

= Catch a Fire =

Catch a Fire , released on 13 April 1973 , is the fifth album by Jamaican reggae band The Wailers , and the first the band released on Island Records . After touring and recording in the United Kingdom with Johnny Nash , Nash 's departure to the United States left the band without enough money to return home ; they approached producer Chris Blackwell , who agreed to advance the Wailers money for an album and paid their fares back to Jamaica , where they recorded Catch a Fire . The album features nine songs , two of which were written by Peter Tosh and the rest by Bob Marley . After Marley 's return to London to present the tapes to Blackwell , the producer reworked the tracks with contributions by Muscle Shoals session musician Wayne Perkins , who played guitar on two overdubbed tracks .

The album 's supporting concert tour throughout England and the United States helped establish the band as international stars . Catch a Fire peaked at number 171 and number 51 on Billboard 's 200 and Black Albums charts , respectively . The album has received critical acclaim , including being listed at number 126 on Rolling Stone 's list of the 500 greatest albums of all time , the second highest placement of the five Bob Marley albums on the list , after the posthumous compilation album Legend . It is also regarded as one of the top reggae albums of all time .

= = Background = =

Businessman Danny Sims made a deal with Johnny Nash to star in and score the film Want So Much To Believe in Sweden and Nash invited Marley to work with him on composing songs for the soundtrack . Marley moved to Sweden to work on the film , and then from November to December 1971 toured Great Britain with Nash and the Wailers , with CBS also releasing a single by the Wailers (the Nash @-@ produced " Reggae on Broadway ") . After the tour , Sims and Nash had left the city for Miami , Florida , and CBS lost interest in the group , leaving the band without enough money to return to Jamaica and unable to work due to work permit issues . The band asked promoter Brent Clarke in the hope that he would help them . Clarke contacted Chris Blackwell from Island Records , who had released many Wailers singles in Great Britain . He then promised Clarke an advance of GB £ 8000 for their next album , and Clarke lent the Wailers some money for their way back to Jamaica .

= = Recording = =

In 1972 , sessions for the album started , with recording taking place at three Kingston , Jamaica studios , all members recording inside one room : Dynamic Sound , Harry J 's and Randy 's . Engineer Sylvan Morris put the songs on eight @-@ track tape , and allocated tracks with the drum mixes on one track and piano and guitar together on another . In the winter of 1972 , Marley flew back to London to present the master tapes . The deal with Island led to a dispute with CBS and Sims , to whom the band were already contracted . The case was won by the first , who received US \$ 9 @,@ 000 and two percent of royalties from the band 's first six albums , and Sims received GB £ 5 @,@ 000 and the publishing rights to the Wailers songs .

Catch a Fire , which is Jamaican patois (slang) for smoking herb , features many backing musicians , but none of those were credited in the liner notes . Muscle Shoals session guitarist Wayne Perkins , who at that time was also recording a new Smith , Perkins & Smith album at the Island Studios on the Basing Street , was asked by Blackwell in the early 1972 to make overdubs for the song Catch a Fire in the studio below . Perkins , not knowing at the time what reggae was , agreed with the proposal and first played the guitar solo on " Concrete Jungle " , including the three @-@ octave feedback at the end . After also playing slide guitar on " Baby We 've Got a Date (Rock It Baby) " and the wah @-@ wah @-@ laced lead on " Stir it Up " , Perkins then went back to complete his own album . " Stir it Up " was later covered by Johnny Nash 's band , Rabbit and the Jungles , on their I Can See Clearly Now , peaking at number 11 on the Billboard Hot 100 chart , Rabbit Bundrick played on all songs on numerous keyboards , including on a synthesizer and a

clavinet . Robbie Shakespeare played the bass on " Concrete Jungle " , while organist Tyrone Downie performed on the same track as well as on " Stir it Up " . Chris Karen , Francisco Willie Pep and Winston Wright served as percussionists , and the female backing singing was performed by Rita Marley and her friend Marcia Griffiths , the latter of whom was already popular in Jamaica as a solo artist and together with her husband Bob Andy released successful singles . Tommy McCook played the flute .

According to Aston Barrett , " some of the songs had been recorded before , ... , in different studios and with different musicians , but we gave them that strict timing and brought the feeling out of them more " . " Baby We 've Got a Date (Rock it Baby) " is similar to " Black Bitter " , recorded in an earlier session .

