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Sun Ra Arkestra - Points On A Space Age

Still travelling the spaceways...

When Sun Ra went back to Saturn in 1993, we all assumed that the Arkestra would pack up its tent and go into well-deserved retirement. Wrong. Despite being the far side of 86, saxophonist Marshall Allen is still taking the band through its paces.

This documentary may only be an hour long but it manages to capture the continued philosophy of Ra, as well as the spirit of his music. Director Ephraim Asili takes an experimental approach that suits the material, with text flashing on screen to accompany Ra aphorisms, while there are split-screen segments that juxtapose shots of the band playing with footage of flying spaceships. Of course there are snips of Ra prowling around in

archive footage, as well as some of his interstellar classics. Best of all, however, the musicians wax philosophical and play their slippers off – especially on footage filmed in a cathedral. Like the Basie and Ellington ensembles, when the leader departed, the strength of the music was more than enough to keep the band standing and touring. The Arkestra are also recruiting new members, which suggests that they're going to be around for some time to come. Essential for Sun Ra fans everywhere.



MVD / Visual MVDV 4774

Reviewed by Ian Shirley

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