

SUN RA: LIVE HIGHLIGHTS

by Sam Byrd

These are notes for a theoretical compilation of selected highlights, in chronological order, from a theoretical collection of unreleased live recordings of Sun Ra and his Arkestra. A few caveats: I use "highlights" in the loosest sense here; in no way are any of these meant to be the "best" version of a particular piece. I chose these selections on a number of loose and not-always-adhered-to criteria.

First of all, I wanted to pull out all of the pieces that to the best of my knowledge were original "compositions" that were unique or seldom performed, or rarely recorded. This is not the place to get into the debate of whether certain pieces, or passages or musical episodes, were composed or improvised. I am aware that Ra often wrote music that he meant to sound improvised. However, I think one can safely say that there are some portions of live performances that are pretty clearly substantially improvised, such as much of the opening music the Arkestra would play at the beginning of a set before Ra made his entrance, or the pieces that consist primarily of a series of solos played consecutively without overlap or ensemble passages in between them. In this compilation, for the most part I have steered clear of these improvisational portions, not because of any judgment on my part of the inherent value of these passages or of the quality of the playing therein, but simply because I wanted to focus on drawing out and highlighting obscure compositions that didn't appear on any of Ra's official recordings on Saturn or elsewhere.

Second, I wanted to select versions of more well-known compositions that were unique in one way or another, whether it be vocal versions of songs only recorded as instrumentals, or unusual arrangements of familiar compositions, or cover tunes that weren't recorded or performed that often. I purposefully avoided including versions of original compositions that appear frequently on released recordings. This meant leaving out several outstanding versions of classics like "The Shadow World," although I did end up relenting and including some choice versions of released pieces. This was either because they were noteworthy in some way, or because the performance was simply too dazzling to omit--or so I felt at the time. (A project for another time would be a compilation of all known versions of "The Shadow World," perhaps *the* key Ra composition and one that would definitely merit such attention.)

Especially after the mid-'70s, Ra featured a lot of covers of tunes associated with Fletcher Henderson and Duke Ellington, in addition to other swing tunes and standards. I tended to avoid tunes that appear on recordings already and tried to focus on representative samples of ones Ra only performed in concert.

Finally, I was always on the lookout for great Gilmore tenor sax solos--and they're not hard to find! In fact, this compilation could easily be renamed "John Gilmore: great live sax solos." I found in writing about these selections that I quickly ran out of words to use to point out that yet another piece has a great Gilmore solo. I briefly considered coming up with an acronym like AGGS ("another great Gilmore solo") but decided against it. Clearly, though, I'm biased--Gilmore was easily Ra's greatest soloist, and I can't help it if he was featured a lot. I don't think I'll get too many complaints that this compilation is too Gilmore-heavy. Sometimes the presence of a particularly excellent Gilmore solo would trump all my other arbitrary criteria--although of course I left out hours of fine improvisations that also feature fantastic Gilmore!

Even though I decided against a Gilmore solo acronym, I do use "RLC" as shorthand for Robert Campbell and Chris Trent's second edition of their discography, The Earthly Recordings of Sun Ra. Rather than list personnel for each of these selections, I refer to the Earthly Recordings entry number. Although I did find it necessary to come up with one additional acronym...

Some minor editing has taken place here, mainly to ease the transitions between tracks, including some fading. I tried to be as unobtrusive as possible. But the very nature of this is that everything here is taken out of the context of the entire performance, and flow is sometimes, well, interrupted. Hey, it's the nature of this beast. The complete shows are always there to return to.

Sound quality varies. I didn't do anything in the way of equalization here. I'm no engineer.

Last but not least, I want to mention that working on these notes has convinced me that a really detailed study of all the Discipline pieces would be really nice. A few years back on the Saturn listserv there was a discussion of "Discipline 27" and "Discipline 27-II," but in many ways those two are atypical of the Discipline series. The first step would be to identify and collate them, then burn all released and unreleased versions back to back....except maybe not for D.27 or D.27-II, since there are so many of them!...then....yet another project for another time...

LIVE HIGHLIGHTS disc 1

1968-03 ELECTRIC CIRCUS, NYC (RLC 148)

1. FRIENDLY GALAXY (12:40)

We start off with an early version of this evocative Ra composition. This is its first live appearance in RLC after its debut on *Secrets of the Sun* from 1962. After the theme is stated, a nice flugelhorn solo is played (probably by Earl Cross) over a heavy percussion backdrop, followed by dark clavinet comping, with the pulse of the ostinato bass line of the theme continuing underneath. The percussion gets progressively wilder, then subdues, with flutes taking over on top of the pulse, with clavinet restating the theme. The band sound here is reminiscent of that on the *Solar Myth Approach* LPs from around this same time. The whole Arkestra here is loose and tight at the same time, a recurring style in Ra's arsenal of band sounds.

2. SPACE AURA [inc] (5:49)

Ra opens up the head and chord changes with Gibson Kalamazoo organ, then the whole band rips in with the head, and we immediately get launched into a great John Gilmore tenor sax solo (the first of many in this compilation!), with Ronnie Boykins' stop-start walking bass underneath. Clifford Jarvis' distinctive bass drum style can be heard as well, pushing Gilmore on in a feel similar to the great "Dancing Shadows" sax solo from *Nothing Is*. Gilmore's all over the place here, and it's very exciting when Jarvis drops out and we get some high-register permutations. You can hear audience members laughing, presumably in blue delight. Gilmore glides from high-register squeals to low whomps in several full swoops. The band comes back in, with Ra on organ as this sadly incomplete recording comes to an end.

1969-07-03 NEWPORT JAZZ FESTIVAL (RLC 155)

3. UNIDENTIFIED TITLE (4:22)

This piece starts off with a full-bore sonic assault (RLC calls it "freakout ensemble"), with organ right in there. This must have been devastating to experience in person. After three minutes, solo organ takes over in out/"Atlantis" mode, swirls of sound, with very physical playing from Ra--lots

of runs over the keyboard, much of it probably with the back of the hands. This segues directly into-->

4. UNIDENTIFIED TITLE [Discipline?] (1:48)

We may not know the title, but this composition has all the earmarks of a Discipline piece: long ensemble horn tones with crescendos of free percussion underneath, slightly portentous in mood. As RLC points out, this "resembles some of the more dirge-like compositions from the Discipline series but predates them by nearly two years."

