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CINEMA IN JAMAICA— THE LEGACY OF PERRY HENZELL'S *THE HARDER THEY COME*

SABRINA CECCATO

Résumé

*Le cinéma traditionnel représentant la Jamaïque et les Jamaïcains a toujours utilisé des clichés et des stéréotypes. Le cinéma jamaïcain a débuté en 1972 avec le film de Perry Henzell et a immédiatement commencé à donner une nouvelle image du pays et de ses habitants. À partir de *The Harder They Come* jusqu'au dernier film, le cinéma Jamaïcain a utilisé les mêmes styles, techniques et thèmes pour fournir une nouvelle vision du pays. Les films ne sont peut-être pas de grande qualité artistique, mais ils donnent une idée de l'authentique Jamaïque et de la richesse de sa culture. Regarder les films Jamaïquains donne aux spectateurs le sens d'une petite mais croissante tradition cinématographique.*

Abstract

*Mainstream cinema representing Jamaica and Jamaicans has always made use of clichés and stereotypes. The emergence of a local Jamaican cinema—beginning in 1972 with Perry Henzell's movie—immediately started to give a new image of the country and its inhabitants. From *The Harder They Come* up to most recent movies, Jamaican cinema has used consistent style, techniques, and themes to give a new vision of the country. Jamaican movies may have low production value, but they provide a more authentic representation of Jamaica's culture. Viewing Jamaican movies gives the audience a sense of a small but growing cinematic tradition.*

In the present essay, I will demonstrate that even though Jamaican cinema is not an established industry, it has nonetheless created a tradition with the primary and founding goal of giving an authentic depiction of Jamaicans. I will first contrast representations of Jamaica in foreign production with movies produced by Jamaicans to show the different perceptions of the country from these two perspectives. After having defined Hollywood's distorted depictions of Jamaica, I will briefly analyse Jamaica's first locally produced feature film, Perry Henzell's *The Harder They Come* (1972), to demonstrate why this film is such an important step in self-representation and differentiation from Hollywood cinema and still an influence on younger Jamaican directors. Finally, I will enumerate some of the themes and devices used by selected Jamaican directors and their debt to Henzell's movie to trace the development of the moviemaking tradition on the island. I will demonstrate that the unfair stereotypes of Jamaica that Hollywood cinema promotes have led to the desire for more authentic depictions of the country. I will outline a general definition of Jamaican cinema, the many social, economic, and cultural problems facing this national cinema, and the common characteristics of Jamaican films. In the end, I will demonstrate that Jamaican movies follow a tradition of rehabilitating Jamaica's reputation and boosting Jamaican pride about their cinematic representation. Regrettably, little criticism has been written so far on this subject; probably due to the small number of works, scholars have neglected Jamaican cinema and thus researchers who confront this issue have to rely on popular cinema criticism, the few scholarly articles focusing on Jamaican cinema, and, above all, on discussions with people involved in this domain—the primary source for this study. Actors, producers, and especially directors are eager to share their vision of Jamaican cinema for scholarly appraisal. My study is

largely based on what I perceived during these discussions with various figures of Jamaican cinema.

Cinema has been prominent in Jamaica from its beginnings. Yet this popularity does not mean that Jamaica has always been an active filmmaking nation, but rather that the island served as a favourite location for foreign companies looking for “exotic” settings. Hollywood has been shooting “on location” in Jamaica since 1903, starting with the documentary *Railroad Panorama Near Spanishtown, Jamaica* (1903), and more regularly since the 1910s, shooting movies such as *Flame of Passion* and *The Pearl of The Antilles* (1915), *A Daughter of The Gods*, *The Ruling Passion* and *A Woman’s Honor* (1916), and *Queen of The Sea* (1918). Since then, Hollywood has produced dozens of movies with this island as a scenario. The main reason why Jamaica is such a popular location for Hollywood companies is that the geography offers a great variety of locations, promoted by the governmental office dealing with filmmaking on the island through the Internet and on dedicated filmmaking circuits. Jamaica can also stand in for other countries, especially those on the African continent. Indeed, the country offers not only beautiful beaches, but also mountains with lush vegetation, valleys and plains, woods and waterfalls, and some important historical sites. Moreover, Jamaica is less expensive for American companies than any location in Africa.

