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Rockers

By Brent Hagerman

Rockers

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25th Anniversary Edition (MVD)
Wars have been fought, families divided and island nations consumed by the feud over which is the greatest reggae film of all time – Rockers or The Harder They Come? No doubt the latter had

a bigger theatrical release and has probably remained forefront in the collective North American reggae consciousness, but is it a better movie? Musician for musician it is not – and this is Rockers' strength: the list of chart topping reggae artists and behind the scenes rudeboys is immense and makes this film the ultimate treat for any reggae fan. The Harder had a bigger star in Jimmy Cliff but Rocker's dreadlocked hero, Burning Spear and Inner Circle drummer Leroy "Horsemouth" Wallace, is instantly likeable and it is easy to sympathize with his predicament (namely that in his search for his stolen Honda he and a musical posse featuring Dirty Harry, Big Youth, Dillinger, Gregory Isaacs, Robbie Shakespeare, Jacob Miller and more stumble upon an organized crime ring). Originally intended to be a documentary of Jamaica's music scene in 1979, director Ted Bafaloukos ended up realizing that building a narrative around the scene's key musicians was in fact a better idea. To that end most of the script is improvised, although it comes off natural, not forced or shoddy. The story is a basic ghetto Robin Hood but the characters are unstoppably mischievous and the score is a perfect time capsule of late '70s reggae.

The extras are numerous, including a director's commentary and documentary, interactive biographies on everyone in, and connected with, the film, a Rockers TV interview with late producer Patrick Hulseley, music videos, a sketchy discography, Patois glossary and more. [BH]

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