

## Blu-ray Review: Comprehensive Doc ‘Marley’ Bound to Enthrall Music Buffs

Submitted by [mattmovieman](#) [1] on August 23, 2012 - 9:52am

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CHICAGO – Clocking in at a shade under two-and-a-half hours, Kevin Macdonald’s hugely informative yet leisurely paced documentary plays like the condensed version of a top-drawer TV miniseries. There’s even enough fade-outs for one to mentally insert commercial breaks. Yet for music buffs, the need to see this footage on the big screen undoubtedly justified its theatrical release.

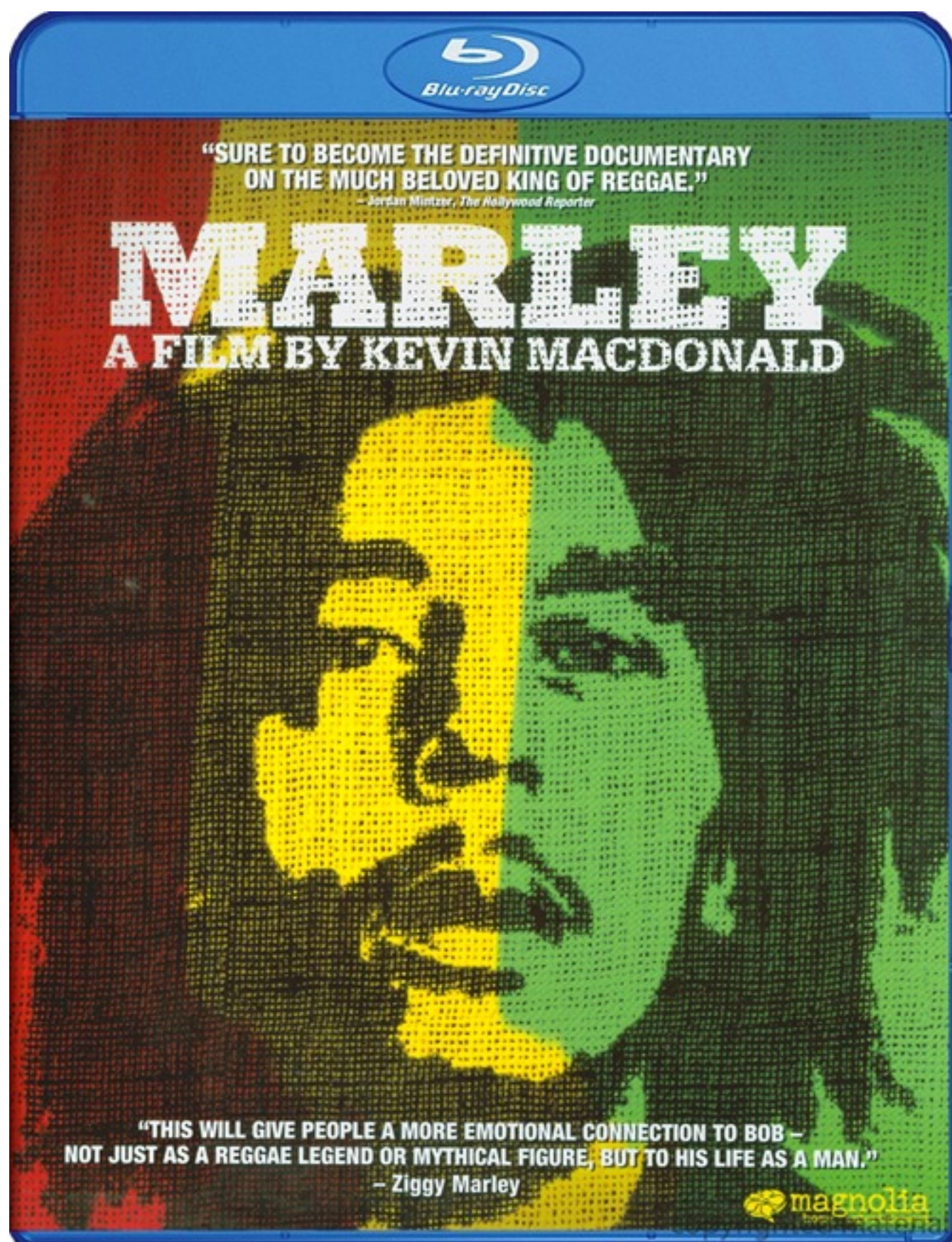
As someone only vaguely familiar with Bob Marley, I found myself completely captivated by this picture, which tells the story of a life purely through in-depth interviews and archival footage. Though the film perhaps could’ve benefitted from more concert footage, the context in which the footage is presented is always enlightening, and at times, very moving. Marley’s messages of peace and unity resonate not only through the power of music, but through the methods in which the filmmakers explore the origins of Marley’s beliefs.



