

Freddie Hubbard – The Black Angel (1969)

Written by bluesever

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1. *Spacetrack* (Hubbard) - 16:54 2. *Eclipse* (Hubbard) - 8:16 3. *The Black Angel* (Kenny Barron) - 8:15 4. *Gittin' Down* (Hubbard) - 6:37 5. *Coral Keys* (Walter Bishop) - 5:20 [play](#)
Personnel: - Freddie Hubbard - trumpet - James Spaulding - alto saxophone, flute - Kenny Barron - piano, electric piano - Reggie Workman - bass - Louis Hayes - drums - Carlos "Patato" Valdes - conga, maracas

Freddie Hubbard released *The Black Angel* in the same year as the landmark Miles Davis album *Bitches Brew*. It's obvious Hubbard wanted to appeal to the emerging crossover rock/jazz crowd of the era. The presence of bop, however, still permeated Hubbard's playing, unlike Miles who had long since dropped the form. The opening Hubbard composition "Spacetrack" contains fiery avant garde interplay between Hubbard, James Spaulding on alto and Kenny Barron's electric piano. Thanks to Spaulding and bassist Reggie Workman, much of the playing here maintains intensity. The other Hubbard penned originals, "Gittin Down" is an urgent hard swinging boogaloo and the ballad "Eclipse" features Spaulding on flute and Barron on piano. "Coral Keys" written by Walter Bishop, Jr. and Barron's "Black Angel" have a Latin tinge highlighted by Spaulding's soaring flute and the congas of Carlos "Patato" Valdes. An enjoyable session leaving the impression Hubbard was preparing to take a different musical direction. ---Al Campbell, allmusic.com

Sadly Hub has passed on but what a legacy he's left behind. In spite of all the unfortunate press that Freddie Hubbard received about his later records for the Columbia label, the critics have demonstrated once again that the guys they knock on the most are the ones who get the last laugh. Case in point.

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Certainly Freddie recorded his most adventurous and interesting material before 1980 but what the hell - that's 20 years of fine music, and this one, "Black Angel", from 1970 is stuck right in the middle of that time zone. Forget about the period cover art; sure this babe is beautiful but so is the music. All 3 of Hub's Atlantic sessions are absolutely pure hard bop/funk jazz and get to the music immediately.

Freddie Hubbard had one of the best tones in jazz. His horn could bark sharp and clear like a clarion. On this session you get lots of that. The sidemen don't get any better either. Kenny Barron (playing some electric), Hub's usual reed player James Spaulding, Reggie Workman bass, and Louis Hayes drums, spell a prime working band to support Freddie.

Of course the song agenda does not disappoint, particularly Walter Bishop Jr's latin-flavoured "Coral Keys", and Hub's 16-minute opener "Spacetrack" (remember this was just a few months after Apollo 11). Freddie Hubbard could play it all, but play it his own way, every time. Jazz has lost a titan. Look out for the music companies to begin releasing the box sets now that Hub is gone, but isn't it always that way. Buy this one; you're going to have it in your player lots.

Four stars only because of the relatively short playing time (45 mins). Weren't there any outtakes? Well maybe not. Freddie nailed it right the first time. --- Curtiss Clarke (Calgary, Alberta Canada)

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