

JAZZ

**CLIFFORD JORDAN*****The Complete Clifford Jordan Strata-East Sessions***

Clifford Jordan, Charles Brackeen, Sonny Fortune, Luqman Lateef, Cecil Payne, Pharoah Sanders, saxophones; Don Cherry, Kenny Dorham, trumpets; Julian Priester, trombone; Howard Johnson, tuba; Stanley Cowell, Wynton Kelly, Lonnie Liston Smith, Cedar Walton, piano; Sonny Sharrock, guitar; Richard Davis, Charlie Haden, Sam Jones, Bill Lee, Cecil McBee, Sirone, Wilbur Ware, bass; Ed Blackwell, Dennis Charles, Billy Hart, Roy Haynes, Albert Heath, Billy Higgins, Majeed Shabazz, drums; Chief Bey, others, percussion; Leon Thomas, vocal, percussion
 Mosaic MD6-256 (6 CDs). 2013. Clifford Jordan, original prod.; Michael Cuscuna, reissue prod.; Orville O'Brien, Ron Carran, engs., Malcolm Addey, remastering. ADD.
 TT: 5:27:32

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
SONICS ★★★★★

Seven albums are collected here, and Clifford Jordan plays tenor on just three. He's heard on *In the World* and the 1973 quartet stunner *Glass Bead Games*, not to mention Wilbur Ware's aptly titled *Super Bass* (unissued until 2012). On the other sessions—led by Ed Blackwell, Charles Brackeen, Cecil Payne, and Pharoah Sanders—we meet Jordan the producer, working in the late 1960s when black self-determination and the ideal of the musician-run label were taking a new turn. Originally made for the never-launched Frontier label, these recordings found a home on Strata-East, the pioneering label cofounded by Charles Tolliver and Stanley Cowell.

As Willard Jenkins observes in his essay, every tune in this set is original, composed by leaders and/or sidemen. The range of instrumentation and aesthetic outlook, from the rock-solid swing of Cecil Payne's *Zodiac* to the outright psychedelia of Pharoah Sanders's *Izipho Zam* (*My Gifts*), establishes that Jordan was way beyond litmus tests of style or hang-ups about new music. These records—Jordan dubbed them “the Dophy Sessions”—offer a window into a vibrant area of jazz not widely

celebrated or discussed. Martin Bough's jaw-dropping photos from the actual sessions transport us precisely to that time and place.

The booklet also reproduces a full-page ad in support of the albums, minus Ware's *Super Bass* and *Shades of Edward Blackwell*, the late drummer's 1968 debut, issued here for the first time ever. These rarities greatly increase the set's historical value. So does the five-minute interview with Ware (even if “Wilbur” is misspelled in the track listing).

A Chicago native, Jordan came of age in bands led by Horace Silver, Max Roach, and Charles Mingus, but he was out there as a leader by his mid-20s. His agile lines, sinewy tone, and deep blues feeling mark him as one of the era's great tenors. A creative risk-taker, too: he used two bassists and drummers on *In the World*, an imperfect record that nonetheless allows us to hear Don Cherry and Wynton Kelly in the same band.

In fact, Cherry appears in four of the seven sessions, even more prominently than Jordan himself. In *Rhythm X: The Music of Charles Brackeen* he joins Brackeen, Charlie Haden, and Ed Blackwell—Ornette Coleman's quartet without Coleman—and the results are incendiary. Cherry also plays on the lost Blackwell session, though four of the six tracks are percussion-only (Jordan plays log drum). Cherry and Jordan form the front line of Ware's riveting quartet date, which includes two ambitious tracks of solo bass, nearly lost to history.

Much of the sound is superb, though sonic flaws do crop up. But these are small matters next to Leon Thomas's yodeling vocal in “Prince of Peace,” from *Izipho Zam*, or Billy Higgins's drumming throughout *Glass Bead Games*, or Payne's baritone sax in the ballad “Martin Luther King, Jr.,” recorded just eight months after the assassination. This is heavy music for heavy times. —David Adler

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