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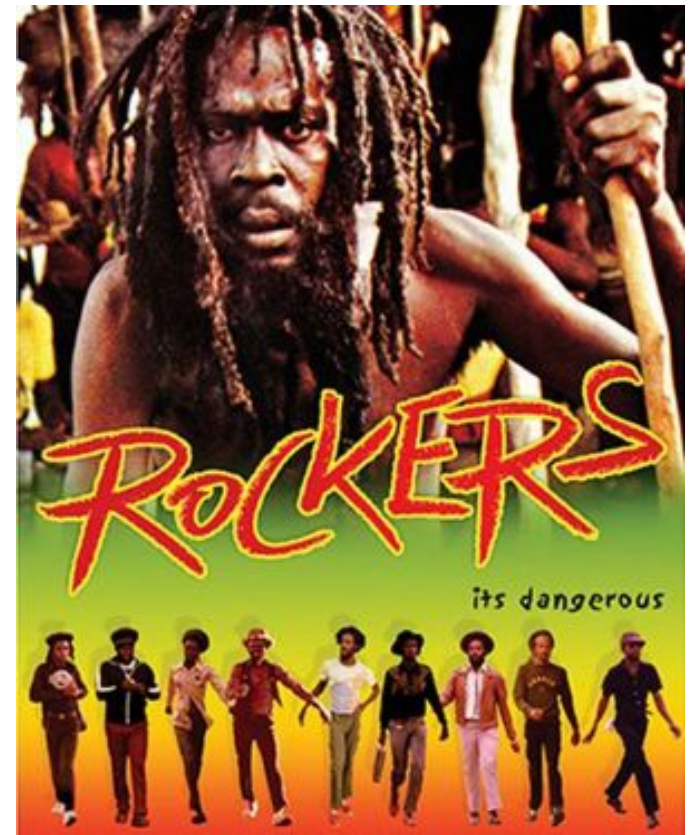
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roots of reggae

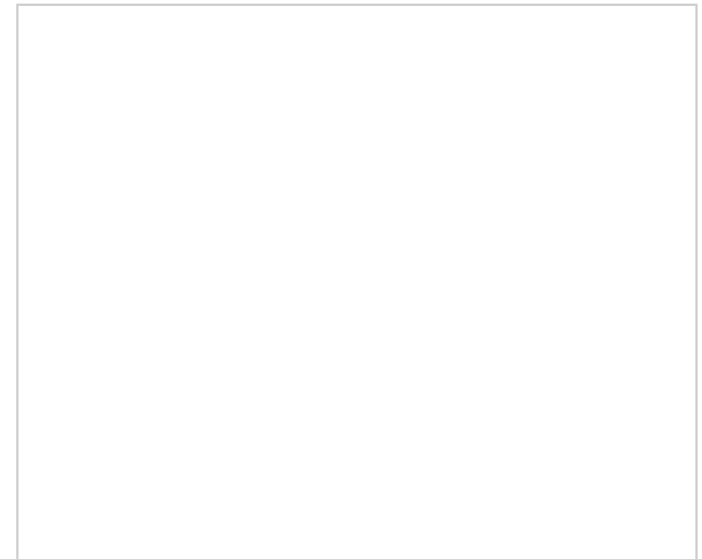
Rockers(Music Video Distributors) ([Buy It!](#))

Perry Henzell's 1972 cult-hit film *The Harder They Come* gave a bigger boost to Jamaica's music business than to its movie business, but Henzell's success did indirectly inspire the production of *Rockers*, a 1978 realist reggae drama that's arguably a better film, as well as a better explication of what the island's music is all about. Leroy "Horsemouth" Wallace plays an unemployed drummer who hustles independent records by day and hustles for gigs by night. In both cases, he has to deal with the local crime bosses, and when his motorbike goes mysteriously missing, he rallies his cohorts for a daring midnight burglary at a mob office. Meanwhile, he bounces from club to club, grousing about how the true reggae sound is being undone by disco-loving tourists. Writer-director Theodoros Bafaloukos presents all this as his own naturalist Rastafarian version of *The Bicycle Thief*, but he breaks with documentary style by having Wallace address the camera directly, and take frequent stops to puff on a ganja pipe and dance.

The new 25th-anniversary DVD edition of *Rockers* dispels some of the mystery surrounding the film, which was Bafaloukos' only feature-directing credit, and has such an organic feel that it almost seems like it made itself. A Bafaloukos commentary track and a collection of scene-setting featurettes fills in a lot of the background behind the film's creation and subsequent critical acclaim, and the pristine digital transfer and subtitled patois make *Rockers* easier to follow and enjoy than ever. Between the nearly nonstop soundtrack, the rhythmic footage of vinyl records being pressed, and the mountaintop prophecies that reveal the spiritual roots of reggae, Bafaloukos establishes what the music business means to impoverished islanders, and how the drug-fueled religious ceremony behind the music matters even more than money. —Noel Murray



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