

‘Redemption Song’ | Bob Marley and the Wailers

‘Redemption Song’ features on Bob Marley & the Wailers’ ninth album, *Uprising*, released in 1980. The song’s original recording consists of a solo performance by Marley, accompanying himself on the guitar, and is said to have been like nothing he had released before. In October 1980 a single version of the song was released and featured a full band version on its B-Side. The single was released in the UK and France and although it failed to chart it became known as one of Marley’s greatest works.

Marley was known for his beliefs in African unity and was a passionate Pan-Africanist, so it is little wonder that ‘Redemption Song’ featured lyrics based on, and sometimes directly taken from, a speech by political activist Marcus Garvey entitled ‘The Work That Has Been Done’. In fact, many of Marley’s songs were heavily influenced by his political views, including ‘Zimbabwe’, ‘Exodus’, ‘Survival’ and ‘Black Redemption’. Marcus Garvey was a huge influence on Marley, both in his writing and in his personal life as they shared many of the same beliefs and hopes for the people of Africa.

‘Redemption Song’ was written while Marley battled with the cancer that eventually took his life. Having been diagnosed in 1977 with a rare form of malignant melanoma, Marley was already in pain at the time of writing the song, and according to his wife Rita Marley “he was already secretly in a lot of pain and dealt with his own mortality, a feature that is clearly apparent in the album, particularly in this song.” Sadly, in 1981 the singer lost his battle with cancer and passed away on May 11th. Marley was honoured with a state funeral at which the Jamaican Prime Minister gave the final eulogy before he was buried with his beloved guitar.

Both throughout his career and posthumously, Marley was awarded and honoured for both his music and humanitarian work. In 1976 Rolling Stone magazine named Bob Marley & the Wailers their ‘Band of the Year’ and in 1981 Marley was posthumously awarded the Jamaican Order of Merit for his renowned international distinction in the arts. His accolades and achievements are endless, with only a few including an induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1994, a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in 2001 and a Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award the same year.

Hailed as one of the most influential figures in bringing reggae to the mass market, Marley’s music remains hugely important to the music industry today. With countless musicians having covered his work, including Stone Roses, Stevie Wonder, Chris Cornell and Joe Strummer (to name but a few) it is evident that he continues to inspire musicians to this day.

Song Info

Song Title: Redemption Song
Album: *Uprising*
Released: 1980
Label: Island/Tuff Gong
Genre: Folk/Reggae
Written By: Bob Marley
Produced by: Bob Marley/Chris Blackwell

Redemption Song

Session Style

Bob Marley and the Wailers

Arranged by Tommy Loose

♩=112 Folk/Reggae

Intro

N.C.

Am G Em

y. We for ward in this gen er a tion

[16]

C D

tri umph ant ly. Won't you help to sing

[19]

Chorus

G C D G C D

these songs of free dom? 'Cause all I ev er had,

[22]

Em C D G C D

re demp tion songs. re demp tion

[26]

G C D G

songs. re demp tion songs.

[30]