The distortion emerging in foreign movies made in Jamaica is that they often unintentionally suggest old stereotypes and reinforce prejudices. A common stereotype is that of showing Jamaica only as a natural paradise where life is beautiful and free of problems. The gorgeous landscape features as a symbol of happy people. Unfortunately, such idyllic scenes do not correspond to the actual life on the island, but only what is presented to the eyes of foreign tourists. The country has several problems characteristic of former colonies or developing countries and the majority of Jamaicans face harsh conditions in their everyday lives. The country displays an enticing

landscape, but its socio-political environment limits opportunities for its inhabitants. The false image of the happy Jamaican is used only for deceiving plots.

Another more dangerous stereotype involves the use and trading of marijuana. Many directors connect narco-traffic to Jamaica; in many international movies a drug dealer has the appearance of a (Rasta) Jamaican. This representation mirrors the prejudice that began during the 1980s with the great migration of Jamaicans to the USA, since Jamaican immigrants were thought of as criminals and Rastas as ganja smokers. This prejudice, though diminished, is still present today, and many directors rely on easy clichés when they need an “evil” character in an action movie (fig. 1).



Fig. 1. Two “evil” characters reminiscent of Jamaica.

Following the preconception that Jamaicans are criminals, another stereotype portrays Jamaica, and particularly Kingston, as one of the most dangerous places in the world. For a large audience who knows nothing about Jamaica but what movies depict, these stereotypes provide a much-distorted image of the country. Marijuana smokers and drug dealers exist in Jamaica, like anywhere else, but Jamaican society is much more diverse than the misleading mainstream images suggest. Hollywood movies exploit these stereotypes to give a deceptive vision of Jamaica. The industry has developed three main roles in which it casts Jamaicans: the subservient character, the threatening one, and the drug dealer. Into the 1930s, directors tried to avoid using natives in their “Jamaican” movies. They started to cast locals from the 1940s to the 1970s, but these Jamaicans were always silent. They were allowed to act only short lines with strong Jamaican accents in order to emphasize their difference from the other actors. They were limited to roles such as waiters, servants of various kinds, slaves, and so on. They represented only a touch of folklore, useful for the white protagonists’ stories, but they were never necessary to the narrative. These roles typically reflect docility and subservience.

Sometimes, Jamaicans are given the part of antagonists trying to harm white characters (e.g., in *Wide Sargasso Sea*³). In these cases, they are condemned to annihilation by the white characters themselves. Obedience or annihilation usually accompany Hollywood screen representations of Jamaicans. The drug dealer cliché allows Jamaicans to become protagonists, but only in violent situations. They still belong to the stereotype of subservience and defeat: at the end of every movie, they are either imprisoned or dead. Each movie demonstrates that their characters are weak and doomed to destruction because of their evil nature, while the white hero is always strong and winning, as in *Marked for Death* [1990], for example.

These stereotypes reveal Hollywood’s latent and unacknowledged racism. The impression one gets in watching these movies uncritically is that white characters are superior to black ones and that Jamaicans are dangerous or ready to sell themselves to white tourists to get money or a visa (as in the movie *How Stella Got Her Groove Back* [1998]). Consequently, Jamaicans do not generally identify with the characters of these movies and do not like to see themselves depicted in such a way.

Countering the stereotyping of both Jamaica and its people has fuelled the vision of many Jamaican filmmakers to create a cinema of their own, depicting Jamaican stories and following Jamaican sensibilities. Building on the scenario described by Victoria Marshall in “Filmmaking in Jamaica: ‘Likkle But Tallawah’” (1992), Chris Browne confirmed in 2007, Jamaican filmmakers did learn how to make movies from Hollywood crews on the island and adapted those techniques to their own context. This essay focuses on filmmakers who started a cinema that diverged in both aesthetics and politics from mainstream Hollywood cinema and was often critical of American influence on Jamaica—an example of what critics Ella Shohat and Robert Stam prominently discuss as “Third World Cinema” in *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media* (1994).

We may define a Jamaican movie as a feature film in which most, if not all, of the crew and staff are Jamaicans. Most of all, the film must have a Jamaican story that Jamaicans can view as a representation of themselves. In fact, contrary to what Marshall argues in the mentioned article, that “foreign markets are usually seen as the principle target markets for Jamaican’s best films” (100), the primary audience of a Jamaican film is Jamaican, both at home and in the Jamaican diaspora. Only after having reached that target audience does the movie reach a (possibly) worldwide circulation.

A Jamaican national cinema started in 1972 with Perry Henzell’s *The Harder They Come*. His work has inspired many local filmmakers since. Despite severe problems, mainly related to funding, filmmakers have formed activity groups, encouraged cross-regional cooperation, and locally produced films regularly participate in festivals in the Caribbean, such as the Trinidad and Tobago Film Festival and Caribbean Tales.

