

Mulatu Astatke + Black Jesus Experience – To Know Without Knowing (2020)

Written by bluesever (Bogdan Marszałkowski)
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1 *Mulatu* 6:21 2 *Ambassa Lemdi* 5:52 3 *Kulun Mankwaleshi* 7:47 4 *Living On Stolen Land* 10:56 5 *To Know Without Knowing* 7:35 6 *Lijay* 5:24 7 *Blue Light* 3:35 8 *Mascaram Setaba* 5:53 9 *A Chance To Give* 5:46 Bass – Richard Rose Chorus – Addisalem Taye, Corry Harper, Mearge Abate Congas, Shaker – Olugbade Okunade Drums – James Davies Flugelhorn, Trumpet – Ian Dixon Flute – Dominique Chaseling Grand Piano – Bob Sedergreen Guitar, Chorus – Zac Lister Lacquer Cut By – Connor Dalton Masinko – Haftu Reda Shaker, Wood Block – Kahan Harper Tenor Saxophone – Peter Harper Vibraphone, Congas, Electric Piano – Mulatu Astatke Vocals – Enushu Taye, Vida Sunshyne

It is easy to affirm that composer and orchestra leader Mulatu Astatke is the central figure in Ethio-jazz, still active at the age of 76. For a second time, he shares an album with the Australian band Black Jesus Experience (listen also to the album *Cradle of Humanity*, released in 2016). Let's also remember that Ethio-jazz had its heyday in the '60s and '70s, until revolutionary violence put this singular movement on the back burner. Expatriated to Europe and North America, these visionaries from Addis Ababa gradually resumed their service and Ethio-jazz has regained its status since the beginning of the millennium. Let us also affirm that the work of composer and multi-instrumentalist Astatke is among the most important in jazz from Africa, along with those of South Africans Abdullah Ibrahim (Dollar Brand) and Hugh Masekela. Here is further striking proof of this. Astatke and his antipodean colleagues offer here a wonderful experience of modern jazz with melodic inflections of the Nile, at the confluence of the musical traditions of East Africa and the Levant. Hip hop and R&B ornaments, and poetic declamations expressed in English and Amharic language, fit perfectly into this context. Everything flows from the source on this second collaboration, the communion is perfect between the musicians – keyboards, guitar, vibraphone, percussion, trumpet, flute, saxophones, vocals, and rap. This fusion is no less typical of the Afro-jazz crossbreeding that illuminated the '80s, with the fervour and cohesion of the ensemble that one should expect. Let's take advantage of it while Astatke is still in full possession of his means. --Alain Brunet, panm360.com

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