

# Gaz-Eta

GAZ-ETA &gt; NR 34 - SIERPIE• 2005 &gt; STRONA G•ÓWNA | KONTAKT



**SUN RA & HIS ARKESTRA - "The Cry of Jazz", DVD**  
Directed by Edward O. Bland

**SUN RA & HIS SOLAR ARKESTRA - "The Magic Sun", DVD**  
Directed by Phill Niblock  
[Atavistic, [www.atavistic.com](http://www.atavistic.com)]

Documentation of late great Sun Ra's performances are so rare, it is with great joy that we finally see the re-issue of these two important films in glorious, re-mastered DVD format. Both of these films were shot between late 50's to mid 60's and each presents Sun Ra Arkestra in a completely different state on their musical journey.

"The Cry of Jazz" was completed in 1959 and is more or less a half-an-hour serious study of the racial origins and social meaning of jazz at that point and time. The first scene features students [or young academics, if you will] smoking way too much and arguing the finer points on the origins of jazz. "Does jazz really belong to the Negroes or does it belong to the whites? Does suffering in life have a meaning that propels the music being made? Do social and economic factors have a tendency to add or take away from jazz music being produced? Are whites simply followers of Negroes in jazz music? Do whites have 'soul'? With slavery, did whites steal the past from Negroes? Do jazz musicians now have a mandate to bring the past back? Is jazz simply a recounting of the past and a hope for the future?" These and dozen other questions are academically put forward and argued throughout the film. The film itself was put together with financial backing of the filmmakers. In fact, 65 people worked on this film for free! I love the intensity in which these theories are put forward. The role of blacks as entertainers is clearly explored and you know just how radical all of this stuff must have been back in the late 50's. This is very dangerous stuff indeed. The fashion in which academic discussion is interspersed with stark images of the black ghettos - where starvation and poverty are order of the day - is absolutely stunning and very precarious. What is enlightening and crucial about this film [on top of academic discussion] is the fact that some vital performance footage of the Arkestra is included. Sometimes the Arkestra is seen as simple shadows, while at other times, sharp close-ups of band members are visible. Sun Ra is clearly mentioned as the future of jazz - fusing past and present to create something bigger and better. The few minutes of Sun Ra Arkestra's performance [recorded in Chicago. Some say this was Sun Ra's mainstream period, while the truth is at this point - during the late 50's- he was already fully versed in the music and was miles ahead of anyone else on the modern music scene.] are worth the price of admission alone. Even if you ignore the documentary nature of the film, "The Cry of Jazz" emphasizes the importance of freedom in jazz and herald Sun Ra as the savior of the music for the future. As the voiceover explains, "The spirit of jazz is alive because the Negro spirit must endure!"

For a change of pace, we have "The Magic Sun" - a 1966 black and white film shot by experimental photographer / filmmaker / composer Phill Niblock. Experimental is the key word that propels the whole project. The 17 minute feature is shot in reverse or x-ray vision if you will. Faces of Arkestra members are white, while instruments look strangely all black. Glimmers of faces, flickers of percussion, a dab of Sun Ra's space costume - all of these ingredients pop in and out of our direct line of vision. Silhouettes of musicians are enough to get the idea what the Arkestra looked like during the mid 60's. The soundtrack is made up of four tracks from Sun Ra's NYC period. Intense, reverberating percussion, space flutes and reeds from out-of-this world and that piano that races faster than the speed of light. What makes this film difficult to watch at times are the fast-paced close-ups of motion on individual instruments. My eyes had difficulty at times following what was happening until I realized it's the soundtrack that is equally important to the images themselves. [It looks like this film is much better preserved than "The Cry of Jazz" which has unfortunately seen the direct effects of aging. After all, four decades of dirt and dust do cause heavy damage to celluloid, especially if it's not cared for.] Honestly, the 17

## RECENZJE

- + Tripleplay - Gambit
- + Trzaska/ Wirkus - Noc/ Nacht
- + Chie Mukai/Rinji Fukuoka - L'Energie de l'Existence
- + Bernard Parmegiani - JazzEx
- + Makoto Kawabata - O Si Amos A Sighire A Essere Duas Umbras?
- + Acid Mothers Temple - Demons from Nipples
- + Andrzej Mierzy•ski (Andyman) - In the Garden of the Rainy King
- + Blare for A - I'm Your Dildo; 498 Days With The Mosquito
- + Kriwi - Past and Present
- + Nokturnal Mortum - Mirowozzrienije
- + Astrofaes - ...Those Whose Past is Immortal
- + Slavland - Pie•• Gromu
- + Henry Threadgill's Zooid - Up Popped the Two Lips
- + Jaga Jazzist - What We Must
- + Zen Paradox - Numinosum
- + Cristian Vogel - Station 55
- + Tiefschwarz - Eat Books
- + Telepopmusik - Angel Milk
- + The American Analog Set - Set Free
- + Royksopp - The Understanding
- + Timo Maas - Pictures
- + Hakan Lidbo - Sound Molecules
- + Hakan Lidbo - From Stockholm With Love
- + Kalk Seeds
- + Matthew Herbert - Plat Du Jour
- + Hauschka - The Prepared Piano
- + Peter Grummich - Switch Off The Soap Opera
- + Famous When Dead IV
- + Benjamin Brunn - Music Under Pin

## >> SUN RA & HIS ARKESTRA - The Cry of Jazz; SUN RA & HIS SOLAR ARKESTRA - The Magic Sun

- + FIFTHS OF SEVEN - Spry From Bitter Anise Folds
- + OE GIARDULLO 4TET - Now Is; JOE GIARDULLO - Weather - Live at Klub RE Krakow
- + MALCOLM GOLDSTEIN - Hardscrabble Songs
- + OCTET de JEAN-PIERRE JULLIAN - Opus Incertum on C.
- + V/A - Italian Café; V/A - Swing Around the World
- + FRANK WRIGHT - The Complete ESP-Disk Recordings
- + DINO SALUZZI / JON CHRISTENSEN - Senderos; CHRISTIAN WALLUMROD ENSEMBLE - A Year From Easter
- + EMILIANA TORRINI - Fisherman's Woman; THE BLUE NILE - High

minute film flies by in what seems like a minute or two. As an added bonus, we get an audio feature, with Sun Ra waxing about his theory of Egypt, history, Russia, Canada, Chicago, NYC and his favourite subject of course - space. Wickedly innovative and strangely alluring, "The Magic Sun" is a definite must-have for any serious lover of this icon's work.

- Tom Sekowski

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+ THE MOTHERS - Township Sessions; BUKKY LEO & BLACK EGYPT - Afrobeat Visions  
+ PETE ASTOR - Hal's Eggs  
+ KILL MEMORY CRASH - Crash V8; LUSINE - Inside/Out  
+ FENNESZ / SAKAMOTO - Sala Santa Cecilia  
+ A TASTE OF RA - A Taste of Ra  
+ ATELEIA - Swimming Against The Moments  
+ LUIGI ARCHETTI / BO WIGET - Low Tide Digitals II  
+ AXON - Constant Comments  
+ NODS OFF - In the Space Between; TSE - The Sound Ensemble - Inversions  
+ MOLY - Your Life is in Danger; ...BENDER - ... Bender; BREATHLESS - Behind The Light