

MUSIC **The Grandmaster Of Reggae: Lee 'Scratch' Perry**

by Jeff Nau



There's a credo a few of us could stand to live by — and the main philosophy of a man who's spent the majority of his life in the studio, either behind the production board or behind the microphone. He's been dubbed by many the "Grandmaster of Reggae," and while that may seem a dubious moniker for those of you who believe the genre lives and dies with The Wailers and Jimmy Cliff, it's hard to argue with tracks like "Dreadlocks in Moonlight" — songs that, while tongue-in-cheek, are overflowing with the man's pure and honest love for a genre he helped revolutionize.

And if you don't find your head bobbing in slow motion to at least some of [Lee 'Scratch' Perry's](#) stuff, you could at least agree that he managed to come up with the greatest name for a reggae song ever in "REJOICE IN SKANK" (The hell with cordial and customary greetings; that salutation's sticking around for a while). He flew under my radar for quite a while, and it's kind of bizarre that so many other hacks got more notoriety when he is listed by a certain well-established music site as # 10 among the most influential reggae artists of all time. I mean, you can only listen to Yellowman's "ZunggaZunngaZung" so many times before you want to eat a gun. If you check out [Red Bull Music Academy](#) right now, you can hear Scratch's live set in Jamaica, the birthplace of reggae music and where 74 year-old Perry's connection with the crowd stands out like few other live sets on the player. You get a taste of exactly how influential he was in developing and pioneering dub reggae, something that still reaches younger audiences and musicians around the world and even earned him a guest spot on The Beastie Boys' record *Hello Nasty*. Even more worth checking out is the documentary on Scratch (titled simple "Lee Scratch Perry"), which you can see on YouTube. It's a fascinating insight into Perry's recording process in the late 70s, which was a congregation of friends and instruments and good vibes and weed, held in makeshift home studios, and a far cry from the uber Pro-Tooled studio sessions of nowadays.

