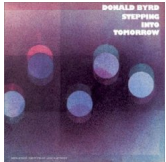


Donald Byrd – Stepping Into Tomorrow (1974)

Written by bluesever

Friday, 30 October 2009 20:10 - Last Updated Sunday, 28 September 2014 08:34

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1. *Stepping Into Tomorrow (Mizell)* – 5:06 2. *Design A Nation (Mizell)* – 4:19 3. *We're Together (Mizell)* – 4:23 4. *Think Twice (Sigidi, Mizell, Mbaji)* – 6:10 5. *Makin' It (Mason)* – 3:46 6. *Rock 'N' Roll Again (Mizell)* – 6:08 7. *You Are The World (Mizell)* – 4:29 8. *I Love The Girl (Byrd)* – 3:52

Donald Byrd - trumpet, flugelhorn, vocals Gary Bartz - alto sax, soprano sax, clarinet James Carter - whistler on "Rock And Roll Again" Mayuto Correa - congas Margie Evans, Kay Haith, Freddie Perren - background vocals Fonce Mizell - trumpet, clarinet, background vocals Jerry Peters - organ, piano John Rowin, David T. Walker - guitar Larry Mizell - Fender Rhodes, ARP synthesizers, background vocals Chuck Rainey - bass Harvey Mason - drums, bata drums Roger Sainte - percussion Ronghea Southern - guitar on "Think Twice" Stephanie Spruill - percussion, background vocals

Beginning with a crack of thunder, like it was made to trail Gary Bartz's "Mother Nature" (actually recorded at a slightly later date), *Stepping into Tomorrow* contains almost all of the Mizell trademarks within its title track's first 30 seconds: a soft and easy (yet still funky) electric-bass-and-drums foundation, silken rhythm guitar, organ and piano gently bouncing off one another, light synthesizer shading, and coed group vocals to ensure true liftoff. It's only one in a line of many magnetic '70s sessions led by Fonce and Larry Mizell, and it differs from their two previous Donald Byrd dates -- the polarizing and groundbreaking *Black Byrd* and the deceptively excellent *Street Lady* -- by not featuring any of Roger Glenn's flute, and by focusing on heavily melodic and laid-back arrangements. Even the speedy "You Are the World," by some distance the most energetic song, seems more suited for relaxing in a hammock than shooting down a freeway. Many of the musicians present on the previous Byrd-Mizell meetings are here, including drummer Harvey Mason, bassist Chuck Rainey, keyboardist Jerry Peters, and guitarist David T. Walker. As ever, those who pined for the approach of Byrd's '60s dates would tune out a sublime set of material, but maybe some of those who sniffed at the straightforward nature of some of the rhythms and riffing were won over by the supreme layering of the many components (the way in which "Think Twice" lurches forward, peels back, and gathers steam is nothing short of heavenly), not to mention some deeply evocative playing from Byrd himself.

---Andy Kellman, Rovi

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