

Marley gone, but Wailers live on

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SPECIAL TO THE REGISTER

Dreadlocks and music: The Wailers brought the Caribbean beat to 600 fans Sunday at the Hotel Fort Des Moines.

It was "One Love," "Three Little Birds," 10 musicians onstage and 600 fans in the audience.

Sunday night's reggae concert with the Wailers at Hotel Fort Des Moines sailed along with one beloved Bob Marley song after another. The party raged past midnight. The Red Stripe beer flowed freely. Singer Gary Pine leapt into the air, his dreadlocks flailing, and belted out "Exodus" during the encore - and almost nobody was leaving. He inspired many in the crowd to follow suit and jump in time to the booming rhythm.

The Wailers revived the reggae anthems of their late leader - who has sold upward of 250 million records worldwide, a truly impressive number - in front of a sold-out audience that couldn't stop jamming in the Grand Ballroom.

It was a concert where nobody had to be prodded to sing along, or reminded of the lyrics. The crowd seemed to chime in as if on cue: "Don't worry about a thing/ 'Cause every little thing gonna be all right!"

And I've never seen so many people prowling the sidewalk before a show at the hotel, in search of tickets.

Marley's songs obviously still can draw the masses, and thankfully the Wailers did most of those songs justice with their faithful renditions.

Pine wielded a raspier voice than Marley, but his soulful delivery was on target. Bandleader Aston "Familyman" Barrett kept his fellow players grounded with fat bass lines. Junior Marvin tore through a couple of guitar solos but mostly locked into Familyman's groove. There were two horns (trumpet and sax), as well as a pair of female backup singers.

"Stir It Up," "I Shot the Sheriff," "Is This Love," "Jamming" - the soundtrack to countless college parties for the last 20-plus years came roaring back to life.

Pine and guitarist Marvin kicked off the encore as a duo for the classic acoustic ballad "Redemption Song"; the other band members gradually joined in. Then "Get Up, Stand Up" became the refrain.

There's no shortage of acts that continue to tour after the loss of one or more key members, but the Wailers seemed to transcend that status even with the gaping hole left by Marley. Credit the man's songs - songs of freedom, songs that more than any other body of work in the 20th century seemed to mine the power of outrage over social injustice and magnify it not through anger but through joyous, uplifting melodies.

While the Wailers were more than competent in celebrating the past, its opening act should be able to bank on a bright future. The hard-charging groove and charismatic performance of deSol inspired a wild response from the audience.

In place of Marley's reggae this septet's template was Carlos Santana's Latin rock. "Oye Como Va" (the Tito Puente tune popularized by Santana) even ended the Asbury Park, N.J.-based band's set, but the bulk of its material was original. (The band's self-titled debut CD is due July 26.)

Singer-acoustic guitarist Albie Monterrosa and lead electric guitarist Soto were the core of the band, which also flexed a pair of percussionists to round out the drum kit's percolating Afro-Cuban rhythms.

The legacy of Marley and the promise of deSol - not your average Sunday night-into-Monday morning in downtown Des Moines. test

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