The primary problem for Jamaican directors is that of funding. Since foreign filmmaking has become such a lucrative industry for the island, the local government prefers supporting foreign companies through incentives and tax breaks in return for economic stimulation rather than helping the local industry. Indeed, local companies benefit from incentives and tax breaks too, but they are unable to find the necessary funds to make a movie and thus cannot rely on government help. In Jamaica, few investors are willing and able to provide

The Harder They Come retains its exemplary status in Jamaican cinema because it is a complete movie in terms of form, content, and national sensibility. The film is first of all Henzell's realistic portrayal of Jamaica, even as it promotes old and new stereotypes—especially with regards to the representation of ganja consumption and the “glamorous” Jamaican gangsters, the main source of criticism of the movie at home. It has a very specific style: Henzell was committed to realism and thus used non-professional actors, shot true to

The Jamaican cinematographic industry properly started in 1972, when Perry Henzell released his first movie *The Harder They Come*, a feature film rightly considered a masterpiece today.

funding for cinema. As I learned from talking to people involved in the film industry, apart from the unsupportive government, many people who have the capital underestimate cinema, viewing it as unimportant. Moreover, profits are unsure, and this risk is a strong deterrent for possible investment. Thus Jamaican directors often have to find the necessary capital on their own. Many of them, including Perry Henzell, have invested their own resources. As Chris Browne explained a few years ago, “When Perry made the film in '72, and now in 2007, we're still in the same place where he was. Only, of course, with the technology it's easier to make films. [...] But it's just as hard.” Financing is a vicious cycle: no one is willing to invest substantial capital in a movie because it will not bring big return, but until a movie has enough money to get proper distribution, it will be impossible for it to make large profits. Forty years after *The Harder They Come*, the situation of movie-making in Jamaica has not changed much and does not seem likely to do so.

The Jamaican cinematographic industry properly started in 1972, when Perry Henzell released his first movie *The Harder They Come*, a feature film rightly considered a masterpiece today. This movie was revolutionary both in thematic content and aesthetic form; Henzell's film was a precursor for later Jamaican cinema and is still a model and point of comparison for Jamaican film since.

life, and did not use a rigid script. Moreover, he was often behind the camera and edited much of the movie himself. The movie has a very specific ethic: it is a reflection on and of Jamaica and is politically committed, asking for complete freedom for Jamaica without American interference in the island's culture, politics, and economy.

The Harder They Come contains many layers of signification behind Ivan's apparently simple story. Through the plot, Henzell directs an analysis of various sectors of his country and shows the causes and effects of Jamaica's political, economic, and social difficulties. In fact, the main theme Henzell presents in his movie is that of corruption in every segment of society—the music business, the ganja trade, the police, and the government.

In his journey into and through Kingston, Ivan comes in touch first of all with religion, offering hope for the afterlife and only patience for the here and now. The Preacher character depends on the U.S. to fund his church and arrogantly believes Ivan to be his social inferior because he does not accept the church's way of life. Ivan represents freedom and rule-breaking and thus the Preacher cannot accept him. Then, Ivan encounters the music business, controlled by a single person, Mr. Hilton, who decides whatever happens in this industry. Ivan tries to break the rules here too but soon understands the extent of Mr. Hilton's power. Finally, Ivan collides with the police, who in turn collude with the government. In this arena, he discovers that the police have their share in the

ganja trade and do not hesitate to act against the small dealers if they fail to pay. The government, for its part, is aware of this collusion and probably collects a part of the profits too.

Thanks to this film, Henzell explored Jamaica. He criticized the country's politics, which allows for foreign intervention in its decisions, consenting to American regulation of how and when to react against the ganja trade. He also criticized the country's economy, again controlled by the U.S., through the example of the ganja trade. This denunciation of American influence is clearly reflected in the movie: the marijuana trade has an insurmountable hierarchy that exploits the poor—the lower levels of small farmers and dealers earning a pittance for their job—and allows the higher levels to get richer and richer. As Ivan's story demonstrates, there is no possibility of rebellion: to revolt against the hierarchy means death.

The Harder They Come is also a metaphor of Jamaica in 1972. Ivan was young and so was the country, in search of freedom and of its own way, in search of wealth and independence, but also vibrant, full of energy, and “a bursting of creativity,” as Trevor Rhone defined it. The film mirrors these characteristics in the plot and characters.

