

The Shaolin Afronauts – Quest Under Capricorn (2012)

Written by bluesever

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01. Brooklyn 02. Gayanamede Prelude 03. Winds Across Gayanamede 04. Los Angeles 05. Quest Under Capricorn 06. End Of A Sun 07. Amhara 08. Voyage Prelude 09. Voyage 10. Forest Of Io 11. Saturn's Dance Personnel: Dylan Marshall, Lachlan Ridge (guitar); Adam Page (flute, soprano saxophone, tenor saxophone); Max Franklin (flute, alto saxophone); Jon Hunt (bass clarinet, baritone saxophone); Andrew Crago (soprano saxophone, alto saxophone); Derek Pascoe (tenor saxophone); Sam Eads, Pat Thiele, Christian Weber (trumpet); Luca Spiler (trombone, bass trombone); Kyra Schwarz (trombone); Brenton Foster (Fender Rhodes piano); Kevin Van Der Zwaag (drums); Tim Bennett, Dave Van Der Zwaag, Jarrad Payne (percussion).

Afro Jazz hasn't reached the level of popularity that it deserves to be at, yet its style has more years behind it than smooth jazz. The sound of African jazz and retro 70s soul are the inspiration behind "Shaolin Afronauts", an amazing Australian band founded in 2009. Their new CD, "Quest Under Capricorn", released July 16th on the Freestyle Records label, is good soul seasoned with just the right touch of musical spices and influences. Now, please bear in mind that no matter what else I say about a specific track from this point on, this phrase still applies: "It has lots of soul and 70s flavor."

John Shaft (shut your mouth!!) could've shown his very cool swagger to the intro record "Brooklyn" which exudes funk, and I do mean the good kind. "Brooklyn" starts like the beginning of an action movie, and its overlapping horns and harmonies blend tightly with the band. The middle section features a blistering baritone sax solo. Just before track 3, there's a riveting prelude with wind blowing sound effects, an echo pedal electric piano, and horns playing softly with classic Gil Evans style jazz harmony.

The track "Los Angeles" is a serious piece of music, beginning with flute and electric keys to set

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up the horn section and band. Kevin Van Der Zwaag pushes a strong funk beat on the drums, while the soprano sax attacks the solo with lines reminiscent of 70's horn man Bennie Maupin of the Headhunters. The arrangement builds in intensity as the horns break into an all-out brawl of notes, and then break back down to the reflective tones of the solo electric fender Rhodes piano. The title track, "Quest Under Capricorn" really shows the band's range with nice unison flutes and low brass answering back.

The Shaolin Afronauts are more than just a band with a cool name. They are exceptional players with a dynamic style who are creating great music that is just too hard to find, unless you go to a vintage record store. They blend well, the cuts are never sloppy, and the mix sounds great on my stereo and even better with headphones. Jazz aficionados and music lovers of all genres who are seeking soul with an order of something special on the side will find "Quest Under Capricorn" to be the crème de la crème. Don't walk, run and pick up your copy today. You'll thank me later. ---Michele Wilson-Morris, bamalovesoul.com

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