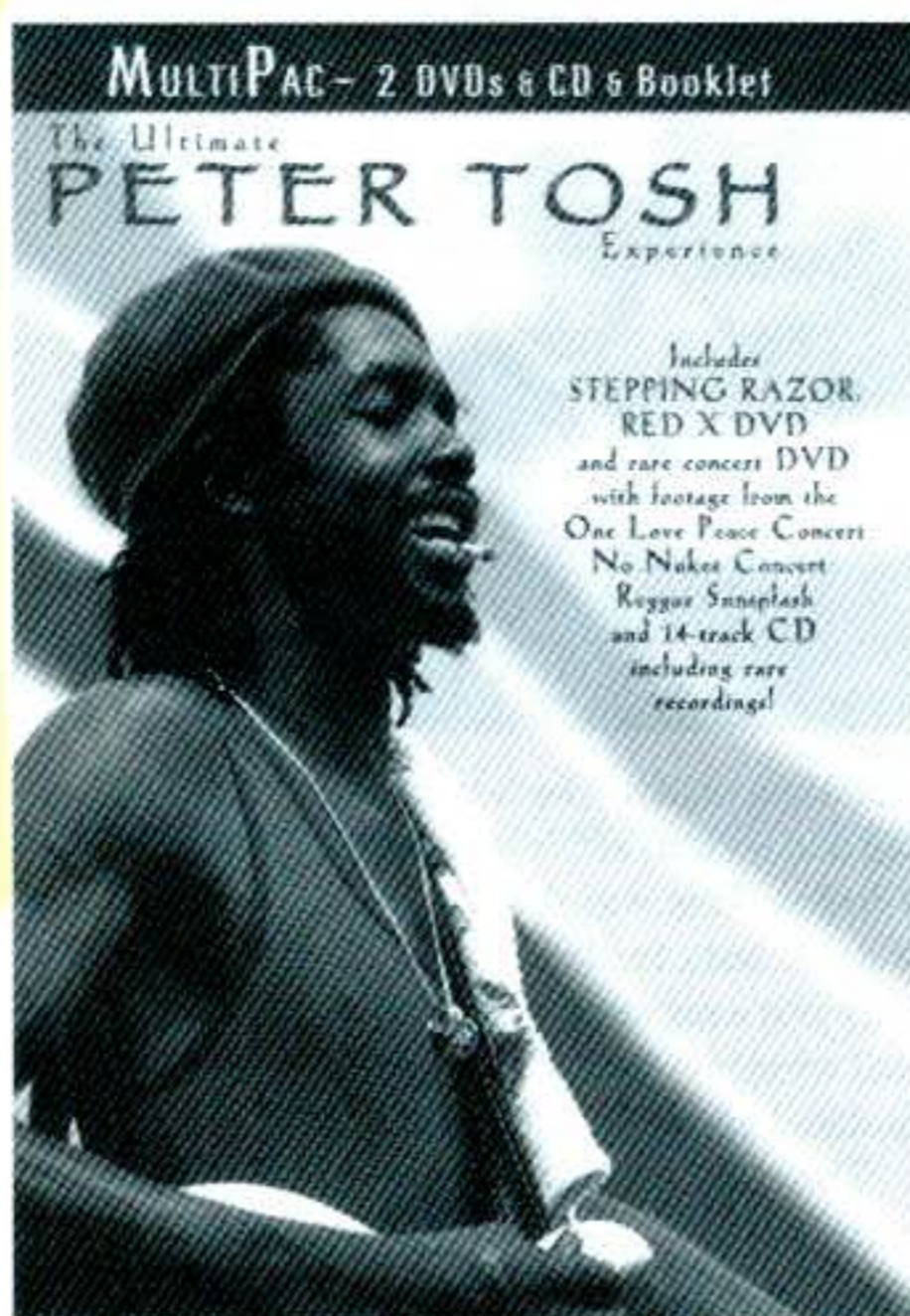
—AP story, May 2009 (see: www.sn.im/h2j6m)

Rockers: *The Movie* (MVD/Blue Sun Blu-Ray): My favorite reggae film from 1979, now in high-tech. A Kingston "Robin Hood" tale that had the luck to be made when deep roots reggae was king, with heaps of roots stars like Bunny, Gregory, Abyssinians, Heptones and more, at their peak. If only for the scene where drummer/star Horsemouth seeks out Winston Rodney, AKA Burning Spear, for some "reasoning" about how to get Horsie's stolen scooter back and Spear simply takes him down to the riverside and chants "Jah No Dead" accompanied only by tropical insects, thereby explaining all, this is essential viewing and listening.

