

Third World Music

Herb Boyd

1970

The Third World—Gato Barbieri (Flying Dutchman); Power To The People—Joe Henderson (Milestone); Liberation Music Orchestra—Charlie Haden (Impulse); The Prisoner—Herbie Hancock (Blue Note); The Giant Is Awakened—Horace Tapscott (Flying Dutchman); A Night At Santa Rita—Rosko (Flying Dutchman); Massacre At My Lai—Rosko (Flying Dutchman); Spirits Known And Unknown—Leon Thomas (Flying Dutchman).

“It was through Jazz that I first learned to express myself, but now I know I can be even stronger in that expression if I keep learning more about my own musical background, my background in the Third World.”

—Gato Barbieri

The above quote from an astounding young jazz musician from Argentina, flavored as it is with intimations of a politico-cultural synthesis, is symbolic of his quest as well as being somewhat representative of a bright new direction in sound on the musical horizon.

With the arrival of such albums as: Joe Henderson’s “Power to the People,” Charlie Haden’s “Liberation Music Orchestra,” Herbie Hancock’s “The Prisoner,” Gato Barbieri’s “The Third World,” Horace Tapscott’s “The Giant Is Awakened,” the Bob Thiele produced “A Night At Santa Rita” and “Massacre At My Lai,” one is forced, according to the good old UHMaryCan creed/greed, to view these ventures first in the ugly light of pretension and/or commercialism. (“Why, all this talk about Revolution and change ain’t nothin’ but another co-opting, coffer-fattening, Madison Ave. concept. Just another brand of the same old bullshit.”)

Knowing both the nature of culture and politics in this society, such an assessment is not a difficult one to make—but there’s something about the character and integrity of the men above that won’t allow an easy dismissal of their efforts—as artist/indicators they seem to cry, “We, too are concerned with solutions. We too know of the present oppression, the coming fascism.”

There’s little reason to expect that all involved in this musical trend (not connoting fad) are equally sincere, but that we can, at this juncture, even raise such an issue is a vast improvement over the general uneventfulness of the past few years. This void is not to include the rising spirituality of jazz, that ever-present tendency toward “Love and Peace,” exemplified by the flights of a Coltrane or a Pharoah Sanders, but more to suggest the absence of strong commentary in the tradition of a Billie Holiday or a Charlie Mingus.

This new batch of sound, with such recording companies as Impulse and Flying Dutchman leading the way, seem to require fresh definitions, more imaginative categories. Where one album is significantly cross-cultural (hear Haden or Barbieri), another is mixed-media (hear My Lai and Santa Rita). Even the temporal-spatial boundaries are transcended (hear Thomas). Though the idiom of jazz undergirds all this music it is no more than the root as it stands in relation to the blossom.

Perhaps the most consistently outstanding album is “The Third World.” Gato Barbieri not only manages to capture what he feels is the start to his regaining his own cultural roots, but extends as well that jazz

sphere we here have become all too familiar with. Lonnie Smith's performance on piano is particularly noteworthy.

If the music on the Thiele productions (My Lai and Santa Rita) was equal to the narration it would be a more engaging package, worthy of repeated listening; but as they are, they are hardly more than lilting documents.

I don't think it's necessary to review all of these new -releases, each is capable, upon purchase, of securing plenty of turntable time, especially if your jazz regimen is in anyway partial to the Ballads and Bullets motif.

The potential of this music is seen in its ability to induce a hard-core jazz apostate, nurtured on Bird, Hank and Monk, to speak again of Renaissance... while its promise is felt in the beguiling song/poetry of Leon Thomas: "There is a place where love is king/it's where echoes shine and reflections ring..."



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