Yet this optimism does not mean that the country was free of problems and Henzell shows in his movie how society was divided, with huge differences between rich and poor. He not only shows the obvious difference in wealth—through means of transport, houses, and belongings in general—but also through such details as fences, windows, and other physical barriers between people belonging to different social classes.

...Henzell shows in his movie how society was divided, with huge differences between rich and poor.

Finally, in his movie, Perry Henzell repeats common tropes, such as that of the countryside opposed to the city (though he did not show a negative view of the city), the country boy who goes to town, the loss of innocence, and so on. Clearly this movie portrays a complex story and through all these devices Henzell managed to create an influential and enduring masterpiece.

In this chaotic world, Ivan searches for justice, not only for himself but also for others living in the same conditions. Every character in this movie represents a different aspect of Jamaican society and the conflicts among them reflect those happening in society at large.

No later Jamaican movie equals *The Harder They Come*, but all of them follow its example, appropriating some themes and technical devices and adapting them to the changing times to reach the same goal. What Jamaican cinema has tried to do from its beginning is to assert a national identity, regardless of mainstream marketability. Obviously, every director would like his movie to be a blockbuster, but few are willing to sacrifice authenticity for this reason. Jamaican directors took a precise position against mainstream cinema, deciding to use their own language, recover their own voice, speak for themselves without intermediaries, and tell the world how they see themselves. These tactics served emancipatory purposes, following the will to assert the country's independence and authority. Local filmmakers found authentic Jamaican identity in centuries-old traditions that have survived thanks to the lower classes, the “low culture” generally considered unsophisticated but shaping the identity of many Jamaican people. These movies rehabilitate the Afro-Caribbean culture surviving in Jamaica, in almost every facet of life, at the expense of Euro-American culture seen as external and inauthentic to the country. Jamaican cinema also attempts to show Jamaica as close as possible to reality, to give foreigners a close look at Jamaican life, and Jamaicans themselves an established sense of identity. These filmmakers achieve what Stuart Hall thought Caribbean cinema should do: “by allowing us to see and recognize different parts and histories of ourselves, to construct those points of identification, those personalities we call a cultural identity” (236).

Among the characteristics shared by Jamaican movies to assert the country's identity, the first one that strikes a non-Jamaican viewer is that the language is not Standard English. Jamaican directors consciously chose to use vernacular in their movies. Though this choice prevents a wide distribution of the movies, it is nonetheless an act of resistance against foreign cultural imperialism. Jamaican movies value using Jamaican Patwa as representative of the people, as the unofficial national language.

Henzell wanted *The Harder They Come* to be a purely Jamaican experience. Henzell used the language to mirror Jamaican society, and he used it as another means to divide the rich from the poor. In fact, rich people talk in Standard English (though they all know Jamaican), while all the lower-class people speak Patwa. In this way, language provides a hierarchy that correlates with colour, wealth, and education. In this hierarchy, lighter skin and the use of Standard English are associated with education and snobbery. Upper-class people despise poorer people, considering them unsophisticated and uneducated because they are Patwa-speakers. However, what clearly emerges from these movies is that this lower class constitutes the core of Jamaican culture and tradition, and that speaking Jamaican Patwa is a sign of authenticity.

Some directors went even farther, making movies using only Jamaican, sometimes also presenting the Rasta dialect. For these directors, the use of Jamaican is the only authentic way to represent the country. When there are no conflicts with the upper classes, Jamaicans tend to use Patwa, and as such this dialect is used in these authentically Jamaican movies.

Another feature always closely interwoven with movies is music, which is extremely important in Jamaican life, as music is present in every moment of the day. Many of the directors also work in the music-video industry and music appears in various ways in Jamaican movies. The movies show the evolution of Jamaican music from the 1960s to the present. *The Harder They Come* captured the 1960s music's vitality and creativity and, as many other directors after him would also do, Henzell used a singer as main actor and protagonist. The songs of the soundtrack are essential to the film, commenting on the scenes and emphasizing what is shown. Indeed, the story is partly set in the music business.

Jamaican cinema post-Henzell can be classified into four broad categories. In the first group are movies in which one or more actors are popular singers. In the second group, music is part of the plot and the story is set in the music business (e.g. *Rockers* (1979) and *One Love* (2005)). The third and largest group includes movies in which the soundtrack comments on and participates in the scenes (*Rockers*, *Countryman* [1982], *The Lunatic* [1991], *Dancehall Queen* [1997], *Third World Cop* [1999], and *One Love* [2003]). In this category of movie, different genres of music often characterize different social groups: the talent scout is linked to dancehall, the church to gospels and the Rastas to reggae. The last group abandons Henzell's example. Music is unimportant in *Smile Orange* (1974), *Children of Babylon* (1980), and *Glory to Gloriana* (2007), which was, as Trevor Rhone acknowledged, to the detriment of the movies' success.

