

Books



**THIS IS REGGAE MUSIC:
THE STORY OF JAMAICA'S MUSIC**
Lloyd Bradley
GROVE/ATLANTIC

Simply put, this is the best book on Jamaican popular music ever written, and is worth its price just for the chapter on Prince Buster alone. Born in London to Jamaican parents, Lloyd Bradley literally grew up with reggae music and brings an insider's passion, understanding and occasional frustration with the music to bear in this definitive history. Through exhaustive research, interviews and sheer force of lived history, Bradley brings the story of Jamaican music to vivid life. Originally published in Britain as *Bass Culture*, the book is also an important, street-level document of Caribbean immigration and assimilation in the U.K.

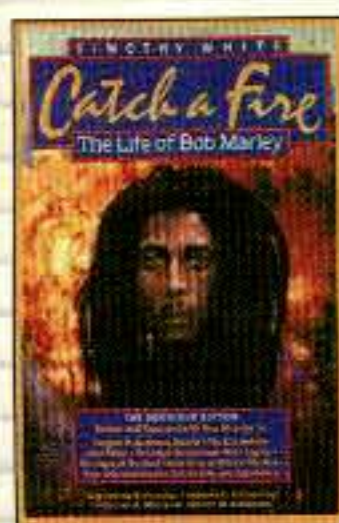
[\$17.00]



**ROUGH GUIDE TO REGGAE,
3RD EDITION**
Steve Barrow & Peter Dalton
ROUGH GUIDES, LTD.

Running a close second Bradley's masterwork, *The Rough Guide To Reggae* is an invaluable and definitive encyclopedia of Jamaican popular music, from ska, rocksteady and roots to dub, dancehall and ragga. Compiled by Steve Barrow, from the excellent Blood and Fire label, and music journalist Peter Dalton, this volume exhibits all the meticulous, geeky attention to detail that only true music fanatics can muster. The authors emphasize not only artists, records and trends; but also producers, labels, styles and all sorts of ephemera to build a comprehensive picture of the music's development. But best of all are the many sidebars that allow that music makers to tell the story in their own words.

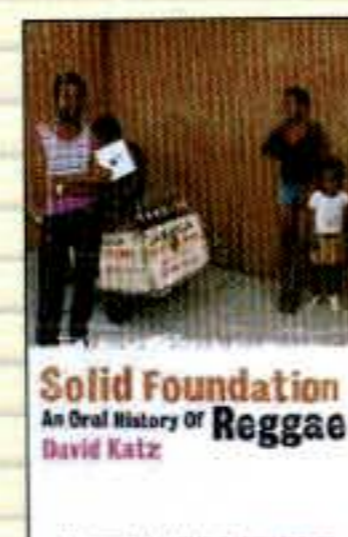
[\$21.95]



**CATCH A FIRE:
THE LIFE OF BOB MARLEY**
Timothy White
HENRY HOLT & COMPANY, INCORPORATED

Originally published in 1977, this Bob Marley biography was one of the first "serious" books on reggae and its impact on Jamaica. The late, legendary *Billboard* editor Timothy White traveled to Jamaica and conducted extensive interviews and research to paint a composite picture not just of Marley and his music, but of the island environment from which they sprang. In doing so, he wrote not only an insightful biography, but an inspired social history as well. While some of White's observations may seem dated or a bit off today, he still manages to catch the essential spirit of Marley's story and offers an excellent guide to Jamaica and its musical culture for the uninitiated.

[\$17.00]



**SOLID FOUNDATION:
AN ORAL HISTORY OF REGGAE**
David Katz
BLOOMSBURY

Music journalist David Katz, author of *People Funny Boy: The Genius of Lee "Scratch" Perry*, takes a different approach in this book by simply letting Jamaican music makers speak for themselves. Interviewing scores of musicians, producers, engineers and other players, Katz covers the last 40 years of Jamaican music, from the Skatalites to Coca Tea. As would be expected in an oral history, more than a few of the interviewees are opinionated, contentious, and stubborn, and there are more than a few conflicting memories here. All of which reminds readers that the well-told story of Jamaican music is also the story of real people, in all their all-too-human glory. A great read.

[\$23.95]

DVDs



THE HARDER THEY COME
UVMD/VISUAL ENTERTAINMENT GROUP

This legendary 1973 cult classic captured reggae on film for the very first time, and was instrumental in getting the word out to the rest of the world. Director Perry Henzel was in the right place at the right time, shooting on location at the height of the roots explosion. Jimmy Cliff plays Ivan, a country boy who comes to Kingston to make it in the music business, only to be reduced to a life of crime, before becoming a rude boy folk hero who eventually goes down in a blaze of gunfire. Tough stuff, but Henzel deftly captured all the hurly-burly of Jamaican urbanization and the rising discontent of the era, and set it against some of the most iconic reggae tracks ever recorded. Classics striver's anthems from Toots and the Maytals, Desmond Dekker, the Melodians and Cliff himself made the soundtrack one of the best albums of all time.

[\$19.98]



**REBEL MUSIC:
THE BOB MARLEY STORY**
PALM PICTURES

Easily the best documentary on the life of Bob Marley, director Jeremy Marre's 2000 film is a comprehensive and honest examination of Marley's life and turbulent times. Marre uses rare footage and extensive interviews—with Bob, his family, his friends, his former lovers, and even two former Jamaican Prime Ministers—to paint a complex portrait of the artist and his era. Marre does an excellent job of charting Marley's rise and artistic development in the contexts of reggae's overall evolution and of Jamaican social and political history. The picture that emerges is far more human and engaging than the cardboard saint that so many of Bob's other biographers have made him out to be. And with a soundtrack that boasts over 40 tracks of the man's music, what's not to love?

[\$24.99]



ROCKERS
MVD

This 1978 film, directed by Ted Bafaloukos, is arguably the best reggae film ever made. Where *The Harder They Come* captured the first flush of roots reggae, *Rockers* captured the rockers era, when musical talent seemed to be bursting out of every West Kingston tenement yard. Starring famed session drummer Leroy "Horsemouth" Wallace and DJ Richard "Dirty Harry" Hall, the film boasts cameos and performances by a who's who of reggae greats, including Jacob Miller, Gregory Isaacs, Burning Spear, Robbie Shakespeare, Leroy Smart, Big Youth and Dillinger, and a killer soundtrack courtesy of the Channel One label's deep roster of artists. Sure the plot, a kind of ghetto robin-hood scenario, is a bit thin, but the location shots, detours and digressions all capture the authentic rhythms and feel of Jamaica.

[\$24.95]



LIFE AND DEBT
NEW YORKER FILMS

This 2003 documentary isn't about reggae, per se. But in telling the story of Jamaica's economic struggle with the World Bank and the IMF in the 70s, 80s and 90s, the film provides the necessary context for understanding the music's social impact in Jamaica. Aply directed by Stephanie Black, the film conducts a wide range of interviews (including one of the last ever with former Prime Minister Michael Manley) and has the smarts to let ordinary Jamaicans speak for themselves. Their articulate, clear-eyed accounts of how IMF policies have affected their lives and livelihoods are riveting. There's plenty of music in the soundtrack, too, with sufferahs' anthems stretching back from contemporaries like Mutabaruka, Anthony B. and Sizzla to old lions like Bob Marley and Peter Tosh. — a stark aural reminder of how little Jamaica's economic situation has improved over the decades.

[\$29.95]