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Various - Sting Jamaica 2003 (DVD)

Tuesday, January 20, 2009

Most will agree that reggae as come a long way since the days of Peter Tosh, Bob Marley, and Toots and the Maytals. The evolution of this unique musical dialect is plain to see during the near three hours of performances on this DVD.

Despite the title, Sting the Police frontman and solo artist is in no way involved with this project. However, there are no less than seventeen headlining artists are. They run the gamut of modern reggae from the hip-hop influenced sonic assault of Assassin, to the more melodic and traditional Sanchez.

Highlights include the energetic Junior Kelly with "Black Am I," and a very tight set from Sanchez ending with the spiritual "Amazing Grace." Anthony B. shows flashes of reggae days gone by with "Thieving Church Liar Pastor."

What sticks is the sheer volume of this concert. There is just shy of three hours worth of stuff here, with seemingly very little thought put into editing. You need to be a reggae die-hard to sit through the whole thing, as many of the artists spend most of their time yelling to the crowd in a heavily accented patois.

The production quality is low at best. While it is shot with multiple cameras, it doesn't lose that sort of community access cable vibe. Many shots are unsteady, and the picture quality is just north of what you'd get out of a pair of rabbit ears. Couple that with very low sound quality, and you have a less than stellar concert video.

The concert closes with an increasingly restless crowd and an onstage brawl between rival artists. This is probably not what Bob Marley had in mind for the genre he made an international success. The equally voluminous bonus disc contains plenty of press about the brawl and subsequent police investigations and arrests, that's if you have another three hours of your life to give to this.

Reggae enthusiasts will be able to enjoy a lot of the performances here so long as the low quality of the video and audio can be overlooked. Others will find themselves reaching for the remote.

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Noah Small - MuzikReviews.com Staff January 16, 2009



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