



Damian Marley And Nas Bring Reggae, Hip-Hop To Gathering Of The Vibes

Duo performed material from their joint album, *Distant Relatives*, at this year's summer festival.

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BRIDGEPORT, Connecticut — It was an unexpected move, but adding Damian "Jr. Gong" Marley and Nas to this year's Gathering of the Vibes bill couldn't have made for a sweeter end to the four-day festival in Seaside Park this weekend.

Before Marley and Nas lit up the stage on Sunday, a series of acts earlier in the day kept the crowd moving. Groups like the Ryan Montbleau Band turned the green lawn into a dance floor extravaganza, featuring groups of skilled hula-hoopers and ribbon twirlers. Jimmy Cliff treated the crowd with his flavorful reggae as he bounced from side to side of the stage in his head-to-toe yellow ensemble. At 62, Cliff proved that age really is nothing but a number with his vibrant energy and ear-to-ear smile. Vibes was never about age or looks, though. It's about the free spirit and carefree attitude that performers like Cliff embody. And as the sun began to set, anticipation grew before the Vibes main stage. "Are you ready for hip-hop and reggae?" asked DJ Green Lantern, as he stood before a flowing five-curtain backdrop.

In what seemed like just a few seconds, Damian Marley, his hype crew and duo of backup singers rushed the stage to the retro-sounding intro of their first single, "As We Enter." Soon after, Nas joined them onstage, where they delivered a high-energy opener, keeping up the Bob Marley tradition with a waving Ethiopian flag.

During his solo set, Nas seemed to create a sometimes intense, sometimes moody atmosphere among the audience of nodding heads. "Connecticut, let's represent!" Nas screamed over a roaring crowd. The rapper made his way through songs like "Nas Is Like" and "Hip Hop Is Dead."

"We just finished the record [Distant Relatives](#). This wasn't about nothing but realness," the rapper said of the concept behind his and Marley's joint LP. "So to all my distant relatives out there, my leaders, this one's to all the leaders." With that he launched into the calming "Leaders."

Marley and Nas played off each other's energy during various cuts, delivering some authentic chemistry. And it was only fitting that the duo's set ended with a cover of Bob Marley's 1980 hit "Could You Be Loved." Marley played with the audience as he encouraged singing in what eventually became a full out sing-along with the echoing voices of the crowd right behind the chanting music.

After the show, fans seemed unanimous in their praise of the duo.

"I think this idea just blew that out of the water and added an insight on life that I've never heard; I'm really learning with this album," said Jamesy Codrington of Bridgeport. Codrington added that Marley and Nas' *Distant Relatives* LP toppled Jay-Z and R. Kelly's project, which he deemed "one of the most monumental hip-hop movements."

"It represents the next generation. It's just great," said Leah Boss on Marley continuing in the family tradition. New York native Brent Fallon, who has seen both artists in concert before, said, "It's not your average hip-hop show. There's a lot of instrumentation."

"Both of these young men are really, really positive," Sue Fallon of New York told MTV News. Fallon revealed that this was her first day of the festival's four-day installment.



Nas and Damian Marley perform at the Gathering of the Vibes festival in Bridgeport, Connecticut, on Saturday
Photo: James Dinh/ MTV News