Music is related to dance and dancehalls appear in many movies. In this regard, however, generic debates surrounding dancehall do not appear in the stories. Generally, dancehalls are only places where to have fun. In *The Harder They Come*, for instance, the downtown dancehall is a joyful place where people dance and do not think about problems. In *Third World Cop* the space becomes a symbol of peace; dances celebrate a truce between two formerly hostile groups. In *Rockers*, neighbours meet together in downtown dancehalls to enjoy the music and their company. In this movie, a key scene occurs in an uptown club, where the Rastas take possession of the DJ cabin and of the music, asserting their (and the ghetto's) values and music.



Fig. 2. *Dancehall Queen*: two of Marcia's disguises in the dancehall

The movie most involved with dancehall is *Dancehall Queen*, celebrating this phenomenon unconditionally. Here, the dancehall becomes the factor that allows Marcia to develop economic independence, but it is also the place where appearances are most important—the “bare-as-you-dare” women’s outfits. In Carolyn Cooper’s *Sound Clash* (2004), the dancehall allows Marcia autonomy over her own body and the way she is perceived by others. She indulges in the “pleasure of disguise” (fig. 2) in doing what is not expected of her, particularly resisting the conventional image of a mother. In this movie the gaze is very important, both of the film camera and of the diegetic photographer. Marcia offers her image willingly to both. She accepts being objectified, because it is one of the conventions of dancehall, where women behave as (sexual) objects, albeit retaining the power to control their sexuality. At the end of the movie, however, the return to “normal” life and the abandonment of the disguise is essential to maintain her identity. Though I do not agree with all of the film’s claims, especially those presenting the dancehall as a liberating space—as female freedom endures only during the time of the dance—in this movie too, the dancehall is perceived as joyful, a place to have fun and assert popular values and not to worry about problems and cultural debates.

Another important aspect of Jamaican life in local movies is that of religion. Christian denominations are generally viewed with little sympathy, more as the “people’s opium” rather than as a comfort in harsh conditions. In *The Harder They Come*, the Preacher is supposed to be the guardian of morality and sex, but he is corrupted by his social role. He dislikes Ivan because Ivan represents everything he stands against: freedom (in music, dress, love, and sex) and the lack of moral and social values. Only *Rockers* shows sympathy toward Revival, underlining the many similarities between this religion and Rastafari, especially through the rhythmic chants and dances. Other religions and belief systems (Pentecostalism, Kumina, Obeah) are viewed with scepticism.

Yet almost every Jamaican director depicts and idealizes one religion: Rastafari. Four movies have a Rasta as a main character. Among these four only *Children Of Babylon* presents a negative Rasta—the newly converted Luke, who asserts male dominance on his partners, reflecting his social environment. By contrast, in *The Harder They Come*, Pedro (fig. 3) is an almost heroic figure, Ivan’s opposite and his only friend. *Rockers* is a Rasta movie, shot in the Rasta communities in Trench Town. The characters are all Rastas, the point of view is Rasta, the language is Rasta talk, and the entire movie spreads the One Love philosophy. In this movie we find the utopia of a

Rasta society as an ideal society, as an example of an alternative way of life. *Countryman* also idealizes Rastafari philosophy with a completely positive depiction. The idealization and the romanticising of Rastas is obvious, avoiding any representation of the movement's imperfections and contradictions. This unabashed glorification of Rastafari is probably the main criticism of these movies: they idealize Rastafari, forgetting that Rastas are human beings who err as any others. Yet these representations create a new positive stereotype for Jamaica.

One movie in particular focuses on religion as a main theme: *One Love*, in which Pentecostalism, Rastafari, Obeah, and Bobo Ashanti are mixed in a love story crossing different beliefs. Despite a constant rivalry between the religions, Rastafari and the Rasta environment are depicted as positive, as the Garden of Eden. Rastas show open minds and sympathy. Pentecostalism, in contrast, is unsympathetically depicted as strict, close-minded, and full of prejudices. The blind faith in

Obeah of Selector G is ridiculed, so that, again, the only positive religion appears to be Rastafari. A happy conclusion can be reached only through compromise and the development of respect for the other religions. In the end, everybody is happy because they have all sacrificed something to be enriched by the other faiths.

