

Good Karma

anon.

1969

a review of

"Karma," Pharoah Sanders (Impulse)

Editors' Note: The following review of Pharoah Sanders' killer new album was found in the Fifth Estate office without the author's name on it. Would he please contact us so proper credit can be given.

Saying that "Karma" is Pharoah Sanders' new album should be enough. Beginning with his close association with the late giant John Coltrane, Sanders has been a moving force in the new jazz of the 1960s. Though he undoubtedly stands in Trane's shadow to a certain extent, he is forging his own path, one as wide and deep, important as any before him.

Like Coltrane, Pharoah is a mystic. And you can't review his albums any more than you could review St. Augustine's "Confessions." With Sanders it may be even harder—his is a very personal music and once you're into it, you must go all the way in. It's not comparable to anything, except maybe a fresh love affair. Even "A Love Supreme," to which "Karma" owes such a great and immediately obvious debt, isn't quite comparable.

"Tahuid," Sanders' previous album for Impulse, may be a technically better effort and yet it has never been able to affect me the way "Karma" can.

"Karma" could very well be the breakthrough avant-garde album that will make jazz palatable to the rockfreaks. This is not to imply that it's another attempt at a jazz-rock synthesis. It's jazz, good jazz; it's just that its appeal is potentially limited. Limited, in fact, by the amount of exposure to it the public receives.

"There was a time when peace was on the earth and joy and happiness did reign. Each man knew his worth. In my heart how I yearn for that Spirit's return, and I cry as time flies, oooooommm, oooooommm." (The Creator has a Master Plan)

That's what it's all about, or should be. That yearning for a lost time of joy and happiness is what we want to regain. Because we can all feel that we must've had it, once. For twenty minutes a side this record makes you regain a portion of what has been lost, what the whole revolution should be about. Right there in your meat, you can really feel it.

"Karma" is a sort of "Remembrance of Things Past." And that's a very subjective analysis, to be sure. But maybe that's what a baby feels when it's parents talk to it

Leon Thomas's vocal is the voice of a saint speaking with what can only be called love. Pharoah's horn and Thomas's voice blend into one of the most exciting moments ever recorded. Not exciting to violence, but to getting out and doing something that can make all that this album talks about a reality.

When Leon Thomas calls out in the middle of "The Creator Has A Master Plan" (a quiet call, one of freedom not anger or sadness) "The Creator makes but one demand / Peace and happiness throughout the land," the feeling of righteousness, of rightness that's been talked about for so long and so rarely achieved is there. Go that far into "Karma" and it'll pull you into it totally.

“Karma” is about life, about living and being alive. It can be about the way things are, hard and chaotic seeming, or it can be about the way things should be, happy and peaceful. And if you can dig that maybe we’ll make it after all.

My girl said it helped her to go to sleep and, though that embarrassed her, that’s an organic thing and reveals a lot about the contents of this record. She said it was like “cool water flowing over you.” That’s where Pharoah hits you, and it makes things easier to take sometimes with “Karma” lying around the house.

Birth may be an explosion as violent as death. Birth and death are segments, though, of life. “Karma” is as violent and as gentle as life. “Karma” is about being alive and free in the planet. Sometimes that’s not so easy

“Karma” helps.

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