

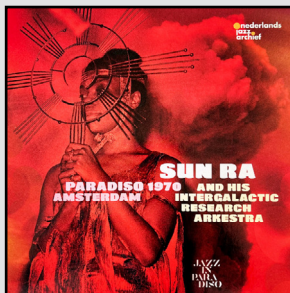
only is reflected in the cover painting, but also in her ten composition titles. Group dynamics here make more powerful sonic statements than solo visual creations though. Smith's thick brush strokes provide a forceful backbeat and his vibraphone resonations add a palate of sound colors to Melford's compositional and performing canvases. Meanwhile, Formanek's sometime arco, mostly pizzicato, lines serve the same purpose in the pianist's artistic expression as scrawls and dribbles do to help a painter define sketches.

Deft rather than just delineated, Melford's playing is never spidery or pastel. Instead her pressurized pace on "A Line With a Mind of its Own" and the introductory "Drift" features dynamic emphasis and methodical theme elaborations, perfectly synced with bass thumps and drum rumbles. Key and tempo changes figure into the expositions, with modulations never allowing substitution to overcome syncopation. Like a group exhibition, space is also given to the other artists. On "Interlude I (To Dribble, To Smear, To Splash)" comprehensive metal bar vibrations and keyboard clips back Formanek's *sul tasto* buzzes, while the control Smith shows with vibe coloration extends to his drumming. "Streaming" demonstrates how cymbal shakes and paradiddles project percussion variations at a speedier tempo than the pianist's single note exposition developed in tandem with the bassist's strokes. The three finally interlock for a profound percussive ending.

Visual artists' creativity often arises in different media during their careers. Melford does similar work with compositions and group sizes. This return to improv power-trio format is a notable milepost in her ongoing *oeuvre*.

For more info visit intaktrec.ch. Melford is at Roulette Jun. 25. See Calendar.

UNEARTHED GEM



Paradiso Amsterdam 1970
Sun Ra and His Intergalactic Research Arkestra
 (Nederlands Jazz Archief)
 by Duck Baker

This lavishly produced set was recorded at the iconic Paradiso Amsterdam club during Sun Ra's late-1970 trip to Europe—and it is easy to believe that the concert was every bit the event that the excellent liner notes make it out to be. The recording was done by a public radio station, with the sound engineers distraught about the band's refusal to stay in the position where microphones had been placed. Instead, they wandered all over the stage and the room, and as a result, much of the proceedings are unfortunately inaudible on the recordings. Whether they were even broadcast or not isn't clear, though certainly long portions of this release would have worked fine. And while the balance is far from ideal, the sound quality itself is actually very good, in marked contrast to the only other recording from

this tour (*Live in London 1970*).

Hardcore Ra-gazers will be all over this album, but how easy is it to recommend to fans who already have a number of Arkestra titles and feel they don't need more? The answer depends on which aspects of Sun Ra's music you like. The program is weighted towards familiar songs including "Enlightenment", "Theme of the Stargazers" and the opener, a non-vocal version of "Space Is the Place". "Second Stop Is Jupiter" and "It's After the End of the World" are short renditions that some may consider a drawback; these two numbers feature short passages of soul-cleansing free ensemble blowing, but there isn't as much of that as some listeners might like. Nor is there all that much soloing by Arkestra members apart from the leader. Presumably the balance issues caused some of this material to be excluded. Ra, of course, would not have been carrying his keyboards around the room, so his playing was unaffected by mic issues, and he is in excellent form throughout, whether spinning enigmatic piano improvisations or joyously taking off with his Moog while Arkestra members add dense, swirling layers of percussion.

While not as essential as the Fondation Maecht concert recorded earlier in 1970, *Paradiso Amsterdam 1970* is a very welcome addition to the Ra canon.

For more info visit jazzarchief.nl. Sun Ra Arkestra is at Issue Project Room Jun. 11 (part of MATA Festival) and Pioneer Works Jun. 20. See Calendar.

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