



William Ellis

One Love: One 45/One LP is a facet of the internationally acclaimed One LP portrait photography series, a project that reveals the powerful ‘one shot’ properties of the 45 RPM single and full reggae LP.

The project explores the inspirational qualities of recordings and the impact they have on people’s lives. Each portrait features the subject holding a reggae 45 or LP that is of fundamental importance to them. The photograph is accompanied by a short interview that explores the meaning and value of the selected vinyl.

The One LP Project began in 2010 as a response to conversations with musicians about their relationship with the work of other artists encountered via recordings. In particular, the conversations focused on the albums that had moved the subjects profoundly. As a conversation is of course transient – usually committed only to memory – I was eager to find a format that would adequately document my interactions with the artists.

The premiere One LP Project exhibition was hosted by the ARChive of Contemporary Music in New York.

“British photographer William Ellis is perhaps best known for his impeccable photos of jazz musicians. Now his One LP Project comes to New York. Truly cool interactive exhibits like this don’t come around too often”

Time Out New York

“Music is the perfect type of art. Music can never reveal its ultimate secret.”

The Critic as Artist, Oscar Wilde (1881)

Music can be studied down to its smallest component though throughout centuries of research, its essence remains as elusive as its effect is tangible. Perhaps more poetically, One LP – and now One 45 – has come to represent a journey into another’s soul: the recording that each person selects is a part of them; their past, present and future.

The portraits were made during the Reggae Innovation and Sound System Culture, an event that was conceived by Birmingham City University and the University of West Indies, and hosted by the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire on the 4th April 2018.

My own introduction to and connection with reggae came about in the late 1970s, when like many people I was given an insight into another world by Bob

Marley and The Wailers. In fact, at that time, reggae was a largely unacknowledged and unknown universe of music in much of the UK and Europe (outside of Caribbean communities, at least).

Marley's lyrical poetry and sophisticated imagery – coupled with the inventiveness and musicianship of his peerless band – combined to express an irresistible, clear and positive vision of how life should be lived with love, equality and respect for all. As a bassist myself, I was entranced – as I still am – by the playing of Aston “Family Man” Barrett, the fulcrum of the band with his melodic diamond-cut timing and impeccable feel. The music was cradled in the almost unbearably beautiful harmonies of the I Threes, who ladled warmth and comfort over the bitter truths of Marley's political statements. Their voices celestial and crystalline shone like hope in the dark.

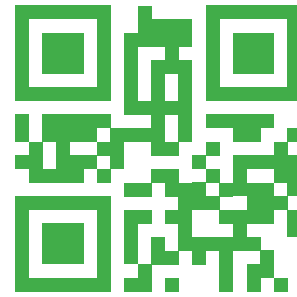
I was fortunate enough to see Marley twice, the first concert was in Manchester at the Hard Rock on July 20th 1975 when I was 18 years old, the second almost 5 years to the day on July 12th 1980 at Deeside Leisure Centre, Wales. This latter gig sadly proved to be one of his last performances.

They live on in my memory. Bob, his work and influence, up there with his spiritual brothers and sisters: Billie, Dylan, Jimi, Joni, Miles, Nina and Prince.

William Ellis was born in Liverpool in 1957 and is an internationally acclaimed music photographer whose contribution to the culture was recognised by the American Jazz Museum in Kansas City when he was invited to produce the Inaugural International Exhibition in 2005, and where he returned in 2008 to present his work in the “Jazz in Black and White: Bebop and Beyond” exhibit.

William's photographs are exhibited at international festivals and galleries in the UK and throughout the world and are in the permanent collection of The National Portrait Gallery, London, The ARChive of Contemporary Music, New York and The American Jazz Museum, Kansas City. His images have also been used as part of the JAM (Jazz Appreciation Month) Outreach program in the United States, initiated by the Smithsonian Institution.

William acts as a visiting lecturer at Birmingham City University and was invited to present a major One LP Project exhibition for Rhythm Changes: Jazz Utopia conference, hosted by BCU in 2016.