5. VELVET (3:14)

Solo clavinet signals the theme, and the band kicks in at a fast pace, the head played tightly, dominated by Gilmore. Then Pat Patrick briefly solos on baritone sax, with trumpet shortly following, then Gilmore. Flute and clavinet are in there too, with a driving walking bass line from Alex Blake. The head pops back up pretty quickly and it's over in a flash. Tight and concise.

1970-07 RED GARTER, NYC (RLC 168)

6. UNIDENTIFIED TITLE [Silva, cello & org] (4:22) -->

This is a lovely understated duet between Ra on organ and Alan Silva on cello. It's nice that Ra gave Silva so much solo space during the latter's relatively short tenure with the Arkestra. -->

UNIDENTIFIED TITLE [Hadi, PP] (11:22) (15:44 total)

Horns and flutes come in, still in keeping with the subdued mood of the previous duet but clearly playing a different piece (RLC calls it a "slow minor-key theme"), before the drums pick up the tempo and the horns and organ dig into a cool swinging riff. This would have fit in perfectly on *My Brother the Wind Vol. II*. Like so many compositions here, this is one I really wish Ra had recorded officially. He lays down cool organ grooves and Kwame Hadi plays a gorgeous trumpet solo, compelling and exciting like all of his playing. This is followed by a sumptuous Pat Patrick baritone sax solo. The groove here is simply incredible. Flutes comment in riffs in the background, and other horns come in. After Patrick stops, the riffs take over for a bit before we return to the opening slower ensemble theme. Dissonant flutes lay down a blanket of chords for the main theme to rest on as it builds to a nice finish.

7. LADIES AND GENTLEMULES (5:53)

What a quirky song! Accompanying himself on organ, Ra introduces the piece by saying he has something to say to the gentlemules. Then the band eases into a slinky jump groove, and they chant "Things ain't gonna change like they did," and something indecipherable. At intervals they stop and Ra makes special announcements about members of the congregation not having themselves together--but it's okay, because "another jackass gonna take your place!" All through the groove, Ra's organ cooks; we get an abrupt ending as the tape cuts off.

8. SOMEWHERE ELSE (6:15)

A nice tight rendering of this piece, one of my favorites from this era. The trumpet solo, by Kwame Hadi, is tight and focused. It's followed by some cool organ, with the band sustaining the groove before returning to the head. (You can tell my bag of musical vocabulary terms is running out. Oh well--my language may run dry, but Ra's musical ideas never do!)

9. SOMETIMES I'M HAPPY (6:12)

This is the earliest known live Ra version of this song, which he first recorded in 1962 at the Choreographer's Workshop (on the CD *Standards*). Later to be sung so beautifully by June Tyson, here it's all instrumental, with a really nice Gilmore solo, backed by Ra's organ comping. Did I say "really nice"? Gilmore swings like a mutha, turning in a heart-thumping whopper of a solo. I'm going to quickly run out of laudatory language to describe his superlative playing, I can tell. Words really don't do him justice. Silva does some cool out bowing as the song draws to a close.

10. PLEASANT TWILIGHT (12:54)

This piece is easily the highlight of this volume. Ra starts it by playing the melody on solo organ, slowly but straight through, followed by meditative ruminations on the melody. Then the band comes in at a swift swinging tempo, faster than the studio version (which is the only other known recording of this piece at all!). After the band plays the head, something magical occurs: the tempo drastically slows down, the horns play through the chord changes slowly, and Gilmore takes off, laying down a simply glorious solo that shows him at the peak of his powers. It's one of those solos that's all over the place

while at the same time fitting firmly in the flow of the song, and it's one of his most amazing ever. As he reaches the upper stratosphere of the high register, Ra's organ joins the horns, then, as on the studio version, the band plays the melody at a slower, statelier pace. But it's not over yet--the tempo picks back up and we get the added bonus of another hot trumpet solo, I'm guessing by Kwame Hadi. Besides Walter Miller, the dynamic duo of Kwame Hadi and Akh Tal Ebah are my favorite Ra trumpeters, and it's great to get whatever solos we can from them. Amazingly, the head comes back, but played even faster than at the beginning. Overall, a fantastic performance.

LIVE HIGHLIGHTS disc 2

1970-11-09 QUEEN ELIZABETH HALL, LONDON (RLC 175)

1. THE SHADOW WORLD -->PIANO SOLO -->UNIDENTIFIED TITLE [Discipline?] (11:33)

We start off Disc 2 by fading in from a version of "The Shadow World," retaining only the final head. At first I thought this was played only by Gilmore, which would have made it unique, but closer listening reveals other horns, just not miked as well. At any rate, it's played extremely fast and tight, and unaccompanied by any other instruments (such as drums), which is unusual. We segue from there to a contemplative solo piano interlude, soon joined by Alan Silva on cello and then trumpet (one, then two) for a nice quintet. As things get wilder, hand percussion is added. Finally at ca. 9:08, a beautiful horn composition is played, a plaintive melody, perhaps a Discipline piece. Another version of this beautiful unknown composition is coming up in track 7 of this disc.

1971-06-10 THE WAREHOUSE, SAN FRANCISCO [not in RLC]

These next three snippets are samples put up on eBay by somebody selling reel to reel tapes of this show, which is not listed in RLC. Hopefully whoever bought the tapes will release them at some point, because the sound is very, very clear.

2. THE SATELLITES ARE SPINNING [excerpt] (:57)

The first excerpt is a quick verse sung by Gilmore and June Tyson.

3. UNTITLED IMPROV [excerpt] (1:17)

Next, a minute-long excerpt from an improvisation, mostly trumpet fanfares and the whole band playing out.

4. ENLIGHTENMENT [excerpt] (:41)

Finally, the last excerpt is the first verse of this classic, sung by Gilmore, Tyson, and others.

1970-11-18 PARADISO, AMSTERDAM [not in RLC]

5. UNIDENTIFIED TITLE [Discipline?] (2:27)

With its long horn chords and free, quiet drums underneath, this is probably another Discipline piece. It eventually flows into "Enlightenment."

6. UNIDENTIFIED TITLE (9:46)

This composition begins with an out piano solo, joined by Silva on cello for an extended duo of deep beauty. Akh Tal Ebah on subtle space-dimension mellophone (I think) joins in, followed by some muted trumpet (Kwame Hadi) and other sounds. The mute comes off, and we get a more full-blown solo, still over contemplative mellophone, with drums added in. This roughly follows the same pattern as the piece at the end of track 1 on this disc (see above). Finally, at ca. 8:20, the horns come in with moody chords for a beautiful closing.

