



**FROM JAMAICA TO THE WORLD: REGGAE ON FILM**

# Rockers

'Greetings and love to one and all.' Originally conceived as a documentary about the late 70s scene, Theodoros Bafaloukos's wonderfully loose, quirky and free-wheeling film gradually morphed into a more singular, hybridised entity combining real-life figures with fictional elements in a tale of oppressed musicians getting one over on their exploiters.

Taking its title from the style of reggae that grew out of dub icon Augustus Pablo and his brother Garth Swaby's record label, this cool and joyous journey ended up cheekily evoking Vittorio De Sica's *Bicycle Thieves* (1948), with a dash of Robin Hood on the side. Leroy 'Horsemouth' Wallace, then one of Jamaica's most celebrated drummers, moves through the Kingston ghetto and music industry in search of his stolen motorbike, bought as part of his record distribution business. As he encounters a host of luminaries along the way, among them Jacob Miller, Gregory Isaacs, Burning Spear and Big Youth, *Rockers* offers an indelible portrait of Jamaican culture and the reggae scene at its peak.

**Alex Ramon, [bfi.org.uk](http://bfi.org.uk), 28 July 2022**

Capturing the 1970s Jamaican reggae scene with an authenticity unmatched by the earlier and more internationally successful *The Harder They Come*, *Rockers* tells the story of the hustling Leroy 'Horsemouth' Wallace, a reggae drummer fallen on hard times. The cast all strut with natty style and deliver memorable performances in rich patois, but the music is the heart of the film, with atmospheric scenes of dances and studio sessions featuring a roll-call of the leading reggae musicians of the time, including Gregory Isaacs, Jacob Miller, Burning Spear and Bunny Wailer.

**Sight & Sound, September 2005**

## **A contemporary review**

This skeletal Jamaican 'Robin Hood' tale owes its contagiously gleeful mood almost entirely to the excellent reggae music which supplies its title. Organically integrated into the film's shaggy-dog naturalism, the music also provides the majority of the cast from the ranks of its performers. A sort of stoned co-ordination, seemingly unique to the Rastafarian sub-culture and its musical expression, lends an endearingly idiomatic exaggeration to action, gesture and language alike, and director Bafaloukos has the good sense to allow his (natural) performers to digress at will, even twice accommodating a straight-to-camera recitation of various articles of the Rasta faith. That said, though, *Rockers* is as far from worthy dramatic anthropology as it's possible to be: there is a conspiratorial ambience about the semi-improvised script, a kind of self-expression-cum-wish-fulfilment, and even the subtitles remain mere transcriptions of the involved ghetto patois rather than translations. The movies are a fitting mirror for a culture where 'star' is an expression of affectionate greeting and where musicians co-opt the names of such as Dirty Harry and Dillinger. The 'roots' simplicity of *The Harder They Come* and *Smile Orange* is perfectly captured here, incongruously enough, in an American film, which would qualify it in Rastafarian parlance as a product of 'Babylon' (any decadent establishment).

**Paul Taylor, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, October 1979**

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## ROCKERS

*Director:* Theodoros Bafaloukos  
*Production Company:* Rockers Film Corporation  
*A Production by:* Jesse Burton  
*Producer:* Patrick Hulsey  
*Associate Producer:* Avrom Robin  
*Production Manager:* David Streit  
*Production Assistants:* Michael Bigger, Ainsley 'Jubey' Gabay, Michael 'Teeny Bop' Gardine, Peter Cox, George 'Gego' Bennet, Audley 'Lutz' Bennet, Errol Brown, George Bryan  
*Assistant Director:* Walter Rearick  
*Screenplay:* Theodoros Bafaloukos  
*Photography:* Peter Sova  
*Camera Operators:* Edward Marritz, Dan Lerner, Craig DiBona  
*Editor:* Susan Steinberg  
*Art Director:* Lilly Kilvert  
*Costumes:* Eugenie Bafaloukos  
*Sound Supervisor:* Nigel Noble  
*Sound Recording:* Kit Whitmore  
*Sound Consultant:* Richard Newton  
*Sound Re-recording:* Dick J. Vorisek  
*Sound Editor:* Ron Kalish  
*Transcribed Titles:* Jean Wardle

## Cast

Leroy Wallace (*Horsemouth*)  
Richard Hall (*Dirty Harry*)  
Monica Craig (*Madgie*)  
Marjorie Norman (*Sunshine*)  
Jacob Miller (*Jakes*)  
Gregory Isaacs (*Jah Tooth*)  
Winston Rodney (*Burning Spear*)  
Frank Dowding (*Kiddus-I*)  
Robert Shakespeare (*Robbie*)  
Manley Buchanan (*Big Youth*)  
Lester Bullocks (*Dillinger*)  
The Mighty Diamonds (*themselves*)  
Ashley Harris (*Higher*)  
Leroy Smart (*himself*)  
Peter Honiball (*Honeyball*)  
L. Lindo (*Jack Ruby*)  
Trevor Douglas (*Leggo Beast*)  
Herman Davis (*Bongo Herman*)  
Raymond Hall (*Jeep Man*)  
Junior Wilby (*Natty Majesty*)  
Errol Brown (*Knatty Garfield*)  
Robert Van Campbell (*Jah Wise*)  
Berris Simpson (*Prince Hammer*)  
Theophilus Beckford (*Easy Snapping*)  
Phylip Richards (*John Dread*)  
Poops, Sharon, Rickie (*children*)

Jamaica 1978  
100 mins

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## FROM JAMAICA TO THE WORLD: REGGAE ON FILM

### Rockers

Thu 4 Aug 20:40; Sat 13 Aug 14:45

### No Place Like Home: Redux

Fri 5 Aug 21:00; Fri 19 Aug 18:40

### Riddim Moves – A Dancehall Day Event

Sat 6 Aug 13:00-18:00

### Dancehall Queen

Sat 6 Aug 18:40; Tue 9 Aug 18:20

### Steppin' Razor: Red X

Sun 7 Aug 18:00; Sat 20 Aug 14:45

### Rudeboy: The Story of Trojan Records

Fri 12 Aug 18:20; Sun 28 Aug 18:30

### Better Mus' Come

Sat 13 Aug 18:15; Sat 27 Aug 20:45

### Sprinter

Sat 13 Aug 20:40; Fri 26 Aug 18:10

### African Redemption: The Life and Legacy of Marcus Garvey

Mon 15 Aug 20:40; Sun 28 Aug 14:50

### Reggae Futures

Sat 20 Aug 17:30

### Lion of Judah, War in Ethiopia, 1935-1936 + discussion

Tue 23 Aug 18:20

### Bob Marley: The Making of a Legend + Q&A with directors Esther

Anderson and Gian Godoy

Tue 30 Aug 18:10

This season is presented by **African Odysseys**, which celebrates its 15th anniversary in 2022



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Programme notes and credits compiled by the BFI Documentation Unit

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