

Hugh Masekela & the Union of South Africa [1971]

Written by bluesever

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01 - *Goin' Back to New Orleans* (5:07) 02 - *Ade* (3:47) 03 - *To Get Ourselves Together* (2:52) 04 - *Johannesburg Hi-Lite Jive* (3:57) 05 - *Mamani* (5:23) 06 - *Shebeen* (4:02) 07 - *Dyambo* (3:49) 08 - *Caution!* (5:41) 09 - *Hush (Somebody's Calling My Name)* (3:34)
Hugh Masekela (tp, vcl); Jonas (Mosa) Gwangwa (tb, vcl); Wayne Henderson (tb); Wilton Felder (ts); Joe Sample (key); Arthur Adams, Wayne West (g); prob. Stix Hooper (d); Caiphus (Caution) Semanya? (vcl).

It's quite a surprise that no one has gleaned from this album any snippets or entire songs for cover material. As today's artists desperately seek new material by looking backwards for sounds -called "sampling" by the artists who do it; "strip-mining" by musicians who wish for a more original element to modern music- "Hugh Masekela and the Union of South Africa" stands as a testament to the benefits of obscurity.

It's an album whose ethnic purity is outshined only by its pure emotional power. By the early seventies, Masekela had already scored a hit with "Grazing in the Grass" and was turning his attention to his geographic roots, the South African horn jive dubbed "township bop." This album is simply unsurpassed in its musicianship, and is also a remarkable anti-apartheid statement, coming a full decade or so before it was brought to mainstream America's attention.

Of special note here is the soulful "To Get ! Ourselves Together", along with beautiful poly-rhythms in "Ade" and "Johannesburg Hi-Lite Jive." Pop-funk influences are evident in wah-wah guitar sounds, prevalent on most of the faster numbers, and Masekela's notoriously crisp solos shine.

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Masekela fans absolutely must have this album; it's tight, inside jazz. Don't expect anything other than quick, major chord progressions and little self-indulgence. "Outside" purists might want to stay away, but only if they want to leave a brilliant album in quiet, unadulterated obscurity. ---Paul Primrose, amazon.com

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