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Lee "Scratch" Perry

Masterpiece

Review by G. W. Hill

I would consider this to be progressive reggae. There's a lot of electronic music and prog sound built into this. Sometimes it almost feels like Enigma turned reggae. All in all, this is quite a tasty release



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Track by Track Review

Soul Man

Piano opens this in soulful tones. Keyboards are heard over the top adding atmosphere. Some echoed female vocals makes it feel a bit like Enigma to me. The main vocals enter and this has a great reggae meets powerful electronic prog texture to it. The cut reminds me in some ways of some of Jonathan Elias' music. It grows into a great tune, continuing those musical vibes.

Master Piece

While there is clearly more pure reggae on this, the keyboards and other elements over the top lend an electronic and quite proggy aspect to the piece. This is a lush piece of music that's very powerful. Between the two and two and a half minute marks it drops back for an acoustic guitar laden part that's intricate and pretty. Then it builds back out from there. Then it launches into some seriously electronic music that's quite house oriented. After that, percussion takes it for a time. Further down the road, after some more electronic sounds, we get a reprise of that acoustic guitar motif, but with more layers of sound added to it. Then female vocals herald a new sound, a real progressive rock meets R&B and Enigma kind of thing. Then it gets shifted again, this time to a symphonic meets space kind of sound. It shifts out towards electronic music again after that. This is really quite a dynamic piece of music working through a number of changes and alterations. It's often quite lush and beautiful.

Medusa Dub

There's some weird space music that opens this. Then it works out to the most purely reggae sound we've heard to this point. Of course, even then the overlays convey something different, sort of an electronic space meets jazz and prog. After a time it works out into some different sounds with a real emphasis on the rhythmic structures. There is some strange space built into that part of the piece. There is a false ending after a time and then lush space keyboards bring it back in with percussion dancing around the edges. Percussion and those electronic keyboards work around the arrangement here with this sitting somewhere between reggae and techno/house music.

Mr. Upsetter (Dancehall Fusion Mix)

The first of several mixes of this song, there is a lot of percussion on this beast. It's got some rapping in the mix. I like the echoed vocals at the end.

Mr. Upsetter

This comes in almost like a Kraftwerk mix of the piece. It's more sparse, but also very dramatic. The vocals are more up front and the cut gets more rhythmic elements as it builds out into more of a techno number. This is stranger, but also more dramatic and powerful. I prefer it to the previous one, but both are cool.

Mr. Upsetter (Funky Mix)

This doesn't seem all that funky to me, but it has a lot of weird electronic sound swirling about and some raps. I'm not overly crazy about this version. It's a bit too weird and just not that interesting. That said, there's a more lush movement with some space sounds that works pretty well later in the piece.



Mr. Upsetter (Pop Mix)

Acoustic guitar opens this and a soulful rap starts from there. It evolves out through more space and techno territory. This might be the best version of the cut, but taken in series it loses something due to the similarities.

Forgiveness

The early portions of this have only percussion as the backdrop for the vocals. It grows out from there with symphonic elements added, and then acoustic guitar sounds are heard. It's an intriguing piece that's lush and beautiful. I like this one quite a bit.

Forgiveness (Road of Life Riddim)

As much as I liked the previous version of this piece, this is even cooler. That's in part because of the addition of female vocals, but the arrangement is just made more lush and accessible. There are symphonic elements and proggy ones all mixed in here.

Soul Man (Reprise)

I dig this redone version of the earlier track. It's lush and powerful.



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