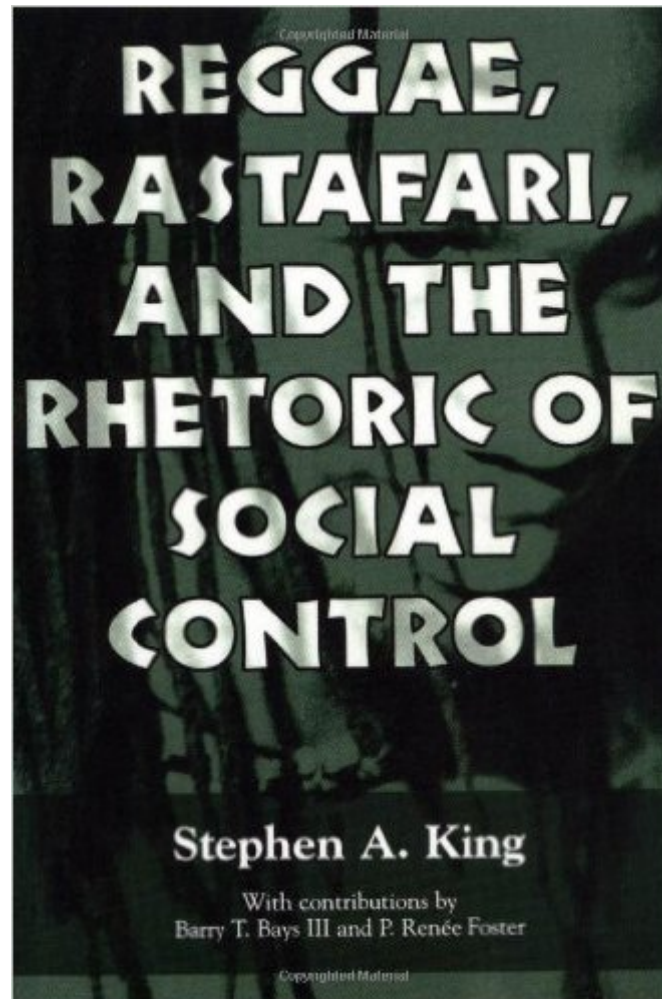


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Reggae, Rastafari, And The Rhetoric Of Social Control



Synopsis

Who changed Bob Marley's famous peace-and-love anthem into "Come to Jamaica and feel all right"? When did the Rastafarian fighting white colonial power become the smiling Rastaman spreading beach towels for American tourists? Drawing on research in social movement theory and protest music, Reggae, Rastafari, and the Rhetoric of Social Control traces the history and rise of reggae and the story of how an island nation commandeered the music to fashion an image and entice tourists. Visitors to Jamaica are often unaware that reggae was a revolutionary music rooted in the suffering of Jamaica's poor. Rastafarians were once a target of police harassment and public condemnation. Now the music is a marketing tool, and the Rastafarians are no longer a "violent counterculture" but an important symbol of Jamaica's new cultural heritage. This book attempts to explain how the Jamaican establishment's strategies of social control influenced the evolutionary direction of both the music and the Rastafarian movement. From 1959 to 1971, Jamaica's popular music became identified with the Rastafarians, a social movement that gave voice to the country's poor black communities. In response to this challenge, the Jamaican government banned politically controversial reggae songs from the airwaves and jailed or deported Rastafarian leaders. Yet when reggae became internationally popular in the 1970s, divisions among Rastafarians grew wider, spawning a number of pseudo-Rastafarians who embraced only the external symbolism of this worldwide religion. Exploiting this opportunity, Jamaica's new Prime Minister, Michael Manley, brought Rastafarian political imagery and themes into the mainstream. Eventually, reggae and Rastafari evolved into Jamaica's chief cultural commodities and tourist attractions. Stephen A. King is associate professor of speech communication at Delta State University. His work has been published in the Howard Journal of Communications, Popular Music and Society, and The Journal of Popular Culture.

Book Information

Hardcover: 173 pages

Publisher: University Press of Mississippi; 1st edition (November 15, 2002)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1578064899

ISBN-13: 978-1578064892

Product Dimensions: 6.3 x 0.8 x 9.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.0 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (1 customer review)

Best Sellers Rank: #1,946,791 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #64 in Books > Religion & Spirituality > Other Religions, Practices & Sacred Texts > Tribal & Ethnic > Rastafari Movement #94 in Books > History > Americas > Caribbean & West Indies > Jamaica #126 in Books > Arts & Photography > Music > Musical Genres > Reggae

Customer Reviews

King's work reads a lot like a dissertation with its use of MLA format and citations. However, that does not diminish the importance of the focus of his work: how Rastafarianism, once a politically charged culture, was co-opted by Jamaica and morphed into a tourist friendly caricature. King's writing becomes a bit repetitive at times (in his analysis of The Gleaner) something the editors should have noticed. A pivotal study for those who are investigating reggae in academic circles despite the high price.

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