



MOVIES / MORE MOVIES

WATT 7/10

Originally released on LP WATT/7 and WATT/10
re-released January 2000 (single CD)

COMMENTS

Two albums from Michael Mantler's back-catalogue, repackaged. The enlightened jazz-rock of "Movies" and "More Movies"- from 1977 and 1979 - now fits onto a generously filled single CD.

Michael Mantler's talents as composer have often found expression in the channelling of others' abilities. He consistently provides contexts in which soloists can shine. In this sense "Movies" and "More Movies" are - despite extreme temperamental differences - very much in the tradition of his work with the Jazz Composers Orchestra. If, on his "Communications" compositions of the 1960s, his structural frames guided and edited the liberated and uninhibited sounds of Cecil Taylor, Pharoah Sanders and others, so do his "Movies" pieces draw upon the energies of jazz-rock while directing its exponents beyond the limitations of the idiom.

"At the time I was interested in some aspects of fusion. I liked the power of the early Mahavishnu Orchestra for instance. But you see, I think all these people - the jazz/rock people and the free jazz people - need composers to give the real playing capacity some sense of organisation. Without any interesting structural ideas, fusion got real boring real fast. The players reached a very high technical level but the language itself was so bland."

For the first "Movies" disc, Mantler assembled an exceptional group, with Tony Williams, Steve Swallow, Carla Bley and Larry Coryell, also giving himself more solo space than on his other projects. Critical reactions were very positive.

MUSICIAN: "... it is his steely trumpet playing that dominates the ensemble sound and establishes the emotional climate of the music. To my knowledge he has never put his own playing so far forward. I hope he does it again."

He did. "More Movies" followed two years later. Swallow and Carla Bley were retained from the original line-up. D. Sharpe and Gary Windo, both then playing with the Bley Band, were enrolled. Anglo-Belgian guitarist Philip Catherine - lovingly dubbed "Little Django" by Charles Mingus - came in as Coryell's replacement. "More Movies" was a more controlled record than the earlier disc, Gary Windo's contagious enthusiasm notwithstanding, but certainly no less compelling. In addition to new "Movies" compositions, Mantler reworked a couple of themes from "The Hapless Child" for the group.
