

Sun Ra: Interviews & Essays



A collection of interviews and essays on Sun Ra, his contemporaries, his records, his myth and his fan base. Composer, bandleader, pianist and space philosopher, Sun Ra was a unique individual and one of the most colorful and enduring of musical legacies, transcending time, place and culture. From the mid 1950s until his death in 1993, Sun Ra led The Arkestra, a fluid collective that lived and played together under the despotic tutelage of their leader, who claimed to hail from Saturn. Their music was jazz, but avant garde compositions in which players were instructed to adhere to a space key-improvising without regard for conventional tonal centers-was symptomatic of an altogether different direction in sound: electronic music, space music and free improvisation. But Sun Ra's legendary status was earned as much for his eccentricities as for his unique artistic vision. He developed and propagated a mystifying sci-fi mythology which he weaved into both the music and Dadaist performances of The Arkestra (performances which inspired artists as diverse as George Clinton and MC5). This book collects together for the first time interviews with Sun Ra, the people that knew him, and his contemporaries, alongside illuminating essays and conversational pieces regarding his prolific musical output, mystique, philosophy, fans, and much more. Contributions from Wayne Kramer, Michael Simmons, Ben Edmonds, Amiri Baraka, Rick Steiger, David Henderson, John Sinclair and others.

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