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Lee 'Scratch' Perry @ Highline Ballroom: August 17, 2010

Yes he is lighting his tongue on fire. All photos by [David Potes](#).

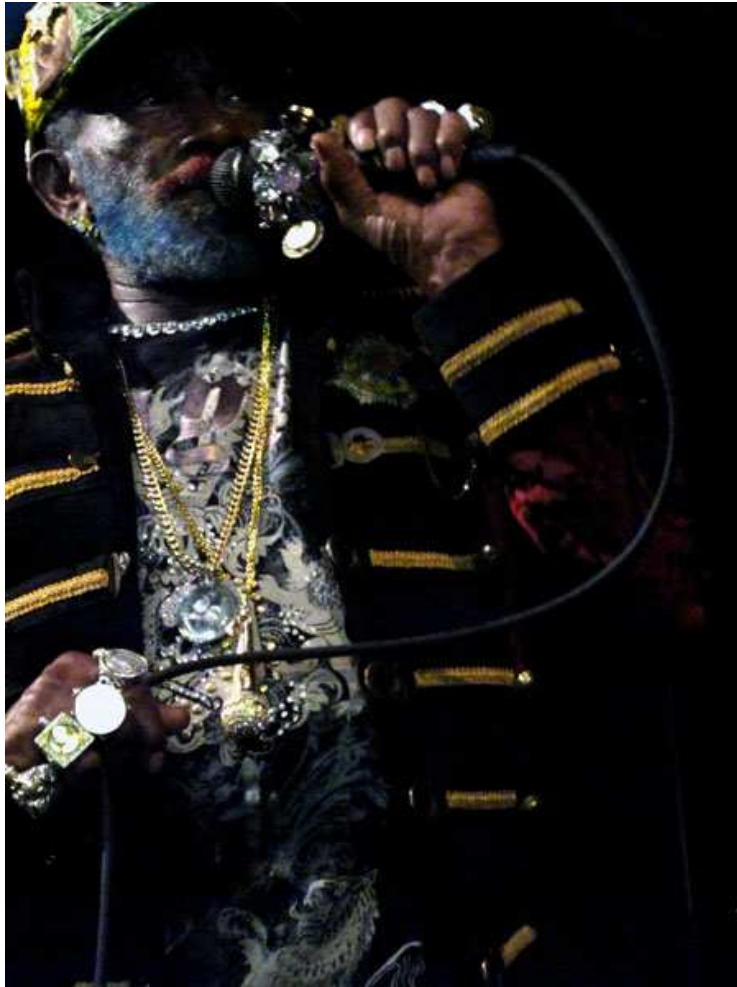
Certiably insane yes; certifiably genius maybe; but out of all the things you could call Lee 'Scratch' Perry, I never knew that 'horny old man' was one of them. Until now. "Did he just say 'I love pussy and I love the sea'!" a girl at the front asked her friend. In a thick patois accent it was hard to tell, but yes, yes he did.

So here we have Mr. Perry (anyone over the age of 70 deserves the prefix 'Mr.' in front of their name) flouncing around the stage like a king, tiny in stature but colossal in importance. He has a regal air about him, but that could just be put down to the giant home-painted in Jamaican colors Timberland-style boots he's clomping around in ("there's a USB drive tied to his shoe," my friend observes), or the fact that he is probably stoned out of his mind. As a related aside, a few years ago Mr. Perry told me in a very bizarre interview that he only drinks marijuana tea nowadays, as smoking it is too harsh. Since he's a Rastafarian – sans dreads yet with a head of hair dyed in a slap-dash mixture of vibrant greens, blues and pinkish reds – who also touts the wonders of weed whilst condemning cigarettes onstage, it's not much of a stretch to say that his high is our sober.



But anyway – Mr. Perry’s backing band comprised of four non-Rastafarian looking dudes is keeping things in order while he kind of does his own thing down in front. Earlier there was the ceremonious laying down of the brown velvet, and the burning of the incense, and then the placement of the sampler, so Mr. Perry is clearly now very comfortable onstage in the most splendiferous next level pre-Gaga costume (but more likely just his daily wear). Let’s just say it comprises of fanciful things including crystals, a golden and diamond mini microphone that he wears as a necklace, at least eight extravagant rings on tiny fingers that curl around a bejeweled mic, a blue beard with a pink moustache, a red brocade jacket (we’ll give him a pass for changing into an Ed Hardy jacket halfway through) and maybe even a keypad from a phone. “I am a cricket,” he says as he triggers a sample. He presses down on a button that makes a rumbling storm noise. “And I am wicked.”

And this is the way that Mr. Perry both speaks and sings, in almost ominous nursery rhymes. Apart from other phrases that to this untrained patois ear are indecipherable, we hear “Touch your eye and touch the sky,” “Shake your leg and shake your head,” and “FBI,” “politician,” and “Lee ‘Scratch’ Perry.” Oh, and also “me cocky get stiff an’ me cocky get hard.” No, really.



Clearly the power of his “cocky” hasn’t waned over the 70+ years he’s been around, as while we’re cheering him on for the encore Mr. Perry is gesturing with his mic at two young nubile PYTs to go around the corner and meet him backstage. The dudes in the audience big him up, I think it’s kind of gross, and yet we all agree that yes, this man is a goddamn genius.



www.myspace.com/leescratchperry

Tags: [Highline Ballroom](#), [Lee 'Scratch' Perry](#)

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