The majority of the movies mentioned take place in downtown Kingston, the city's ghettos; few movies are set in the countryside. Henzell's movie, shot in Trench Town, established the trend towards the urban. Henzell thought he could find authentic Jamaican culture among the common people. In those years, this place represented the core of Jamaican creativity, what Henzell wanted for his films. *The Harder They Come* was shot in the streets, in almost exclusively exterior scenes. The city is chaotic and overcrowded but also joyous, vibrant, and a place of solidarity. This perspective on the city would be continued by all the later directors shooting in Kingston: the city can be violent but it is also the only place where



Fig. 3. Ras Daniel Hartman as Pedro in *The Harder They Come*, the first Rasta ever to appear in a feature film.



Fig. 4. The chaotic but joyful Kingston in *The Harder They Come* (top) and the dreamy aura of the Rasta village in *One Love*.

lower-class Jamaicans can find solidarity—for instance, in *Rockers*, *Dancehall Queen*, and *Third World Cop*. Jamaican directors have elected Kingston as their major location, with their striking commitment to a “realism” that depicts the city in all its contradictory facets. In contrast, the directors who chose to shoot their movies in the countryside offer an idyllic portrayal of the rural life, maybe with a foreign audience in mind. This happens, for instance, in *Children of Babylon*,

which tries to show a positive image of Jamaica; furthermore, in *One Love*, the countryside appears in all its splendour, giving a dreamy aura to the movie, pervaded by harmony and beauty. The Rasta environment—clean, happy, self-sufficient, respectful of Nature—appears in *Countryman* too, while in *The Lunatic*, the most important aspect of country life seems to be that owning a house defines one’s place in society.

What appears from these movies is Jamaica, beautiful and full of contradictions, in its lived reality. The directors try to discredit the negative stereotypes about Kingston and its ghettos; in fact, through the movie's perspective, the city appears hard but encouraging (fig. 4).

The characters' appearance (not only dress but also accessories, means of transport, houses, and belongings), is important because it provides a sense of social status. In *The Harder They Come*, Ivan's conscious use of fashion is quite striking. He changes his wardrobe and means of transport when he climbs the social ladder; the more his social status grows, the more he changes his appearance: from the simple clothes he had at the beginning to the flashy clothes of the gangster (including the symbolic guns; fig. 5); from the public bus to a bicycle, then a motorbike, then a convertible Mercedes. The climax arrives when he objectifies himself by having some photographs taken as "the bad man." However, he acquires no real power; he is the form without the substance. For Ivan, appearance is more important than anything else, as G.L. Yearwood argues in his analysis of myth and signification in this movie .

In every movie, appearances denote the character's status. However, two movies are interesting for their *absence* of clothes. *Countryman* shows the life of a man living close to nature, at the lower strata of society. Thus, he wears no clothes and owns no means of transport. On the contrary, *Children Of Babylon* is set among the upper strata of society, but here it seems that money and education allow women to take off their clothes quite freely. The film depicts a kind of role reversal between Penny and Dorcas, Luke's two women. At first Penny is free; she wears few or no clothes and has sex with anyone. At the end, when she becomes Luke's woman, she follows his orders and appears entirely "covered." On the other side, Dorcas, Luke's wife, is totally covered and nobody notices her. She is never naked and when she commits suicide she chooses a symbolic red dress from the landlady's wardrobe. Penny and Dorcas are two sides of the same coin: Penny represents the "city," sophisticated, emancipated, uninhibited, smart, while Dorcas represents the "countryside," backward and uneducated. In the end, however, the film shows that there is little distance between them.

Fig. 5. *The Harder They Come*: Ivan portrays himself as a gangster-star.



In *The Lunatic*, clothes are relevant because, as with houses, owning or not owning clothes means belonging or not to certain groups in society. Once the characters are accepted in society, they start wearing the appropriate clothes. In the gangster movies, such as *Third World Cop*, clothes and jewellery are important because they characterize the gangster's status (fig. 6).



Fig. 6. Countryman in the movie of the same title (left); some gangsters in *Third World Cop*.