7. UNIDENTIFIED TITLE [Discipline?] (18:57)

Solo clavinet starts off this second version of the beautiful horn piece that also appears at the end of track 1 of this disc (see above). This version, more solidly realized, evokes Ellington in its close horn voicings and execution. After the melody, Silva goes into a nice cello solo, joined by oboe, clarinet (and/or Neptunian libflecto), and drums. This is rich, possibly guided, improvisation of the highest order. Then Ra's mini-moog takes over for an extended solo that gets wilder and more frenetic as it goes on, soon joined by the full band in an ecstatic free-for-all which quickly evolves into space chords, percussion, and abstract mini-moog tones, soon overtaken by solo mini-moog, which quickly changes into those industrial super-vacuum moog sounds that adorn so much

of *Black Myth/Out in Space* from this same tour. We fade to calls of "Second Stop is Jupiter."

**1971-06-12 J.P. WIDNEY JR. HIGH SCHOOL, LOS ANGELES, CA
(RLC 176)**

These selections are heavily distorted, but it's a historically important concert (this was the show where Ra placed a curse on the city of L.A. after the lights were turned off while they were still playing); besides, it's great music!

8. UNIDENTIFIED TITLE (5:50)

This improv opens up with bowed bass (back to Ronnie Boykins; Silva's short stint is over) and hardcore industrial mini-moog. This is heavy stuff indeed, piercing and potent, the swoops and swirls of a laser blast roller coaster buzz saw, loud and unrelenting--and it keeps intensifying until the organ signals the call....

9. CALLING PLANET EARTH (1:17)

...to planet Earth. The vocals exhort, the mini-moog continues its blast. Heavy distortion here; the recording is dodgy at best, but the energy of the performance more than justifies its existence in this compilation.

10. WE'LL WAIT FOR YOU (1:19)

These lyrics are some of Ra's best. They seem to summarize his whole philosophy of music and being: building a world of abstract dreams, a world's world. Here the words are declaimed by June Tyson (not sung as they would be, much later, on *Strange Celestial Road*), with response from the band.

11. SECOND STOP IS JUPITER (8:21)

Rather than just the call and response that the space chant piece with this name usually resolves into, this is a percussion-heavy funky horn groove with Gilmore soloing, trumpet riffing, and Tyson vocals embellishing, before the horns play the familiar melody that goes with the title.

12. DISCIPLINE ? (6:44) [RLC says "Discipline 15" but see below]

This is definitely a Discipline piece, but it is definitely not "Discipline 15," as RLC has it. "Discipline 15" appears on *Nidhamu* and *Calling Planet Earth*--it has a special brooding quality all of its own, in a more stately way, perhaps (here is where my lack of musical training really shows! It seems like it's in a different key from this one.) RLC says "Discipline 15" also appears on *Concert for the Comet Kohoutek*, but that piece has a brooding three-note figure with the third note swooping up: tantalizingly similar, but definitely different from the four-note figure here.

To summarize, in handy chart form:

"Discipline 15"

RLC listing	Actual Discipline #
Widney High	?a
Calling Planet Earth	15
Nidhamu	15
Kohoutek	?b

[?a and ?b indicate that for both of these, the Discipline number is unknown, but they are not equal to each other. Further research needed! Somebody with access to Marshall Allen ought to sit him down and play all these heads for him and see if he can scrounge up the sheet music and identify them once and for all, dad-gummit!]

The theme is a typical Discipline-style head (long horn chords, free percussion) which segues into a bowed bass solo by Boykins, with tambourine accompaniment. I don't really hear any keyboard here, which could indicate that this was conducted by Ra. As Boykins switches to fingering, Marshall Allen joins in on oboe for a cool, meditative solo. Other instruments show up, and the drums get louder while still maintaining the meditative feel of the overall piece. Things get pretty dense and distorted toward the end--sonically difficult, but a masterful performance nonetheless.

LIVE HIGHLIGHTS disc 3

1971-10-12 STOCKHOLM (RLC 181)

1. SOMETIMES THE UNIVERSE SPEAKS/DISCIPLINE 2 (3:51)

Most notable for its beautiful moog solo, this piece starts off with the flute melody of "Sometimes the Universe Speaks" (a song that did not appear on vinyl until 1977's Saturn LP *The Soul Vibrations of Man*) mixed in with what may be part of "Discipline 2." The only LP "Discipline 2" appears on is *Nidhamu*.

2. SOMETIMES THE UNIVERSE SPEAKS (7:50)

RLC calls this an unnamed Discipline piece, but it's actually the first track of *The Soul Vibrations of Man*, with a different arrangement. The main melody is still played by double flutes. After the head, the whole band drops out for a gorgeous organ/vibes interlude, which mutates to a wilder drum-driven organ outing, with wild horns adding to the mix.

3. DISCIPLINE 8 incl. SKETCH (19:01)

Get ready for another Gilmore extravaganza, this time an extended high-range solo over the brooding chords of "Discipline 8" swelling and repeating underneath. The melody of "Discipline 8" is warm-blooded and somber, and sounds to me tangentially related to the chords of "On Jupiter." After a strong, evocative reading of the theme, complete with organ swirls, the brooding three-note figure is played, with free drums boiling along. The figure is repeated, with variations in texture and tone from flutes and saxes. At ca. 2:43, baritone sax (and another sax?) solos over the figure. Gilmore dominates from ca. 3:51 on, although another horn (Danny Davis on alto?) joins in at ca. 8:00. More amazing events occur further on. At ca. 9:50, vocalist Art Jenkins contributes a solo, followed by short trombone and trumpet solos. Then, still on top of the "Discipline 8" chords, at ca. 15:05, the organ touches on, and the vibes pick up on, the head of the composition "Sketch"! "Sketch" only appears one other place in the Ra canon, on the LP *Other Planes of There* from 1964! This quick appearance of the typically convoluted Ra freebop theme is not even noted in RLC. The horns pick up the theme at ca. 16:10 and play through the whole head--then, as quickly as it appeared, it disappears, never to be heard again in any of the concerts documented so far (unless it's buried, unnoticed, somewhere else the way it was here). Things finally wrap up with the "Discipline 8" head.

4. ROCKET NUMBER NINE (4:30)

5. ROCKET NUMBER NINE contd. (8:36)

This version is closest in spirit to the primarily vocal version on the Blue Thumb *Space is the Place* LP: orchestrated vocals, wild sax solos.

