

RONALD SHANNON JACKSON ON "MAN DANCE"

MAN DANCE: It's basically a shuffle played by one hand, while the other plays a double backbeat, with a 4/4 on the floor that moves into a jazz interlude. It opens up into Zane Massey's freely blown alto solo, played through his multi-effects box. This song is an expression of man's true desire to dance, his glory in dance.

IOLA: This is our Decoded version of country music. Iola is a whistle-stop in east Texas where I spent my childhood summers. The drumbeat is a gentle heartbeat, and the song is about driving across the country and entering a town of peace, a friendly village and not a hostile village. The centerpieces of the tune are Vernon Reid's banjo and Melvin Gibbs' avant-barnyard bass solo. "Iola" has a southwestern feeling, but a Far Eastern flavor--which you can hear in the banjo and in Reverend Johnson's fretless bass.

SPANKING: A spanking of all the musical cliches of our time--rock, big band, and fusion. It's a benevolent spanking; we're showing the directions these musics can go. The piece is the musical equivalent of giving birth in a cab on the way to a city hospital. It opens like a big band, goes into a funk/rock beat and then a unison riff, at which point Vernon's solo runs through traffic, with the basses bubbling up from the bottom and horns coming down from the top.

CATMAN: It's sneaky, tricky, intuitive. It's everything that hustling is about. Real New York City game playing; the Murphy and the burglar, the pimp and the politician. Musically, it's the most structured piece on the album; a circular American poem pierced by Henry Scott's trumpet solo. (Listen for Zane's alto on the head--he bucks in like a horse from out of town.)

THE ART OF LEVITATION: Our theme, we close our concerts with it. It's our way of saying; We love you, Peace be with you, Joy to y'all, all those good things. It's humorous, 'cause we are. It's a way of laughing at ourselves. No gravity.

BELLY BUTTON: This is Urban Classical music. Charlie Chaplin in 1982. Laurel and Hardy in Bloomingdale's. Abbott and Costello on LSD on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange. The Moral Majority at CBGB's. This is Barbeque Punk, with a seriously Saturday Night Fish-Fry interlude thrown in.

GIRAFFE: Egyptian Rock. The soundtrack for William F. Buckley's first visit to the Middle East. Zane's soprano solo describes how Buckley feels when--to his surprise-- he sees his wife up on a camel. Just a mirage.

WHEN SOULS SPEAK: An evening gathering song. A ballad of togetherness after the day's tasks are done. People being human beings, listening, creating a dialogue without words. Voices, no drums.

ALICE IN THE CONGO: A self-explanatory title; poor lucky Alice. A song about departure from one's physical environment. Reverend Johnson solos on fretless--a floating solo cushioned by a cloudbed of horns--after which Vernon Reid delivers the lightning and thunder. The song, and the record, ends not just with a drum-roll, but an entire band-roll, into the future.