Mongrel Media

Presents

Life and Debt

A film by Stephanie Black

USA/86 min./2001/In English

Best Documentary
Jamerican Film Festival

Critic’s Jury Special Prize, Honourable Mention “Best Film of the Festival”
IFP/ West Los Angeles Film Festival 2001

www.lifeanddebt.org

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Life & Debt – Synopsis

*Life and Debt* is a feature-length documentary that addresses the impact of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank and current globalization policies on developing countries such as Jamaica.

Jamaica is the land of sea, sand and sun and also a prime example of the complexities of economic globalization on the world's developing countries. The film dissects the "mechanism of debt" that is destroying local agriculture and industry in Third World countries and substituting sweatshops and cheap imports. With a voice-over narration written by Jamaica Kincaid, adapted from her non-fiction book *A Small Place*, *Life and Debt* is an unapologetic look at the "new world order," from the point of view of Jamaican workers, farmers, government and policy officials who see the reality of globalization from the ground up. The film includes interviews with Former Prime Minister Michael Manley, Deputy Director of the International Monetary Fund Stanley Fischer, short commentary by the President of Haiti Jean-Bertrand Aristide and Former President of Ghana Jerry Rawlings. But the articulate voices of those whose lives have been impacted by the policies of globalization are foremost.

*Life & Debt* is a woven tapestry of sequences focusing on the stories of individual Jamaicans whose strategies for survival and parameters of day-to-day existence are determined by the U.S. and other foreign economic agendas. By combining traditional documentary explication with a stylized narrative framework, the complexity of international lending, structural adjustment policies and free trade will be understood in the context of the day-to-day realities of the people whose lives they impact. The film opens with the arrival of vacationers to the island; in this sequence Kincaid’s text is introduced in the form of a voice-over, a technique that is employed throughout the film. Through the juxtaposition of image and sound we begin to understand the profound contrasts and contradictions behind the breathtaking natural beauty of the island. The poetic urgency of Kincaid’s words lends a first-person understanding of the legacy of the country's colonial past, and to its present day economic challenges.
Two international financial institutions wield enormous power over the lives of tens of millions of people around the world. From Russia to Thailand to Bolivia to Chile to Haiti, the International Monetary Fund and World Bank offer loans of billions of dollars, provided that the recipient nations adhere to strict "structural adjustment" programs. These programs include imposition of earning limits on foreign investment, devaluation of local currency to increase exports, suppression of wages, cutting of social services such as health care and education, and prevention of state involvement in many potentially profitable endeavors. Furthermore, commercial banks function according to IMF/World Bank stipulations: governments that refuse to follow IMF/World Bank prescriptions are cut off from international commercial lending – regardless of how well those governments may be serving their own people. With the collapse of the Eastern bloc, the free–market economy is now seen as the only viable economic system. Yet, within this system, much of the developing world receives less than its share of global resources – often, these countries are contributing a great deal more than they are receiving.

The lives of the Jamaican people operate as part of an economic order in which their labour benefits foreign interests more than the interests of their own families and countries. The IMF, the World Bank, U.S. AID, and international trade agreements enforce this order. Under the guise of providing developmental support to Third World countries, these institutions actually operate to control the economies and, in many cases, the political systems of these nations, crippling efforts toward self–reliant development. Jamaica – like many other developing countries – attempted to build its economy, after 400 years of colonization, on policies of self–sufficiency and independence. Due to a variety of external and internal pressures, it was unable to do so without foreign bank loans. Funds obtained through arrangements with the International Monetary Fund required austerity measures that proved to be anathema to progressive reforms. At present, Jamaica, along with many Third World
countries, has built up an astronomical external debt that must be paid in U.S. dollars. In 1991, 8 billion Jamaican dollars were used to buy the foreign exchange (640 million U.S. dollars) needed to service the debt. In 1992, as a result of "structural adjustment" policies mandated by the IMF, the Jamaican dollar was devalued and 18 billion dollars were then needed to service the loan. Consequently, all government spending on education, health, social welfare, etc., has been cut by over 50 percent; great numbers of civil servants have been dismissed; and import regulations have been eliminated. According to the World Bank, of the total money lent to Jamaica, less than 10 percent actually stays within the country. The rest is returned to the donor countries, to the perpetual detriment of the small nation. While Jamaica is seen to be on the path of "success," according to public IMF evaluation, statistics of wealth distribution cite Jamaica as having nearly the worst internal distribution of wealth of any country on the globe, second only to South Africa.