1971-11-29 PARIS (RLC 185)

6. DISCIPLINE ? (3:53)

Sorry about the sound level on this track. The tape source must have deteriorated; the sound is wobbly. But this is a unique recording of an unknown Discipline piece, and it's really cool. It's too bad Ra didn't systematically record more of this wonderful series for posterity. There's a great solo sax break (Marshall Allen?) in this one. The melody is typically dark and foreboding.

1972-06-07 SLUG'S, NYC (RLC 193)

This was an amazing night, with several obscure compositions--an excellent performance.

7. DISCIPLINE ? --> ALONG CAME RA --> 7/4 VAMP (6:02)

8. 7/4/VAMP contd. (11:46)

9. ALONG CAME RA contd. (1:29)

Yet another cool Discipline piece. This one is similar especially to the Discipline piece on *Koboutek*. A lot of nice free percussion occurs throughout the melody. At ca. 3:21 everything drops out for a Gilmore solo outing that's forceful and strong, reaching the stratosphere as it develops.

At ca. 4:58, "Along Came Ra" begins. This is the early version of this composition, later to be a vocal piece often used to as an intro for Ra's entrance in a set (see Discs 6 and 7 for examples). Here, it's instrumental, a great mid-tempo swing shuffle, which right after the melody breaks into a much faster tempo. RLC calls this simply a "7/4 vamp," but it could just as easily be seen as part of "Along Came Ra," especially since they return to that melody later on. Whatever. The vamp is a strong, driving showcase for some fierce soloing (including Allen on alto and Gilmore), with a cool "Space is the Place"-style baritone sax bass line. Incidentally, this is the same music that is

used in the film *Space is the Place* when Ra is being chauffeured around in Oakland in the white convertible by the Overseer. (Unfortunately, it didn't make it to the soundtrack CD). I'm guessing this was a showcase for dancers. The vamp goes on too long, perhaps, before breaking back into "Along Came Ra."

10. THEME OF THE STARGAZERS --> DISCIPLINE 11 (2:41)
11. DISCIPLINE 11 contd. (7:58)

From a nicely sung rendering of "Stargazers," Ra moves into a solo moog outing that sets the stage for the stately "Discipline 11." In its mood, tempo, and layering of a trumpet-led melody over the elegiac long tones of the horns, this composition is very reminiscent of "Discipline 99." Ra plays a nice moog solo over the horn chords as they develop and mutate. This is a breathtakingly beautiful work.

LIVE HIGHLIGHTS disc 4

1972-06-07 SLUG'S, NYC (RLC 193)

1. UNIDENTIFIED TITLE (8:34)

This is misnamed in RLC as "Somewhere Else." I don't hear that at all here. After a Marshall Allen solo alto sax intro, the band settles into a groove based on chords related to "Discipline 27." It's another organ-based groove similar to what appears on *My Brother the Wind Volume II*, with a trumpet solo.

2. DISCIPLINE ? --> SHADOW WORLD [head only] (8:25)

The sound is pretty rough on this track--again, probably tape deterioration. It's too bad, because it's a cool two-chord riff that goes on for four minutes before a fiery alto sax solo (Danny Davis) breaks in. This is an incredible solo that goes on for four more minutes before the whole band plays the "Shadow World" head while Davis wails on! An incredible moment.

3. DISCIPLINE ? (3:58) -->

I've heard this riff before, but where? Two short horn bursts and a longer chord, with a hot organ solo. After two minutes, another jump riff comes in, so cool and deep and developed, you just want to be there and groove. This segues directly into...

4. ANGELS AND DEMONS AT PLAY (3:57)

This is played fast, much faster than the classic studio version, with a great piercing Marshall Allen alto sax solo. Since this piece wasn't played live that much, I included this version in addition to the definitive live version coming up three tracks from now.

1972-11-02/03 "MYSTERY BOARD" [not in RLC]

5. UNIDENTIFIED TITLE (2:08)

Another beautiful unknown title, the head characterized by the keening oboe, with organ featured prominently before taking over completely.

6. INTERGALACTIC UNIVERSE (9:09)

The only other place this composition is known to appear is on the rehearsal tapes before the European tour of 1971. That makes this a perfect example of the catalog of compositions band members have said they'd rehearse extensively before a show, only to never play it that night. Of course we don't have recordings of every single show from this tour, but it is interesting that it doesn't show up on even one. What amazes me is how Ra could neglect this wonderful piece; it certainly deserves more attention. It's a soul-jazz groove guided by Rocksichord/clavinet with the head beautifully executed by Gilmore, who then proceeds to play gorgeous variations. He just sounds fabulous. This solo is a gift. Anything that follows has to be anticlimactic, but Kwame Hadi's trumpet solo is compelling on its own terms--actually, it's quite beautiful! This is just a killer performance.

7. ANGELS AND DEMONS AT PLAY (10:48)

Here is the definitive live version of this composition. With the bass line doubled by baritone sax, Marshall Allen plays the melody, on alto sax rather than flute, before embarking on a killer alto sax solo that embellishes and stretches the head. And this powerful solo is a long one, lasting over six minutes before entering bass/percussion territory.

1974-12-11 SANTA CRUZ (RLC 222)

8. THEME OF THE STARGAZERS (3:26)

An always appealing song, this version has a strong group vocal immediately followed by super-industrial hardcore space-age solo synthesizer.

9. PLANET EARTH [voc] (1:01)

The scores show that Ra had lyrics for several of his early compositions, but his early albums were predominantly instrumental. Only a handful of his songs were recorded with lyrics. While they may have been performed with lyrics back in the '50s, we have no recorded evidence of any. However, he did use lyrics for some of these songs later, in the '70s and '80s, as several selections from this compilation will attest. This is a spirited vocal version of one such song resurrected from the '50s, led by organ and dominated by June Tyson.

1975-06-11 FIVE SPOT, NYC (RLC 227)

10. SLIPPERY HORN (3:19)

An excellent close rendering of the Ellington composition, never officially released by Ra, very much in the spirit of the '30s original, with a lovely muted trumpet solo and a Gilmore clarinet solo.

1977-04-17 SMUCKERS, NYC (RLC 244)

11. (THE WORLD IS WAITING FOR) THE SUNRISE (3:38)

I've loved this song ever since its tantalizingly short appearance on *Live at Montreux*, so I've included a couple of different versions of it here. It was usually used to introduce Ra onstage. This version is more in the form of a chant, with slightly different timing (or rhythmic emphasis) than the Montreux version.

12. DISCIPLINE 27 (5:54)

A nice compact version of this classic, with slightly different harmonies and a lot of dissonance. There's a great mellophone/trumpet solo and several minutes of full band free blowing.

