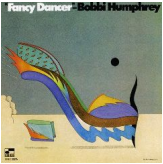


Bobbi Humphrey – Fancy Dancer (1975)

Written by bluesever

Saturday, 20 November 2010 11:13 - Last Updated Friday, 01 August 2014 15:50

Bobbi Humphrey – Fancy Dancer (1975)



1. *Uno Esta* 2. *The Trip* 3. *You Make Me Feel So Good* 4. *Fancy Dancer* 5. *Mestizo Eyes* 6. *Sweeter Than Sugar* 7. *Please Set Me At Ease* Bobbi Humphrey - Flute, Vocals Dorothy Ashby - Harp Oscar Brashear - Trumpet Mayuto Correa Congas Roger Glenn - Marimba, Vibraphone Tyree Glenn - Sax (Tenor) Bobbi Humphrey - Flute, Vocals Harvey Mason, Sr. - Drums Craig McMullen - Guitar Fonce Mizell - Clavinet, Conductor, Solina, Trumpet, Vocals Larry Mizell - Arranger, Conductor, Piano, Piano (Electric), Solina, Synthesizer, Vocals Jerry Peters - Arranger, Piano, Piano (Electric), Synthesizer Julian Priester - Trombone Chuck Rainey - Bass, Bass (Electric) John Rowin - Guitar Skip Scarborough - Arranger, Clavinet, Piano, Piano (Electric) Jess Acuna, Rosario Dávila, Katherine Lyra, Augie Ray, Sonia Tavares - Vocals (Background)

The third and final collaboration between flutist Bobbi Humphrey and Larry Mizell also marked the end of Humphrey's five-album run with Blue Note Records. Humphrey began recording with Larry and his brother Fonce (who provides arrangements and plays clavinet and trumpet here) in the aftermath of Donald Byrd's *Black Byrd*, the collaborative jazz-funk effort that resulted in a massively successful (and influential) commercial breakthrough for the trumpeter and the label. While not as well known as her *Blacks and Blues* album, her stellar debut with the pair from 1973, *Fancy Dancer* is every bit its aesthetic equal. The Mizells lined up a serious crew of studio aces for the date, including trumpeter Oscar Brashear; trombonist Julian Priester; Tyree and Roger Glenn on saxophone and piano, respectively; pianists Skip Scarborough and Jerry Peters (who were part of an army of them on this date); drummer Harvey Mason; bassist Chuck Rainey; and even the great Dorothy Ashby on harp. Recorded at their Sound Factory studio in Los Angeles, *Fancy Dancer* is a seamless collection of seven tracks that cruise the distance across soulful fusions of funk, Latin grooves, electric jazz, and gauzy vocal choruses that offer a hint as to what the underground dancefloor scenes of Los Angeles and New York were offering in at the predawn of the disco era. Humphrey's flute playing feels effortless as she hovers around and plays through the layers of spacy keyboards, shimmering rhythmic pulses, and seductive textures provided by lilting voices, hand percussion, and breaks. The set comes popping out of the gate with the glorious "Uno Esta," featuring bank upon bank of warm bubbling keyboards, roiling basslines, and hand drums courtesy of Mayuto Correa's congas.

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Craig McMullen and John Rowin contribute some bright chunky guitars, and Larry lays a fine horn chart in the cut as Humphrey begins the first of three solo breaks. When the chorus comes in, the rhythm shifts; the vibe get funkier but never loses the sheen and polish in the mix.

Following this is the stunning Chuck Davis number "The Trip." Commencing with a cut-time funk break, wah-wah guitars, and three different synth harmonic lines all painting a nocturnal spaced-out groove, Humphrey begins to play fills around and through them. A Rhodes enters and the drums become more pronounced in the mix, just as a guitar begins to play contrapuntal fills under her flute. This is one of the greatest tracks in her catalog because it is simultaneously dreamy and sensual and offers enough head-nodding funk to seduce an army. The title track feels more laid-back at first with its gentle chorus. But some flipped-out psychedelic soul finds its way through in waves of Latin percussion that build a shelf under Roger Glenn's vibes break, which in turn sets up Humphrey's burning flute solo prefiguring a salsa piano line and furious hand drumming in syncopated grooves. "Mestizo Eyes" is a steamy, lusty babymaker with simmering, ratcheted intensity as Rainey's fat-bottom electric Fender bassline belies the chunky wah-wah guitars and synth strings and Dorothy Ashby's harp floats through the center. A chorus of male voices softly chants the title and Humphrey goes to town, rhythmically undulating her solo through the entire mix. There isn't anything approaching a middling moment here -- this is all killer, no filler. Jazz critics may have had their troubles with this set, but no one cared; Humphrey and The Mizells were creating a new kind of largely instrumental funk that was inclusive of everything they could weave in from world music to soul-jazz to club music to pop -- and the public responded. [In 2008, Fancy Dancer was released domestically on compact disc as part of the Michael Cuscuna-produced Blue Note Rare Grooves series.] --- Thom Jurek, Rovi

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