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The Sun Ra Arkestra— *Points on a Space Age* DVD

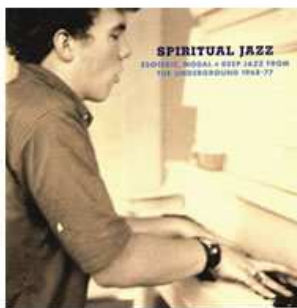
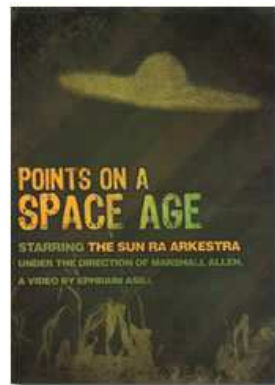
(MVD Visual)

Various Artists— *Spiritual Jazz*

(Jazzman/Now Again Records)

Eberhard Weber— *Colours*

When the great Sun Ra split this galaxy for the next in 1993, tenor saxophonist John Gilmore assumed leadership of his legendary Arkestra; after Gilmore died two years later Ra's baton was passed to altoist Marshall Allen, a crucial member of the band since the late '50s. Since he took over, Allen—who turns 87 in May—has continued to lead the Arkestra on its tours and recordings, along the way recruiting new players and indoctrinating them into the ways of this boldly experimental big band's founder. Centering on this more recent era of the Arkestra, director Ephraim Asili's beautifully shot *Points on a Space Age* features superb concert and rehearsal scenes interspersed with stock NASA footage befitting the ensemble's space-travel aesthetic, and brief interviews with band members. If you've seen the earlier *Space is the Place* or *A Joyful Noise*, both of which feature Ra himself, this intriguing documentary is the logical next step.



Sun Ra's art and that of another visionary, John Coltrane, directly influenced a whole school of music: the intensely meditative underground late-'60s/early '70s scene retroactively dubbed "spiritual jazz" by studious collectors. Another fine anthology on the Jazzman/Now Again logo (see past installments of Roll Back for reviews of the label's Florida and Carolina funk comps), *Spiritual Jazz* explores this avant-garde subgenre, a style strongly informed by the progressive polemics and psychedelic consciousness of the day. Curiously, coming from what was mainly a D.I.Y. movement,

some of these meandering, mystical tracks—the Lightmen Plus One's roiling "All Praises to Allah"; the Morris Wilson Beau Bailey Quintet's "Paul's Ark"—were originally released on seven-inch singles, not a format one readily associates with modern jazz. Fittingly, one of the standouts here is by bassist Ronnie Boykins, who served with the Arkestra early on: the 13-minute "The Will Come, Is Now," which dates from 1974 and weaves a questing web of harrowing horns and hypnotizing percussion. Don those beads and kaftan, fire up that incense, and take a trip...

Germany's Eberhard Weber is perhaps the archetypal ECM Records artist. Playing a kind of coldly Teutonic, essentially blues-devoid chamber jazz, the bassist clearly owes much of his inspiration to European classical styles and contemporary composers. *Colours*—named for the quartet Weber led from 1974 to 1981—is a box set that brings together three of his long out-of-print albums for the label: 1975's *Yellow Fields*, 1977's *Silent Feet*, and 1980's *Little Movements*. Along with his own loping, edgeless, and effects-treated instrument, Weber's monochromatic, diachronically

