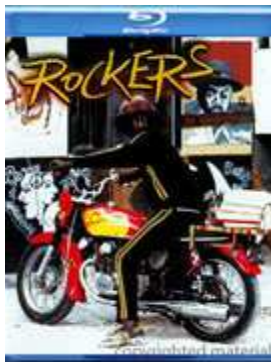



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### Case Number 16736: Small Claims Court



## Rockers (Blu-Ray)

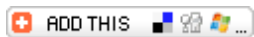
**MVD Visual** // 1978 // 99 Minutes // Not Rated  
Reviewed by Judge Gordon Sullivan // July 2nd, 2009

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Someone stole Judge Gordon Sullivan's tricycle.

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### Scales of Justice

**Judgment:** 80

### Perp Profile

**Studio:** [MVD Visual](#)

**Video Formats:**

- 1.85:1 Non-Anamorphic (1080p)

**Audio Formats:**

- Dolby Digital 5.1 Surround (English)

**Subtitles:**

- French
- Jamaican (Patois)
- Japanese
- Spanish

**Running Time:** 99 Minutes

**Release Year:** 1978

**MPAA Rating:** Not Rated

**Genres:**

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### The Charge

It's dangerous.

### The Case

Like most American kids, my first introduction to reggae was Bob Marley on the radio. However, I didn't really have any serious interest in the genre until I discovered punk as a teenager. Then I learned that most of the seminal punk rockers had crates full of Jamaican music, including dub and reggae, which prompted me to learn more. What I discovered is that punk and reggae complement each other perfectly. Reggae shows that behind punk's sneering exterior is a genuine sense of oppression and experimentation, while punk shows that reggae, despite its generally mellow groove and bright sounds, has true revolutionary potential. In my mind, the two worlds most fruitfully meet in the DIY aesthetic of Jamaican cinema, especially its twin stars **The Harder They Come** and **Rockers**.

**The Harder They Come** is undoubtedly the more famous of the two, not least because **Rockers** has no qualms about borrowing some of the underdog sentiments of its older brother. In fact, it wouldn't be amiss to label **Rockers** as **The Harder They Come** meets **The Bicycle Thieves**.

### Distinguishing Marks

- Booklet

### Accomplices

- [IMDb](#)

The film follows Horsemouth (played by reggae artist Leroy "Horsemouth" Wallace) as he attempts to better himself by buying a motorcycle so he can distribute the hottest reggae jams around the island. However, someone steals his ride, and he must join with his fellow musicians and clash with a group of small-time gangsters to retrieve his property.

I'm not about to knock **The Harder They Come**, but its rags-to-riches story doesn't offer as much insight into the Jamaican reggae community as it could. It's a little too contrived to capture the everyday aspects of reggae culture (even as it perfectly captures the simmering discontent and poverty). Taking a cue from Neorealism, **Rockers** takes a more naturalistic approach, using the stolen motorcycle as a small peg on which to hang footage of reggae musicians being reggae musicians. In fact, the film opens with a group of musicians sitting around, passing the pipe as they play. One suspects that it's not tobacco they're smoking, and that this non-tobacco informed much of the hazy pacing of the film.

All that really pales before the truly important question about **Rockers**: How does the music stand up? Thirty years later, it still stands up pretty well. Those weaned on the more radio-friendly reggae of Bob Marley (or more distantly, covers of his work by the likes of Eric Clapton) may find **Rockers** a little hard to swallow, as the jams can be hard-hitting and lengthy. However, for fans of the "golden era" of reggae, this is a serious goldmine. We get to see (and hear!) the likes of Burning Spear, Peter Tosh, Gregory Isaacs, and Robbie Shakespeare. Even when no one is playing on-screen, the soundtrack brims with beautiful music.

**Rockers** was released in a twenty-fifth anniversary DVD edition in 2005, and this new Blu-ray disc is a mixed bag in comparison. On the positive side, the film is presented in a newly created HD transfer in the original 1.85:1 aspect ratio (in contrast to the full-frame of the DVD). It looks as good as you'd expect from a low-budget film from 1978. The source is a bit ragged, and the colors muted, but this is probably as good as the film is going to look on home video. On the negative side of things, all the extras from the twenty-fifth anniversary are lost. These include an interview with the director, a commentary with the director, the trailer, and music videos. The only "extra" ported over is a booklet containing pictures and a Jamaican patois glossary. Because **Rockers** functions almost as much as a documentary as it does a musical, the contextual extras are sorely missed.

The Blu-ray does port over the 5.1 surround audio mix, which is listed as "English," but is really Jamaican patois. For the uninitiated this track will be a difficult listen, but the inclusion of numerous subtitle options (and the glossary booklet) will be of use to many viewers.

**Rockers** is a fascinating Neorealist portrait of a particularly interesting time in Jamaican history and popular culture. It's certainly recommended for all fans of reggae, or anyone who enjoyed **The Harder They Come**. This Blu-ray is hard to recommend because, despite the upgrade in visual quality, all the DVD extras have been lost, making for a much less



attractive package. Upgrade at your own discretion, but I'd recommend both releases for serious fans.

#### The Verdict

Jah know **Rockers** not guilty.

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- [Sins Of The Father](#)
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- [Depeche Mode: Songs Of Faith And Devotion](#)

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