1978-01-23 MILANO (RLC 263)

13. UNIDENTIFIED TITLE (10:11)

This untitled ballad is from the same concert that produced the LP *Disco 3000*. At one point the whole concert was scheduled to be released on vinyl by Art Yard, but there's a rumor that it has since been cancelled. This is a real shame, because all of the music from the quartet sessions in Italy, both live and in the studio (the ones that produced *Media Dream*, *Other Voices Other Blues*, *Disco 3000*, *New Steps*, and half of *Sound Mirror*) is pure gold. Similar in feel to some of the quieter pieces on the Horo LPs, this finds Gilmore playing at his purest and deepest, having a conversation with Ra on piano. Even Michael Ray doesn't sound so offensive here, even though his over-the-top grandstanding totally destroys the sublime mood created by Gilmore's four-minute exploration of beauty. Ray doesn't even do that annoying fake-echo tic, even though every time I hear this I get all edgy waiting for him to, like he does in practically every other solo I've ever heard him play with Sun Ra. His mercifully short solo is followed by a short piano solo and a new sax/trumpet riff (possibly moving into a different composition--should I know this? It sounds familiar; at least, it's very much in the vein of the new Horo compositions).

LIVE HIGHLIGHTS disc 5

1978-07 WUHY-FM, PHILADELPHIA (RLC 272)

1. TAPESTRY FROM AN ASTEROID [voc] (2:20)

Another vocal version of a '50s instrumental. This is a gorgeous June Tyson vocal, with minimal percussive accompaniment, before the full band explodes in a glorious unfolding of free ruminations.

2. (THE WORLD IS WAITING) FOR THE SUNRISE (:57)

Another take on this piece, with a more prominent African/percussion bent.

3. WHEN THERE IS NO SUN (1:28)

I love the Horo version on *New Steps*, which, as sung by John Gilmore and Michael Ray there, is almost perfect in its sublimity, but it's great to hear June Tyson sing it too.

1978-09-25 JAZZ SHOWCASE, CHICAGO (RLC 280)

**4. SPRINGTIME IN CHICAGO [voc] -->
ASTRO BLACK --> (THE WORLD IS WAITING)
FOR THE SUNRISE --> (8:48)**

Another relatively rare vocal version of a '50s instrumental, again beautifully sung by June Tyson. Was there ever a better vocalist for Ra's compositions? Nope. After the two-minute song, the full band plays a free transition piece, with solo guitar from Dale Williams arising out of it. The guitar is more rock-oriented than the earlier, jazzier solos of Calvin Newborn or the later solos of Bruce Edwards and Carl LeBlanc, but it fits in nicely here. From there, Tyson grooves with "Astro Black" in a pretty loosely funky version, changing to another short full band free transition before "For the Sunrise" and Ra's entrance.

5. DISCIPLINE 27 --> THE SHADOW WORLD (19:23)

A grooving dissonant version of the second-most-played Discipline piece (second only to its splinter piece, "Discipline 27-II," which mutated and took on a life of its own both as a composition in and of itself and as a backdrop for extended sermons and rants), with a blistering trumpet solo for just another two minutes before getting totally out. The full band blows hard and fast before Marshall Allen takes over for a hardcore solo alto fireball. From there, they go straight into a tight rendering of "Shadow World," with Ra on synthesizer and Gilmore in high-speed, high-register intensity mode. Then there's all kinds of solos, all interacting with synthesizer. As the full band joins in, beware the Michael Ray fake-echo thing at ca. 10:24. After some solo synth, Gilmore breaks in at ca. 15:52 for some major high-intensity soloing, strong and out in the Marshall Allen vein, really aggressive and intense. From there, back to the head, played super fast and without percussion. Maybe Gilmore was thinking back to his solo when he announces, right after the end, "That's a Sun Ra composition entitled 'The Shadow World,' and it's movin' pretty fast, right?" Yeah, man!

6. OVER THE RAINBOW (2:23)

7. OVER THE RAINBOW contd. (4:43)

Ra latched onto this song in the late '70s and played it sporadically the rest of his career. Most of his versions are either solo pieces or piano trios, but here he plays organ, with a fast full band arrangement that swings pretty hard. Not

the most transcendent version he ever played (I would give the nod to the one on *Of Mythic Worlds* for that), but very nice nonetheless, with a great Gilmore solo that alone is worth the price of admission.

8. BODY AND SOUL (9:18)

This song is usually played by most folks as a ballad; here, as in the previous song, Ra gives us a medium-up-tempo organ swing arrangement, with a jump-style riff to go along with the melody. Thankfully, though, he retains the other tradition of the song as a tenor sax showcase, and so we have a typically brilliant Gilmore solo. There's also great organ work from Ra, and excellent trumpet soloing from Walter Miller.

9. NEXT STOP MARS/CALLING PLANET EARTH [inc] (9:10)

With organ, this opens with a nicely-sung version of "Next Stop Mars" with Gilmore and Tyson's vocals prominent. The evocation of Mars leads into a relatively subdued spacey group improvisation with synthesizer and sax leading the way. The moog playing is especially nice, reminiscent of the moog sounds on *Concert for the Comet Koboutek*. After that, the organ signals "Calling Planet Earth," with vocal exhortations summoning high-energy blasting from the entire band. I love it when the whole band kicks into high gear, *Ascension*-style, with Ra's keyboards right in there draping sonic intensity over the whole group sound. Just beware of Michael Ray's fake-echo cliché at ca. 8:38!

1979-05-04 NEW ORLEANS (RLC 295)

10. SPRINGTIME AGAIN (5:53)

Here's a nice organ-driven version of this beautiful melody, which first appeared on the LP *Sleeping Beauty*. After the vocals, a typically transcendent Gilmore solo--what a tone! What ideas!

1979-05-10 The Bayou, DC (RLC 298)

11. CELESTIAL ROAD (13:56)

This is a strong version, played slightly faster than the studio version from *Strange Celestial Road*. It's a beautiful melody, sung with verve by Gilmore and others, immediately followed by a blistering tenor sax solo. A large part of this

performance is devoted to singing the melody over and over, with hand clapping, etc. (although there is some nice synth soloing toward the end).

A note about the tenor sax solo: this doesn't sound like Gilmore to me--there's a heavy use of vibrato here that he doesn't tend to use, and the tone is different. To my ears, this solo is definitely by the same soloist who is on the studio recording of "UFO," on the album *On Jupiter*, from the same month. But RLC only lists Gilmore on tenor sax for that session, so I have to concur with that listing, and thus conclude that this solo too is by Gilmore, but I have my doubts. Other possible players are Hutch Jones or Kenny Williams, both of whom appear on the Bayou gig. Further research needed!

