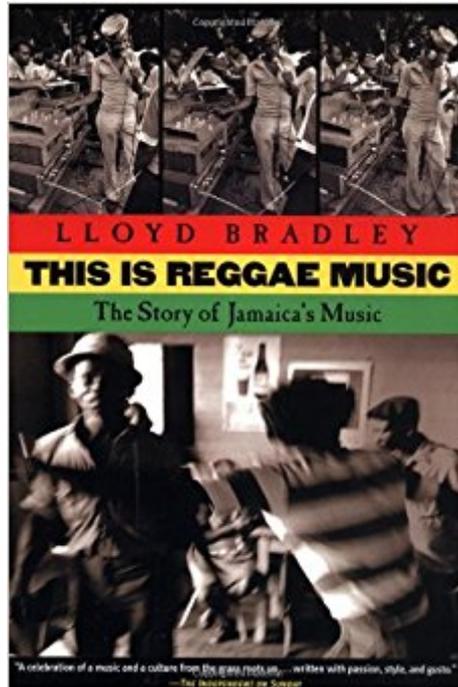


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# This Is Reggae Music: The Story Of Jamaica's Music



## Synopsis

Jamaica is a small country in the Caribbean, 146 miles wide and populated by fewer than three million people. Nevertheless, it has exerted a more powerful hold on international popular music than any nation besides England and America. From Prince Buster to Burning Spear, Lee "Scratch" Perry to Yellowman, Bob Marley to Shabba Ranks, reggae music is one of the most dynamic and powerful musical forms of the twentieth century. And, as Lloyd Bradley shows in his deft, definitive, and always entertaining book, it is and always has been the people's music. Born in the sound systems of the Kingston slums, reggae was the first music poor Jamaicans could call their own, and as it spread throughout the world, it always remained fluid, challenging, and distinctly Jamaican. Based on six years of research -- original interviews with most of reggae's key producers, musicians, and international players -- and a lifelong enthusiasm for one of the most remarkable of the world's musics, *This Is Reggae Music* is the definitive history of reggae.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

It's a shame that the publishers deemed it fit to release this book with a new, bland, user friendly title to cater for the American market, rather than to stick with the far more appropriate British title of *Bass Culture: When Reggae Was King*, but the biggest disappointment for me is replacing the great cover on the British edition (it says as much about dub as a thousand words) with the almost Jamaican holiday brochure photo. The book itself is a great read. Lloyd Bradley traces the evolution of Jamaican music from the wild soundssystem days of the Fifties up to the digital reggae of the

Nineties , the biggest chunk of the book revolving around the two most important decades in the development of reggae , the Sixties and Seventies . He also traces the often violent political evolution of the island after independence , and the consequences this has had on its people . These two subjects are easily entwined as the development of reggae has always been inextricably linked with the political climate in Jamaica . Some of the main players add their enlightening anecdotes , to give the reader a much more vivid picture of who or what was pushing the envelope back at crucial times in the development of this vital music . There is also a chapter dealing with the history and philosophies of the Rastafarian that is crucial if you want a better understanding of reggae .Lloyd Bradley then follows the Jamaican diaspora across the atlantic ocean , and chronicles the bad race relations it encountered in England that would ultimately herald in the rise of British reggae . This part of the book is entertaining enough , although I think the author has wildly overestimated the importance and influence of British reggae in general .Considering that this story has its fair share of suffering and violence , it's a nice touch to have two contemporary reggae stars ( Luciano and Bobby Digital ) ending this book with optimistic and positive views on the future of reggae .

An overall delightful and informative read, every page of this book is animated by Lloyd Bradley's unflagging love for reggae music -- a passion that took him all over Jamaica, England, and the States in a quest for first-hand accounts and setting-the-record-straight interviews. It is also this true fan's passion that guides his writing, which is strangely informal, as if Bradley is explaining the history of reggae to you while you buy him pints down at his favorite local. While for the most part, this chatty style is kind of fun, it does detract a bit from the more scholarly tone Bradley occasionally adopts when discussing religion and politics. And, like any fan, Bradley is quite opinionated -- it's easy to sense his likes and dislikes, the latter of which seems to include most reggae performed after the 1970s. This is very much a book about ska, rocksteady, and roots reggae. (Bradley is almost ridiculously biased against Bob Marley's Island work as well, and makes some rather amusing and almost charmingly against-the-grain assertions about Marley's later catalog.) Additionally, there are a few chapters on British reggae, which -- let's face it -- are nowhere near as interesting as the Jamaican material. It would have been better if Bradley would have written a separate book on English reggae and devoted the extra space to a deeper exploration of dancehall and ragga. But despite these quibbles, the book is definitely worth reading, and contains many wonderful insights and anecdotes.

This book was originally issued in England under the title Bass Culture and putting it out here with a name change, cover change and no reference to the original is pretty deceptive, IMHO. That having been said, I had mixed thoughts about this book. The part of the book that covers the 1950s through the middle 1960s is wonderful, with lots of detail that hasn't been available anywhere else and it leans heavily on the reminiscences of Prince Buster who is a very valuable resource. By the time Bradley gets into the 70s, he loses his exclusive source (Buster) and the narrative speeds up. The 80s and 90s are dismissed quickly and very incompletely, making this a strong source on early Jamaican music but pretty useless on everything else. One further note - (...)difficult sentence and paragraph constructions, bad grammar and bizarre word choices can make things very difficult to read.

This is one of the most informative books on the history of a musical genre I've ever read. Doubling as a superb history of Jamaica made it even more readable and gave you a real feeling of not just where the music came from but also why it sounded like it did. My background isn't in reggae and this book gave me a good grounding as well as turning me on to some great music. I not only got a copy for myself but having read it I bought copies for a couple of mates who also thought it was a great read.

This book is great. Great stories and great history. If you want a detailed account of the development of reggae from the beginning to the end of roots, this is the book. It's true that the book basically ends at the beginning of the 80s, but up till then this book is great. I have read most of the books out on reggae and this is my favorite one. A must for roots fans.

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