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Archie Shepp Band

This entry was posted on 12/3/2006 6:31 AM and is filed under DVD Reviews.





It's a sad reality that musicianship is, increasingly, infrequently recognized in today's landscape. We certainly see this on American Idol, where — even separated from the deluded losers who are merely making their play for fame, regardless of actual singing talent, would-be crooners

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have little understanding or appreciation of musicians, the session folk that play those little things called instruments.

Archie Shepp, then, is sadly bound to be forgotten — or, more to the point, never really known, and fully appreciated. That doesn't change the fact that he's one of the last living giants of the 20th century jazz scene, a New York City native and saxophonist who parlayed his talent for avantgarde free association into memorable collaborations with John Coltrane, Cecil Taylor and many more. Both as an instrumentalist and a singer, he is one of the most irresistable interpreters of the genre.

Archie Shepp Band: The Paris Concert provides an hour-and-a-half August, 1994 performance from the New Morning Club in France, and features Shepp alongside skilled ivory tickler Horace Parlan, plus Wayne Dockery and Steve McCraven. Covered nicely are "Revolution," "Things Ain't What They Used to Be," "Ask Me Now," "Arrival," "The Reverse," "Steam," "Up Phat" and "Sophisticated Lady." The highlight of the set is probably "Steam," with its dizzying conflagration of high-end, helter-skelter notes. DVD bonus features include a nice little interview segment and a 21-minute bonus track — "Sweet Bird of Youth," recorded in 2001 in a collaboration between Shepp's band and a Moroccan quartet known as Les Gnawas de Tanger. This cross-cultural mash-up, a free-jazz fan's dream, is almost worth the purchase price alone. For more information on Shepp, visit his eponymous web site. B- (Concert) B+ (Disc)



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