

DVD: Roots Daughters - The Women of Rastafari (1992)

Review Rating: Good
Label/Studio: MVD (Music Video Distributors)
Catalog #: DRG-227
Region: 0 (NTSC)
Released: August 29, 2006



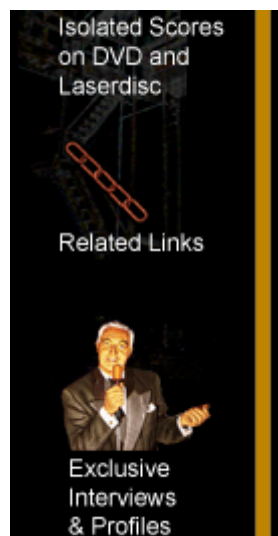
Genre: Documentary
Synopsis: Up close and personal examination of women within Rastafari culture.
Directed by: Bianca Nyavingi Brynda
Screenplay by: Bianca Nyavingi Brynda

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Music by: various
Produced by: Bianca Nyavingi Brynda

Cast: Petal Roberts, Judy Mowatt, Minion Phillips, Wisdom-Donna Gomes-Freedom, Norman Wilkinson, Ingrid Wilkinson, Lorna Dixon, Fitz Elliott, Yvonne Lewis, Dawn Wright, Terro Nelson, and Ariane Cook.

Film Length: 50 mins

Process/Ratio: 1.33:1

Colour

Anamorphic DVD: No

Languages: English Dolby 2.0 and 5.1

Subtitles:

Special Features :

Live Judy Mowatt performances of "Let's Dance" 3:47 + "Sing Our Own Song" (5:32)

Comments :

Produced with some participation from the NFB, Bianca Nyavingi Brynda's documentary on the position of women within the Rastafari religion mixes music, archival stills, and interviews with an even sampling of practicing Rastafarians from various social and work strata, and though the production is less glossy than conventional docs - **Roots Daughters** was mostly shot on location in Jamaica, but Brynda doesn't dwell on glossy island images and lengthy music montages - it provides an excellent introduction to a religion whose specific attire and musical roots have been adopted and exploited by the fashion and music industry since the look and sound of reggae brought them into the international market.

[Bob Marley](#) fans won't find concert segments in Brynda's doc; the director and her interviewees acknowledge the late great musician is an important symbol and figurehead of Rastafarian culture, but he's one of three men to which the doc pays tribute, including [Marcus Garvey](#) (the Jamaican freedom fighter who prophesized that a savior king shall be crowned in Africa), and Ethiopia's Emperor [Haile Selassie](#) (who became the anointed savior, partly through his stature, and his pleas to the international community for aid when Italy's Mussolini wanted to conquer the last independent African nation).

Brynda's goal is threefold: to show the religion's value through the words of the faithful in candid & earnest detail; to trace its evolution from specific historic and religious strands; and the changes being made by Rastafari women for their own betterment. Not dissimilar from other religions, there are factions that share different views of a woman's role in family and religious ceremonies, and the doc speaks to a fair sampling of professional artists and ordinary women who explain how and why their faith and the Rastafari culture are tied to their personal identities.

Self purpose, pride, and symbols (hair locks, garments) are discussed, along with more contemporary issues such as birth control, menstruation, and polygamy. Singer [Judy Mowatt](#) often clarifies some of the more hot-button topics, and she's positioned as a modern Rastafari who emphasizes a woman's need to educate and become nearly self-sufficient for the benefit her family, and as insurance in case the husband is no longer present.

Brynda's scope rarely includes the views of men, except Fitz Elliott, who expresses the conservative and chauvinistic stance that men are superior beings, have higher intellect, and greater understanding of faith. One could say this lone paternalistic view isn't fair to men, but if taken as an example of traditional arrogance and control maneuvering - women are still viewed

as evil, temptresses, and such - one understands why the small efforts of women to assert themselves within a culture are so important to Brynda, and her message of self-worth within any faith.

MVD's DVD includes a clean transfer of the original film print, and while mixed to stereo 2.0 and 5.1, only the studio recorded source songs (like the Bob Marley track) are in true stereo. The DVD also contains two complete concert performances by Mowatt (in true stereo), as performed live at The Diamond Club, and recorded on videotape. (Her song "Great Black Warrior Princess," which is woven early into the film's intro narrative, was shot on film in a recording studio, and plays in mono in the finished film.)

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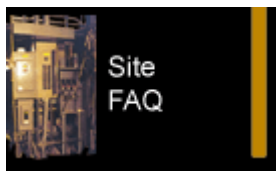
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