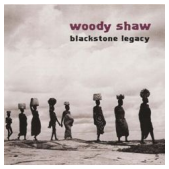
Woody Shaw – Blackstone Legacy (1971)



A Blackstone Legacy 16:08 B1 Think On Me 10:49 B2 Lost And Found 11:57 C New World 18:30 D1 Boo-Ann's Grand 14:35 D2 A Deed For Dolphy 8:59 Gary Bartz - Sax (Alto), Sax (Soprano) George Cables - Piano, Piano (Electric) Ron Carter - Bass, Guest Artist Clint Houston - Bass Bennie Maupin - Clarinet (Bass), Flute, Sax (Tenor) Woody Shaw - Trumpet Lenny White – Drums

Originally a two-fer on vinyl and now on one CD, Shaw's debut as a leader is one of the first "free bop" sessions, in many ways his answer to Bitches Brew. The trumpeter's ensemble extracts dense, energetic, meaty collective sounds based in pure improvisation with a skeleton of a rhythmic framework to expound upon. Saxophonists Gary Bartz & Bennie Maupin, electric pianist George Cables, twin bassists Ron Carter and Clint Houston, and drummer Lenny White respond to Shaw's heavy direction, making for some of the most kinetic jazz heard in that period of early fusion. Shaw's bright melodicism, hard edged swing and refusal to compromise are his greatest assets. They come shining through on tuneful classics like the unstoppable "Think On Me" and stop-start gymnastics of "Boo-Ann's Grand." It represents the progressive bop aesthetic at a fever pitch. The title track is as wild and wooly as Woody could be, while "Lost & Found" is free bop at its finest. "New World" is a free funk number, quite a trend setter for its time, while "A Deed For Dolphy" shows an abstract, no-time side rarely heard from Shaw. All tunes are quite lengthy, no shorter than nine, no longer than seventeen minutes. This allows the band to develop their ideas and interact in a manner more akin to a concert setting. Bartz (alto and soprano saxophone) and Maupin (tenor saxophone, bass clarinet and flute) consistently show why they are two of the best improvising jazzmen out there. As much as the music is the thing, it is the singular presence of Shaw that refracts many colors of light and dark, like a multi-hued beacon directing many ships to port. There is not a better example of this music from its inception, documented on tape, than this other worldly session that brought the trumpeter to the jazz world's attention. Furthermore, few have done it better since. Truly a landmark recording, and a pivot point in the history of post-modern music. --- Michael G. Nastos, Rovi

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