Jamaican cinema is mainly a male domain and does very little to discredit the stereotypes of the violent, rough, and tough Jamaican Man. In Jamaican movies men are aggressive, sometimes violent, and street-wise. This portrayal is particularly true of gangster movies. Yet the gangsters in movies are admired, renowned, and their status is aspirational for much of the Jamaican audience, especially the ghetto people who respect them. Thus, to please the Jamaican audience, all men in Jamaican movies are assertive, tough, “macho,” self-assured, and violent when needed. If, however, Jamaican movies reinforce the stereotypes about Jamaican masculinity, these films are also different from Hollywood’s stereotypes about Jamaicans. In Hollywood movies, they are only drug dealers, prostitutes, pitiless, and unabashedly evil. In Jamaican movies, there can be machos, but these figures always retain their humanity: the audience sympathizes with them, likes them despite whatever they do.

All these features are common to the Jamaican movies that have followed *The Harder They Come*'s example. Obviously, later movies have also introduced new themes and techniques to keep the pace with the changing times. Jamaican cinema may be accused of being too commercial, but this has been a deliberate choice. In fact, a profitable movie needs to be accessible to all audiences, with mass appeal, which explains the great number of action movies. Marketability is also the reason why Jamaican movies are realistic, in that they represent likely situations and mirror the country's popular culture. This mass culture is valued because Jamaican cinema represents Jamaica; it is an expression of identity in which Jamaicans can recognize themselves.

To conclude, a Jamaican cinematographic tradition has finally appeared in the wake of *The Harder They Come* and the films that followed. Directors face similar themes with similar methods and address the same social classes. Jamaican cinema is local and tries to show the country and its people as close as possible to reality. The films promote Jamaican lower-class culture as the most valuable sign of authenticity and identity of the island. Above all, Jamaican cinema gives a new vision of the country and its population, one with which Jamaicans can identify. The relatively new local movie production provides alternatives to negative images created from abroad, and engenders a new sense of self-consciousness and pride. Jamaicans can watch a movie depicting themselves without prejudices and be gratified by the "pleasure of recognition." Self-representation offers them a new range of possibilities, from simple identification with the characters, the story, or setting, to the satisfaction that popular culture is finally showing a more authentic depiction of the country and its population. *The Harder They Come* set the trend; significantly, the desire for self-representation coincided with Jamaican independence. Since then, Jamaican cinema has followed the tradition Henzell's astonishing movie established, not only in style and themes but also in purpose. Every Jamaican cinematic self-representation has valued the country, its culture, traditions, and above all its population in order to give to every Jamaican, no matter what social class, education, or religion, and to non-Jamaicans as well, a fresh and realistic portrayal of Jamaica. Hopefully, as local production develops, more studies will appear to add new insights to the much-needed criticism on this national cinema.

Above all, Jamaican cinema gives a new vision of the country and its population, one with which Jamaicans can identify.

Notes

1. For a list of movies shot in Jamaica, see *Titles for Jamaica filming locations*. Web. 26 May 2011; and *Welcome to Film Jamaica*. Web. 03 June 2011.
2. Basil Wallace as Screwface in *Marked For Death*. Web. 11 Feb. 2013, and Kevin Peter Hall as The Predator in *Predator 1* and 2. Web. 11 Feb. 2013. Stephen Hopkins' *Predator 2* (1990) is an American movie with Danny Glover, Gary Busey, and Kevin Peter Hall in the role of the predator. Here the alien monster is constructed as a Jamaican Rasta, in that he is given dreadlocks. There are also other characteristics that link him not only to the Jamaican drug gangs of the period in Los Angeles, but also to Vodun—another instance of the use of clichés by the director, who did not realize that Vodun is practiced in Haiti and not in Jamaica. Moreover, Vodun is a religion, not the set of stereotypes promoted by Hollywood cinema. An interesting analysis of this aspect of the film can be found in Tasker Yvonne. *Spectacular Bodies: Gender, Genre and the Action Cinema*. London and New York: Routledge, 1993, 47-53.
3. John Duigan, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, 1993. For a full citation of this and all the other movies quoted in this article, see the Works Cited list.
4. Kevin Rodney Sullivan, *How Stella Got Her Groove Back*, 1998. It is true that in this movie, based on a true story, the Jamaican character does not seem to need a visa or money, but his behaviour resembles that of a prostitute searching for an escape from the island.
5. Chris Browne. Personal interview. 15 Nov. 2007.
6. I list major productions since Perry Henzell's *The Harder They Come* in my Works Cited. The following sites provide further details: <http://caribbeanfilm.org/> and <http://www.newcaribbeancinema.com/>
7. Chris Browne. Personal interview. 15 Nov. 2007.
8. Trevor D. Rhone. Personal interview. 16 Nov. 2007.
9. As noted by Yearwood Gladstone L. "Myth and Signification in Perry Henzell's *The Harder They Come*." *The Reordering of Culture: Latin America, the Caribbean and Canada in the Hood*. Eds. Alvina Ruprecht and Cecilia Taiana. Canada: Carleton University Press, 1995. 437-455. Print.

