

**FRONT FIVE****JUL 2009**

## **A Buena Vista of Rocksteady**

By David Dacks

Jamaica's ska explosion and its golden age of reggae show no sign of losing their international appeal decades after their heyday, but sandwiched in the middle of these two much-chronicled phenomena is the short and sweet rocksteady era. *Rocksteady: The Roots Of Reggae* is a film and CD that assembles a top notch cast of veteran singers and players to let them shine once again.

Montreal's stalwart reggae advocate Moss Man Raxlen is the music producer of the project. He explains that with the recent passing of some of the leading lights of the genre's 1966 to '69 time frame he "got to talking with friends on the need to do something like Buena Vista Social Club, but about the start of reggae: rocksteady. A few months later Stascha Bader (the director) contacted me and said he really wanted to try and get a film/album made. I'm sure we were not the first people to think of this type of project, but we were the first to get it off the ground."

Most of the film deals with the recording sessions and reminiscences of multi-decade stars like Ken Boothe, Marcia Griffiths and Stranger Cole (pictured) and musicians such as guitarist Ernest Ranglin and the ubiquitous Sly Dunbar. Comments Moss Man "[Rocksteady] is the start of what has never really died. It's a form of music that has expanded and grown into many styles: dub, dancehall, reggaeton. At its root is still rocksteady — the riddims and bass lines that formed this structure have remained ever-fresh."

German label Moll Selektä will be releasing the soundtrack on June 29, and there will be a free outdoor concert at the Montreal Jazz Festival on July 7 to accompany the limited run of the movie in that city from July 4 to 12.