

In creating their collaborative, island-inspired album *44/876*, Sting and Shaggy drew from the many unlikely connections at the heart of their music. With its title referencing their hometown area codes, *44/876* first and foremost honors the duo's deep-rooted love for Jamaica: Shaggy's homeland, and the place where Sting penned such classics as The Police's "Every Breath You Take." Along with continuing each artist's exploration of reggae and its transcendent rhythms, songs like "Don't Make Me Wait" reveal Sting and Shaggy's shared passion for making timeless music that defies expectation.

The lead single from *44/876*, "Don't Make Me Wait" came to life after the musicians were introduced by Martin Kierszenbaum (Sting's manager and Shaggy's former A&R executive). Although the initial plan was for Sting to lend his vocals and musical finesse to the track, the two soon discovered that their distinct voices blended with unbelievable ease. Fueled by their immediate chemistry, "Don't Make Me Wait" emerged as a soulful love song built on intense grooves, warm harmonies, and graceful guitar work.

Compelled by their creative synergy, Sting and Shaggy decided to team up on another track and soon amassed a near-album's worth of material. "Everything about it is organic—it was never planned," says Shaggy of *44/876*. Recording in New York City, they enlisted a lineup of esteemed musicians and writers from Jamaica and New York, including the legendary Robbie Shakespeare of Sly and Robbie, dancehall sensation Aidonia, Morgan Heritage (courtesy of CTBC Music Group), Agent Sasco as well as Branford Marsalis and Sting's longtime guitarist Dominic Miller.

Executive-produced by Kierszenbaum and primarily produced by Sting International—a frequent Shaggy collaborator who worked on global smashes like "Oh Carolina," "Boombastic," and "It Wasn't Me"—*44/876* fuses infectious Afro-Caribbean rhythms with irresistible pop melody and plenty of massive hooks. And in their lyrics, Sting and Shaggy take a cue from their mutual hero Bob Marley and present a powerful message of love, hope, freedom, and unity. "The theme that's common to all of this is looking for something better in tomorrow," notes Sting.

That thoughtful optimism infuses such songs as "Waiting For the Break of Day" (a piano-laced, gently soaring mid-tempo number) and "Morning Is Coming" (a brightly swaying track delivering silken grooves and sultry horns). On "Just One Lifetime," the pair turns playful with a bit of poetry lifted from Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass*, their warm-hearted storytelling shifting from Sting's smooth vocals to Shaggy's masterful flow. And on the deeply stirring "Dreaming in the USA," with its urgent beats and uplifting harmonies, the duo detail their shared experience as outsiders pursuing the promise of American life. "I think the greatest part of America is that welcome that it gives to the world," says Sting.

One of rock music's most notably inventive bass players, Sting traces his love of reggae to the bass-driven melodies that served as a prime inspiration for his work with The Police. With the pioneering British band's near-decade-long run yielding five studio albums—and earning six Grammy Awards, plus an induction into The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2003—Sting's illustrious solo career has led to an additional 10 Grammy

Awards, two Brits, a Golden Globe, an Emmy, four Oscar nominations, a TONY nomination, Billboard Magazine's Century Award, and MusiCares' 2004 Person of the Year honor. All told, he's sold close to 100 million albums from his combined work with The Police and as a solo artist.

Born and raised in Jamaica, Shaggy moved to Flatbush, Brooklyn as a teen where he attended high school and first realized his talent as a lyricist while freestyling with his Flatbush classmates. After serving in the US Marines for four years, he made his musical breakthrough in 1993 with "Oh Carolina," a track that holds the distinction of being the first-ever dancehall record to chart in England (where it spent two weeks at No. 1. on the UK Singles Chart). A major force in boosting the worldwide popularity of reggae and dancehall music, Shaggy later went on to win the Best Reggae Album prize at the 1996 Grammy Awards for his third full-length effort *Boombastic* (featuring the platinum-selling and iconic title track). His catalog also includes the No. 1 mega-hits "It Wasn't Me" and "Angel," both of which appeared on his diamond-selling album *Hot Shot*. Shaggy currently resides in Jamaica with his wife and children.

In their collaboration on *44/876*, both artists felt equally challenged and inspired by the other's singular creative approach. While Shaggy says he learned from Sting's meticulous experimentation in the songwriting process, Sting points out that Shaggy's purposeful spontaneity helped to expand his artistry. "The whole record was made with this kind of genial competitiveness between us, each trying to up our game," says Sting.

Both dedicated philanthropists (Sting co-founded the Rainforest Fund with his wife Trudie Styler in 1989), Sting and Shaggy debuted "Don't Make Me Wait" at a recent benefit for the Bustamante Hospital for Children (a Kingston, Jamaica-based facility that Shaggy's long supported through his Shaggy Make a Difference Foundation). Despite never having heard the song, the crowd of 20,000 almost instantly sang along—a testament to the undeniable vitality of the duo's collaboration. "Going into the studio with Shaggy and not knowing what the outcome would be—it's a leap in the dark, it's a risk," says Sting. "But it's always worth taking a risk in terms of creativity because the best things are always accidents...You have to say, 'Okay, well, I'm going to put myself out of my comfort zone and see what happens.' And that's really what this is."