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Lee "Scratch" Perry Talks About His New Album Revelation Featuring Keith Richards and George Clinton

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By **PHYLLIS POLLACK**
BLOGCRITICS.ORG

Reggae icon Lee "Scratch" Perry's upcoming album *Revelation* will be released by Megawave, with North American distribution through MVD on August 10, 2010. The Grammy winner's album will complete a trilogy of works with multi-instrumentalist Steve Marshall, following *Scratch Came*, *Scratch Saw*, *Scratch Conquered* and the Grammy-nominated *The End of An American Dream*. Like *Scratch Came*, this album also features guests Rolling Stones guitarist Keith Richards and funkster George Clinton.

Perry will be playing concerts in five cities in the States, including New York and Los Angeles, in August 2010 to promote the album. He certainly brought some interesting baggage last year to his Los Angeles [show](#).

The 74-year-old Perry is an engineer, producer, songwriter, and performer who has pioneered numerous musical innovations in his work with dub and reggae. Perry, whose prolific volumes of work began to amass during the '50s, received the 2003 Grammy Award for Best Reggae Album for his album *Jamaican E.T.* and his *Repentance* disc was nominated for that title earlier this year.

In addition to his seminal work in reggae and as an instigator when it came to dub, Perry's musical Midas touch will long continue to be of note. His brilliant studio production is heard on works that include some of the most historic reggae albums ever recorded. Perry's groundbreaking and experimental studio work changed the face of music, as he became a major influence, not only on the reggae artists he produced, such as Bob Marley and The Wailers, Max Romeo, and Junior Murvin, but his experimental visionary artistry also cast a spell on countless other artists that have included rockers like The Clash, with whom he worked on "Complete Control."



On *Revelation*, Keith Richards appears on the track "Book of Moses," playing funky blues guitar, offering an enticing vamp and double stops. The fusion of blues guitar with Perry's vocals is exquisite.

Perry says of Richards, "We don't meet person to person. We meet spiritually. We speak through the spiritual world to each other through the music. The music is our god, a God blessed power, like when we are talking on the phone now, so when I send out a message, people like that can understand what is perfect and is right, and Keith Richards also, he's on a mission like me. I'm on a mission working for God. Me and Keith, we talk to each other in the spirit, and we know what were talking about because we're coming from the same place. Some of us where we came from, some of us are human beings and some of us are angels in human form, and we came here to fight against people who are doing the wrong things to other people."

In the track, Perry's lyrics refer to Moses, who had to take his shoes off before he got to the burning bush. In a recent interview with me, Perry says he has been in that position himself. He comments, "To be the person you have to be, you have to take off your shoes, because an angel call me, and see things you should not do, and you see the change. You have no shoes and no boots on and you talk to God."

Perhaps the song isn't just about Moses taking off his shoes because of a burning bush. It was that burning guitar work that would lead him to the top of the Mount Zion.



(Lee "Scratch" Perry's shoe. Photo ©Phyllis Pollack)

The production on *Revelation* is both captivating and well-paired with Perry's genius. According to the album's producer, John Saxon of State of Emergency in the UK, "Lee's vocals were recorded in Switzerland. The rhythm section and the back-up vocals on "Revelation Revolution and Evolution" in London. Lee sung those background vocals to me over the phone. I got ElodieO and Abi Browning in to record them the next day. Keith Richards and George Clinton recorded their parts in the U.S.A. I took all the recordings back to my lab in Somerset to mix and edit, adding saxophones, percussion, guitars and keyboards along the way."Saxon adds, "The whole thing took more than a year to complete. Lee said the sessions were 'easy' for him because 'everything just went smooth and flowed nicely.'"

Revelation also features Duncan & Green, Tim Hill, Dr Sleepy, Alec Hay, and David Stewart Jones.

Saxon, who has known Lee since 1984, related to me, "He has always had his eye on great lead guitar players as far as I know."

That said, on *Revelations*, in addition to guitar work heard from Keith Richards on "Books Of Moses," David Stewart Jones throws down some fancy footwork on the title track, "Run For Cover," and "Weatherman." More guitar licks come from the multi-talented Steve Marshall on "Fire Power," "An Eye For An Eye," and "Let There Be Light." Marshall has toured the UK as lead guitarist with his band. Marshall additionally contributes an arsenal of his own contributions on the album that also include on percussion, keyboards and harmonica.

As Saxon notes, "It is not just an album for the 'world/reggae' chart, but something that every music fan wants in their collection. So there are elements of Rock, there are elements of Hip Hop and there are elements of Dance. Reggae has influenced all these styles and that is because of Lee Perry's magic and originality. Lee is not Reggae, he is bigger than that, he is *all* music, Lord God Muzik."

Much of this album is a spiritual experience.

