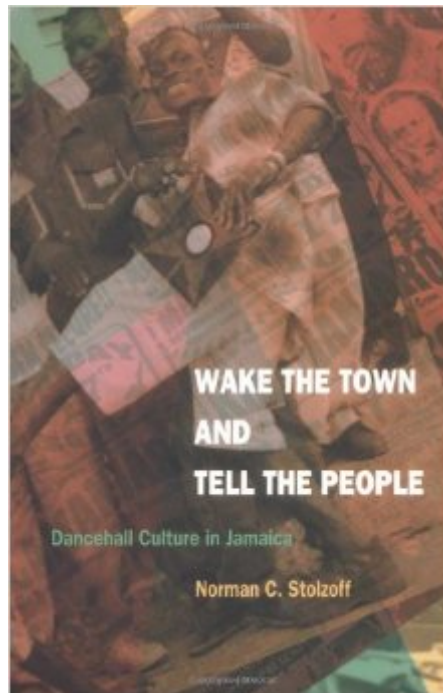


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# Wake The Town And Tell The People: Dancehall Culture In Jamaica



## Synopsis

Jamaican dancehall has long been one of the most vital and influential cultural and artistic forces within contemporary global music. *Wake the Town and Tell the People* presents, for the first time, a lively, nuanced, and comprehensive view of this musical and cultural phenomenon: its growth and historical role within Jamaican society, its economy of star making, its technology of production, its performative practices, and its capacity to channel political beliefs through popular culture in ways that are urgent, tangible, and lasting. Norman C. Stolzoff brings a fan's enthusiasm to his broad perspective on dancehall, providing extensive interviews, original photographs, and anthropological analysis from eighteen months of fieldwork in Kingston. Stolzoff argues that this enormously popular musical genre expresses deep conflicts within Jamaican society, not only along lines of class, race, gender, sexuality, and religion but also between different factions struggling to gain control of the island nation's political culture. Dancehall culture thus remains a key arena where the future of this volatile nation is shaped. As his argument unfolds, Stolzoff traces the history of Jamaican music from its roots in the late eighteenth century to 1945, from the addition of sound systems and technology during the mid-forties to early sixties, and finally through the post-independence years from the early sixties to the present. *Wake the Town and Tell the People* offers a general introduction for those interested in dancehall music and culture. For the fan or musicologist, it will serve as a comprehensive reference book.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

As a lover of the creative, colorful and very controversial culture known as Jamaican dancehall, I received this book ecstatically, but I wasn't quite sure of what to expect. I mean, this is a world that changes so rapidly that any attempts to document it have felt outdated even before their ink dried. I thought Stolzoff would play it safe and keep his approach as superficial as possible—a nice coffee table book perhaps, filled with eye-pleasing full-color pix of scantily-dressed dancehall queens, posturing dapper dons, maybe even the occasional text paragraph with amusing tidbits like, "Whatever happened to Wayne 'Sleng Teng' Smith?" Instead, I found a meticulously researched study packed with so much detail that several times I had to "wheel back and come again" (re-read pages) in order to digest it all. Of course, this isn't the first piece of writing to cast a critical eye on dancehall; but past discussions (helmed mostly by staunch roots reggae apologists who make no bones about expressing their view of the subject as an anti-musical ebola responsible for devouring the innards of upright, "real" reggae as exemplified by the likes of Bob Marley, Peter Tosh and Burning Spear), irrespective of whether they have been pro- or anti-dancehall, have all revolved to varying degrees around the old dancehall "reggae" vs. "traditional" reggae issue. Stolzoff distinguishes himself from the pack by sidestepping that stumbling block altogether: In (what I think is) a revolutionary move, he posits ALL Jamaican music, in essence, as dancehall—from the creolized drum and fiddle music of 18th century slave frolics to the thundering amplified bass blaring from contemporary Kingston sound systems.

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