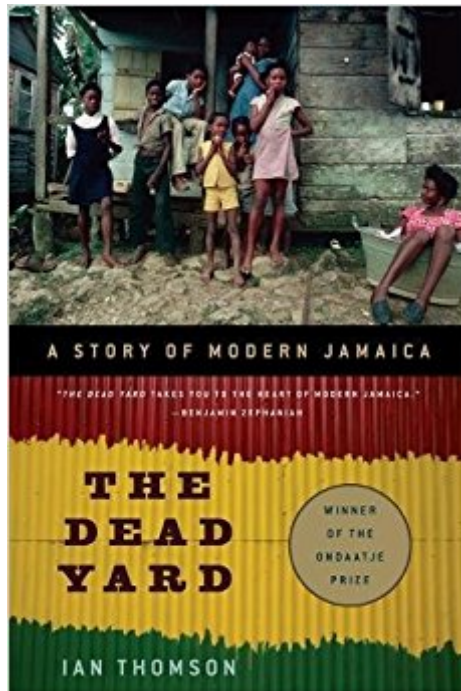


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The Dead Yard: A Story Of Modern Jamaica



Synopsis

Named the Dolman Travel Book of the Year, *The Dead Yard* paints an unforgettable portrait of modern Jamaica. Since independence, Jamaica has gradually become associated with twin images--a resort-style travel Eden for foreigners and a new kind of hell for Jamaicans, a society where gangs control the areas where most Jamaicans live and drug lords like Christopher Coke rule elites and the poor alike. Ian Thomson's brave book explores a country of lost promise, where America's hunger for drugs fuels a dependent economy and shadowy politics. The lauded birthplace of reggae and Bob Marley, Jamaica is now sunk in corruption and hopelessness. A synthesis of vital history and unflinching reportage, *The Dead Yard* is "a fascinating account of a beautiful, treacherous country" (Irish Times).

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Journalist Thomson (Bonjour Blanc) offers a portrait of contemporary Jamaica beyond the cliché of "golden beaches and guns, guns, guns." Thomson spoke to Jamaicans from all strata of society: white Jamaicans, beneficiaries of fortunes built on slave labor, now hiding in their crumbling plantation mansions, terrified of the encroaching violence; Rastafarians and Maroons; rabbis and priests; tired bureaucrats and armed youths; Indian and Chinese shopkeepers; the musicians and producers that have exported Jamaican music all over the globe. At times the book is overcrowded with characters and lacks a cohesive argument, but the elegant capsule histories of major figures and events ground the interviews in context. What emerges is a portrait of a country

haunted by its colonial past, still trying to define itself apart from the two imperial powers (U.S. and British) that have shaped it thus far, and of a diverse people who struggle to hold on to their hope for a brighter future. (Apr.) (c) Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved.

Ian Thomson is the author of *Primo Levi*, which won the Royal Society of Literature's W. H. Heinemann Award in 2003. He lives in London.

I last visited Jamaica in about 1990, as the "digital music" era was taking over the dancehall, and crack cocaine was supplanting "herb" as the drug of choice among the sufferers. Having been a semi-regular visitor since the mid-Seventies, I found the changes disconcerting, and the "vibes" sadly deteriorating. One could still leave the "safety" of the beaches and hotels, and meet Jamaican people, but the poverty and lack of opportunity most "ordinary" folks experience, especially the young, became more depressing as I got older. "The Dead Yard" author Ian Thompson spends most of his time with Jamaicans and ex-pats that visitors to the "all-inclusive" resorts never meet, the REAL 1%'ers (descendants of slave masters and similar aristocracy,) who live in a climate of fear, hatred, and despair. I found them to be, on the whole, irritating and condescending, especially the English painter, who boasts of his exploitation of young Jamaican girls. Thompson rightly expresses his disgust of this creep. Among the few admirable folks Thompson meets are Catholic priests and other "do-gooders", who attempt to broker gang truces and administer job training programs, amidst a rampantly corrupt and disintegrating legal, political, and social environment. These brave men and women gave me what little hope I took from this otherwise mostly depressing read. On the whole, I can't recommend this book as a travel guide, one probably won't want to visit Jamaica after reading it. It does give an unflinching view of a class of privileged individuals whom events have left behind, to wallow in an atmosphere of decay and irrelevance. A very sad story.

Thanks!

Tons of research was done to create this book. Reads like an ethnography.

for those who need to know more about Jamaica

Good effort. Im glad I decided to buy the book and read from an open mind. Those who rate the book negatively are obviously "off put" by the less than stellar history of an island still trying to

solidify itself in an independence only 50 something years old...i won't say that this should be the only book on Jamaica one should read..it should be read with other texts.This also should not be taken as a travel guide either..its just an account of interviews and research. Want to vacation in Jamaica...go...want to cruise there..cruise there..

great read

Good book about the island. Went there and the author was right---may not want to go back. My advice is to stay on the resort or the beach, the place is a dump. Not dangerous but crappy. If your a water person, you will love it, but stay at the resort. The book is a eye opener.

I purchased this book expecting to further learn about the island of Jamaica. Everytime I turned the page I became disappointed. The island of Jamaica that I know is not the island of Jamaica that Ian Thomson explored. Negativity poured off the pages and he provided some incorrect information I.e. Bob Marley's restaurant is not at Disneyworld. Thomson should have fact checked better, it disappoints me he received awards for a book that neglected the Jamaican middle class. He went from one extreme to the next. A majority of my family and friends in Jamaica do not live in horrible conditions. Just like in England and America their houses are equipped with hot water and air condition, they wear all the latest fashions and brand names, attend the universities, and travel abroad. Every person in Jamaica is not suffering and begging to move abroad. Thomson wrote this book in a biased manner, pointing out all of the negatives of Jamaican society. Every society whether first, second, or third world deals with issues of children born out of wedlock and violence. If we choose to look at why so many children are born out of wedlock we can trace it to the British. Did the plantation owners not treat the slaves as breeders. Most of the issues he speaks of should be associated with England. Instead of him suggesting Jamaica wasn't ready for independence. All of the corrupt politicians mirror their political style off the British, everything the British did such as exploiting the Jamaican people for monetary gain was learned by Jamaican politicians. If Thomson really wants to get deep into the Jamaican culture and issues of the society, he should start by looking at all the destruction England brought the country. He could have interviewed prominent middle class Jamaicans. Hard work ethic and intelligence are traits of the Jamaican people and not laziness.

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