

# Music Review: Wyclef Jean-J'ouvert EP



By Uther Blakwhel

*J'ouvert* is a French word for daybreak or morning, and it is also the signal for the beginning of Carnival. Wyclef Jean returns after seven years with his new EP titled after the beginning of Carnival. The *J'ouvert* EP is a prelude to the forthcoming full-length, *The Carnival III*.

On the first song called "The Ring," Wyclef reminds us that he's been gone but is back now to answer any questions about his absence. So much time has passed but The Fugees co-founder and leader re-asserts himself as a champion of Hip Hop when he says,

*"I left at the height of my career, man and I'm coming back. It's like I'm starting all over again. It don't matter what I did before, man. This the music business, man. You're only as hot as your last hit. Everybody like, 'Yo, can he get another ring?'"*

"The Ring" has hip-hop, Caribbean and pop-styled production with drums reminiscent of trap music. Wyclef goes for the jugular when reciting the alphabet. The song has a minimalist feel with lyrics that drive the song and the point home. You find yourself asking will he get another ring?

"I Swear (Featuring Young Thug)" has a warm and smooth tropical island feel. The song focuses on swearing your loyalty and love to the woman who always holds you down. Wyclef and Young Thug swear their loving allegiance to those

women who were there from the beginning which is a sentiment seldom heard in hip-hop.

"Rearview" continues the Island seduction with Wyclef yearning for his lady in the rearview to come on through for a romantic rendezvous. The music is a perfect blend of Calypso, Soca and hip-hop. "Rearview" compels you to dance when Wyclef cleverly references Superman with Sade within the song.

"Little Things (Featuring T-Baby and Allyson Casado)" starts off like a sad love ballad that begins with subtle piano in support of Wyclef's plea to have his relationship return to its former bliss.

"Little Things" picks up tempo and turns into a steady and smooth Dancehall production that will almost make you forget the song is actually a new take on The Stylistics's "Break Up to Make Up."

Wyclef's most traditional song is "Lady Haiti," a compelling and sincere tribute to his native country. The song feels as if only the essential pieces were used in its traditional Haitian style production. Wyclef sings about his love for his homeland and the Haitian flag he wore at the Grammys. He also references leaving his music to run for Haiti's president and the 2010 earthquake. The song plays like a tribute to his first love and how others tried to keep him from Haiti.

"Jouvert" takes on a more serious tone towards the end of the CD starting with "Hendrix." The church organ starts the song with a deep pounding bass line and trap like drums. and Wyclef's narration creates a hip-hop eulogy of sorts. He talks about when he was younger and how he loved playing his guitar. He also raps about how he wanted to be just like Jimi Hendrix but his cousin wanted to be like Pablo Escobar and El Chapo. From selling crack to being in a gang most of his homies went to jail.

*"The Devil pulled a card and he said choose one. I chose*

*music, my homies chose yay. Some of my ballers chose the NBA. Cuzzoâ€™s on the block, man they gang bang. Funeral parlors makinâ€™ all the changeâ€*

The song is a great reminder of how one decision can change everything for the better or for the worse in anyoneâ€™s life.

The regular version of the EP ends with the 2016 version of “If I Was President.” He then references presidential promises from Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump. Wyclef poignantly sings about the state of America which includes police brutality, black lives matter and school shootings within the country. “Bittersweet” sums up Wyclefâ€™s pondering of what his presidency would be like. He further states in the song that even though all of these troubling things are happening within the United States of America, anyone can be president.

The deluxe version of *Jâ€™ouvert* includes the four bonus tracks “Kiss The Sky (Acoustic)”, “I Swear (Acoustic)”, “Hendrix” (Acoustic)” and “Ne Me Quitte Pas (Do Not Leave Me).” The acoustic songs sound just as good as the studio versions if not better due to Wyclefâ€™s lyrics becoming more vivid because of the stripped down acoustic guitar driven production. The last bonus track is “Ne Me Quitte Pas (Do Not Leave Me).” Wyclef sings in French pleading with his lover to forgive him and not leave. The song has a French gypsy-like production with hip-hop drums that let you know that this is old and new and different.

Sad, serious, fun and encouraging sums up Wyclefâ€™s *Jâ€™ouvert*. The EP and Deluxe versions will leave you thinking that Wyclef just might get another championship ring in hip-hop and that a Wyclef Jean presidency might not be so bad after all.