

Joe Henderson – Black Miracle (1975)

Written by bluesever

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1. *Soulution* 2. *My Cherrie Amour* 3. *Gazele* 4. *Black Mirakle* 5. *Immaculate Deception* 6. *Old Slippers* Joe Henderson – tenor saxophone Dawilli Gongga – piano, keyboards Lee Ritenour - guitar (1,3,6) George Bohanon – trombone Don Waldrop – bass trombone, tuba Snooky Young, Oscar Brashear – trumpet Hadley Caliman – flute, tenor saxophone Ron Carter – bass Harvey Mason – drums Bill Summers – percussion, congas

Although the album title still evokes an Afrocentricity that defined Joe Henderson's career -- especially his Milestone recordings of the '70s -- as the last of that string, *Black Miracle* was a decidedly softer album with enough pop elements to make it (dare it be said) "easy listening" for a wide range of jazz heads. From the lush big-band horn section of "Gazelle" to the midtempo Stevie Wonder cover "My Cherie Amour" with George Duke on keyboard and the steady shake of Bill Summers' percussion, this album rarely provokes. Alas, it was his last studio album of a grand decade, even if many critics and enthusiasts refuse to acknowledge the import of Henderson's Milestone years, and here Henderson appeared to finally succumb to pop pandering, albeit not as egregiously as some of his peers. Nothing exhibited this more than the album's closer, "Old Slippers," with Harvey Mason's drums and Dawilli Gongga's clavinet in full-bore fusion syrup, and the preceding "Immaculate Deception," which sounded like it came out of Freddie Hubbard's poppish CTI catalog. Lee Ritenour's guitar always felt too corny for a Henderson record. Henderson was a little more than ten years from his career renaissance, but even in a less than stellar swan song he found time to drop one last gem, the breakbeat and hip-hop sample-ready "Solution," featuring Joe in the crease. Throughout the '70s, that's where he was most comfortable. ---Vincent Thomas, Rovi

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