As Jamaica has been subject for nearly twenty–five years to the policies of the IMF, World Bank, and the Inter–American Development Bank, among other international institutions, the country stands as a prime example to shed light on how these institutions function to reorganize global production and promote the interests of wealthy Western nations.
Life and Debt – Key Personnel Bios

Stephanie Black – Producer/Director
Filmography includes the feature-length documentary *H–2 Worker* which won both Best Documentary and Best Cinematography at the 1990 Sundance Film Festival. Produced and directed by Stephanie Black, the film was selected to be the U.S. representative in the prestigious Semaine de la Critique (Critics Week) section at Cannes, in addition to winning many festival awards including the John Grierson Award at the American Film and Video Festival in 1991, Special Gold Jury Award at the Houston Film Festival 1991, among others. The film documents the plight of the 10,000+ Caribbean men who are brought to Florida each year under a temporary guest worker ("H–2") visa to harvest sugar cane for American sugar corporations. The film was also screened in the Library of Congress and the Florida State Senate. The film was broadcast on national PBS as well as on national television in twenty countries abroad. Upon completion of "H–2 Worker" Stephanie Black was hired as the Chief Researcher and Second Unit Director of *Incident at Oglala* an award-winning feature–length documentary about Leonard Peltier and the activities of the F.B.I. on the Pine Ridge Reservation during the 1970's. The film was produced by Robert Redford and directed by Michael Apted. For over ten years, Stephanie Black has been producing and directing live–action documentary segments for The Children's Television Workshop for Sesame Street. To date, over fifty short segments have been conceived, produced and directed by Black for Sesame Street. In addition Black has produced segments for Nickelodeon's "U to U" show, CTW's "Big Bag" seen on the Cartoon Network and PBS's "Zoom". Stephanie Black produced and directed a PSA about the lack of equal economic opportunity in the U.S. entitled "More Than Luck" for Direct Impact, a non–profit organization in Athens, Georgia. For over ten years, Stephanie Black has been producing and directing music videos and EPK's for such artists as Ziggy Marley and the Melody
Makers, Buju Banton, Snow, Anthony B., INOJ, among others. In 1999, Black directed and produced a 30-minute documentary on the "Making of Chant Down Babylon" a Bob Marley tribute album produced by Stephen Marley featuring Lauryn Hill, Busta Rhymes, Erykah Badu, among others. Other related work experience includes Adjunct Professor of Documentary Film at the School of Visual Arts 1991–1994 and presently instructor of documentary workshops at Y/FVA in NYC.

Malik Sayeed, Kyle Kibbe, Alex Nepomniaschy and Richard Lannaman—Cinematography

Life and Debt combines the talents of four outstanding cinematographers. Malik Sayeed's credits include Spike Lee's Clockers Girl 6 and He's Got Game, as well as Hype Williams' Belly and Ice Cube's The Players Club. Kyle Kibbe has shot numerous documentaries including the award-winning Bitter Cane and Rezistance. Alex Nepomniaschy's credits include the award-winning documentary Beirut: The Last Home Movie. Richard Lannaman is one of Jamaica's most talented cinematographer's; recent credits include Third World Cop.

John Mullen – Editor

John Mullen's editing career spans over thirty-five years and includes the award-winning H–2 Worker directed by Stephanie Black; Beirut: The Last Home Movie directed by Jennifer Fox; Warrior: The Story of Leonard Peltier directed by Suzie Baer; and Rezistance produced by Crowing Rooster Productions. Other editing credits include musical documentaries such as Headin’ for Broadway, a theatrical release produced by 20th Century Fox; Rock World, a special for NBC; and Working, a PBS special; and a Time–Life series of television shorts. For over five years, John was the supervising editor of the Emmy award-winning children's series Big Blue Marble.

Jamaica Kincaid– Writer of Voice–Over Narration based on A Small Place

Jamaica Kincaid has published At the Bottom of the River, Annie John, A Small Place, Lucy, The Autobiography of My Mother, My Brother, My Garden and has edited My Favorite Plant. All published by Farrar,
Life and Debt – Credits

Produced and Directed by Stephanie Black
Cinematographers: Malik Sayeed
    Kyle Kibbe
    Richard Lannaman
    Alex Nepomniaschy
Voice–over narration written by Jamaica Kincaid
based on A Small Place (c) 1987
Read by Belinda Becker
Editor: John Mullen
Additional Editing: Jon Stefansson
    Suzanne Bauman
    Neal Usatin
Assistant Producer (JA): Sarah Manley
Steadicam Operator: John Bentham
Sound Recordists: Caleb Mose
    Brenda Ray
Assistant Camera: Jonathan Weaver
    Chris Browne
ITVS Godsend: Ellin Baumel
Assistant to the Director: Neal Usatin
Production Managers (JA): Peter Packer
    Jeremy Francis
    (NYC): Betsy Blakemore
Electrician/Gaffer: Earl Brown
Production Assistants: Talawah Levy
    Victor Patterson
Grip/Driver: Roy Buchanan
    Winfred "Soljie" Henry
On–location Research: Noel Dean
    Carleene Samuels
    Michelle Stewart
Research Consultants: Michael Witter  
Horace Levy  
Mr. Gunn  
Mr. Elvie  

