



## The Harder They Come

*Michael Thelwell*

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# **The Harder They Come**

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## **The Harder They Come Michael Thelwell**

Like the acclaimed film of the same title, this lyrical, lilting, densely textured novel is based on the exploits of the legendary Jamaican folk hero and reggae star Rhygin. With passion and precision, Michael Thelwell recounts Rhygin's journey from a morally coherent rural universe to the teeming, predatory slums of Kingston, his rebellion against the poverty and corruption of postcolonial Jamaica, his blazing, simultaneous rise to the top of the charts and the Most Wanted list.

## **The Harder They Come Details**

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Author : Michael Thelwell

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## **From Reader Review The Harder They Come for online ebook**

### **Donna Desanctis says**

I have read thousands of books and this is still one of my favorites. I have read it a few times. It transends you into life in rural countryside of Jamaica. I love the way it describes the traditions of the elders and the rituals. I fell in love with the characters also. When I am lonesome for Jamaica I read this book and I feel great again!

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### **Norman says**

This book may be better than the movie.

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### **Catherine says**

There's something about this book... It's rare that you feel an author's love for a people this much through their writing. I think it's the fact that although the narration is in pretty standard English most of the time, you get these seamless shifts into Patwa that are simply genius. It is perfectly accessible to non-Jamaicans and at the same time the 2 are sewn together so that you don't feel that there is a discrepancy or a distance between the narrator and the characters.

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### **Ginger says**

This is a novel written after the motion picture by the same title. Much more than just a novelization of the movie, this work greatly expands the film, creating a childhood and whole culture for its main character.

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### **Vanessa says**

I began to read this novel because it shed a light on my Jamaican heritage. The novel is primarily based on the film "The Harder They Come". It is about the legendary Jamaican folk hero and reggae star Rhygin. It shows the corruption with the slums of Kingston (which is where my mother is from) and it reveals the poverty and corruption of postcolonial Jamaica.

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### **Zero vi Britannia says**

First half: YAY!!

Second half: NAY!!

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## **Bettie? says**

[Bettie's Books (hide spoiler)]

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## **Adam says**

Jamaican music in a book. This is the classic that accompanies Perry Henzel's movie of the same name. Certainly there is no better, truer picture of Jamaica in the rude bwoy era. Like the music of the time, the book follows Ivan from the hills, living with his grandmother, to Kingston and grinding poverty.

With his new name, Rhygin, comes musical success, but no financial reward. And like a western, or the Lee Perry tune it inspired, he ends in a cloud of gunsmoke.

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## **Pearl says**

ivanhoe is my guy right now.

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## **Jack Wolfe says**

"The Harder They Come," the record, is one of the best records I own. "The Harder They Come," the song, is probably the best track on that record. "The Harder They Come," the film, is supposed to be great, but I haven't seen it (I have seen the fruits of its influence though... See every white person foray into reggae, from good ("Sandinista!") to bad (fucking Eric Clapton and 90's meathead ska poop)). And "The Harder They Come," the novel, released almost two decades after the first depictions of Rhygin, gives us a context in which to appreciate all of that incredible achievement. No longer is the "Harder" soundtrack a merry walk down Jamaica lane... No, that album is about poverty! It's a social justice album, through and through, depicting the various ways Jamaicans overcome their squalor, some "positive" (the dance anthem "Sweet and Dandy") and some, err, less so (the proto-gangsta rap classics "Johnny Too Bad" and "Draw Your Brakes"); some showing the pull of spirituality ("Many Rivers to Cross," and "Rivers of Babylon"), others depicting the allure of the material world (the film references in "Shantytown," and "You Can Get It If You Really Want"). So yeah, a heavy record... But that doesn't mean you can't dance to it!

That's kind of how "The Harder They Come," the book, works, too. Essentially, it's a coming of age story, and a crime story: Ivanhoe Martin's journey from his rural childhood to his urban adulthood, and his gradual descent (ascent?) into criminality and reggae music (the "Rhygin" personality). It's a good damn story, mixing "Clockers" with, like, "Jane Eyre," but it's just the skeleton, really. It's the way Thelwell fleshes out these bones, with legends, myths, musical samples, rich dialogue, and a sense of all the changes working in and on Jamaica, that is truly impressive. Thelwell is a talented writer, but he is a dense writer, so navigating Ivan's tale requires a bit of patience at first. But once you've got a handle on the language of his characters, and once you start to feel the feel of Jamaica in every page, it's hard to stop reading. I did this thing in chunks. The first hundred pages probably took me a week. The next hundred took me half that. And the two

hundred after that required just a couple days. The book ROCKETS toward its conclusion-- the speed of the narrative parallels the speed of its locales, from the sleepy idyllic jungle to the chaotic Kingston slums-- and ends on a perfect note.

Why didn't I hear about this one earlier? It is outstanding reading for Black History month, and would make for a ridiculously entertaining entry in a Postcolonial Literature syllabus (Thelwell's perspective on white people in Jamaica is just BRUTAL). It's also a great excuse to pull out your copy of the soundtrack and drop the PRESSHAH on YOUEUU. IT IS YOUEUU

OH YEAHHHH

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### **Chantal Vázquez-waldropt says**

Reminds me of Marlon James' "A brief history of seven killings". Full of rich history, plot and characters from start to finish. I laughed so many ties while reading this book. Jamaicans really do have a way with words!

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### **John says**

After the "Tortilla Curtain", how could I resist this author on a line from Jimmy Cliff. I watched that movie over and over and loved it. The protagonist comes off as an unlikely hero on a Costa Rica tour gone bad. He is a big guy and kills a would be thug in a jungle setup.

Thelwell's attention to detail and accuracy are evident in the interchange between the "hero" and the local police. An innocent thug goes down for the crime and we are left with spit as the leaf that turns the twig on his unfortunate life. On to the Northwest and this "happy" family who has a sociopath/whatever son who has been on the road to hell since high school.

Add inept police, a wacky girl friend (of the son), and a few people in the wrong place at the wrong time. Stage right "the harder they come" in current context.

Sad outcome. Still Thelwell is real the whole time. Not as good as Tortilla Curtain, but still a good read.

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### **Ted Nadeau says**

Read it out loud to Kirsten over many days. Fun to attempt the thick jamacian accent. A true joy of a book.

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### **Sandy Swirsky says**

Boyles usual social situations with no suggestion of solution, this time guns and psychosis

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**Karlos says**

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One of my favorite books ever!

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