LIVE HIGHLIGHTS disc 6

1979-05-10 THE BAYOU, DC (RLC 298)

1. TAPESTRY FROM AN ASTEROID [voc] (2:14)

This June Tyson vocal has a swing accompaniment on bass, drums, and percussion, before a quick free band foray (but watch out for Michael Ray's fake echo thing again! Maybe I should just have a symbol for that, or an acronym, like FRET--"Fake Ray Echo Thing"--because he uses it on ALMOST EVERY DAMN SOLO HE EVER PLAYED WITH SUN RA). Okay, sorry, back to non-caps...

2. EL IS A SOUND OF JOY (7:20)

Does every entry have to start with "This"? At any rate, note that there's a one-second blip at ca. :48. This version of "El" has a streamlined arrangement similar to the one on *Live at Montreux*, with Michael Ray soloing over the middle riff, marred by, yes, a FRET at ca. 1:48. But it's all redeemed immediately after with a strong Gilmore solo, with the horn riffs getting riffer. After that comes a grooving organ solo, the mood hearkening back to the grooves of *My Brother the Wind Vol. II*. Now, check this: after the organ solo, another tenor sax solo, one that sounds very similar to the soloist on "UFO" and the live version of "Celestial Road" which appears here on CD 5, track 11 (see my notes above). If Gilmore already soloed, and in a way different vein, then who is this? Is it in fact a baritone sax instead? Or could it be one of the other tenor sax players on this gig, one who is uncredited on the LP *On Jupiter*? Unfortunately, we get another FRET again at the conclusion.

3. 'ROUND MIDNIGHT (10:35)

This song has always been a Gilmore feature, but this version, rather than being sublime, is quite raucous. Gilmore's opening solo is robust and rousing, with nice muted trumpet obbligatos behind it. This is followed by a nice trumpet solo by, I believe, Walter Miller (well, no FRET's anyway!). The piece concludes with some more great tenor sax. I'm considering changing the name of this collection to "Great Live Gilmore Solos, plus Sun Ra." As I said earlier, you can see where my biases are in my selections--almost every one has at least one great Gilmore solo!

1979-11-24 SOUNDSCAPE, NYC (RLC 316)

4. UNIDENTIFIED TITLE (8:44)

This (largely improvised?) piece starts off with a spacey vibes duet. After a quiet bass solo and a nice baritone sax solo (by Kenny Williams?), the ensemble passage emerges, highly reminiscent of the Discipline pieces. It's shortly superseded by an outrageous, high-intensity unaccompanied Gilmore tenor sax solo that lasts four minutes long. Intense!

5. THE WAY YOU LOOK TONIGHT (4:44)

A peppy version of the Fields/Kern standard. The main discographical mystery is: who is the vocalist? He's male, even though he shares a lot of timbral and stylistic inflection with June Tyson--you can easily imagine her singing this, in this style, and sometimes you could almost swear it is her, but it isn't. This singer wasn't a regular member of the Arkestra, or at least if he was he didn't sing so much. Was he a guest? Anyway, need I say there's also a great Gilmore solo?

6. IMAGES (13:57)

"Images" is one of my favorite early Ra compositions, and every version I've ever heard him play is a gem. This one starts with an extended piano introduction. When the band kicks in, it's at top speed and in high gear. This arrangement includes the middle eight section that was often left off in versions from the '70s and '80s. First solo up is a blistering trumpet solo by Michael Ray, actually one of his best ever, even though it's tainted by his stupid FRET at ca. 7:13. Next up is a cooking piano solo with Ra in full classic "jazz" mode. Finally, we are treated to yet another superb Gilmore solo, this one

unaccompanied, beautiful in its logic and power. A super version of a classic Ra composition.

7. DOOR OF THE COSMOS (1:41)

A catchy space chant version of this cool song from the LP *Sleeping Beauty*, with June Tyson shining above.

CA. 1980 FROM "A JOYFUL NOISE" (RLC 271 & 321)

I couldn't resist including a couple of musical extracts from the soundtrack of this film.

8. ALONG CAME RA --> DISCIPLINE 27 [inc] (2:45)

The vibes are much higher in the mix than I remembered, maybe because they are hardly shown in the film. This is the best version of "Along Came Ra," I think, the perfect rendering of this great melody by June Tyson. Then Ra nails "Mystery Mr. Ra" before conducting the band in a tight, expansive version of "Discipline 27." Again, note the vibes.

9. DISCIPLINE 27-II [inc] (1:12)

A tight, upbeat version of this, although it will be topped on 1989-08-11 by the excellent version from *Nightstage* (see Disc 8, track 10).

10. GILMORE SOLO (:40)

More great unaccompanied Gilmore, heading out into the stratosphere.

1980-12 DETROIT (RLC 335-341)

11. UNIDENTIFIED TITLE [June Tyson melody] (:53)

This brief wordless ditty is an evocative melody sung by June Tyson and doubled on organ. Did this ever appear anywhere else?

12. WE'LL BE TOGETHER AGAIN (4:02)

Here's an instrumental organ feature of this old chestnut.

1981-01-07 WHITNEY MUSEUM, NYC (RLC 342)

This whole concert is an amazing extended composition (incorporating a couple of older ones), but I limited myself to a couple of favorite moments.

13. OPUS SPRINGTIME (5:13)

This plaintive melody, played by Gilmore, with organ accompaniment, is really cool. The composition would not appear on record until its appearance on a DIW single live from the Pit-Inn in Japan, in 1988, and then on 1990's *Mayan Temples*. After the melody, Gilmore develops a high-register out solo that spans the omniverse.

14. OMNIVERSE WORLD PREMIERE [excerpt] (6:52)

More great Gilmore; really beautiful stuff over dynamic drums and percussion before going into unaccompanied territory. Easily as strong as his exemplary work on the Horo studio LPs. Other horns begin to join in, probably in a guided fashion from Ra, and the mood begins to change, things getting more intense and overblown with big band intensity (peaking the meters, I'm afraid) that harkens back to the European tour of 1970. The cacophony stops for a nice bowed bass solo break, then low notes and guided chaos break out again for a splendid climax.

LIVE HIGHLIGHTS disc 7

1981-01-17 SQUAT THEATER, NYC (RLC 343)

1. DANCE OF INNOCENT PASSION (8:09)

A riff-driven piece with Ra on organ. This is really heavy on the percussion. The overlapping riffs and horn lines are compelling. There's also a nice trombone solo and some out horn work toward the end.