The song 's lyrics deal with political injustice towards blacks and poverty , as is the case in many of their albums . Catch a Fire is about " the current state of urban poverty " , and " Slave Driver " " connects the present to past injustices " . But politics are not the main theme ; " Stir it Up " , for example , is a love song .

= = Cover art = =

The original 1973 vinyl release , designed by graphic artists Rod Dyer and Bob Weiner , was encased in a sleeve depicting a Zippo lighter . The sleeve functioned like a real Zippo lighter case , opening at a side hinge to reveal the record within . Only the original pressing of 20 @, @ 000 had the Zippo cover , subsequent pressings had an alternative cover designed by John Bonis featuring an Esther Anderson portrait of Marley smoking a " spliff " or joint , with the album now credited to " Bob Marley and the Wailers " . Copies of the record from the original pressings have since become collectors ' items . The original cover art was reproduced in 2001 for the deluxe compact disc edition .

= = Release = =

The first release from the album sessions was the " Baby We 've Got a Date " single , released in early 1973 on Island 's Blue Mountain subsidiary . Catch a Fire was released on 13 April 1973 on the Island label with a supporting tour . The album sold around 14 @, @ 000 copies in its first weeks , and peaked at number 171 on the Billboard 200 chart and at number 51 on Billboard R & B chart .

Catch a Fire has been re @-@ released under different recording labels with different track lengths . In 2001 , a special collection edition was released containing unreleased , non @-@ overdubbed (" Jamaican ") songs on the first side and the original , overdubbed album on the second side .

A documentary about the album , directed by Jeremy Marre , was released in 2000 , featuring interviews with the musicians and engineers who worked on the album , archive performance footage , and home video footage filmed by members of the band .

= = Tour = =

The album 's supporting tour began in 1973 in the United Kingdom and then moved to the United States . In England they performed on 19 shows at universities and clubs . While in London , the band performed on the BBC shows The Old Grey Whistle Test and Top Gear . In the first performance singer Bunny Livingston performed for the first and last time for the Wailers , as he was unhappy touring outside Jamaica , difficulty finding suitable food due to his strict Ital diet a contributing factor . After Bunny 's resignation from the band , Tosh consulted with Marley and finally picked Joe Higgs . Blackwell hired the concert promoter Lee Jaffe to book gigs in North America . The Wailers performed at Paul 's Mall in Boston , Massachusetts , and then three gigs in New York alongside Bruce Springsteen 's E Street Band , and in October opened for Sly and the Family Stone in Las Vegas . These concerts marked an important step towards international acknowledgement .

= = Reception = =

Catch a Fire had a positive critical reception . Robert Christgau rated the album as " A " , saying that " half these songs are worthy of St. John the Divine " , and " Barrett brothers ' bass and drums save those that aren 't from limbo " . Reviewers from Rolling Stone also praised the brother 's playing , concluding that " Catch a Fire is a blazing debut " . According to the review , " ' Concrete Jungle ' and ' Slave Driver ' crackle with streetwise immediacy , while ' Kinky Reggae ' and ' Stir It Up ' ... revel in the music 's vast capacity for good @-@ time skanking . ' Stop That Train ' and ' 400 Years , ' both written by Peter Tosh , indicate the original Wailers weren 't strictly a one @-@ man show " .

Critics have called Catch a Fire one of the greatest reggae albums of all time . Vik Iyengar from AllMusic comments that " Marley would continue to achieve great critical and commercial success during the 1970s , but Catch a Fire is one of the finest reggae albums ever . This album is essential for any music collection " . Rolling Stone ranked the album at number 123 on its list of 500 Greatest Albums of All Time , the second highest placement for a reggae album ; only Legend , ranked higher at number 46 . Writing in The Spectator arts blog in 2012 , Dave Rodigan described it as " quite simply , one of the greatest reggae albums ever made " . The album was also groundbreaking as its singles were released as long @-@ playing records as against to the early reggae songs coupled with two sides .

= = Track listing = =

= = = Original album release (1973) = = =

All songs were written by Bob Marley , except where noted .

= = = The Definitive Remastered edition (2001) = = =

= = = Deluxe edition (2001) = = =

= = Personnel = =