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Magic Sun  
[Sun Ra](#)



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Review

by Lindsay Planer

The *Magic Sun* (1966) is a short experimental piece from New York-based multi-media artist [Phill Niblock](#) with the music and imagery of Sun Ra and His Solar Arkestra circa 1966 when the band was residing in the Big Apple. [Niblock](#)'s trademark minimalism fuses with the avant-garde free jazz of Ra and company, yielding a rush of sonic and visual expressionism. The black-and-white film displays a varied assortment of close shots of the musicians fingers, hand movements and facial characteristics in such a way as to present distorted and practically unrecognizable figures to correlate with the Arkestra's edgy and equally disorienting sounds. [Niblock](#)'s abstract use of the optical negative projects darker objects as light and vice versa, adding another tier of splashes and rapidly juxtaposed countenances. Ra and the Arkestra's improvisations run the full length of the 17 minute short feature and are presented in 2.0 stereo (although the music is undoubtedly in monaural) and a 5.1 Surround Sound mix.

## Album

Magic Sun

Rating

★★★★☆

Release Date

Feb 15, 2005

Label

Music Video Distributors

Type

Video

Genre

Styles

- [Jazz](#)
- [Avant-Garde](#)
- [Progressive Big Band](#)
- [Avant-Garde Jazz](#)
- [Experimental Big Band](#)

## Moods

- [Amiable/ Good-Natured](#)
- [Fiery](#)
- [Eccentric](#)
- [Spacey](#)
- [Freewheeling](#)
- [Spiritual](#)
- [Intense](#)
- [Quirky](#)
- [Complex](#)
- [Carefree](#)
- [Elegant](#)
- [Sophisticated](#)
- [Stylish](#)
- [Exuberant](#)
- [Earthy](#)
- [Trippy](#)
- [Joyous](#)
- [Rousing](#)
- [Calm/Peaceful](#)

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As there is no specific mention of the work, it is presumed to be an original group arrangement and recalls sounds the Arkestra created during the [Heliocentric Worlds of Sun Ra](#) (1965) era. The DVD also includes four short recitations by Ra. "Statement" is an accurate title as the artist gives an exceptional elucidation of what he and his band are attempting to accomplish. He also unravels the astrological aspects and translations behind the name Sun Ra — interpreted as "To Live In The Sun Spirit" and "Pharaoh". "Eternity Ltd." features a reading by [Mahmoud Mobarek](#) with Ra (electric piano) as well as [Akh Tal Ebah](#) (trumpet) and is along the lines of what [Kenneth Rexroth](#) and [Lawrence Ferlinghetti](#) had done on [Poetry Readings in the Cellar](#) (1958). Both "My Children" and "Truth Is Bad" are much more typical of Ra's admonitory monologues and the intimate and raw quality — even for Sun Ra standards — may indicate that these were demos or personal home recordings. Here, Ra is accompanied by an electric piano and his words are more or less theoretical musings than straight-forward or conventional prose. As the lectures are audio-only, they are complemented with a gallery of photos of Sun Ra during a period that he was rarely captured on film.



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