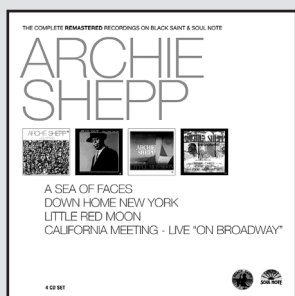


BOXED SET



**The Complete Remastered Recordings
on Black Saint & Soul Note
Archie Shepp (CAM Jazz)
by Anders Griffen**

The latest among the CAM Jazz boxed set series *The Complete Remastered Recordings on Black Saint & Soul Note*, this Archie Shepp set consists of, chronologically, *A Sea of Faces*, *Down Home New York*, *Live On Broadway-California Meeting* and *Little Red Moon*, each packaged in a slipcase with the original album artwork. *A Sea of Faces* was recorded in August of 1975 while the other three dates were recorded between February 1984-December 1985. Shepp was already well established, having made classic recordings with John Coltrane, Cecil Taylor, Gil Evans, Bill Dixon and Don Cherry, among many others. As a leader, he had already produced over 30 albums, including about a dozen albums for Impulse! between 1964-69 and 1971-72, which many consider his best work. His singular personality imbues all of his recordings and he has just received the nation's highest jazz honor, being named a National

Endowment for the Arts Jazz Master.

A Sea Of Faces opens with the infectious "Hipnosis", written by trombonist Grachan Moncur III. It's a one-bar bassline, accenting a tritone, Cameron Brown repeats for much of the cut's 26 minutes. Dave Burrell's piano and Shepp's tenor introduce counterpoint melodies before extended improvisations. Rafi Taha reads Shepp's title poem while Bunny Foy sings Semanya McCord's "Song For Mozambique". Foy also has a beautiful feature on "I Know 'bout The Life" (though she sings "About"), consisting of words by playwright Aisha Rahman set to music by Shepp, somewhat reminiscent of his "Steam" (Shepp's theater and poetry background are central to his art). The album closes with a swinging instrumental reading of Cal Massey's "Lookin' for Someone To Love".

Shepp's quintet of trumpeter Charles McGhee, pianist Kenny Werner, bassist Saheb Sarbib and drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith grooves a funky two-bar vamp on the title track of *Down Home New York*, playing for three minutes before Shepp introduces Bazzi Bartholomew Gray and his vocal variations on a theme of fascination with New York City—"The city is where I had to be / just to be here among the crowd / folks coming from miles and miles around / I can't think of any place I'd rather be." The band adds their collective shout before the scene fades out at 11 minutes. Sarbib's evocative "May 16th" is a medium-bright waltz, which feels like a reflective ballad, while Shepp's African-influenced "The 4th World" is a joyful stroll in 4/4 with an accent on beat 4 followed by a tacet 1. Monk's "Round About Midnight" and Coltrane's "Straight Street" round out this great set.

Live On Broadway-California Meeting was recorded in Sacramento, CA at The On Broadway Bar & Café. The room comes alive with the vocal entrance of Royal Blue on the set-opening "St. James Infirmary" and the band swings hard on "A Night In Tunisia", perhaps the strongest number in the set; it's just the trio of George Cables (piano), Herbie Lewis (bass) and Eddie Marshall (drums) until they hit the tag just before the five-minute mark and Shepp enters with his soprano (which sounds a bit strident through the live mics, the tone better when he's slightly off mic). Marshall's fantastic drum solo sparks loud applause and Cables is burning on the fleet "Giant Steps". They modulate the tempo for the last chorus and loosen into an extended ending like a group cadenza and the crowd goes bananas. The set closes with a gorgeous "My Romance".

Little Red Moon plays like a jam session where the band is swinging but not always gelling, lacking the focus and ambition of the previous studio dates. After the meandering blues of the title cut and "Impromptu", Coltrane's beautiful "Naima" is probably the best track, performed as an uptempo waltz led by Wilbur Little's bass groove. Benny Golson's "Whisper Not" is given a unique rendering with a great outro. Trumpeter Enrico Rava and frenetic pianist Siegfried Kessler display some rapport on the set-closing "Sweet Georgia Brown".

This boxed set is just a small snap shot of Shepp's prolific output. The first two records here are absolutely great and *California Meeting* is a fine live set. *Little Red Moon*, however, is probably reserved for collectors and the die-hard Archie Shepp fan.

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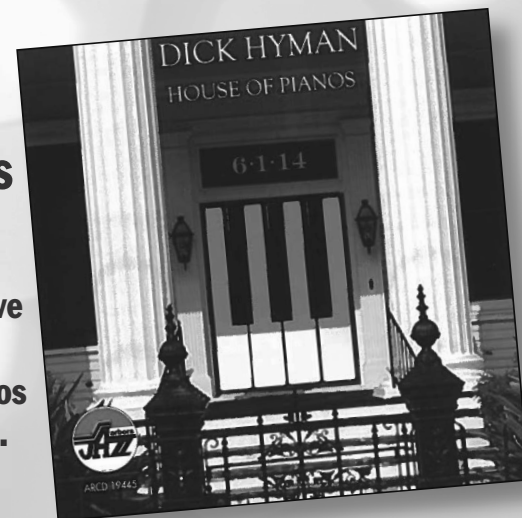


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