



VARIOUS ARTISTS

*Conjure: Music For The Texts
Of Ishmael Reed*
(American Clavé Records)

Jazz is not a producer's idiom: the few exceptions bring their own compositions or concept to a session of personally selected players. Kip Hanrahan is such a producer, and although you have to look hard to find his name on *Conjure*, it is very much his album.

Hanrahan's previous *Coup De Tete* and *Desire Develops An Edge* LPs brought together a wide range of players from Jack Bruce to Chico Freeman to Daniel Ponce, and managed to incorporate jazz, Latin and experimental styles into a seamless amalgam. On *Conjure: Music For The Texts Of Ishmael Reed*, Hanrahan has again handed over most of the compositional reins to players like Taj Mahal, Allen Toussaint, David Murray, Billy Hart and Steve Swallow. (Also contributing tracks are Lester Bowie, Carmen Moore and Carla Bley; additional performers include Jamaaladeen Tacuma, Jean-Paul Bourelly, Elysee Pyronneau, Milton Cardona, Andy Gonzalez and Arto Lindsay.) As with Hanrahan's previous albums, the diverse selection guarantees both a high caliber of musicianship and a group sound like no other.

The selection of Mahal as vocalist/guitarist sets the tone for the album, and the choice is perfect. His rich, muddy voice suits the black Southern inflection of Reed's words so well that on the two tracks where the author recites his own work, he sounds comparatively stiff. Similarly, the choice of New Orleans' Toussaint as session pianist imbues the music with the decidedly Southern roll of Crescent City funk. Equally natural is Lester Bowie's "Fool-ology (The Song)," as the trumpeter revels in his role of buffoon. David Murray's solos are among his best, alternating between sinewy twists and breathy romanticism. Olu Dara, usually confined to cornet, plays trumpet brilliantly; his lyrical solo on "Oakland Blues" shows how well he's absorbed Louis rather than simply learned him. Together these musicians have helped Hanrahan "conjure" an exceptionally rich album, one whose textures are as lush, brown and warm as its ghostly lyric images of rural life. — **Fred Goodman**

MUSICIAN

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