

SONGLINES MAGAZINE



styles (*jùjú* and Afrobeat in Nigeria), outside influences like reggae, and more contemporary music such as hiplife and *azonto* (Afrobeats).

Grammatical mistakes, glaringly obvious typographical errors and spelling inconsistencies are frustrating and a distraction from the hard work done by the author. Prince Nico Mbarga at one point is written as 'Prince Niko Mbrarga'; hiplife originator Reggie Rockstone momentarily becomes 'Reggae Rockstone'; and Robert Nesta Marley mutating into 'Bob Nestus Marely' is unforgivable. The lack of an index is an equally sore point given the staggeringly encyclopaedic amount of detail in the book; and a discography of essential recordings seems like an obvious omission.

This is an important and authoritative account of one of the most musically productive regions of Africa, but the author deserves a better editor/publisher.

MARTIN SINNOCK

Of Death and a Banana Skin: Poems and Other Words Simon Mayor

Acoustics Publishing (92 pages)



Delightful book of witty poems and profound prose



Quirky, touching and full of wit, this collection of 'poems and stories of a musical life' by one of

Britain's leading mandolin players is an unexpected delight. Mayor's live shows are celebrated not only for their musicianship but for his humorous anecdotes, poetry and off-the-cuff wit. The freewheeling mix translates to the page with a natural and engaging ease. The poems range from smart verses (*The psychiatrist told me stop gambling/You'll lose all your cash if you don't/He said he was sure he could cure me/I answered, 'I'll wager you won't'*) to the unashamedly romantic ('The Kissing Gate') via

WIN

We have three copies of *Of Death and a Banana Skin* to give away.

To enter, answer: Who illustrated the book?

See p17 for competition rules



Mandolinist Simon Mayor and mandobassist Hilary James

Nigel Tribbeck

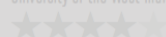
character sketches ('Old Arthur Blenkinsop') and celebrations of nature in the spirit of Gerard Manley Hopkins ('Red Kite').

The prose passages are sometimes poignant, sometimes mordant, as Mayor describes the delights of the places where he has lived (Ilkley and Reading), a year spent in Poland before the Iron Curtain came down, touring the US, and the joy of performing for children, among other eclectic topics. Throughout the book's 92 pages, his words are illustrated by delightful drawings in chalk and crayon by his partner, the singer Hilary James, with whom Mayor regularly performs. There's even an 'augmented reality' app, which means when you scan the pages with a tablet or smartphone, the poems are recited out loud, accompanied by music and video. This reviewer was too much of Luddite to try this, but pleads in defence that the work is so satisfying in its old-fashioned page-turning form that further stimulation was deemed superfluous.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

ReggaeStories: Jamaican Musical Legends and Cultural Legacies Donna P Hope (ed)

University of the West Indies Press (149 pages)



Charting reggae's story



Donna Hope runs the Reggae Studies Unit at UWI and has authored trailblazing texts on Caribbean music, culture and identity including

Inna di Dancehall and Man Vibes: Masculinities in the Jamaican Dancehall. This essay collection

surveys reggae developments from Mexico to Belarus, as well as sharp analysis of scene contributors like Peter Tosh, 'glocal' dancehall hybrid Tommy Lee Sparta and dancehall's 'fallen dark star' Vybz Kartel, who was imprisoned for murder in 2014.

In a confident, thought-provoking introduction, Hope sets out the 'problem' that characterises the territory: is all Jamaican music contained within the term reggae, tending towards exclusivity, or is it better viewed as multiple cultural and sonic narratives? *ReggaeStories* prefers a broad definition exploring narratives 'from reggae, ska, dancehall to the new upbeat, electronic wave of Jamaican popular music that is yet to take its form and claim its name.'

Klaus Naumann's chapter 'I Was Born Here' looks at how Jamaican forms and expressions have affected Belarusian culture over decades, and uses the term 'glocal' to good effect. He argues that musicians and producers do not simply import and copy reggae stylings but adapt them into 'new locales and imaginations.'

Less successful is Christian Eugenio López-Negrete Miranda's 'The Development of Reggae Music in Mexico'. This chapter simply offers a chronology of reggae's development in the Hispanic Caribbean region of Mexico and lacks penetrating analysis.

The collection's strongest contribution is Racquel Bernard's astute and original profile 'Peter Tosh, Social Protest and Jamaican Curse Words'. Bernard locates Tosh – who was killed by a trio of assassins in 1987 – within the context of Jamaica's Black Power movement, and argues the Wailer member's just rage has been often misunderstood as 'overly aggressive and alienating.' Bernard's