

## 'Africa Unite' Ethiopia's Largest Concert Feb1st

Written by Robert ID738

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### **Bob Marley**

India Arie, Angelique Kidjo and the Marley family join a roster of international music stars here next month to celebrate the 60th birthday of the late reggae legend Bob Marley — the first time the event has been held outside the singer's native Jamaica.

Hundreds of thousands are expected to participate in a month of festivities starting Feb. 1 dubbed "Africa Unite" in tribute to one of Marley's many famous songs. The highlight is Ethiopia's largest ever concert on Marley's birthday, Feb. 6, in the capital, Addis Ababa.

Marley's wife, Rita, together with the African Union and U.N. Children's Fund, is organizing the US\$1 million (euro770,000) celebrations expected to be broadcast in Africa and beyond.

Ethiopia was chosen as the venue because of the country's holy place in Marley's Rastafarian faith. It is also home to the 53-nation African Union.

"Africa is Bob's spiritual home, and so solidarity among other cultural activists across the continent is important to his family," Rita Marley said in Addis Ababa. "We want to negate the impoverished, dependent and hopeless images of Africa that are beamed around the world every day."

Rita Marley caused a storm of controversy when she announced recently that she was working on taking her late husband's remains from Jamaica to his "spiritual resting place" in Ethiopia after the birthday celebrations here and in Jamaica. Jamaicans protested the proposed reburial would rob the Caribbean island of its national heritage.

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The Bob Marley Foundation later issued a statement saying it was a private family matter, but there were no immediate plans to exhume the body of the singer, who died of cancer in 1981 at age 36.

Rita Marley will sing with Marcia Griffiths and Judy Mowatt as the I-Threes, Bob Marley's former backing group, on Feb. 6. Joining them on stage will be Senegal's Baaba Maal and Youssou N'Dour, Benin's Kidjo, Hip-Hop Reggae rap artist Shaggy, soul singer India Arie and Marley's children.

Other events include a film festival, an exhibition of African art, the Ethiopian launch of Rita Marley's autobiography "No Woman No Cry — My Life with Bob Marley," and conferences on the themes of African unity, women and youth.

More celebrations are planned in Shashemene, 155 miles (250 kilometers) south of Addis Ababa, where several hundred Rastafarians have lived since they were given land by Ethiopia's last emperor, Haile Selassie.

Rastafarians worshipped Selassie as their living god, a belief based on the prophecy by Jamaican civil rights leader Marcus Garvey that a black man would be crowned king in Africa.

A devout Rastafarian, Marley's lyrics were laden with references to the faith, whose followers preach a oneness with nature, grow their hair uncombed into dreadlocks and smoke marijuana as a sacrament.

Born in 1945, Marley grew up in the gritty shantytowns of Kingston and later shot to global stardom with hits like "I Shot the Sheriff" and "No Woman, No Cry." His poignant lyrics promoting social justice and African unity made him an icon throughout the world.

The organizers of next month's commemoration hope to highlight issues like HIV /AIDS , war and poverty, while raising funds for Tsunami relief in Somalia, the Shashemane Medical Center and a Bob Marley Youth Development Center in downtown Addis Ababa.

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"The Marley family is committed to progressing Bob's legacy as a champion for human rights," said Desta Meghoo-Peddie, managing director of the Bob Marley Foundation. "We invite the world to celebrate with us in refueling the spirit that will unify Africa, her sons and daughters in the Diaspora and work toward ending violence, poverty, injustice and discrimination."

[Source](#)