QR - Full interviews from portraits overleaf
onelp.org

Exhibitions 2018/19

Birmingham

‘One 45 - Northern Soul’: Birmingham City University, Parkside Building

Kingston

One LP/45 Reggae: 6th Global Reggae Conference 2019 - Reggae Innovation and Sound System Culture 11: Institute of Caribbean Studies, Mona Campus, Kingston, Jamaica. A University of the West Indies and Birmingham City University partnership event.

London

100 One LPs: Cadogan Hall, 5 Sloane Terrace, Belgravia - during the EFG London Jazz Festival.

Miles and Beyond: Jazz Photographs by William Ellis: The Omnibus Theatre, 1 Clapham Common North Side - during the EFG London Jazz Festival.

Los Angeles

For One Night Only: Jazz photographs by Bob Barry and William Ellis, Mr Musichead Head Gallery, 7420 Sunset Blvd, Los Angeles, CA

New York

101 One LPs: The ARChive of Contemporary Music, 54 White Street, Tribeca, NYC

william-ellis.com

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Jah9

“So, the album I have chosen is Scientist Rides The World Of The Evil Curse Of The Vampires. When I listened to that record and it was early in my exposure to instrumental dub and it made a profound impact on me because I didn't even know the songs that were being dubbed, but I got so into the music of it. It was very inspiring for me as a poet because of how the music was treated. It was almost like it wasn't even music, it was like it was creating an environment and it was telling a story. So, separate from what the original songs were, I thought it was incredibly powerful what Scientist was able to do by creating a whole new narrative with sound. And it inspired me as a producer and as a songwriter. It is music that gave me space because it emptied out so much it gave me space to put my words in. So actually, [I] wrote a lot of music, a lot of poetry, listening to that music. And it's something I always go back to and it's something I use in my yoga practice: it's sonic healing.”



Sebastian Davies

“It’s 'Prophesy' by Fabian on the Tribesman label. It’s a 12" 45 and for me it’s really special because it’s an original press, it’s a limited edition of this tune. Produced by Lloyd Coxson in 1977 but it’s still the hardest tune I have. When the bass comes in, every time, it always blows everyone’s mind. I have a nice little story about this. I select on a sound system back in the Netherlands called Backattack and at our last dance we had to have the system raised a little bit so the SubScoops were really like at head level. We hadn’t introduced the sub bass until this song and when we did apparently it blew a girl’s hat off. Everyone was saying, ‘Oh my god someone’s hats flying around!’ I don’t know if it’s true, but it’s quite a nice story.”



Rusty Rebel

“This is 'Civilisation' by the Classics and it's a Lee Perry production. It's not on the original label that it was on, but the fact that it's been repressed that's fine by me. It's actually got a picture of Lee Perry on the sleeve, which is really nice. 'Civilisation' is basically saying that we need more civilisation, we need more unity, we need more love, we need to look after one another. It's as simple as that. We need to be acting like we are civilised people and to stop the back biting, the fussing and the fighting. So, that to me replicates what reggae music is about: it's about peace.”



Kokumo

“It's Legalize It, a 1976 album by Peter Tosh. With him sitting in a field of ganja. It was so important, in terms of the visuals, at the time [because] ganja was associated with Rasta and persecution of Rastafarians for the use of ganja in Jamaica: Peter Tosh was one of the main protagonists for legalising it. So, that album for me kind of epitomises the revolutionary stance that Peter took, not just in his music, but in his persona as somebody who stood up for equal rights and justice.”



Stephi

“So it's Jah9, since she's here today, and it's New Name. I chose this album because when it came out, in about 2013, it was like inspiration. It was new, it was with the times, a new name – Rastafari – bringing the realisation of Rastafari back into the community, back into life by a young artist.”



Christafari

“The LP is John Holt’s Sings For I. It’s an old album and he used the full Philharmonic Orchestra to play reggae music. It was the first time it had ever been done and this was in the era of the seventies when there was a lot of good music out there. The artistic work on the front portrayed Rasta in a more positive light, rather than the negative light of the persecutions that they went through in the sixties.”