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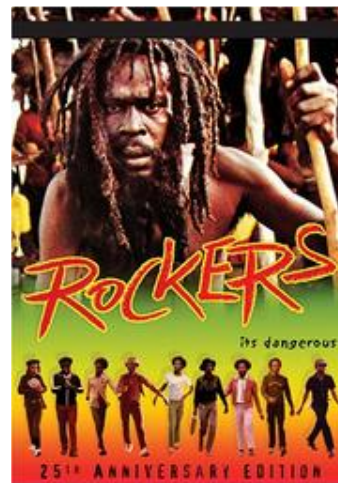
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Rockers – 25th Anniversary Edition (DTS)

Picture: C+ Sound: B- Extras: B- Film: B-

Since New Yorker brought **Rockers** to the United States in 1979, the 1978 film has been the film most compared to the Jimmy Cliff classic **The Harder They Come** (1973, directed by Perry Henzell) as the definitive Reggae film. Though writer/director Theodoros Bafaloukos' film is worthy of the comparison, its narrative is more predictable and archetypical of so many stories about making it or not making it in the music business. Though the acting is often convincing and it has great music by key artists in the genre, including Peter Tosh, Bunny Wailer and Third World, it simply does not have the outright spirit of **Harder They Come** in that the narrative is as bold and revelatory as the music.



The story about Reggae artists trying to make it in the music business is somewhat similar, but even with corruption in both cases, **Rockers** just cannot compete with its great predecessor. This does not mean the film fails, as it is remarkable in its own way, fully realized in its sense of community that is comfortable (and maybe too much so) with the music and life. Music Video Distributors and Blue Sun Film Company are so happy with it that they have reissued it on DVD in an impressive 25th Anniversary Special Edition whose presentation can rival any version of **Harder They Come** to date. Besides having all the extras in one place, the sound is has been upgraded to 5.1 Dolby and 5.1 DTS, the latter of which **Harder They Come** desperately needs and deserves, but has not received yet.

The letterboxed 1.85 X 1 image is not the new transfer **Rockers** should get to match that sound, but purists will be happy to know that background noise was left in the remix. That may not satisfy audiophiles completely, but the lack of compression is a plus. Needless to say a digital HD update will be needed down the line. This is the best presentation of the film on video to date, with audio rich enough to catch the music and color (by Movielab and it looks like it) that is consistent enough to play back without distraction. It looks like the original materials are in good shape, though with DVD you can never be totally sure since it is easy to cheat with this format.

No cheating is detected here, which extends to a slew of extras. Besides a very nice full color 16-page booklet inside the DVD case, there are stills, text biographies, on camera interviews with cats and crew, trailers for twelve other MVD DVD Reggae titles, director's interviews (one called a commentary, but it is not the usual audio commentary) and even original radio and trailer materials. This is especially great for a little-known independent film and the quality and number of extras you would usually get from Criterion. No viewer will be disappointed.

- Nicholas Sheffo

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