

The Upsetter: The Life & Music Of Lee Scratch Perry

★★★★

MVD 5289 D

Playing the definitive Scratch card

It's hard to imagine crackpot legend Lee Perry getting the usual documentary treatment with talking heads analysing his exploits. The man who revolutionised reggae music and production of sound as studio science, while enjoying a bonkers reputation as eccentric, weed-driven nutter, defies normal description, dissection and logic.

Seven years in production, independent filmmakers Ethan Higbee and Adam Bhala Lough have uncovered startling archive footage of Scratch in full flight over the years. Here he can be found recounting his stories and explaining his idiosyncratic philosophies himself, whether that's expounding in Native American headdress or giving a guided tour of his fabled Black Ark studios, where he produced so many seminal reggae classics during the 70s (before burning it down, believing it was possessed by evil spirits).

Beneath the smoke-shrouded mania lurked a shrewd entrepreneur who sold Bob Marley's early music to Trojan in the UK, incurring flack yet launching The Wailers in Britain. That, after decades as a hard-nosed businessman, visionary producer and cultivating a reputation as reggae's Syd Barrett, Perry can return to Earth and record a well-received album with The Orb is testimony to the unfathomable inner drive of this true one-off. This superb document is as close to the complete picture as it will ever get. *Kris Needs*