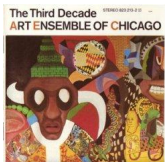


Art Ensemble of Chicago - The Third Decade (1984)

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1. *Prayer For Jimbo Kwesi* 2. *Funky AECO* 3. *Walking In The Moonlight* 4. *The Bell Piece*
5. *Zero* 6. *Third Decade* Musicians: Lester Bowie - trumpet, fluegelhorn, bass drum, cymbal rack Malachi Favors Maghostut - string bass, electric bass, percussion Joseph Jarman - alto, tenor & bass saxes, clarinets, percussion, synthesizer Roscoe Mitchell - saxophones, clarinets, flute, percussion Famoudou Don Moye - drums, percussion

For the Art Ensemble of Chicago, *Third Decade* marked both the end of their relationship with the ECM label and the beginning of a more streamlined stretch of music making. The band would cut back on their once predominant, free-form explorations to make room for more bebop and crossover material, like "Funky AECO" and the Caribbean-tinged bop tune "Zero," straightforward genre pieces the band still undermine with playful "found sounds" (bike horns, sirens, chimes, etc.). Along these more traditional lines, the lovely, '20s-style jazz ballad "Walking in the Moonlight" is also included. The group stretches out on more open-ended pieces like Joseph Jarmen's dirge-like opener "Prayer for Jimbo Kwesi" and Mitchell's magisterial number "The Bell Piece," but even here the group's traditionally frenetic playing is kept in check. This is not necessarily bad, considering the Art Ensemble's consistently top-notch and provocative solo work, straight-ahead or otherwise. The band does end the album, though, with the decidedly frenetic and free "Third Decade," as if to say they are equally adept at a variety of styles and so should not be restricted to only one. The point is well taken with this varied yet cogent set. ---Stephen Cook, Rovi

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