Blu-ray Rating: **4.5/5.0**

In sequences gorgeously lensed by the cinematography team of Alwin Kuchler (“Ratcatcher”), Mike Eley (“Touching the Void”) and Wally Pfister (“Memento”), the audience is treated to vivid snapshots and aerial coverage of Marley’s hometown of Nine Mile in Saint Ann Parish, Jamaica. His status as a “half-breed” brings added poignance to his stirring anthem, “One Heart,” which will be instantly familiar to viewers, even those who are least well-acquainted with his work. His devout belief in the Rastafari movement contributed greatly to his evolution as an artist, as well as his persona itself (his dreadlocks are a crucial part of his spiritual identity). After joining the band eventually known as “The Wailers” in 1963, Marley perfected his work in reggae, creating numerous infectious rhythms and classics tunes before his sudden death in 1981 at the mere age of 36.





Marley was released on Blu-ray and DVD on August 7, 2012.

Photo credit: Magnolia Home Entertainment

Though Macdonald is certainly respectful of Marley's achievements, he resists deifying him and doesn't shy away from the more complex aspects of his personal life. His children recall him as a stern and distant father, while his wife defines her role as more of a "guardian angel" in his life, since his fidelity was nonexistent (he had a total of 11 children with seven women). Yet rather than being embittered, his wife views her work with Marley as an evangelistic mission during a time of great turmoil in Jamaica. Perhaps the most astonishing footage centers on the 1976 benefit concert that followed an assassination attempt on the violent streets of Kingston. In an act of selfless bravery, Marley went on with the concert while displaying the scars left by the bullets that grazed his chest. It is an awe-inspiring moment in music history, and Macdonald's film captures it in all of its glory.

"Marley" is presented in 1080p High Definition (with a 1.78:1 aspect ratio), accompanied by English and Spanish subtitles and includes a feature-length audio commentary track with Macdonald and David "Ziggy" Marley that's packed with enlightening tidbits. Since Marley often resented explaining himself in interviews and often would toy with journalists in his evasive answers, much of his voice-overs in the film were taken from uncommonly candid audio interviews with publications such as "Rolling Stone." An 18-minute featurette expands on footage used in the film's touching end credit sequence, which grants Marley's wish that the people of the earth would be united by his music. The montage hops around the globe to observe the reggae icon's influence in places such as Jamaica, Tunisia, Japan, Kenya, Ghana, Brazil, Tibet and India. There are also more interview snippets with Marley's children, as well as the wonderful Bunny Wailer, who emerges as the film's most charismatic speaker. The words flow out of him like jazz punctuated by a sly cackle. Rounding out the extras are segments from Ziggy's radio show, "Legends of Reggae," a photo gallery and a rather jarring promo for vacationing in Jamaica, which is an unusual addition since it's doubtful the film's more troubling passages will help Jamaica's tourism market.

*'Marley' is released by Magnolia Home Entertainment and features Bob Marley, David 'Ziggy' Marley, Jimmy Cliff, Rita Marley, Cedella Marley, Lee Perry, Cindy Breakspeare, Chris Blackwell, Lee Jaffe and Bunny Wailer. It was directed by Kevin Macdonald. It was released on August 7, 2012. It is rated PG-13.*





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