

Sounds

Wilson Lindsey

1968

This column is primarily concerned with contemporary jazz, relevant jazz, music with not only social significance, but sounds derived from environment, relating directly from experience. The very word jazz to many listeners conjures up stereotyped images. Most common is the movie image, the usual pseudo biographical tale of a musician tormented by the everyday series of musician's "furies" dope, women and/or booze—not necessarily in that order. There is usually a social hangup or two with the hefty bleached blonde that quickly fades into oblivion leaving tons of grief in her wake. The musician, of course, is portrayed by Sammy Davis.

Commercially, a jazz musician may enjoy immense popularity, sell many records and sign many lucrative contracts for concerts, commercials, etc. But he will work until he drops. Only in rock and roll may a performer strike once, big, and retire from the scene moderately wealthy. Rock is where the money is. This is Billboard Magazine's point of view, the commercial point of view.

The current music listener is usually taken aback, somewhat perplexed when confronted with the likes of a Marion Brown, John Coltrane, Archie Shepp or Albert Ayler. Mr. Average is still swaying dizzily years after Thelonius Monk made his commercial breakthrough. Most people removed from jazz regard him as somewhat of an old freak. The new jazz musician—usually black, but not always rarely appeals to the older generation. The music born of frustration, frenzy and literally insane dedication to the one piece of metal that can lift him out of a smothering ghetto prison completely loses and repels the unreceptive audience.

Albert Ayler's new album, "Love Cry" on Impulse, the leading new wave jazz label is overwhelming. Ayler's articulate manipulation of his tenor sax jumps from one trying boundary to another. In both "Love Cry" and "Ghosts" Ayler has penned soaring, erratic, but always melodic interpretations of life. In "Love Cry" he shouts unabashed joy.

Archie Shepp's new L.P. "The Magic of Ju Ju" is different, yet similar. Shepp and Ayler are of basically the same school. Their musical inclinations are similar, but the styles, techniques and interpretations are different. Shepp is a gifted tenor sax man, and it would be an understatement if I said he plays his head off in this album. While Ayler's beauty revolves around his soaring vertical expressions, Shepp rams into the listener on an even plane and drives him against the wall. There is no give-and-take involved in Shepp's music. In "You're What This Day Is All About" he elicits warmth and surprise for about 1:47, from then on, it's cosmic power. Compliments must be paid to drummer Beaver Harris whose unprecedented and unrelenting wall of sound was no doubt derived from some occult power. Shepp says his music is folk music: it's about life. For the uninitiated who have not experienced this part of life, do so.

Hypnotic I: Bit 'A Sweet (A.B.C.)

There is one other album that must be mentioned simply because it may be lost in the flood of merchandise coming out and suffer the fate of the unrecognized.

It's a rock L.P. called "Hypnotic I" by Bit 'A Sweet on A.B.C. This L.P. is artfully and tastefully put together, all tracks blend successfully, and it's really beautiful. Even the new albums by established groups leave a lot to be desired. This album doesn't. It's a rare first-rate job by an unknown, but vastly talented group.



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