



Marley and me

AN EX-LOVER of the legendary Bob Marley tells how their affair impacted the artist's early career in an award-winning documentary premiering at the BFI this month. She also talked to the *Weekender*, writes Teodora Beleaga.

"Bob Marley: the Making of a Legend" includes original footage from the days Marley was recording his first album "Catch a Fire" with the Wailers, in Jamaica and at 56 Hope Rd in Kingston. The footage, believed to have been stolen and only recovered 30 years later, runs alongside exclusive interviews with some of the figures that have impacted Marley's career.

The film, co-directed by his ex-partner, renowned Jamaican actress Esther Anderson, and filmmaker Gian Godoy, shows the man before he became an international star. "Bob looks the way Bob looks," Esther told the *Weekender*. "He has no idea what's going on and he is fascinated by [the camera]. He used to tell

me, when I was taking pictures of him, 'nobody took so many pictures of me before' and I said 'well, you know, many more will come.'"

Esther had just finished filming "A Warm December" alongside Sidney Poitier when she met Bob Marley at a party for the film in New York's Lincoln Centre in 1972. "We really liked each other immediately," she remembers. "He said he knew all about me. I didn't know who he was, but he did have a great presence, very much like a rude boy. People say Bob Marley was great, but really back then I was the star."

Soon after their love affair took off, Esther, who was also passionate about photography and film-making, was taping Marley and the Wailers. She said she wanted "to document where the music came from, to really tie up the Rastafari with the reggae music."

"We shot a lot of him being very relaxed in the hammock in the yard. He used to sit under the mango tree, which is really where

he called his office. He would never have a meeting inside the house."

"The first footage is of their first rehearsal when the Wailers were getting ready to come to England for their tour. I filmed them talking to each other about their cars, I filmed them having casual conversations about their philosophy, you know, I just set the camera out and let it run," explained Esther.

She went on to argue their love story was behind his fame, as it was her who suggested the dreadlocks look and took the iconic photo of Marley smoking a large joint, used on the cover of *Catch a Fire*. "I said, 'people have never seen musicians with dreadlocks' and then I took the picture of him smoking. I said, 'if that is your normal daily thing then you shouldn't be ashamed of it' but I didn't expect the record company to make a poster of Bob alone on his own smoking."

Yet Esther disapproves of the impact her photo had: "That gave Bob the hook that

created him into a cult. I didn't intend that, though, it's the record company that did that. His dreadlocks have become a tourist thing, when they were in fact a very special vow. Bob Marley has been turned into a commodity."

Her film, "Bob Marley: the making of a legend" has already rewards at the international film festivals in Edinburgh, Rhode Island Flickers and DOC Miami although it was only finished in March this year. It was also nominated for an UNESCO Award at the Reggae Film Festival.

Bob Marley: the Making of a Legend is part of the African Odysseys strand; BFI Southbank, Belvedere Rd, South Bank, London, SE 1 8XT; December 17 at 1.30pm; £5 in advance from box office at 0207 928 3232.