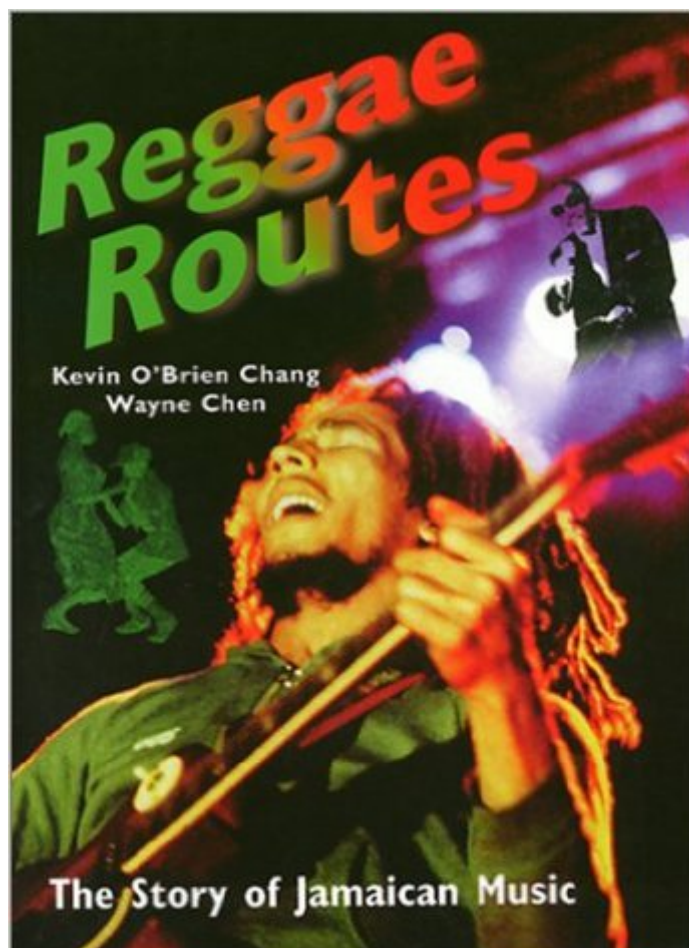


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Reggae Routes: The Story Of Jamaican Music



Synopsis

Jamaican music can be roughly divided into four eras, each with a distinctive beat - ska, rocksteady, reggae and dancehall. Ska dates from about 1960 to mid-1966, rocksteady from 1966 to 1968, while from 1969 to 1983 reggae was the popular beat. The reggae era had two phases, 'early reggae' up to 1974 and 'roots reggae' up to 1983. Since 1983 dancehall has been the prevalent sound. The authors describe each stage in the development of the music, identifying the most popular songs and artists, highlighting the significant social, political and economic issues as they affected the musical scene. While they write from a Jamaican perspective, the intended audience is 'any person, local or foreign, interested in an intelligent discussion of reggae music and Jamaica.'

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book certainly makes a lot of bold claims for itself. According to the back cover it's "the authentic story of Jamaican popular music" as well as being "the best book ever written on reggae". So my first disappointment after receiving "Reggae routes" (a gift from a well-meaning friend) was to discover how short it is. Although the authors seem to think that they've written a "reggae bible", in reality it barely qualifies as a primer, and not a very good one at that. The book is divided into 3 sections, so it makes sense to consider each one in turn. Section 1 briefly outlines the history of Jamaican music and on the whole is a pretty good introduction to the subject, but it's nothing like the definitive account I was expecting. The only really bad chapter is "Reggae international", which mainly consists of well-worn cliches about Bob Marley and actually says very little about the impact

reggae has made beyond the shores of Jamaica, particularly in the UK since the 1960s, or about the huge influence of Jamaican music on today's rave and dj culture, or its specific contributions to the development of hip hop as well as more recent phenomena like drum 'n' bass. In Section 2 the authors list and discuss memorable recordings from the 1960s, 70s, 80s and 90s in roughly chronological order, and although most of their choices are worthy of inclusion, it's a far from comprehensive selection, mainly because they focus entirely on singles. It's true that reggae is without doubt a singles-driven genre, but failure to include some of the great albums from the last four decades means that many of Jamaica's finest recordings aren't even mentioned in "Reggae routes".

MUCH MORE THAN MUSIC Two Jamaican Reggae enthusiasts pen the history of reggae music from the Jamaican perspective - and end up giving us so much more. REGGAE ROUTES - By Kevin O'Brien Chang and Wayne Chen "Jamaica has less than one-twentieth of one percent of the world's population and produces even less of its wealth... In terms of popular music, though, it's the most fortunate nation on earth. Like everything else, reggae has had to adapt to a faster moving world. But it remains inarguably Jamaican, a rhythm in tune with its people, not only listened to all over the globe but still listening to itself." Such is the tone for Reggae Routes. From cover to cover, and with practically flawless consistency, lead author Kevin O'Brien Chang and co-author Wayne Chen bring to life the story of Jamaica's reggae music with the same frankness, pride and gutsy insight that punctuate this excerpt. When asked what prompted him to write about reggae, Brien Chang just laughs. "Oh, I don't know! My friends and I used to spend a lot of time as youngsters talking and arguing about reggae and its evolution over the years. It was like a hobby of sorts." An understatement indeed! As the name implies, Reggae Routes walks the reader through the entire history of Jamaica's hallbrand of music, now globally famous, if not unmistakably recognised. The work is no less than thorough in its research, one of its obvious strengths, with every musical contributor being given his or her fair share of the limelight. Fear not. Bob Marley, while featured prominently on the book's cover, does not upstage his colleagues. In fact, the book is a virtual three-dimensional expose of reggae's history, with all aspects covered, or rather, uncovered.

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