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- Flame of Passion*. Dir. Tom Terriss. Perf. Tom Terriss, Ellaline Terriss, Rienzi de Cordova. 1915. Film.
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- Marked for Death*. Dir. Dwight H. Little. Perf. Steven Seagal, Joanna Pacula, Basil Wallace. 1990. Film.
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One Love. Dir. Don Letts and Rick Elgood. Perf. Ky-Mani Marley, Cherine Anderson, Winston Bell. 2003. Jamaica/Denmark, Film Council and Baker Street in association with BV International Pictures, Take4 Production, One Love Films/ Euromax / Exposed / Nik Powell FilmVP Music Group Inc., 2005. DVD. Original screenplay by Trevor Rhone, based on an original story by Yvonne Deutschman.

Predator 1. Dir. John McTiernan. Perf. Arnold Schwarzenegger, Carl Weathers, Kevin Peter Hall. 1987. Film.

Predator 2. Dir. Stephen Hopkins. Perf. Danny Glover, Gary Busey, Kevin Peter Hall. 1990. Film.

Queen of the Sea. Dir. John G. Adolphi. Perf. Annette Kellerman, Hugh Thompson, Mildred Keats. 1918. Film.

Railroad Panorama near Spanishtown, Jamaica. Edison Manufacturing Company. 1903. Short Documentary.

Rhone, Trevor D. Personal interview. 16 Nov. 2007.

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The Lunatic. Dir. Lol Crème. Perf. Julie T. Wallace, Paul Campbell, Carl Bradshaw. 1991. Jamaica, Island Pictures, Manga Entertainment, 1992. VHS. Based on a novel by Anthony C. Winkler.

The Ruling Passion. Dir. James C. McKay. Perf. William E. Shay, Claire Whitney, Harry Burkhardt. 1916. Film.

The Pearl of the Antilles. Dir. Tom Terriss. Perf. Tom Terriss, Tessie de Cordova, Paul Harvey. 1915. Film.

Third World Cop. Dir. Chris Browne. Perf. Paul Campbell, Mark Danvers, Carl Bradshaw. 1999. Jamaica, Palm Pictures and Island Jamaica Films in association with Hawk's Nest Productions. Palm Pictures, 2000. DVD.

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Wide Sargasso Sea. Dir. John Duigan. Perf. Karina Lombard, Nathaniel Parker, Rachel Ward. 1993. Film.

Image Notes

Figure 1: Wallace, Basil. *Screwface*. 1990. <http://www.reelbastards.com/10-reasons-steven-seagal-still-rocks/>. Web. 11 Feb. 2013.

--- Hall, Kevin Peter. *The Predator*. 1987 and 1990. <http://villains.wikia.com/wiki/Predators>. Web. 11 Feb. 2013.

Figure 2: Reid, Audrey. *Dancehall Queen*. Dir. Don Letts and Rick Elgood. Perf. Audrey Reid, Carl Davis, Paul Campbell. 1997. Jamaica, Onion Pictures Corporation, Palm Pictures, 1998. DVD.

Figure 3-5: Cliff, Jimmy; Hartman, Ras Daniel; Kingston. *The Harder They Come*. Dir. Perry Henzell. Perf. Jimmy Cliff, Carl Bradshaw, Janet Bartley. 1972. Jamaica, International Films Ltd, Xenon Pictures Inc., 2006. DVD.

--- Rasta village. *One Love*. Dir. Don Letts and Rick Elgood. Perf. Ky-Mani Marley, Cherine Anderson, Winston Bell. 2003. Jamaica/Denmark, Film Council and Baker Street in association with BV International Pictures, Take4 Production, One Love Films/ Euromax / Exposed / Nik Powell FilmVP Music Group Inc., 2005. DVD.

Figure 6: *Countryman*. Dir. Dickie Jobson. Perf. Countryman, Hiram Keller, Carl Bradshaw. 1982. Jamaica, Onion Pictures Corporation, Palm Pictures, 2004. DVD.

--- Danvers, Mark. *Third World Cop*. Dir. Chris Browne. Perf. Paul Campbell, Mark Danvers, Carl Bradshaw. 1999. Jamaica, Palm Pictures and Island Jamaica Films in association with Hawk's Nest Productions. Palm Pictures, 2000. DVD.