Additional Camera: Chris Browne  
Richard Chisolm  
Talawah Levy  
Katherine Kean/Aboudja  

Additional Sound: Don McGregor  
Michael Boyle  

Assistant Picture Editor: Jake Diamond  
Nicholas Stone  

Text Guidance: Ifeona Fulani  
Karen Williams  

Loan Document Design: Ben Hillman  
Lisa Crafts  
Justin Girard  

Post Production Assistant: Shannon Clark  
Alyce Hrakbak  
Nate Pommer  
Donna Clarke  
Kelli Boyles  
Garrett Levin  
Benjamin Kast  
Baderinwa L-Umoja  
Lauryn Nakamura  
Sean John  
Carleene Samuels  
Sky Sitney  

Supervising Sound Editor: Coll Anderson  
Effects Editor: Andrew Bracken  
Additional Sound Editing: Blake Leyh  
Dialogue: Kimberly McCord  
ReRecording Mixer: Frank Morrone  
Dolby Engineer: Dustin Hudson
It is with heartfelt gratitude that these songs could be included:
"G–7"
Performed by Ziggy Marley and the Melody Makers
Written by David Marley
Courtesy of Elektra Records
By arrangement with Warner Special Products
Used by permission of Colgems–EMI Music Inc.

"ONE LOVE" "WORK" and "THREE LITTLE BIRDS"
Written and Performed by Bob Marley
Published by Fifty–Six Hope Road Music, Ltd/Ondil Music, Ltd./Blue Mountain Music, Ltd. (PRS).
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All rights for the rest of the world controlled and administered by Rykomusic, Ltd. (PRS)
Courtesy of the Island/Def Jam Music Group All Rights Reserved

“ONE LOVE"
(The Wailers Original version)
Written by Bob Marley
Produced by Clement Dodd at Jamaica Recording Studio One
Published by Jamrec Music, Inc. (BMI)
Used by Special Permission Coxsone Dodd

"ONE LOVE"
Written By Bob Marley
Remix by Bill Laswell
Courtesy of Axiom/Island Records (ASCAP)
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"NO WOMAN, NO CRY"
Written by Vincent Ford/Performed by Dean Fraser
Published by Fifty-Six Hope Road Music, Ltd/Odnil Music, Ltd./Blue Mountain Music, Ltd. (PRS). All rights for North and South America controlled and administered by Rykomusic, Inc. (ASCAP)
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Written by Bob Marley/Performed by Dean Fraser
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"CIRCUMSTANCES" and "DESTINY"
Written and Performed by Buju Banton
(c) 1997 Songs of Polygram International, Inc./Germain Music/Gargamel Music (BMI) Used by Special Permission
Buju Banton and Donovan Germaine Penthouse/VP Records

"FORTUNES OF LOVE"
Written by Suzanne Couch/Brian Jobson
Anxious Music (U.K.) BMI
Courtesy Suzanne Couch/Brian Jobson

"CHANTILLY LACE"
Written by J.P. Richardson
Used by Permission of Glad Music Co., Fort Knox Music Inc. and Trio Music Inc.

"FILTHY"
Written by H. Browne
Produced by Danny Browne for Mainstreet Records
Published by Dubplate Music (PRS)
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"GIVE THEM THE RIDE" (Morgan Heritage Remix)
Performed by Sizzla
Written by Miguel Collins, Bobby Dixon and Clement Dodd
Published by XTM Sounds Publishing (ASCAP)/Zaboughabi Music/ Crage Music/Jamrec Music  Courtesy of the Royalty Network, Inc.

"DAY-O" (The Banana Boat Song)
Performed by Harry Belafonte
Written by Irving Burgie and William Attawy
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"ISLAND IN THE SUN"
Written by Irving Burgie and Harry Belafonte
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NYABINGHI CHANTS
Tafari Music Inc./JRTTR (PRS)

"LIFE AND DEBT"
Performed by Mutabaruka
Written by Alan Hope (BMI)

"BE STILL BABYLON"
Written and Performed by Rolando E. McLean
Yam Euphony Music Ltd./Warner Chapell Publishing/BMI
By Special Permission Yami Bolo

"FOOLS DIE"
Written and Performed by Peter Tosh
EMI Records
Published by Mabrak Music
By Special Permission Peter Tosh Estate

"RAID THE BARN"
Performed by Anthony B.
Written by Richard Bell
Published by Tamaljayo Publishing Inc.
By Special Permission Startrail Records/VP Records

Special Appearance: Buju Banton and Yami Bolo
Archival Footage kindly provided by:
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Bretton Woods Conference Courtesy of The National Archives
"Land of My Birth" and "Steppin" Courtesy of Saul Landau and Haskell Wexler
International Monetary Fund Meeting Courtesy of MacNeil Lehrer/WETA
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