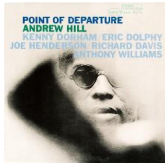
Andrew Hill - Point of Departure (1965/2003)



1. Refuge 2. New Monastery 3. Spectrum 4. Flight 19 5. Dedication 6. New Monastery (alt. take) 7. Flight 19 (alt. take) 8. Dedication (alt. take) Andrew Hill - piano Kenny Dorham - trumpet Eric Dolphy - alto saxophone, flute, bass clarinet Joe Henderson - tenor saxophone Richard Davis - bass Tony Williams – drums

Pianist and composer Andrew Hill is perhaps known more for this date than any other in his catalogue -- and with good reason. Hill's complex compositions straddled many lines in the early to mid-1960s and crossed over many. Point of Departure, with its all-star lineup (even then), took jazz and wrote a new book on it, excluding nothing. With Eric Dolphy and Joe Henderson on saxophones (Dolphy also played clarinet, bass clarinet, and flute), Richard Davis on bass, Tony Williams on drums, and Kenny Dorham on trumpet, this was a cast created for a jazz fire dance. From the opening moments of "Refuge," with its complex minor mode intro that moves headlong via Hill's large, open chords that flat sevenths, ninths, and even 11ths in their striding to move through the mode, into a wellspring of angular hard bop and minor-key blues. Hill's solo is first and it cooks along in the upper middle register, almost all right hand ministrations, creating with his left a virtual counterpoint for Davis and a skittering wash of notes for Williams. The horn solos in are all from the hard bop book, but Dolphy cuts his close to the bone with an edgy tone. "New Monastery," which some mistake for an avant-garde tune, is actually a rewrite of bop minimalism extended by a diminished minor mode and an intervallic sequence that, while clipped, moves very quickly. Dorham solos to connect the dots of the knotty frontline melody and, in his wake, leaves the space open for Dolphy, who blows edgy, blue, and true into the center, as Hill jumps to create a maelstrom by vamping with augmented and suspended chords. Hill chills it out with gorgeous legato phrasing and a left-hand ostinato that cuts through the murk in the harmony. When Henderson takes his break, he just glides into the chromatically elegant space created by Hill, and it's suddenly a new tune. This disc is full of moments like this. In Hill's compositional world, everything is up for grabs. It just has to be taken a piece at a time, and not by leaving your fingerprints all over everything. In "Dedication," where he takes the piano solo further out melodically than on the rest of the album combined, he does so gradually. You cannot remember his starting point, only that there has been a transformation. This is a stellar date, essential for any representative jazz collection, and a record that, in the

21st century, still points the way to the future for jazz. ---Thom Jurek, AllMusic Review

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