Spatial, No Problem

Lee "Scratch" Perry & Mouse on Mars

Sat 6—Sat 13 Jun 2026, The Pit

Though known as a Grammy-winning innovator of ska, rock-steady, reggae and dub, Lee "Scratch" Perry's influence runs through punk, post-punk, hip hop, trip hop, house, techno, drum and bass, dubstep, ambient. His last decades featured him performing his surrealist chanting over reggae and dub tracks from a wide range of producers and groups. But that unmistakable voice could also be heard from an even wider range of productions impossible to categorize. These latter examples convey how far his influence had spread, but also how far his restless genius travelled.

And travel he did, being as hungry for new sounds as he was for new opportunities to collaborate with musicians inspired by his remarkable legacy. For his last official album project, those travels took him to Berlin, Germany. This city is home to all of those genres mentioned above, particularly those that take seriously the studio as an instrument. This concept is one of Perry's great contributions. "I see the studio must be like a living thing, a life itself," he once famously said. "The machine must be live and intelligent. Then I put my mind into the machine, and the machine performs reality."

It's hard to imagine musicians more in sync with this sensibility than Berlin's iconic duo, Mouse on Mars. It was their doorstep he landed on, 30 years into their groundbreaking career redefining electronic music. They had been chosen. Perry unpacked his travel case and began decorating the studio with objects, images, words, slogans, turning it into his personal African Diaspora. He began chanting, singing, murmuring in rhythm, communicating in sound given the differences in language. And the musicians followed him, recording all the time, migrating from room to room. This 80+ year old man was there from early in the morning performing, pushing them to keep up, always making space for each person and their individual sound.

He made clear that this would not be a reggae or dub album. He took to the group's blending of European motorik rhythms with free improvisation, digital glitches, dada poetry and the dubby "voodoo" that Perry insisted haunted the machines. It was the sound of his pan-African sonic history helping to create a culture that did not exist. At least not yet.

Not long after Lee "Scratch" Perry began reimagining the space of the studio with his knickknacks, talismans, objects, slogans and chants, he was asked about his familiarity with Spatial Audio and multi-channel sound diffusion. The album was conceived via this technology, which presents sound in revelatory ways. His response provides the title of this collision and collusion of sonic utopias, and the very method of its making.

"Spatial," he said, grinning, "No problem."

And then just like that, after four days of frenzied, non-stop recording, performing and experimenting across cultures, music, nations and histories, he was gone. Back to Switzerland where he lived and then to join our sonic ancestors. Mouse on Mars were left to tell the story of those four days. Spatial, No Problem is that story.

Programme note : Louis Chude-Sokei

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