

Marcus Miller - Renaissance (Japanese Edition) (2012)

Written by bluesever

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01. *Detroit* (05:46) 02. *Redemption* (06:10) 03. *February* (04:15) 04. *Slippin' Into Darkness* (09:17) 05. *Setembro (Brazilian Wedding Song)* (feat. Gretchen Parlato And Ruben Blades) (06:39) 06. *Jekyll & Hyde* (06:31) 07. *Interlude: Nocturnal Mist* (01:16) 08. *Revelation* (04:47) 09. *Mr. Clean* (05:01) 10. *Goree (Go-ray)* (05:39) 11. *Cee-Tee-Eye* (07:40) 12. *Tightrope* (05:47) 13. *I'll Be There* (03:50) 14. *Rebop (Japanese Bonus Track)* (02:03) Personnel: Marcus Miller - fretless bass, bass clarinet, acoustic bass Kris Bowers - piano Adam Rogers - guitar Adam Agati - guitar Federico Gonzalez Peña - Fender Rhodes Bobby Sparks - organ Alex Han - alto saxophone Sean Jones - trumpet Maurice Brown - muted trumpet Ramon Yslas - percussion Louis Cato - drums Gretchen Parlato - vocals Rubén Blades - vocals

Marcus Miller's career as a sideman, composer, and producer in jazz, R&B, and pop has been prolific. He's continuously pushed boundaries in order to blur and integrate genres. Renaissance is his first studio recording in five years (Free was released in 2007 in Europe and Japan, then re-released in the United States as Marcus in 2008). Renaissance's title reflects the idea that music needs a rebirth to keep up with the creative possibilities afforded by technology, and to reflect the ever-shifting, politically charged cultural landscape. The manner in which he posits this is anything but theoretical, however. Renaissance may be the most emotive offering in Miller's catalog. Groove and firepower are near constants here. Jazz-funk, R&B, rock, post-bop, club-jazz, and more come together in a wide-ranging collection that is deeply focused and expertly sequenced. Using a revolving cast whose core is alto saxophonist Alex Han, guitarist Adam Agati, and keyboardist Federico Gonzalez Peña, guests include trumpeters Maurice Brown and Sean Jones, organist Bobby Sparks, and more. Things get off to a skittering start on "Detroit," with Miller's bass riding heard over a knotty jazz-funk groove. Louis Cato's drums accent breaks in key sections, the souled-out horns highlight the choruses, and Agati's guitar nastily accents it all while Han's alto solo is a monster. The cover of "Slipping Into Darkness" melds Kris Bowers' piano and Sparks' organ with hand percussion, both trumpets, and Miller's funky reggae groove. The melody accents syncopation on the backbeat before weaving Bob Marley's and Peter Tosh's "Get Up, Stand Up" in as a logical yet surprising extension. Bowers' knotty piano solo illustrates the wide possibilities for jazz improvisation. "Jekyll & Hyde" combines alternate passages of elegant, soulful contemporary jazz with

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riff-driven rock as Agati and Miller complement and push one another. "Revelation" is a rumbling modal jam with funky highlights and fine soloing by Han. "Gorée (Go-ray)," with Miller on bass clarinet, is a lilting, post-bop ballad with lovely melodic interplay. "Cee-Tee-Eye," while a thoroughly contemporary jazz tune, pays excellent tribute to the inspiration of Creed Taylor's label. The set closer, a simple reading of "I'll Be There," showcases the bassist's gift for lyricism and understatement. Renaissance is a lofty title, but the inspired performances Miller puts on offer get very close to delivering on the ambition it promises. –Thom Jurek, Rovi

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