2. GROOVIN' HIGH (7:17)

Here's a relatively straight-ahead bebop arrangement, again with Ra on organ, taking the first solo. After that, an extended Gilmore solo, then trumpet, with horn punctuations. Overall, a nice, swinging rendition.

1981-09-02 SOUNDSTAGE (TV), CHICAGO (RLC 351)

3. ALONG CAME RA (1:34)

Another nice version of this intro piece, close in arrangement to the one on *A Joyful Noise*.

1982-06-24 MANNHEIM, GERMANY (RLC 365)

4. GILMORE FALSETTO SOLO (2:53)

Just as it says, with Ra on organ getting him started.

5. WHAT'S NEW? (10:00)

Similar in arrangement and feel to many versions of “Images,” we start off with an unaccompanied piano solo intro before breaking into the piece proper. This version swings hard, starting off with a burning trumpet solo by either Ronnie Brown or Longineu Parsons that’s exceptional for its exploration of the middle register, often breaking into growling. Then we get a quick piano solo before Gilmore takes over and turns in a particularly hot solo. This is the mighty Arkestra big band engine in full roar.

6. QUEER NOTIONS (2:51)

This Coleman Hawkins composition, originally recorded by Fletcher Henderson’s band, similar in feel to another ‘30s piece Ra performed a lot, “Frisco Fog,” was played less often by Ra. It’s too bad, because the rapid chord changes and horn lines perfectly suited the band’s Fletcher Henderson repertoire. Here, the ensemble is tight and swinging, and Gilmore solos heartily (if too briefly!).

7. A LOST HORIZON (12:27)

A nice latter-day seldom-played composition that starts off with multiple heavy percussion breaks before June Tyson sings the melody, accompanied only by percussion. Then the full band erupts in out/free form blowing, with female vocals right in there, different soloists coming to the fore, organ swirling, totally out for a long time before a cool organ/trumpet dialogue, quickly joined by other horns and finally the full band again. “Cosmo Shangri-La” indeed—a ten-minute tour de force.

1985-08-11 TEMPLE OF MUSIC, PROVIDENCE, RI (RLC 460)

8. UNTITLED IMPROVISATION[excerpt] (4:52) -->

This opening improv mainly features Marshall Allen on kora, leading into percussion and then EVI. From what I can tell, Ra hadn't appeared onstage yet (since "Lion of the Heavens," below, was a typical intro piece for Ra, and improvs usually opened sets around this time period, and you can hear applause from the end of "Lions" and into "Different Horizon"), but it sure sounds like him on synth—I think it's one or more EVIs going wild.

9. SUNOLOGY (THE LION OF THE HEAVENS) --> A DIFFERENT HORIZON (5:03)

Another example of June Tyson singing lyrics to a song that had appeared originally on a '50s Saturn album as an instrumental. "A Different Horizon" is a mesmerizing melody/chant used to introduce Ra; you can hear the applause as he comes onstage. Marshall Allen joins in on aggressive outside alto sax. The piece ends with conducted group improv.

10. I'LL NEVER BE THE SAME (8:28)

A pleasantly swinging instrumental version of this big band piece, capstoned by a virile, swinging Gilmore tenor sax solo.

1986-06-24 RADIO BREMEN, WEST GERMANY (RLC 501)

11. DAY DREAM (4:54)

Here's a relatively seldom-played cover arrangement of a Duke Ellington piece (a Strayhorn composition). Ra approaches this in much the same way he did "Prelude to a Kiss," even going so far as to mirror the bombastic drums used in that piece (especially by Earl "Buster" Smith), and to feature Marshall Allen's blistering alto sax in the same way. I'm not totally convinced that this arrangement brings out the beauty inherent in Strayhorn's composition--I would go so far as to say it doesn't do justice to Ellington's recordings of it--but it's still fun to listen to.

1987-05-10 KUUMBWA JAZZ CENTER, SANTA CRUZ, CA (RLC 536)

12. BEAUTIFUL LOVE (4:33)

Ra often played a lovely, lush arrangement of this song in the '80s. His vocals are plaintive, unique, and I think, quite touching. And, damn, what do you know--another brilliant Gilmore solo! He's on fire here, and this solo is thematically similar to the ones that sparkle so many of the songs on *Mayan Temples*.

LIVE HIGHLIGHTS disc 8

1987-05-10 KUUMBWA JAZZ CENTER, SANTA CRUZ, CA (RLC 536)

1. CAREFREE [excerpt] (8:22)

This is the first of two versions of this latter-day work included in this compilation. A slow, marching processional pulse underpins a piano intro. After the head, we get a great Gilmore solo. Well, not simply great--it's incredible, lasting almost seven minutes. A marvel. After that, Ra does some melodic vocalizing as only he can. We fade before the preaching starts.

2. MOOD INDIGO (6:38)

This unique arrangement starts off with a glorious piano introduction. Ra builds more on later Ellington versions rather than the slow moody original. In fact, this arrangement, with this tempo, is closer to Mingus's on *Mingus Dynasty* than to Ellington's original. Ra's well-recorded piano shines throughout, and there is a nice Ronald Wilson trumpet solo as well.

1987-10-03 VICTORIAVILLE FESTIVAL, QUEBEC (RLC 548)

3. LIGHTS ON A SATELLITE (9:56)

An excellent version of this Ra standard, with the head played by Gilmore as on *Live at Montreux*. Unlike that arrangement, though, here we get a great short synth solo with flute soloing behind it before Gilmore takes off and delivers yet another glorious solo.

1988-09-30 NIGHTSTAGE, CAMBRIDGE, MA (RLC 590)

4. DROP ME OFF IN HARLEM [inc] (8:37)

Here's a punchy, uptempo, kick-ass swing version of another Ellington (actually Ellington/Kenny) composition from the '30s. The band whirls through the arrangement, pushed by Ra's piano comping. Plus a kick-ass Gilmore solo! The guitar solo by Bruce Edwards can't help but be anticlimactic--it must have been hard to follow Gilmore on stage.

5. SOMETIMES I'M HAPPY (4:54)

Instead of a great June Tyson vocal (for that, see *Nuclear War*), here we have Ra himself doing the singing, and it's quite cool. After a nice jazzy guitar solo by Bruce Edwards, and the vocals, we get treated to yet another great Gilmore solo. Ra comes back and swings the vocals out to the end.

