

ABSTRACT

Fi Wi Cultural Studies: Film, Culture and Identity

Kam-Au Ron Amen

Who speaks for us? Can they speak for us? Can we relate to what they say?

This study has examined the representation of Jamaican identity in the films *The Harder They Come* (1972), *Dancehall Queen* (1996), and *Babymother* (1997) through theoretical constructs such as race, class and culture. The study was conducted to make a contribution to the development of a "Jamaican Cultural Studies" framework. It contends that social and economic advancement of the Jamaican society, will ultimately revolve around the phenomenon of "Jamaican-ness", one that is of necessity heterogeneous, and located within an African Caribbean cultural paradigm.

Narrative and genre methods of analysis were applied to the Jamaican films under study, and "Jamaican-ness" as expressed through Anancy narratives and Reggae aesthetics was interrogated. The films selected for analysis, were those that sought to capture some important contemporary urban experiences, such as the dancehall phenomenon, since the urban space provides an impetus for more varied assertions of cultural identity in the modern "globalized" environment.

Among the study's limitations is its focus on the film medium only, despite the work's location in the wider media and cultural debate. It discusses only three films and therefore many Jamaican issues and concerns are not encountered. The work is a cultural analysis and avoids an equally under-studied film industry analysis.

The study concludes that "Jamaican-ness" is truly a national and trans-national identity, one that dynamically changes its form, but maintains its integrity from moment to moment. Further, the study challenges the characterization of Jamaican culture as primarily one of resistance and opposition to oppressive forces, and argues that the culture has its own internal logic and motivation. The analysis revealed that the Jamaican films under study have been consistent in the portrayal of issues related to family, violence, aesthetics, music, race, class and power. However, shifts were evident in the representation of the dancehall space, and in the change in gender focus from male to female over time. The study also demonstrated that increasingly, popular cultural forms are exerting greater influence over the direction of the society's cultural development. Finally, the thesis advocated the need for more intense focus on Jamaica's film industry, as it is one of the nation's valuable cultural industries, and a tool for national development.

Keywords: Kam-Au Ron Amen; Cultural Studies; Jamaican Film; Identity; Media and Culture; Cultural Industries.