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Ben Harper – A Rising Legend In Music Grows

By Jay Nault

Of all the new rising sensations in the music world, perhaps none embody the true eclectic and multi-faceted influences more than Ben Harper. Harper is known for his crowd-embracing live performance style, and he's hitting the stage again in 2006. Below you'll find a look at Harper's life, musical development and career highlights that you should consider when deciding whether or not to catch his high-quality act.

Early Life

Ben Harper was born in Claremont, California on October 28, 1969. Although Harper was born to musician parents with limited means, he enjoyed a relatively "normal" childhood, and as early as he can remember, he was in love with music. His obsession was with two figures in particular: Jimi Hendrix and Bob Marley. Harper had a melodic ear even when he was a child, and he was mesmerized by the pure blend of sound each of the two artists created.

In regards to his overall perspective on life, growing up poor in the Inland Empire of Southern California created a person in Harper who was and is extremely sensitive to several social issues and the struggle of the "second-class" citizens of the world.

This environment contributed to Harper beginning to play the guitar by the time he was six. His specialty, then and now, is the bottleneck guitar. This love was further developed by Harper's childhood job at his grandparents' music store, the Folk Music Center.

After several years of balancing music and work at the "family" business, Harper realized by the time he was a teenager that he needed to dedicate himself to his music if he was ever to make it as a performer. He began like many others – playing in local coffee houses and slowly building a small but loyal following.

Career Path

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Harper's parents were supportive of his musical ambitions even though he never did well in school. As a result, he landed his first big-time gig at the age of 16 at a blues show in Fontana, California. Harper did continue to go to school until he had completed one year in college, but after his first big performance, he began to build a larger following in the Southern California blues scene.

In 1992, Harper joined the blues band Taj Mahal and embarked on several tours. In 1994, Harper was "discovered" by Virgin Records and cut his solo first album, entitled *Welcome to the Cruel World*. The album did well, reaching gold or platinum levels in France, Italy, Australia, and New Zealand.

Harper's second album, *Fight For Your Mind*, was released the following year, and it featured further development of Harper's combination of socially-relevant lyrics and ballad-driven melodies. Harper was becoming known as a blues musician, but his style was actually much too eclectic to be molded into one genre.

Harper's style continued to become more diversified in his following two releases, *The Will to Live* in 1995 and *Burn to Shine* in 1997. These two albums were not mega-hits, but they definitely helped Harper find his niche as a true "musician."

Following these releases, Harper began to collaborate with the likes of John Lee Hooker, Jack Johnson, Metallica, Radiohead, Pearl Jam and Marilyn Manson. Working within this enormous spectrum of styles, critics and fans still haven't been able to pin down Harper's style, other than the fact that he is truly talented and could wind up defining his own genre over the years.

If you have not yet had a chance to see Harper live, you should take the opportunity to do so before demand moves his shows from smaller venues to enormous stadiums.

By Jay Nault sponsored by

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Bob Marley: Legend – The Greatest Hits Album

By Glen B. Porter

The album *Bob Marley Legend* is one of the best albums of all time, especially in the realm of pop.

Bob Marley Legend tells you the story of the world– famous Bob Marley and the Wailers, by having such classic tracks and all time hits as Buffalo Soldier, Stir it Up, Get Up Stand Up, Is This Love, just to name a few. Marley is one of the most phenomenal musicians in history, and almost single–handedly pioneered the art of reggae music. It is a testament to him that, despite the fact that he is probably more famous worldwide than all other reggae artists combined, he is still adored and respected in his native Jamaica rather than resented for permanently aching the rest of the local music.

Whenever I am feeling depressed with the way things are, I like to put on Bob Marley Legend and dream about a better world. I see clearly why it is like by hippies, frat boys, rastas, and college kids of all kinds. Bob Marley has managed to capture the virility of life, the spirit of youth and rebellion which is lacking from this modern life. The Wailers did more than revolutionize music - Bob Marley and his band with their tuneful groove and deep bass hooks helped to transform life itself for all of us.

Bob Marley Legend was one of the first albums I've heard in college, which is a fairly typical story. Many people started their love affair with a band this way. Something about the smooth, timeless groove of the Wailers makes it perfect for the dorm parties we had so often back then. My first girl friend in college was a huge Bob Marley Legend fan, and used to like to put it on whenever we were together. It is just the mellowest thing possible, and I can't imagine how I can live without those breezy melodies.

Although he is admired by fans of all kinds, Bob Marley Legend was originally radical music meant to bring to the world's attention the plight of average Jamaicans under tight clasps of poverty as well as political disenchantment and disenfranchisement.

Bob Marley himself always triumphed for noble causes such as independence and the right of ordinary people, and his radical spirit is still fresh in the songs that he plays. Wailers songs are not just meant as party music, although of course, they are lots of fun to party too. They are meant to make the listener feel a thirst for justice and peace, and sow the seeds of hope for a better world.

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on all things and family oriented, and much more.



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