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The Songs Of Albert Ayler
Healing Force | [Cuneiform Records](#) (2007)

By [Mark Corroto](#)

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The candle that burns the brightest does burn for the shortest time.



Saxophonist Albert Ayler only recorded music from 1962 until his death (was it suicide?) in 1970. Self described as the Holy Ghost to John Coltrane the Father and Pharoah Sanders the Son, he was a prophet of free jazz of the 1960s. But, of course he was more than that. His music moved in multiple directions at once. It could be New Orleans Brass and bugle calls, marches, Gospel, and purely frenetic free music. On his last three recordings *Love Cry* (Impulse!, 1967), *New Grass* (Impulse!, 1968), and *Music Is The Healing Force Of The Universe* (Impulse!, 1969) he ventured into R&B and psychedelia. Cries of sellout distanced him from his most ardent supporters and the youth crowd he might have hoped for never signed on.

Then in 1970 he was gone and Ken Burns and Wynton Marsalis wrote him out of the history of jazz.

Guitarist Henry Kaiser resurrects Albert and not his signature music, *Witches and Devils* (1201, 1964), *Bells* (Calibre, 1965), and *Spirits Rejoice* (ESP Disk, 1965), but his least understood. He takes on those last three albums with all the naivety and spirituality/psychedelia they delivered.

Kaiser, a first class free improviser, has of late been a force behind the Yo Miles! project with trumpeter Wadada Leo Smith, playing the equally misunderstood 1970s electric Miles Davis music.

The guitarist assembled a band to cover these controversial tunes, including vocalist Aurora Josephson to sing the lyrics of Mary Parks aka Mary Maria. The beauty of this music is not a Lincoln City Jazz note-for-note replay of what once was, but tribute to the feel of the times with it's Black nationalism, urban unrest, war protests, and turmoil. Seems that everything old is new again.

Saxophonist Vinny Golia was a perfect choice to play the Ayler parts as he unleashes a powerful growl from note one. The title track is a testament to late Coltrane and the spirituality of the creators. These were not wrathful men, these were the blessed peace makers sent to deliver a message ignored for the last fifty years.

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Like the original albums, the music is slightly off-balance. All hippie-fed by outward streaming horns and guitar makes one either take note or turn off. Kaiser and his crew make a solid argument that even Ayler's late music bears some critical attention. Maybe even adoration.

Track listing: New New Grass/Message from Albert; Music Is The Healing Force Of The Universe; Japan/Universal Indians; A Man Is Like A Tree; Oh! Love Of Life; Thank God For Women; Heart Love; New Generations; New Ghosts/New Message.

Personnel: Vinny Golia: reeds; Aurora Josephson: voice; Henry Kaiser: guitar; Mike Keneally: piano, guitar, voice; Joe Morris: guitar, double-bass; Damon Smith: double-bass; Weasel Walter: drums.

Published: October 20, 2007

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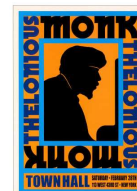
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