1988-10-29 PALM THEATRE, DAVIS, CA (RLC 592)

6. UNIDENTIFIED TITLE (6:30)

This loopy mysterious 3/4 piece serves as the intro to the first set of this show, with solos by (probably) Eddie Gale on trumpet, Noel Scott on alto sax, then percussion and horns, and Marshall Allen on alto sax. During the short drum solo, Ra makes his appearance.

7. CAREFREE [excerpt] (9:35)

This version, faster than the one from Santa Cruz (see track 1 of this disc), includes a cool synthesizer solo before the head. And after the head: a great Gilmore solo, with Ra synth interpolations. After that, Ra sermonizes over the waltz groove: "There are other worlds" and "Angel race." We fade after a while.

1988-10-30 KUUMBWA JAZZ CENTER, SANTA CRUZ, CA (RLC 593)

8. BLUE LOU (4:09)

This Fletcher Henderson arrangement appears on a lot of live shows, but not so many official releases. This particular version is distinguished by a longer-than-usual (for this song) Gilmore solo.

9. UNTITLED IMPROVISATION (4:15)

Really two solos in a row: a two-minute high-intensity falsetto Gilmore tenor sax solo, and a two-minute synthesizer solo from Ra.

1989-08-11 NIGHTSTAGE, CAMBRIDGE, MA (RLC 628)

I was lucky enough to be at this concert, so it has a special place in my heart.

10. DISCIPLINE 27-II/ANGEL RACE (7:49)

The band's in a real groove here, swinging hard, and Ra is really energized in his vocal preaching/delivery. In fact, to me, this is one of the all-time best versions of this composition extant. "Why not now?" I especially love the "To be or not to be" discourse. We are all be-ings, aren't we?

11. YOU'VE LOST YOUR WAY (3:54)

The band goes through guided free out improv passages, punctuated by Ra's vocal interjections, culminating in a breathtaking high-energy falsetto Gilmore tenor sax solo!

12. EAST OF THE SUN (3:23)

This is one of the best versions of this swing piece, engagingly sung by Gilmore. Ra's piano playing is really nice here as well, including a great solo.

LIVE HIGHLIGHTS disc 9

1989-08-11 NIGHTSTAGE, CAMBRIDGE, MA (RLC 628) contd.

1. WISHING WELL (8:38)

It's a shame there aren't more official releases of Ra playing Disney tunes. Looking at the discography, we can see that he played many more than the ones appearing on the Leo release *Second Star to the Right*, the only commercial Ra release (besides the one track appearing on the Hal Wilner compilation *Stay Awake*) featuring any Disney songs at all. The Leo CD is far from essential, due to another notable fault: Gilmore wasn't present at the gig when it was recorded. The Disney tunes there are jokey and campy, whereas the Disney

songs they played at Nightstage were pretty deep (well, and jokey, too, but with a better spirit, I think). "Wishing Well" is the cream of the crop: a deep groove, serious piano comping, and a stellar Gilmore solo--and all this before Ra's swinging call-and-response lead vocals, complete with muted trumpet obbligatos.

2. SOMEBODY ELSE'S IDEA [excerpt pt. 1] (11:19)

3. SOMEBODY ELSE'S IDEA [excerpt pt. 2] (:59)

This was extraordinary. Ra played this song for 45 minutes. The recorders had to edit it after a while because, while it was hypnotically repetitive, they were running out of tape! Ah, that something as mundane as the sheer physicality of a tangible recording medium can determine the capture of a complete performance for posterity. The excerpts here give a pretty good idea of what was heard: strong flutes, heavy percussion, the whole band singing the haunting wordless part of the melody while Ra wandered around the audience, periodically picking someone to stand up so he could paddle them, Ra as spacey Zen master of the universe. Ra also recites the lyrics, and, as in the few other live versions I've heard, goes off into an indictment of life on Earth and its limitations set by the existence of death. Included is the classic line, "Tomorrow never comes to a world in love with yesterday."

4. UNIDENTIFIED BALLAD (11:19) -->

This piece starts off with a lovely piano/bowed bass (John Ore) duet. Quiet drums come in, and Marshall Allen steps to the fore for a quirky solo, followed by a subdued muted trumpet solo by Cecil Brooks. There's also a nice piano solo, marred only (to my ears) by the incessant woodblock hitting on two and four. Sometimes heavy-handed percussion just isn't necessary, especially in an otherwise fluid beautiful ballad. Many, many Fletcher Henderson songs played by Ra in the late '80s and early '90s are also lessened by this unnecessary and unswinging metronomic hammering away on the two and four on woodblock or cowbell. Oh, well, at least here it isn't that loud. And all is saved with a stunning Gilmore tenor sax solo that's just beauty personified. You can really hear Ore's bass backing him up, too.

5. YESTERDAYS (5:58) -->

The slow ballad metamorphoses into this cooking version of "Yesterdays," with the band swinging mightily, including a hot trumpet solo, restrained but exciting, and a killer Gilmore solo.

6. FRIENDLY GALAXY (4:52)

This compilation comes almost full circle, with piano leading this powerful version of the fantastic mystical piece from the '60s that led off Disc 1. Ore's bass is powerful, and the dissonant horns give the feel an Oriental flavor. This is similar in arrangement to the studio version that would soon be recorded for *Purple Night*, only much shorter here. There's a nice flute solo from Marshall Allen.

1990-03-10 LEEUWARDEN, NETHERLANDS (RLC 651)

7. PLANET EARTH DAY [MYTHIC 1] (6:33)

This is a powerful processional composition of grand proportions. The version here is much stronger than the one on *Pleaidēs* (incorrectly listed there as "Mythic 1") with the orchestra, which was poorly recorded and weakly executed. Here, the groove is strong and the horn lines are played powerfully and majestically. It helps that the bass is well-recorded and strong in the mix. It serves as the perfect grounding for the great trumpet solo by Jothan Collins and the synth solo, where things get spacey while the groove percolates underneath.

1990-03-31 NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY, BOSTON, MA (RLC 652)

8. SPRINGTIME AGAIN (6:50)

I was at this concert. The Arkestra was particularly big that evening, augmented by two or three young white students on trumpet. This lovely version is notable not only for June Tyson's vocals but also for the transcendent "horn" solo sung by old-time Arkestra member Art Jenkins, emulating a growling wah-wah Ellingtonian trumpet before being eclipsed by a gorgeous Gilmore solo. This is a beautiful, inspiring version of this song, and a lovely way to close this compilation. Hope you've enjoyed it!

Sam Byrd, Feb.-Oct. 2006



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