

Competitive: Shaggy is looking forward to performing with Wyclef Jean at Raggamuffin



Tapping into island's soul

THIS will be the second year in a row dancehall superstar Shaggy will have performed at the Raggamuffin festival. The singer says he had such a good time last time he wanted to come back, albeit at a higher price.

"I think they called me back because I was so damned good the last year," he says. "So they said, 'can you come back again?' And I said, 'OK, it's going to cost you more; and they were like, 'OK, no problem.'"

He's looking forward to performing alongside old friend Wyclef Jean, whom he first performed with in the Caribbean many years ago.

Back then, Shaggy says Wyclef, riding a string of hits, beat him out at every show.

"He whooped my ass at every show in the Caribbean. But that was before I had (hits) *Angel* and *It Wasn't Me*."

A few years later, they performed together again and Mr Boombastic held his own. "No more was I getting any flogging from him."

The singer, who came to prominence with *Oh Carolina* says fans of both artists are in for a good time at Raggamuffin.

"I think it's going to be a competitive stage but a very, very good one and good fun because I'm very good friends with Wyclef. He's a very big philanthropist and I'm doing a lot of philanthropy work right now so we have a lot to talk about."

Shaggy has contributed much to the island he grew up on and during the past 10 years has worked closely with the island's only children's hospital, buying equipment such as ventilators, incubators and steriliser machines.

A touching moment came when he met a young girl with a bullet lodged in her head, hooked up to one of the machines he had bought. It spurred him on to fund more charities.

Each year at Christmas he sits at

home wrapping about 300 presents for the children and heads to the hospital to play Santa.

Santa Shaggy is an endearing image far from the *It Wasn't Me* prankster.

Shaggy now spends as much time as possible on his island home, which he first left at age 18. He still lives in Kingston, albeit in a far different area than where he grew up. Cricketer Courtney Walsh is his neighbour ("he's always stealing my mangoes") and he's great friends with boxer Lennox Lewis and sprinter Usain Bolt.

Shaggy says he was raised on the music of the street: reggae, ska, rocksteady, dancehall and country, which is apparently big in Jamaica.

He remembers well the street parties they would hold in the neighbourhood of his youth.

"They'll string these sound systems outside and play these huge street dances. Everyone would come and sing and dance."

It's incredible to think what a big influence this small island nation has had on the world's music, with the words of Bob Marley especially resonant to people far and wide.

Rap music too, Shaggy points out, evolved from the tradition of toasting (MC-ing) in dancehall music.

What's the secret? Could it be something in the water?

"There's a lot of soul here. The spirit of the people is very strong. They're very creative and passionate people about arts, about music, about culture. It's so close to the US, yet the US doesn't have that much of an influence on it as far as music is concerned."

Sally Browne

Shaggy performs at the Raggamuffin Festival, Riverstage, January 30.

music, Jean listened to Bob Marley, Jimmy Cliff and King Yellowman, among others.

On *From the Hut*, which he describes as carnival-style hip-hop, Clef worked with DJ Drama. The album features guest appearances from Cyndi Lauper, Lil' Kim and Eve.

The title comes "straight from my own background", Jean says.

"I'm from the village. I came from nothing. I used to take a donkey to school, you dig?"

"Growing up, I loved to just play

with whatever I could find. I could find bottles; I could find sticks. I went from there to starting to play the guitar. And from the guitar I went to piano, to bass, to keyboards to all the instruments."

Moving to New York was inevitably a culture shock.

"Man, when you come from that village with no electricity, no water and you see those New York lights, you're like, 'Wow, what is this?'" he says.

"It looks like the city of diamonds. And you get to a place

called 'the projects'. The projects were very, very rough."

Jean says his new album is self-titled because for the first time all seven opening tracks are him performing alone.

For now, though, Australian audiences can see the artist as himself when he performs here at the end of the month.

The Raggamuffin Festival will be held at Brisbane Riverstage, January 30. To donate to the Yele Haiti Earthquake Appeal, visit www.yele.org.

ROCK

Overt and Deliberate
Painters & Dockers
(Independent)

★★★★★

Look closely at the words on the cover of this album and they leap out at you – "overt... crude... vulgarity... appalling... repulsive... offensive". Some might say they're mere words, but align them with the legendary funsters they're directed at by a school principal – after the band infamously performed at Scotch College in Melbourne – and it helps you remember why we loved them so much. Painters and Dockers, ladies and gentlemen, an '80s band with a difference: not much polish but loads of passion. There were many line-ups but this one, which recorded in Auckland more than 20 years ago, was probably their best. The limited edition album is for real fans who want to relive classics such as *Mohawk Baby*, *Basia* and *Judas*.

Scott Podmore

R&B

Time Flies When You're Having Fun
Smokey Robinson
(Robso/Sony)

★★★★★

Smokey Robinson turns 70 in February, five years beyond qualifying for the age pension in Australia. For all those out there wanting to work on after turning 65, offer this as evidence in support of being able to make a meaningful contribution. For Robinson's voice is not diminished and nor is his power to communicate. And while the album features guest slots by Joss Stone, India.Arie and Carlos Santana, this is not a ploy to awaken a new audience to the great man, those guests fulfilling their roles as accompanists to Robinson without taking anything away from him. Affairs of the heart are still paramount, although less sexist these days.

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