Peter Tosh, *The Ultimate Experience* (Shanachie): Ultimate, indeed—this has not one but two dvds—the very fine *Stepping Razor: Red X* film documentary of Tosh's life, music and death, and a concert dvd of Tosh from various shows in 1979-83 and interview excerpts with Roger Steffens. Add a cd of hits and rarities and a 30-page booklet with fine essays by veterans who knew him—Tosh's manager Herbie Miller and Shanachie honcho Randall Grass—and this nicely packaged box shall from here on be the standard for Tosh tributes.

Lee Scratch Perry, *Ari Up and Dubble-standart, Return From the Planet Dub* (Collision): The latest chapter in Scratch's modern-era electro-reggae offers two-full cds of better-than-usual collaboration with original post-punk Slit Ari Up and veteran Euro-dub band Dubble-standart. They revise LSP chestnuts like "Chase the Devil" and "Blackboard Jungle" and conjure up the voice of Prince Far I and others on the bonus dub cd, which could be seen as superfluous, or maybe as more warranted than the non-dub one, depending. As per usual, Scratch sounds like he may have largely phoned this one in, but he still sounds like nobody else.

Babylon A Fall: *The Best of Lee Perry* (Trojan): This two-cd set is here only since it includes the legendary/scandalous/slanderous "Judgment



Inna Babylon" from 1981—the only cd version I've seen—wherein Scratch accuses Chris Blackwell of everything from murdering Bob Marley to drinking chicken blood, all over a driving horn-heavy riddim. But other much-anthologized songs like "City Too Hot" still sound deep and murkily great as well.

Joe Gibbs: *Scorchers From the Early Years* (VP): From 1967-73, starting with the late great Roy Shirley and ending with Big Youth, with all manner of singers both famed (Tosh, Heptones, Scratch) to obscure. Forty cuts on two cds, a fine ramble through producer Gibbs' varied stable. Some with rare dubs, and some just plain worthy, such as the Ethiopians' "The Ring," and many more.

Niney the Observer, *Roots with Quality* (VP): Moving slightly forward in time, this second 40-song/double cd kicks off with "Blood and Fire" from 1970 and rolls all the way to 1993, with too

many primo cuts to list, making for an extensive journey through one key producer/artist's vision of reggae in its prime. A quality bargain—OK, to note just the title tune, it's Third World's best song ever, for starters.

The Heptones, *Meet the New Generation!* (VP): Meet them when they were reggae's greatest harmony trio but evolving from their innocent rocksteady years (with romantic covers such as "Save the Last Dance" or "Our Day Will Come") into more "cultural" themes and a bonus appearance by Dennis Alcapone. A 1972 gem.

Freddie McGregor, *Mr. McGregor* (VP): Sweet-voiced Freddie had a near-heyday as one of the most-loved lovers rock singers, but we don't hear much of/from him nowadays. In 1979, though, he was on top of his game, and this very fine lp proves that. In this new version it is even much more deep and wonderful, containing a slew of extended dub versions collected from subsequent releases, full of Rasta reasoning. The original reached number two on the JA charts upon release, and now it deserves notice as likely the best single McGregor offering we'll hear.

Soothsayers, *One More Reason* (Red Earth): Here's an example of how to bring reggae and dub up-to-date without losing what makes it worth doing in the first place. A third set from this U.K. modern roots outfit, this one features their fine playing, singing and horn flavors, with guests Johnny Clarke, Linval Thompson, and Michael Prophet lending vocals and roots credibility. Mad Professor chimes in, a bit of other-world flavoring with *ouds* and such, and here's something worth your eartime.

King Cephas, *Coming of the King* (Ernie B's): It took me a couple listens to conjure up just who this fine roots singer reminds me of, but then it came to me: Leonard Dillon, the Ethiopian. It's an uncanny resemblance, and that is high praise in my book. Produced by Tuff Lion, who plays much of the backing music as well, this is very strong reggae throughout, with conscious lyrics, melodic tunes, and no jive. Highest marks.

John Collins, *Fela: Kalakuta Notes* (KIT Publishers, Amsterdam): Fela is getting his posthumous props in scads of cd re-releases and even a handful of books, including this new one by longtime Ghanaian journalist and musician/producer (Boko Studio, etc) Collins. Collins is at least the second author who actually played with Fela to offer his memories and tribute, and while nothing will top the other such author/saxman Micheal Veal's 2000 biography, this is a very in-