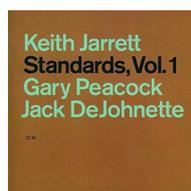


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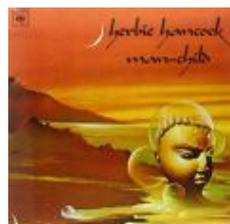


Herbie Hancock – Man-Child – Speakers Corner

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Herbie Hancock – Man-Child – Columbia PC 33812 (1975)/Speakers Corner (2013) 180-gram stereo vinyl, 45:23 **1/2:**



Speakers Corner has released a dazzling re-



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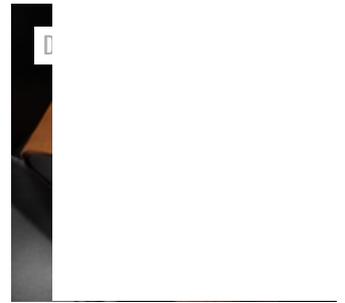
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mastered 180-gram vinyl of Herbie Hancock's fusion classic, *Man-Child*. The album was recorded in 1975 and featured a veritable all-star cadre of musicians (many of whom are part of Headhunters). There are multiple players on guitar, electric bass, drums, reeds and horns. At the center of this is Hancock on Fender Rhodes, piano and all forms of synthesizer. This is not a free-form excursion into jazz fusion, it is a funk groove-fest. Side 1 opens with a relentless flow on "Hang Up Your Han Ups". Paul Jackson's electric bass sets up "Wah Wah" Watson's nasty guitar hooks. This has been frequently sampled. The layers of horns, reeds and synthesizer (including strings) envelop and stretch out the aural landscape. There are jazzy chord transitions, and a subtle, mellower piano interlude that offsets the r & b template. "Sun Touch" takes it down a notch with a gliding (and at times halting) rhythm. Hancock's Fender Rhodes glows (with some echo) and the repeat vamp maintains the pulse. A tuba (Dick Hyde) and percussion (Bill Summers) meshes perfectly. Returning to the funk train, "The Traitor" utilizes familiar slap-bass riffs that propel the tight grooves in visceral hypnotic dynamics. Hancock employs a variety of exotic synthesized tones and solos within the group context of the jam. There are brief, muscular horn accents against synth strings that expand the soundscape.

Side 2 "struts its stuff" beginning with the slower, but locked-down "Bubbles". The swirling atmospherics counters the tight soul, guitar and "fat" bass. Wayne Shorter contributes an understated, but effective solo on soprano saxophone. There is a level of contained rowdiness. But on "Steppin' In It", the overall vibe is bigger, fuller, all-out Headhunters. The arrangement is concise with punctuated horns and subtle rhythm changes. Hancock percolates on extended Fender Rhodes runs in 2 solos. There is a familiarity, like Earth Wind & Fire without vocals. As a bonus, Stevie Wonder offers a trademark, virtuosic harmonica solo. It is nothing short of funk heaven. The finale, "Heartbeat" establishes a driving thump-like vamp with scratchy guitar positioned against gossamer synths. This is possibly the closest track to classic fusion instrumentation and arrangement. Hancock is incendiary on Fender which seems the ideal instrument to develop fusion grooves.

Speakers Corner has done a masterful job re-mastering *Man-Child* to audiophile vinyl. The multi-faceted, layered sound is expansive, but never fulsome. The softer, blended synthesizers and Fender tonality is terrific. When a sharper instrumental tone is introduced (soprano saxophone, harmonica) it intermingles perfectly. The front and back cover art by Nobuyuki Nakanishi is stunning, especially in 12" format, and the protected album sleeve is a nice touch.



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Musicians:

Herbie Hancock – piano, Fender Rhodes, ARP Odyssey Pro Soloist 2600; synthesizers, Hohner D 6 clarinet Oberheim Polyphonic synthesizer
 Bud Brisbois – trumpet; Jay DaVersa – trumpet
 Garrett Brown – trombone; Dick Hyde – bass trombone, tuba
 Wayne Shorter – soprano saxophone
 Bennis Maupin – soprano saxophone, tenor saxophone, saxello, bass clarinet, alto flute, bass flute
 Jim Horn – saxophone, flute; Ernie Watts – saxophone, flute
 Stevie Wonder – harmonica
 Blackbird McKnight – guitar; David T. Walker – guitar
 Melvin Wah Wah Watson – guitar, voice bag, synthesizer
 Henry Davis – bass; Louis Jackson – bass; Paul Jackson – bass; Louis Johnson – bass
 Mike Clark – drums; James Gadson – drums; Harvey Mason – drums
 Bill Summers – percussion

TrackList:*Side 1:*

Hang Up Your Hang Ups
 Sun Touch
 The Traitor

Side 2:

Bubbles
 Steppin' In It
 Heartbeat

—Robbie Gerson

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