

Standing room only for **Wailing Reggae**



Trunks swayed to the reggae rhythm Photo by Mark Piesanen

By **PAT SAVAGE**

On Sunday Feb. 22 the Wailers came to town and played two shows at the Club Flamingo before 1,100 happy, happy people. Coming out of Jamaica in the late 60's and 70's the Wailers were the pre-eminent reggae band, and their charismatic singer Bob Marley was reggae.

Marley is a legend, and the legend goes beyond music. Marley and the Wailers played at Zimbabwe's independence concert to celebrate the end of white rule. Marley himself survived an assassination attempt in Jamaica. Also in Jamaica the Wailers were sufficiently powerful to bring together Jamaica's two major political leaders at one of their concerts, and in a gesture of national reconciliation, shake hands. The equivalent in Canada might be Glass Tiger or Rush getting Turner and Mulroney up on stage and shaking hands — don't wait for it.

Marley died of brain cancer in '81, but the audience at Club Flamingo still wanted to believe, still wanted to dance. It was with a mixture of tension and anticipation that the crowd watched Captain Crunch videos and waited.

With the first few notes smiles began, legs rocked, trunks swayed, the air became sweet and the fun began. So began the rush for the stage as the hard core fans formed a nucleus around lead singer and guitarist Junior Murvin.

Marvin was a real crowd pleaser who had the audience eating out of his outstretched hands. He would sing, and the audience would sing back to him. When he grimaced people felt his pain.


The band was tight. After some early sound problems got worked through, the relentless rhythm did its job and percussionist Alvin 'Seeco' Patterson pitter patted around to cheers with a tamboourine on his head. Bassist Aston 'Family Man' Barrett looked like an immovable ewok, the solid backbone of the band.

The only discordant sound was the keyboard which sounded a little glitzy in contrast to the earthen unity of the music.

The Wailers ended the show with three of their hits — *I Shot the Sheriff*, *Everything's Gonna Be Alright* and *Stand Up For Your Rights*. They did a haunting version of *Waiting in Vain* in the encore where Marvin worked in some Tina Turner lyrics for nice effect.

The real crowd pleaser though was *Stand Up For Your Rights*. And as Junior Marvin exhorted people to stand up for their rights they did — territorial rights were being vigorously asserted by swaying, moving bodies. The smiles were wide.

People might have come to the Wailers to see the remains of a music legend, but the Wailers are more than that. Marvin has replaced Marley and Halifax fans seem happy he has.



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