

Menu

- Home
- Reviews
- Interviews
- The Best Of...
- Forum
- Links
- FAQ
- Contact Us
- Music News
- Write For Us
- Current Contests
- cdreviews @ myspace
- Music Shop

Search

Interviews

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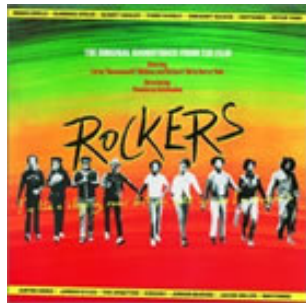


Home

Thursday, 04 August 2005

Rockers: 25th Anniversary Edition

Written by Chris Manson



Despite the abundance of great [reggae](#) tracks, the soundtrack to Theodoros Bafaloukos' *Rockers* always comes up a close second to that of its predecessor *The Harder They Come*. The movie, however, easily bests the Jimmy Cliff flick. Funny, spirited, and downright inspiring, *Rockers* is a must-own in its new 25th anniversary DVD incarnation.

Writer-director Bafaloukos presents a convincing portrait of Jamaican ghetto life circa the late 1970s by simply turning his actors—a who's who of greats from reggae's "golden age"—loose and letting them live in front of his never-intrusive camera. The heavily improvised movie follows drummer Leroy "Horsemouth" Wallace on a series of adventures that begin when he convinces his frustrated lady to give him money to buy a motorbike so he can peddle records around Kingston. Later the bike gets stolen, allowing the movie to show us a true sense of community as pals like Gregory Isaacs and Burning Spear rally together to help Horsemouth stick it to the bad men.

Here is a movie that isn't afraid to stop the action for some extended musical numbers. The performances are lively, never slowing down the film. In one particularly great sequence, Horsemouth's pal locks himself in the DJ booth of a disco and treats the patrons to his "rockers" music. Best of all is Burning Spear's a cappella rendition of "Jah No Dead"—it always sounded great on the album, but here it is especially beautiful.

The dialogue is very authentic Rastafarian, hence the subtitles. The DVD boasts top-notch stereo surround as well as 5.1 and DTS. *Rockers'* remastered 35mm print benefits from rich colors and lovely images.

Rockers would be essential for the movie alone, but the bonus features put most other special editions to shame, including Criterion Collection's out-of-print issue of *The Harder They Come*. A 22-minute interview catches up with Bafaloukos who—aside from occasional assistance to documentarian Errol Morris—appears to be just enjoying life these days. He offers wonderful insights into the making of the movie. The interview and 16-minute selected scene commentary are informative and well produced.

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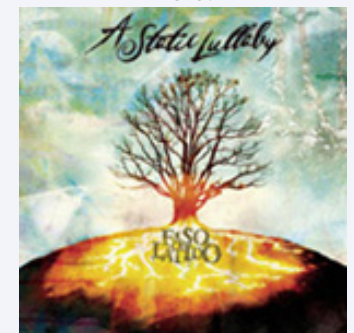
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A couple of music videos spice up this package, and the theatrical trailer will make old-timers yearn for the good old days when coming attractions previews did not reveal every little plot detail. Show me some cool images accompanied by Peter Tosh's transcendent "Stepping Razor"—I'll be there on opening night, man. A collection of producer Patrick Hulse's movie posters is accompanied by radio advertisements.

And if that's not enough for you, there are tons of mini-biographies included. These are particularly well done with narration as well as discographies for the musicians. The "Rasta Patois Glossary" is especially useful and is also included in the DVD's lavish booklet. An interview with Hulse from a 2001 episode of "Rockers TV" and a plug for the new line of "Rockers It's Dangerous" clothing complete this commendable effort.

Did I mention that the movie is great? If you even think you like reggae, take that money you were going to throw away on another [Bob Marley](#) T-shirt and buy this disc instead.

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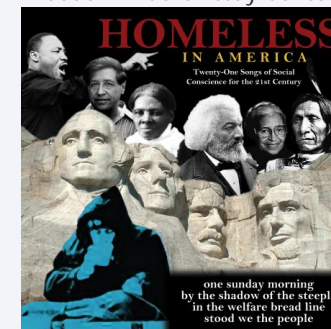


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