THE FINEST IN JAZZ SINCE 1939
BLUE NOTE®

BLACK BYRD
DONALD BYRD



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THE FINEST IN JAZZ SINCE 1939
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Side One
FLIGHT TIME (L. Mizell)
BLACK BYRD (L. Mizell)
LOVE'S SO FAR AWAY (L. Mizell)
Side Two
MR. THOMAS (L. Mizell-W. Jordan)
SKY HIGH (L. Mizell)
SLOP JAR BLUES (L. Mizell)
WHERE ARE WE GOING? (L. Mizell-L. Gordon)
ASCAP

PRODUCED AND ARRANGED BY LARRY MIZELL FOR SKY HIGH PRODUCTIONS, INC.
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER: GEORGE BUTLER

Recorded At: Sound Factory, Hollywood, California
Chief Engineer: Dave Hassinger
Assistant Engineer: Chuck Davis
Assistant Engineer: Steve Waldman
Chief Remix Engineer: Dave Hassinger
Assistant Remix Engineer: Chuck Davis
Electronic Music Consultant: Reggie Andrews
Photography: Art Hanson
Graphic Art Work: Eileen Anderson

707 jet plane effect courtesy of Elektra Records

Special Thanks To: George Butler, Kathy Sherry, Deena Glover, Carol Campbell, Vicki, Terry and everyone who helped provide inspiration.

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Manufactured by United Artists Records, Inc., Los Angeles, California 90028. Printed in U.S.A.

Also available on United Artists Stereo-Tape

When you are a super-jazz great whose name is Donald Byrd and have been acclaimed as one of the great jazz trumpeters in the business and you are still hearing the raves from your last album, "Ethiopian Nights," you wonder what you will do for an encore. This within itself is a supreme compliment which is reserved only for a performer of classical dimensions.

The Blue Note release of Donald's new LP tagged "Black Byrd" is the satisfying answer. Since the total involvement of Byrd in Afro-American music, it is no surprise to the many fans that this great jazz artist would revitalize these beats and traditional elements with the new magnetic sounds that a capable musician like Byrd can derive from the powerful new rhythms and sonorities developed for today's jazz sounds.

Especially noticeable exciting rhythms and Afro-American beats are heard with the tunes "Flight Time," "Black Byrd" and "Mr. Thomas." With "Black Byrd," Donald Byrd puts new vitality with a blending of vocal voices augmented with avant-garde elements used in his own individual manner.

Donald Byrd is referred to as the musician cum laude. He continues to research and comes up with a new musical project each year hoping that with his knowledge he can pass on to the black man his findings of his true heritage and history.

Donald Byrd has a magic know-how of the blending of instruments and in this LP you will become cognizant of a vital, intense and enthralling power like no other music you have heard and it all adds up to one important factor. Donald Byrd is a man with a genius for sound.

It is through his music that you really get to know this man. With the tune "Love Is So Far Away," what you hear is a beautiful piece of music with feeling, drive and smoothness.

Donald Byrd has a strong solid background in jazz. He was actively involved with the world acclaimed Marshall Stearns Jazz Collection, a compilation of over 25,000 albums that trace the history of jazz in this country.

The jazz tunes heard in the album will not only delight the ears of music lovers but will be a sheer delight for dancers and choreographers who in the last years have been drawn to jazz not only for the musical and rhythmical qualities but for the manifestation of a life style. With this type of modern jazz music can come dance works concerning black pride, themes from life with ever increasing freedom of movement.

Donald Byrd makes it clear that he is deeply into jazz and grooved the public ear for more than twenty years.

Gertrude Gipson
Nationally Syndicated Columnist

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On *Flight Time* and *Mr. Thomas*: DONALD BYRD, trumpet, flugelhorn, electric trumpet, lead vocals; FONCE MIZELL, trumpet, vocals; ROGER GLENN, flutes, saxophones; JOE SAMPLE, piano, electric piano; FRED PERREN, electric piano, synthesizers, vocals; DEAN PARKS, guitar; WILTON FELDER, electric bass; HARVEY MASON, drums; BOBBYE PORTER HALL, percussion; LARRY MIZELL, vocals, arrangements;

