



Monty Alexander
Here Comes The Sun

MPS Records (LC00979)
Distributor: Edel:Kultur (GER) /
Naxos (USA)/absolute (UK)

Vinyl UPC/EAN: 4029759124061
Vinyl Cat.-No.: 0212406MSW
Vinyl Release Date: November 10th
2017

CD UPC/EAN: 4029759124078
CD Cat.-No.: 0212407MSW
CD Release Date: November 10th
2017

www.mps-music.de

More info and artwork:

<http://www.herzogpromotion.com>

Keywords: MPS Records, 1971, Eugene Wright (Bass), Montego Joe (Congas), Duffy Jackson (Drums), Monty Alexander (Piano), audiophile 180g vinyl, CD, Download

This 1971 recording signals the beginning of Jamaican pianist Monty Alexander's fruitful relationship with MPS, lasting over a decade and encompassing some dozen albums. Originally touted as heir to Oscar Peterson's crown, Alexander is famous for his virtuoso melding of jazz, the sounds of the Caribbean and blues. The classic Dave Brubeck Quartet's bassist Eugene Wright, calypso percussionist Montego Joe, and ace drummer Duffy Jackson round out the quartet. "Montevideo" jumps off with percussive Latin two-beat verve and a witty piano filled with quotes. The ballad "Where is Love" is a searching romantic serenade, and Monty transforms the Beatle's "Here Comes The Sun" into blues-laced Latinesque with a taste of boogie. Monty takes the standard "Love Walked" In at a brisk pace as he demonstrates his considerable straight-ahead jazz chops, bop quotes and all. Check out the tasty walking bass and drum solos. The luscious calypso "Brown Skin Girl" is followed by Monty's tender, wistful solo rendition of his "The Dream Is Mine". The group stretches out on Miles Davis' iconic "So What", grounding the tune with a driving Latin-rock beat. They say variety is the spice of life and Monty Alexander and co. have seasoned this album to perfection.

MPS Releases Fall 2017

The MPS reissue series kicks off in the fall of 2017 with an attractive 'five-pack' of artists who have been central to this label; milestones, rediscoveries and new discoveries, as well as rare and much sought-after pieces are hidden within the recordings from the years 1967 through 1973, with the halcyon (golden) year 1971 smack dab in the middle. The music covers a wide range of styles and formats, ranging from piano masterpieces to vocal jazz on through to filigree guitar work.

On the album "In Tune", a cappella vocal jazz meets up with elaborate keyboard play, as Oscar Peterson joins forces with the vocal architects from Chicago, The Singers Unlimited. A refined dialogue between two musical poles unfolds in a panoply of swinging cooperation, nostalgic, dreamy moments and Brazilian excursions. This 1971 recording was The Singers Unlimited's first album for MPS, and the beginning of a fruitful partnership that had initially come about at the recommendation of Peterson himself.

The musical journey moves on from the Canadian piano giant to his Jamaican colleague, Monty Alexander, who made his MPS debut in the same year with "Here Comes The Sun". Monty steps up with his quartet (bassist Eugene Wright, percussionist Montego Joe, drummer Duff Jackson) and offers up a superb repertoire ranging from a Beatles classic to blues and Latin-hued compositions on through to bebop-flavored pieces and a rock-saturated version of Miles Davis' "So What".

Englishman John Taylor represents the third voice of piano-centered jazz. With this reissue of "Decipher", an album that has long been off the market is available once again. For years Taylor was featured as the house pianist at Ronnie Scott's, London's legendary Jazzclub. First released in 1973, the album also boasts bassist Chris Laurence and drummer Tony Levin. "Decipher" offers a deep insight into Taylor's compositional abilities; virtuoso runs, abstract tonalities with pointillist strokes, an emotive jazz waltz and a soft-spoken ballad mark the trio's diversity and Taylor's emotive world.

Likewise, fans have longed for the re-release of Volker Kriegel's "Spectrum". In a thrilling rollercoaster ride, Kriegel's second album under his own name portrays the diverse qualities of the guitarist who at that time was the enfant terrible of the German and European jazz scene. The album captures an unusually broad stylistic range, as sitar rock, folksy lyricism, and a rondo shot through with free jazz alternate, while silky-smooth guitar runs, grooving percussion, and fluorescent Electra piano lines color the nuanced sound of this 1967 album.

Vocalist Mark Murphy, who died in 2015, was voted Male Vocalist of the Year four times by Downbeat. Early on in his eventful career, he created a musical bridge between America and the Old World that he later renewed by recordings with the likes of German trumpet phenom Till Brönner. Recorded in 1967, "Midnight Mood" stood in the middle of his European decade, a brilliant moment in his long musical journey. Surrounded by eight musicians from the famed Kenny Clarke/Francy Boland Big Band, Murphy performs persuasive adaptations of Ellington, luxuriates in the grandeur of Sinatra, steps in with a nonchalant Hispanic flair, and sounds the depths of dark sensuality and romantic ardor.

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