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# NĒO

NEW ALBUM IN STORES  
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## ROAD TO NEO

Berlin. February. It's raining. And it is unseasonably warm. I ring the bell. "Dellé" is on the doorbell...

Two large brown eyes are staring at me. "Daddy's not home." They are curious eyes. And pretty. Noa. Behind her are another set of pretty eyes. His wife. "He is..." She thinks about it laughing ... "still picking something up at the hardware store."  
Hmm.

We're hanging out in Dellé's own studio, in his own home, when we get to talking. And talking. It's been seven years since "Before I grow old". But much more, seven years since he fulfilled one of his personal wishes by kicking off his solo career with his solo album. A roots album. A personal tribute to reggae. It was great coming in at No. 11 on the charts. Great, sure, but not all that important. The gigs with the band in intimate clubs were what really stood out. **"It was exhilarating and fun. Especially because with Seede we were performing in front of crowds of 20,000 people and the intimate club tour had a way of putting a lot of things back into perspective for me."**

It was around that time when he met Guido Craveiro. What had originally been a technical production emergency became a friendship and **"...my better [musician] half. The same language. The same vibes. A blind understanding."** It comes as no surprise that Dellé and the Cologne-based musician and producer have once again paired up for NEO. Nevertheless, many things are different! We sit there listening to the tracks while going over the last few years. **"When you're in the middle of it you don't even notice"**. That is, how the time races by between solo album, Seede album, freezing construction on the house because the company went bust, South America tour, becoming a father again, transatlantic telephone calls, wondering where the family might be living next, more gigs, this time in Europe, house construction rescued, even more gigs, the move and finally the last Seede performance before the break. And now what to make of all of these impressions? For one, he describes himself as being very "German" when it comes to managing everything. One by one. Exact and meticulous to a tee. Checking things off a list keeps one grounded. So what's to make of the culmination of impressions and thoughts packed into the last seven years of life?

Dellé, a man who observes, reflects, and is humbly grateful for everything: **"Sometimes I don't believe it. Everything!"** and points to his studio. "And now I've even managed to create something productive. It was such a strange feeling. True to the motto, now you've built everything (including the raised flower beds on the terrace), **now it's time for something meaningful to happen."** A pause. Then he looks at me and says, **"You know, seven years later, seven years older. Wiser. I think it's cool. Not only do I feel different but I also approach certain things differently. And I hope people are able to hear that."**

NEO is a testament to all of this. Rough edges and all. **"So many things happened that I had to come to terms with. Shortly before the birth of our son Neo, I was swept away by the fear that he possibly wouldn't be healthy. It totally consumed me. "Trisomy 21" doesn't necessarily have the kind of lyrics you would usually associate with a guy like me or my music. And, since I don't write poems or keep a diary, this song arose out of the need to get this stuff out."** Dellé reflects for a moment, **"Wait! Actually this album is sort of like a diary. A diary of the last few years of my life."** I listen fascinated, Dellé is warmed up and has totally found his flow. I, on the other hand, am cursing in my head for forgetting a recorder. It was supposed to be a preliminary interview.

**"For me personally, NEO stands for my further development as a musician and my concept of reggae in 2016 – This is how a cool album I'd listen to today should sound like. Just as the formation and experiences of a boy with Ghanaian-Selesian roots can still be found. The proud father of two kids who is well aware of the everyday accompanying responsibilities."** Pressure! Healthy fears. Normal. Human. It all makes him even more likable. Especially when you know that Dellé is the kind of guy who always sees the glass half full and both appreciates and loves life. NEO is brave, phat and demands more than its precursor. But it's also rewarding. Songs like "Marry

me" or "Sleepy Hallow" have what it takes to turn a fleeting moment on a summer's night into something memorable. Zest for life. Where there is light, there is also darkness.

"Take your medicine" deals with the descent of a close friend into the bottomless depths of mental illness. Living in the midst of life, graduation within hand's reach and then suddenly everything is lost. Sedated and subdued. "TicToc" is the bittersweet truth packed into catchy Dancehall sounds. And as much as we appreciate life, it is eternal. Take it with a smile.

**"Tell me who u are" is also like that. "Adopt an opinion or form your own opinion. People see my dreadlocks first, then me, then me on stage. Sorry people, but I don't smoke spliffs. Word! Hearsay isn't an option and doesn't help you get the picture. That's the difference between knowledge and faith. Faith is easier. Knowledge has to be acquired. Including the possibility of failing."**

NEO is a personal album. Dellé has a way of producing exciting tracks while emitting an aura of tranquility. It is rare for such a personal struggle with terror and false beliefs to come along in such an intimate and gentle way.

Silent protest! If there is one song that has the power to carry and transport nonviolence, it is "Light your Fire".

The day starts to come to a close. We've spent almost six hours submerged in Dellé's diary. Filled with/full of contemplation, experiences, and self-reflection. "Please Apologize" could have been the brilliant result of a kitchen jam session at a house party. The slightly foggy conversations about society and the ever universal theme of sustainability, including sorting the trash. We should be doing more. Living healthier. Producing less emissions and finally getting off our asses! The result is a song in which the artist strips himself bare. With it comes the realization that every individual has to battle his/her own personal limitations.

We get to talking about music. Which is somehow strange when you're supposed to be talking about your own music. Naturally, there's quite a bit to be said. Influences. **"Of course, I go through life with eyes wide open."** Hear this, check that. You think something is cool, some other things aren't. **"Figuring out how to incorporate these things into NEO rocked."** So how was the production? **"Great."** He laughs because he knows that I have to grill him for more. My eyes express a mix between laughing and begging. **"Well, with the last album Guido and I each worked on the tracks out of our own studios and then sent each other updates per mail and data transfer. Our usual electronic pen-pal relationship. Only, our language is music. Later, we got together for two weeks in Cologne to do all of the fine tuning."** Whether writing lyrics comes easily to him, especially since they are so personally motivated? **"It's very easy to write shitty lyrics. Good lyrics take time. And personally, it's very hard work. And a long battle, ultimately you have to let go."**

11 songs - one album. NEO! Those who have a keen ear will recognize two of Dellé's soulmates in "How do you do". "Teach me" is a sensation! Never mind journalistic due diligence. The song is the shit. And exactly how every album should kick-off. Now, it's up to you to check out the rest. Simply listen. And decide for yourself. Oh yeah, and "Why did you lie" is the real deal and demonstrates particularly well why this album lives up to its name NEO.

NEO is the personal statement of an artist living in the midst of life, welcoming all of its many facets with arms wide open. In doing so, capturing a snapshot of our age and society. The music originally dating back to Jamaica is more proof than an assumption and shows in a modest yet consequential way just how far we have already come on the road to NEO. And just how far we still have to go. It's great and yet at the same time fun. And if it really is a diary, Dellé shouldn't complain this summer when a bunch of people start rummaging through his drawer, diving head-first into his diary.