Perry explains why, as Saxon says, it is so easy for him to conjure his poetic lyrics, seemingly out of nowhere. "God is a spirit," says Perry. "That is the spirit coming down. The spirit will tell you exactly what to say, where to go, and what to go and do. When you listen it is not hard, it is a pleasure."

On "Eye For An Eye," rock is Perry's soul. He sings, "*and I'm not getting old...I'm not getting older. I'm getting younger.*" Perry confirms, "I'm not feeling any age. I'm feeling extremely strong. My health is good."

Perry also has some words for Michael Jackson's ghost. This is not the first time he has literally gone on record, referring to the late pop star. For instance, on *In The Wire* in 1998, Perry sang of Michael, "*I am the elephant man and Michael could not buy me out.*" On *Revelation*, Perry speaks his mind about "Freaky Michael." Here, he rhymes about Jackson's nose job, and the late entertainer being repulsed by his racial features. The point of the song is clear. If you are black, you should love your color. Here is [why](#).

Perry comments, "Your original form is your original form. It was made by the number one artist. He knows the kind of face you should have. You should give God thanks for the face you have. If you don't you are going to have big trouble, because that means you are going to disrespect what God gave you. You are not

pleased with God's blessing." Perry, who has grown older, wiser and if possible, even more beautiful with age, says, "Shooting botox in the face, and all of that. He was so lucky before he changed his nose. Everything looked so perfect and right. Until he started to change it. Then when he started to change it, then everything started to go wrong. He lost the blessings of good health and good strength. I think Michael Jackson died a long time ago when he changed his nose."

Perry addresses the FBI and the CIA in "Fire Power" and evil government officials in "Scary Politicians." Perry told me, "That's my job. Revelations." Clinton and Perry funk it up together, letting them know they "*don't stand a chance.*"

There is even worse punishment for the FBI and the CIA in "Fire Power," when it comes to the ultimate celebration, and they find out they're not on the guest list.

Just like the witch in the *Wizard of Oz*, who was "liquidated" and destroyed with water, there is a similar ground rule when it comes to politicians that do not understand there are forces mightier than weapons of war. Perry told me, "Fire is a mighty power, but power of the water to put out the fire is more mighty. The fire power is in destruction like the boom and the war, fire power. So power can only come through water."

Perry certainly knows the power of fire, which destroyed his Black Ark Studio in Jamaica over three decades ago. As far as his currently life in Switzerland, he reports, "I'm writing, and I'm trying to put something together like some books, with the idea that I have, like spirits speaking to me. And I'm working on the computer."

As far as working with State of Emergency on the album, he says, "We make a good team."

Perry told me, "Most of the album is talking about revelation from Genesis." This declaration comes through in tracks like "Let There Be Light" and "Holy Angels."

The trippy "Used to Drive a Tractor in Negrille" with its transfixing beat is more earthy than electronica, but it crosses over gracefully with its addictive, mesmerizing groove.

Perry is intensely modest, as he expresses gratitude to his upcoming album's two special guests. He emphasizes, "I want to give thanks to Keith Richards, and George Clinton. To them both. They did not want money from me or anything like that (for playing on the album). I want to give special thanks to Keith Richards and to George Clinton. It was a gift, a present to me, playing free, these songs for me, singing for me."

Perry says he wants to repay them for their generosity. "It will come back to them from me, Lee "Scratch" Perry, like a servant. They are like how people really should be. Great flavor with great savor. I have great love for them."

"I want to work with both of them in the future on their records," he adds. "They gave me their service free, and I'm going to give them my service in return to Keith and to George."

I asked Lee if he wants contribute to one of their songs or albums. "That is coming in the future," says Perry, who wants to offer some Upsetter stylings in return. "Sure. For Keith Richards to do what he wants with it, and I want for George Clinton to do what he wants to it. I will work with them as The Upsetter."

In closing or interview, Perry implores of me, "Remember to send a special thanks to George Clinton, personal thanks to Keith Richards, and I am hoping to do also a reggae funk album with George Clinton, and a reggae rock album with Keith Richards in return of the acceptance." He then laughs, as if seeing an angel nearby.

This is Jah love.

Track Listing:

- Revelation Revolution and Evolution
- Used To Drive A Tractor In Negrille
- Fire Power
- Holy Angels
- Scary Politicians
- Let There Be Light
- Books of Moses
- Money Come and Money Go
- Psalm

- Run For Cover
- Freaky Michael
- Weatherman
- An Eye For An Eye

Confirmed Tour Dates:

- 8/17 - New York NY: Highline Ballroom
- 8/18 - Boston MA: Harper's Ferry
- 8/19 - Philadelphia PA: World Café Live
- 8/20 - Stephentown NY: Bella Terra Festival
- 8/22 - Los Angeles CA: Sunset Junction Festival

(Photos ©Phyllis Pollack)

Watch Lee Perry talking about Dub:



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