

Ibrahim Maalouf - Red & Black Light (2015)

Written by bluesever

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1 Free Spirit 00:07:02 2 Essentielles 00:03:42 3 Goodnight Kiss 00:06:49 4 Elephant's Tooth 00:04:38 5 Red & Black Light 00:03:51 6 Escape 00:06:15 7 Improbable 00:05:59 8 Run the World (Girls) 00:03:44 Ibrahim Maalouf – trumpet, keyboards Eric Legnini - keyboards [Fender Rhodes], synth [Clavia Nord Bass G2 Modular] François Delporte – guitar Stéphane Galland – drums + Maîtrise De Radio France (Choir) Sofi Jeannin – conductor [track 5] Sylvain Dupuis – percussion (tapan) [track 7]

Ibrahim Maalouf isn't one of those musicians where if you've heard one of their songs, you've heard them all. Apparently being the world's best quarter tone trumpet player wasn't enough for him, because he is a master composer, arranger, producer and cultural diplomat in addition to being highly versatile as an instrumentalist.

Red and Black Light is his "electro" album, released the same week as Kalthoum, his tribute to Oum Kalthoum, the Egyptian singer and feminist who used her voice to unite the Arab people, whether they be Muslim, Jewish, Christian, or atheist. (This is according to Maalouf; I had never heard of her. There is a good review of Kalthoum already posted if you are interested.) You can see another side of Maalouf in Illusions, which has more of an orchestral flavor to it, with a section of background trumpets and mostly acoustical instrumentation. The common thread in all his work is the Middle Eastern sound, which is why he needs a fourth valve on his trumpet. (If you aren't familiar with that sound, there is a hint of it in the Sting song, Desert Rose.)

A couple of side notes: His stuff doesn't contain lyrics, although he just produced and played on a record of Natacha Atlas, so if you have to have vocals, get that one. Also, Europeans have a much looser definition of jazz than North Americans, so if you're expecting Wynton Marsalis you're in for a shock. If you can't stand synthesizers or the sound of hard rock electric guitar, get Illusions or Kalthoum rather than Red and Black Light, but if you don't get something of his you

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will be missing out in a big way.

The songs from Red and Black Light that they are playing on the radio are the title track and Free Spirit. The CD cover also mentions his adaptation of the Beyoncé song, Run the World (Girls). My favorite, though, is Essentielles, because the focus is solidly on the trumpet. Although he normally titles his songs in English, he must have kept this one in French because the French adjective he used for “essential” is in the plural feminine form, which you can’t specify in English. He dedicated this album to all the women in the background whose contributions to society and families are critical but who don’t get the credit they deserve. If Amazon allowed it, I would give him a sixth star for that. --- Sandy Judd, amazon.com

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