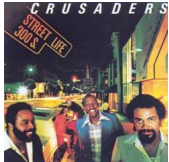


The Crusaders - Street Life (1979)

Written by bluesever

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01. *Street Life* 02. *My Lady* 03. *Rodeo Drive (High Steppin')* 04. *Carnival Of The Night* 05. *The Hustler* 06. *Night Faces* Arthur Adams - Guitar Roland Bautista - Guitar Oscar Brashear - Trumpet Garnett Brown - Trombone Randy Crawford - Vocals Paulinho Da Costa - Percussion Wilton Felder - CoSaxophone Barry Finnerty - Guitar William Green - Saxophone Stix Hooper - Drums Paul Jackson, Jr. - Guitar James Jamerson - Bass Alphonso Johnson - Bass Robert O'Bryan - Trumpet Jerome Richardson - Saxophone Billy Rogers - Guitar Joe Sample - Keyboards

Although the Crusaders could not have known it at the time, their recording of "Street Life" (which features a memorable vocal by Randy Crawford) was a last hurrah for the 20-year old group. Their recordings of the next few years would decline in interest until the band gradually faded away in the '80s. However this particular set is well worth picking up for the 11-minute title cut and there is good playing by the three original members (Wilton Felder on tenor, soprano and electric bass, keyboardist Joe Sample and drummer Stix Hooper) along with guitarist Barry Finnerty; horn and string sections, plus additional guitarists are utilized on Sample's commercial but listenable arrangements. ---Scott Yanow, AllMusic Review

By 1979, Crusaders were a well established jazz fusion crossover act with leader Joe Sample providing keyboards, Wilton Felder saxophone, and "Stix Hooper" drums and percussion. Whilst viewing some chaotic scenes at the beginners slope at the Mammoth Mountain California resort, Sample came up with the idea for a song titled "Street Life" which reflected his love for the hubbub of the city. Along with writer Will Jennings, the pair crafted a catchy instrumental with a rare lyric to complement. The requirement for a classy singer to light up the song led to the keyboardist approaching solo artist Randy Crawford. They had previously worked together

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on Crawford's 1976 debut album "Everything Must Change", and the familiarity leads to the relaxed, almost frivolous and yet truly magical title track. Clocking in at over eleven stunning minutes, the song develops from a soulfully atmospheric intro leading into the explosive horn led party stomp, and virtuoso solos from Sample and Felder. But it's Randy who steals the show, effortlessly rising through octaves as she joyfully delivers a performance that would instantly draw attention and eventually lead to a successful international solo career.

With such an outstanding and dominant opener, it's difficult to view the remaining five songs without feeling a shade of anti-climax. That said, "My Lady" beats out a rhythm heavy slow groove which benefits from the celestially rising backing vocal harmonies. "Rodeo Drive (High Steppin')" carries a delightfully upbeat saxophone melody, and "Carnival Of The Night" reflects the funky mellow approach that prevails throughout the collection.

"Street Life" is one of those rare moments where contemporary jazz and pop collide successfully, and although nothing can match the sparkling title track, the remaining five songs form a more than worthy collection of carefree gestures and cool tunes. ---hackskeptic.com

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