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Alexa Tarantino

Firefly

POSI-TONE

★★★

Firefly, Alexa Tarantino's third record with Posi-Tone, has her back in the bandleader's chair. It's a 12-track effort combining interpretive takes of Wayne Shorter compositions ("Iris," "Lady Day"), pieces written by her bandmates and, most notably, a multi-movement suite by Tarantino titled "Moment In Time."

The approach Tarantino used to conceptualize and assemble *Firefly* worked serendipitously well with her intent to compose as a way of responding to and coping with last year's tribulations. The suite showcases catharsis in the assuaging of Tarantino's emotions, while also upholding a secondary purpose in revealing the landscape of an artist's mindset during such prolonged isolation. In this regard, the suite is demonstrative on both an internally individual and broadly relatable scale.

Tarantino doesn't overthink her execution on the Shorter contributions, giving an emotive saxophone performance driven by instinct. Meanwhile, "Spider's Dance," "Mindful Moments" and "Move Of The Spirit" do a wonderful job introducing this iteration of personnel behind Tarantino. The varying personalities of each piece support *Firefly's* core vision: to highlight the creative light within individual people and the collective light born from unifying that energy.

—Kira Grunenberg

Firefly: Spider's Dance; Mindful Moments; Move Of The Spirit; Iris; Daybreak; Surge Fughetta; Surge Capacity; Le Donna Nel Giardino; Rootless Ruthlessness; Lady Day; Violet Sky; The Firefly Code. (57:34)
Personnel: Alexa Tarantino, saxophone, flute, clarinet; Behn Gillice, vibraphone; Art Hirahara, piano, Rhodes; Boris Kozlov, bass; Rudy Royston, drums, percussion.

Ordering info: posi-tone.com



Tony Allen

There Is No End

BLUE NOTE 003310502

★★★

Tony Allen has always been a melder of genres. Thus, it would stand to reason that Allen making a straight-up hip-hop album would happen eventually, even if it was after his death under the shepherding of producers

Damon Albarn and Remi Kabaka, who enlisted the talents of assorted rappers and vocalists across the globe to make use of Allen's beats.

Allen's beats are truly that, *beats* — the multifaceted backing tracks from what are a variety of good raps — but that stripped-down nature leaves Allen's work in the background of an album meant to be his. It's understandable that when one dies, one cedes the mic, but one wouldn't expect this to happen so overtly on a work so ostensibly *his*.

This isn't to say it doesn't work, but it's certainly not what one would expect. It's not in league with the rest of Allen's recorded work. It's so many ideas jumbled together that it sounds more a creation of co-producer Damon Albarn than of Allen. If Allen had more control over his last release by not dying first, one could wonder if this could have had a clearer vision.

—Anthony Dean-Harris



There Is No End: Tony's Praeludium; Stumbling Down (feat. Sampa The Great); Crushed Grapes (feat. Lord Jah-Monte Ogbon); Très Magnifique (feat. Tsunami); Mau Mau (feat. Nah Eeto); Coonta Kinte (feat. Zelooperz); Rich Black (feat. Koreatown Oddity); One Inna Million (feat. Lava La Rue); Gang On Holiday (Em I Go We?) (feat. Jeremiah Jae); Deer In Headlights (feat. Danny Brown); Hurt Your Soul (feat. Nate Bone); My Own (feat. Marlowe); Cosmosis (feat. Ben Okri & Skepta); There's No End. (42:37)

Personnel: Tony Allen, drums, producer; Vincent Taeger, producer; Vincent Taurelle, producer; Guest vocalists — Skepta, Sampa The Great, Danny Brown, Lava La Rue, Zelooperz and more.

Ordering info: bluenote.com

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