On all other selections: DAVID T. WALKER replaces Dean Parks; CHUCK RAINEY replaces Wilton Felder; STEPHANIE SPRUILL replaces Bobbye Porter Hall

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Produced and arranged by LARRY MIZELL for SKY HIGH PRODUCTIONS, INC.
Executive Producer GEORGE BUTLER. Recorded At SOUND FACTORY, HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA.
Chief Engineer DAVE HASSINGER. Assistant Engineers CHUCK DAVIS & STEVE WALDMAN.
Chief Remix Engineer DAVE HASSINGER. Assistant Remix Engineer CHUCK DAVIS.
Electronic Music Consultant REGGIE ANDREWS. Photography ART HANSON.
Graphic Art Work EILEEN ANDERSON. 707 jet plane effect courtesy of ELECTRA RECORDS.
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DONALD BYRD



Talk about coming full circle. Case in point: hardbop trumpeter Donald Byrd and pianist/keyboardist Herbie Hancock. Byrd met Herbie when he was an aspiring pianist in his Chicago hometown and convinced him in 1961 to come to New York as a member of his band. That move opened up many doors for Herbie, including a record deal with Blue Note. As restless creatives are compelled to be on the move, both artists underwent significant changes in the next decade as the music evolved, most significantly into the fusion zone.

Fast-forward to the early '70s when jazz-rock was in vogue and high-flying, free electronics were being explored. Enter Herbie's funky *Head Hunters* electric jazz album in 1973, which went on to become the idiom's biggest selling recording ever. "I had been listening to Sly Stone…so I wanted to do something funky," Herbie said recently. "It wasn't exactly sticking to straight r&b, and the jazz

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kept slipping in. So, I thought, let's just let it be whatever it wants to be. No one was doing any funk-jazz records quite like this."

Herbie quickly added, "The closest to what we were doing was the Blackbyrds, but there were also vocals there. It's so interesting. Donald Byrd, who put the Blackbyrds together, discovered me and introduced me to so many firsts in my life. So there I was with the Headhunters relating again to Donald Byrd with that mixture of r&b and jazz."

Of course, Herbie was referring to Donald's 1972 groundbreaking *Black Byrd* album, a steamy slab of funky, spirited music with several of the tunes featuring simple, catchy vocals. It showcased Donald's ease into the urban groove genre—which was the zeitgeist of early '70s r&b exemplified in many ways by soulster Isaac Hayes' soundtrack to the 1971 film *Shaft*. For Byrd, who played trumpet, flugelhorn and electric trumpet on the album (he also contributed vocals), *Black Byrd* didn't require him to turn in a fiery blowing session—but rather the improvising of mood-making and mood-building lyricism wafting over a dance groove.

With the band assembled for the seven-track *Black Byrd* comprising several musicians — pianists (acoustic and plugged in), percussionists, a guitarist and saxophonists, among others—Donald's contributions consisted of weaving textures and painting colors. He pulls out the electric trumpet for the festive "Love's So Far Away," engages in a grooving trumpet-flute conversation on "Flight Time," blows in a relaxed, but exuberant high on "Mr. Thomas" and contributes flourishes, trills and ornamentations on "Where Are We Going?"

In addition to *Black Byrd* being a milestone moment for Donald Byrd, it also represents the first Blue Note album featuring the innovative production team of the Mizell Brothers (producers and r&b songwriters Larry and Fonce). They tapped into the jazz fusion of the era, presaging the acid soul jazz movement of the early '90s. In addition to continuing to collaborate with Donald, the brothers created hip sessions with such Blue Note artists as Bobbi Humphrey and Gary Bartz in the next few years (a remixed sampler of Mizell mayhem appeared in 2005 on the Blue Note album *The Mizell Brothers at Blue Note Records [1973-1977 and Beyond]*).

Black Byrd crossed over into the pop world, charting high on the r&b charts. It became up to that time Blue Note's best-selling album and proceeded to open the floodgates for the in-vogue jazz that was not only hip to listen to but also a dream to dance along to.

A side note: While in a slightly similar Byrd-styled funk-jazz vein, *Head Hunters* scored platinum for Columbia Records in 1973-74 and also afforded Donald's touring band, the Blackbyrds, opportunities to open Headhunters concerts, which treated young music fans to a doubleheader of the newfangled jazz.

—Dan Ouellette, 2012