



all about jazz

LOS ANGELES

Dec. 2005 Vol. 3 No.11

The Guide to Los Angeles Improvised Music

allaboutjazz.com/losangeles



Now Is Rising
Earth People (Undivided Vision)
by Ollie Bivins

Probably because jazz is largely an instrumental music, it does not have a long history of directly addressing political and social issues, unlike rock, R&B, pop and hip hop, which are predominately vocal-centered. However, given the widespread level of dissatisfaction with the domestic and foreign policies of the Bush administration, more jazz artists are forcefully expressing their political views through their music. The New York-based Earth People use free jazz as a platform to express their progressive views on the state of our troubled world on this their fourth album, *Now Is Rising*.

Leading things off with their original "Red Clay", M with her wordless vocals leads the band on an 11-minute free jam underpinned with the funky bass lines of Francois Grillot and saxophonist Elliott Levin and pianist Mark Hennen improvising on top. "Small Distraction, Mass Confusion" is not far removed from the radical creativity of the Art Ensemble of Chicago, but with the addition of the howling rock-style guitar of Doug Principato and the Albert Ayler-like saxophone bellowing of Sabir Mateen. With its Gregorian chants decrying political apathy and its '50s beat-style poetry the title track, "Now Is Rising" is a collective free-for-all of controlled cacophony. "Time To Vote!" is a romp with piano, electronica and vocalist M beseeching the listener to change the political situation in this country.

Now Is Rising is an adventurous journey through free jazz fused with rock, soul, Latin, poetry and funk. For jazz fans with open minds, it can be a true ear-opener. Recorded in October 2004 on the eve of the Presidential elections, the album's themes deal with the political tensions of that time, which sadly, have only increased. Given the national, state and local governments actions and inactions before, during and after Hurricane Katrina's devastating roll through the birth-place of jazz, one can expect more jazz artists to step up to the plate and state their views through their art. I, for one, hope so.

Earth People on the web: www.earthpeople.tv