



Deep Roots 1-3

In terms of music documentaries, where biographical films are generally centered on commercial radio giants and often run the narrow range from Johnny Cash to the Rolling Stones, reggae has traditionally been a very under-represented genre. For reggae aficionados long squirming for documentary subjects beyond the immediate realm of Bob Marley, however, the Deep Roots series finally offers a reason and an opportunity to drop \$60 on a satisfying collection of old reggae footage.

The Deep Roots series, now having reached its third volume, is a documentary compilation covering everything from the birth of mento and ska, via Lee Perry and the Black Ark, to Jack Ruby and his legendary street corner auditions. The three DVDs in the series are jam-packed with interviews, featuring conversations with the likes of The Skatalites, Lee Perry, and Bunny Lee, as well as long archival performances by heavy hitters like Count Ossie, an incredible Nyabinghi drumming session, and yes, Bob Marley too.

For anyone with even a marginal interest in reggae and Jamaican culture, the Deep Roots series is a gold mine; since the six films (two on each disc) cover the birth and rise of reggae chronologically, viewers can get a very clear grip on how the genre has evolved over the years, and interviews with historians and artists alike present differing viewpoints and in-depth opinions on the art form's history. Although there are some conflicting approaches to the history of the genre, one conclusion shared by everyone interviewed is that the music of Jamaica is the music of the people, and had it not been for a pure love of art and the desire for expressing oneself, reggae would never have come to be.

While all three volumes offer indispensable material for viewers, one of the most appealing aspects of the Deep Roots series is that the discs are sold separately, so there is no requirement to spend \$60 for the entire set if you're only after specific material. Those dedicated to tracking down obscure footage of Lee Perry, both outside and inside his legendary Black Ark studio, can settle for only part two of the series, while the rock-steady enthusiasts (you know who you are) can comfortably reach for the first disc.

That said, chances are that once you've delved into one of the three volumes you'll want to check out the others. While each disc can stand on its own as a documentary, died-in-the-wool reggae devotees and curious minds alike will want to approach the series from the beginning, as the chronology is a solid key to dissecting the genre's

maturity. Watching the three DVDs in sequence will not only provide deep insight into reggae and rasta culture, and the now myriad sub-genres thereof, but it will also provide a deeper developmental understanding through the series' collection of performances - some of them very rare - from a collection of reggae's greatest practitioners.

Although picking a definitive favorite among the three discs is daunting due to the sheer volume of artists and styles represented, the most potent in the series is disc two: the Lee Perry interviews and the footage from the Black Ark studio are remarkable. Music buffs are rarely afforded the opportunity of a detailed tour through such a studio as iconic as the Black Ark compound, where one can almost smell the blood, sweat and tears that have been poured into the music created there over the years.

If you have a few hours and some discretionary funding to spare, the Deep Roots DVD series is an investment well worth \$60. Discerning fans of reggae and music in general will find themselves returning to the series' three DVDs over and over again.