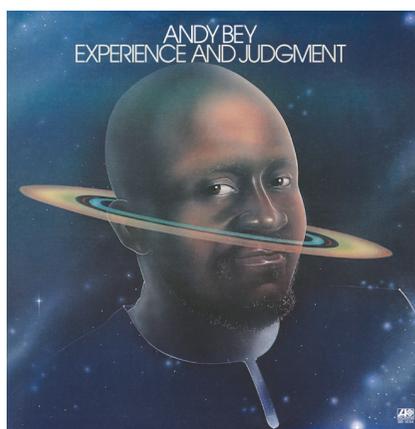


ANDY BEY

EXPERIENCE AND JUDGEMENT SPEAKERS CORNER



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The shame of it is that a lot of people reading this will declare "Andy who?". And I don't blame them, at all. Too much good music and too many great performers somehow disappear under the radar. So consider this one a sort of wake up call.

So, to properly cover this album, let's address that question. Who is Andy Bey? Bey was born in New Jersey in the USA in 1939 and quickly found that he had a voice. It was a voice that would develop quickly and would be recognised by many. Bey had a strong and wide-ranging voice. His delivery can range from jazz vocal to blues to full-throated soul. Sometimes within the same song.

Bey recorded his first album when he was seventeen, 'Mama's Little Boy's Got the Blues'. He even founded a sibling group with his two sisters as Andy & the Bey Sisters, recording three albums and touring Europe.

Big names recognised Bey's talent pretty quickly. People like Hank Mobley and Max Roach performed with him. With Gary Bartz he produced highly political works directed at the USA's handling of the Vietnam conflict. The man was not afraid to speak up.

In fact, the man is a thinker and a bit of a music and life-based philosopher. "I think I'm a more spiritual person. You can be religious and not be spiritual. You can be spiritual and not be religious at all. It's not about a judgmental thing; everybody's at a different level. And I find that, with myself, it's dealing with everyday challenges. That to me is more important than dealing with anything else. If you can't handle the things around you, if you don't know how to adjust to your surroundings and understanding what happiness is not...when you understand what happiness is not, then you arrive at what happiness is".

As the seventies progressed, Bey teamed up with Horace Silver and performed on some of Silver's religious-toned LPs of the early seventies.

It was around this time that this album popped up. 'Experience and Judgement' was released in 1974 on the Atlantic label. I don't know if the Silver influence had anything to

do with it and the sense of spirituality has already been mentioned here but, on this LP, there is a real spiritual feeling to this jazz funk album. I say jazz funk but you'd be forgiven for calling this release hard-core soul. Depends how you look at it, really.

Bey uses his voice to maximum impact on this twelve-track release, half of which were written by Bey himself. He can lift his delivery up to alto from a smooth baritone. Although maybe Bey would disagree. As he told The New York Times. "I can sing like a tenor at full power, like UHNUHNUHnuhnuh (cue a bellow from the chest, starting high and descending) but I'm really not a tenor. Range doesn't determine what you are; it's the colour of your voice. And the colour of my voice is very dark, very deep. I'm a bass-baritone".

It's Bey's organisation that is most impressive. His work resembles the skill of a top footballer. That is, no matter how crowded the work, how high the emotion, how busy the task involved, he will always find space to work and room to manoeuvre – appearing that he has more time to think than he really has. It's an impressive illusion because it means that Bey has total control of his voice and material in hand.

Some might think that Bey's powerful voice was too much for the majority of jazz material. Well here, with this soul underpinning, it might have found its home. His baritone combining with life advice and comments on Tune Up and You Should Have Seen The Way that focuses on yoga, meditation and healthy eating. A self-help performance on black wax, you might say.

Over the past twenty years, this album has seen a couple of reissues: back in 2005 from Atlantic itself and Be With Records in 2016. I have to say that I didn't get a chance to hear those issues but I can recommend this one from the highly respected audiophile label, Germany's Speakers Corner.

Created from original master tapes, this vinyl edition is an analogue production throughout the chain while the rather nice pressing has been produced by Germany's own Pallas. One of the best pressing plants in the world. **PR**