

ART

Homage to Bob Marley



BOB MARLEY one of Jamaica's youngest heroes.

LONDON (LPS):
IN A DRAUGHTY studio in the south London district of Vauxhall, Jamaican sculptor Alvin T. Marriott is putting the finishing touches on a massive statue of the legendary Rastafarian and Reggae superstar Bob Marley, who died in 1981.

When completed in April, the 2.4 metre high statue will be shipped back to the singer's birthplace to take pride of place in Kingston's Celebrity Park. "It will overlook the National Stadium and will be the first statue in the park", said Mr Marriott. "The Prime Minister, Mr Edward Seaga, will unveil it, and we expect a crowd of at least 50,000 for the ceremony."

Mr Marriott, aged 81, has been carving the statue for seven months. It was due to be completed in December and will be sent to a foundry in High Wycombe (southern England) for casting into bronze.

The commission from the Jamaican Government went to Mr Marriott, well-known for his skill in portraying likenesses of Jamaica's important figures.

"I never met Bob Marley — the closest I got to him was press inter-

views and recordings of his concerts. But I thought a lot of him. He was not ashamed of his ghetto status, and consequently made other young Jamaicans less afraid to say where they were from. He was one of Jamaica's great men".

Mr Marriott worked from photographs, video tape recordings and stills. To get a feel of the singer's character, he talked to Marley's friend, Neville Garrick, who flies out to Britain every few months to check on the work.

The result is Marley in a familiar pose — strumming an invisible guitar, left hand raised, right leg bent. "It was a stance peculiar to him. He was playing the guitar to himself, perhaps working out a new song. That is the message of the statue."

Mr Marriott, who lives in St Andrews Parish, Kingston, has temporarily moved to Britain to complete his commission.

MARCUS GARVEY STATUE

He was born in St Andrews in 1902. His father was a farmer and hat weaver and his mother a director of plays. From an early age, Marriott carved anything that came his way — even the chalk stones around San Antonio where the family later moved.

"Even from the age of nine, neighbours were calling me a sculptor", he recalled. "I had an insatiable appetite for carving. Once I ran away from home and spent three weeks carving a lion out of a tree trunk and living off the land — just eating yams and bananas."

Mr Marriott trained at London's Camberwell Art School, where he later taught before moving back to Jamaica and life as a full-time artist. His best-known works are an 2.4 metre high statue of Marcus Garvey, founder of the "Back to Africa" movement, a 3-metre high statue of Norman Manley, Premier of Jamaica from 1959-62, and a statue of Sir Alexander Bustamante, the first Prime Ministers of independent Jamaica. He also did carvings for the chapel ceiling in the University of the West Indies in Kingston.

The Jamaican Government is taking a keen interest in the progress of the memorial to one of the country's youngest heroes — carved by one of its most revered artists. Mr Marriott — who was made a Commander of Distinction (CD) for his contribution of Jamaica's cultural heritage — showed the statue to Mr Edward Seaga, during the Prime Minister's visit to Britain in November. (LPS).