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The Harder They Come is Director-Producer Perry Henzell's all-Jamaican-made 1972 classic. It was the first feature film to be shot in Jamaica with a Jamaican director and cast. It revealed the grim realities of Jamaican life as well as its most famous asset - the sound of reggae - to the world.

Fiercely expressive of the live-wire Jamaican spirit, The Harder They Come is one of the most beloved and longest-running of all international cult favorites. The movie soundtrack album also played a major part in popularizing reggae across the globe, paving the way for the success of Jamaican musicians like Bob Marley.

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The film stars reggae singer Jimmy Cliff, who plays Ivanhoe Martin, a character based upon a real-life Jamaican criminal of that name, better known as Rhygin, who achieved fame in the 1940s. Prior to filming, the project had a working title of 'Rhygin. This then changed to 'Hard Road to Travel' before finally being changed to 'The Harder They Come', prompting Cliff to write the song of the same name.

The film was a sensation in Jamaica due to its naturalistic portrayal of black Jamaicans in real locations and its use of local Patois (Jamaican Creole). According to Henzell, "Black people seeing themselves on the screen for the first time created an unbelievable audience reaction.

When the film was first shown in Kingston in 1972, it provoked riots by people unable to get into the sold-out Carib cinema. But it was a different story when it opened later that year in London. "It was a difficult sell," said Henzell. "The first night the cinema was empty. Not one critic had gone down there to review it. I had to print up thousands of flyers and literally stand outside the underground station in Brixton and hand them out." That turned the tide. The film took off. Time and time again, everywhere, the film would just have died without a lot of hard work.

The Harder They Come inspired a novel of the same name by Michael Thelwell. The novel follows Ivan but develops the plot further; including giving the reader a portrait of what Ivan's life was like back in the countryside before he came to the city.

FLASHBACK: It's midnight at the Orson Welles Cinema, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1980. Perry Henzell's breakthrough Jamaican film "The Harder They Come" has been playing here every weekend for nearly a decade now, but tonight it's still a full house. As the lights go down, the audience sparks up, and within a good 10 minutes the room is stewing in a haze of pungent sinsemilla and fine reggae music.

Forty-five years later, the film's enduring appeal and themes have certainly stood the test of time. One could say it is 'Harder at 45!'