

REVIEWS AND PRESS CLIPS FOR THE EIGHTH HOUR OF AMDUAT (released 2017)

DAVE SOLDIER

the eighth hour of amduat



Marshall Allen as Sun Ra
Sahoko Sato Timpone as Mistress of the Boat
Orchestra & Choir featuring
Dan Blacksberg, Nick Milevoi & Rebecca Cherry
Rita Lucarelli, Egyptologist

JazzdaGama

<https://jazzdagama.com/music/dave-soldier-eighth-hour-amduat/>

Mr Soldier has produced a monumental work, operatic in every sense: swirling in supernatural myth – Wagnerian *Bühnenfestspiel*) actually – in which is placed arias soaring in the drama of *opera seria*. Its cast includes Marshall Allen, who sings the god, Ra (even as he plays his saxophones and EVI), and the mezzo-soprano Sahoko Sato Timpone who sings the Mistress of the Boat. Both stars are supported by a large ensemble and a wonderful accompanying choir as well.

Remember this is but one hour of the twelve that occur during the night, when the Pharaoh rises from his sarcophagus and journeys each night from the netherworld towards the sun (and therefore Ra), there to both to redeem himself and plead his case for glorious immortality. Like the events of the much earlier Akkadian poem, the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, the journey is fraught with nightmare and strife. Appropriately the sheer scale of this opera by Dave Soldier is immense. Its musical structure is more rich than its text and includes some of the most powerful episodes – moments of extreme intensity in an epic – that are highly charged from the start to the finish of the arias. In terms of casting it is hard to imagine better: Both Mr Allen and Miss Sato Timpone are in peak form, on “Ra Dances With Rams” and “Mistress Prayer” respectively, where they are heard in great voice. The other musicians and singers are deeply responsive as well-rounded characters and thus as performers too.

Few recordings – especially in the difficult style of opera (after Wagner) are more viscerally exciting with such an outstanding cast and vital sound. But this recording captures the enormous impact of *Amduat* in wonderfully theatrical form.

ALL ABOUT JAZZ (1)

<https://www.allaboutjazz.com/the-eighth-hour-of-amduat-dave-soldier-self-produced-review-by-roger-farbey.php>

Nonagenarian [Marshall Allen](#) is still producing blistering solos both on alto and EVI, as heard on six of the tracks including "Mourning And She Who Annihilates The Ignorant Caverns," "Envelopes Her Images & Uniting Darkness Caverns," "Removing Her Ba-Souls Cavern" and "Ra Dances With Rams."

It's difficult to put into a few words exactly what this record emulates, it might well be that it

doesn't sound like anything else, ever. However, the instrumentation and arrangements are both imaginative and at times brilliant. This is not a work to be regarded lightly but rather it's a brave and bold contemporary composition ironically based on the very oldest one.

ALL ABOUT JAZZ (2)

<https://www.allaboutjazz.com/the-eighth-hour-of-amduat-dave-soldier-self-produced-review-by-troy-dostert.php>

The idea of crafting a classical/jazz opera from an ancient Egyptian funerary papyrus would probably be too much for most ordinary mortals to contemplate. But this kind of thing isn't at all unexpected for [Dave Soldier](#), whose dedication to unusual and surprising projects has defined his long avocation in music. He first studied composition with [Roscoe Mitchell](#) as an undergraduate, and eventually launched a series of ventures which have included: assembling improvising orchestras made up solely of elephants; a string quartet fusing classical music with rhythm & blues and punk rock; and field recordings from around the world, including mountain villages in Guatemala and Thailand. Anyone who expresses equal admiration for [Henry Threadgill](#), Haydn and Guided by Voices is going to be willing to try just about anything. And for listeners in a similarly adventurous spirit, this particular record has plenty to offer.

The text for Soldier's opera, "Amduat" (literally: "Book of What is in the Netherworld") is widely found in the tombs of many ancient Egyptian rulers. Soldier consulted UC Berkeley Egyptologist Rita Lucarelli for assistance with the project, and the story itself is fascinating, providing rich material for operatic treatment. Soldier also explains in the liner notes that Amduat is actually a "sound score," meaning that while the music isn't notated, there are "specific sounds" detailed in the text which offer clues for how the music should be performed.

And as for the music: well, one would expect it to be rather strange and unsettling, as any journey to the world below should undoubtedly be. But that doesn't prevent it from being both stimulating and musically engaging. The opera's opening, "Mistress Prayer," is in the form of an aria (sung powerfully by mezzo-soprano [Sahoko Sato Timpone](#)). But once a brief rhythmic detour into a New Orleans second-line section emerges, one quickly gets a glimpse of how aggressively Soldier is going to be juxtaposing diverse musical traditions throughout the recording. Strings and horns are both essential to this task, so that many of the segments sound like jazz-influenced chamber music, albeit with a healthy portion of Soldier's electronics (including recordings of numerous animals; cats understandably are featured prominently), and enough interesting percussion to add variety throughout.

Of the many terrific musicians featured on the record, the outsized presence from the jazz world is without question [Marshall Allen](#), who is assigned the role of the sun god himself: Sun Ra. Who else could do the part justice, after all, but the fabled sideman of the original Jazz Egyptologist himself, Sonny Blount? Now in his early nineties, Allen continues to amaze with his cosmically-inspired alto playing, and his contributions throughout the opera support the music's navigation between the spheres of classical and jazz. "Ra Dances with Rams" is exemplary in this regard: one of the highlights of the program, it is a riveting piece, with frenetic strings complementing Allen's squeals and the rest of the horns in a furious, delightful romp.

The Eighth Hour of Amduat offers what is in essence a sound collage of diverse musical modes, themes, and stylistic approaches, making for listening that is both challenging and rewarding. It won't be to everyone's liking, to be sure: jazz fans less willing to push the envelope of the music into other traditions will probably blanch at some of Soldier's more audacious choices. But for those willing to meet him halfway, their effort will be repaid handsomely.

THE VINYL ANACHRONIST

<http://thevinylanachronist.blogspot.com/2017/03/dave-soldiers-eighth-hour-of-amduat-on.html>

It's when you focus on the individual components of the opera that you find the hidden jewels. For instance, Marshall Allen's contributions on saxophone and something called an EVI (electronic valve instrument) are intriguing especially when you consider that he's now 93 years old. T

JAZZ WEEKLY

<http://www.jazzweekly.com/2017/03/dave-soldier-the-eight-hour-of-amduat/>

Talking about searching for standards! Dave Soldier bases this 14 piece jazz-oriented opera on a score from 1425 BC Egypt. Ah! Those were the days!

JAZZ VIEWS

Skimming the credits listed for this recording, you can easily see that you aren't in any obviously familiar territory. For one thing, the list is headed by an Egyptologist. She has translated, in Italian, the words from 'The Book of Amduat'. This is the earliest surviving musical score, painted on papyrus and on the walls of various Pharaoh's tombs. The Book describes the journey of the Egyptian god Sun Ra – as he travels across the sky, from East to West, during the day and the descends to journey on the river in the underworld during the night. On his journey, he dies, is reborn and then defeats the serpent Apep before rising with the dawn. The journey involves a number of caverns and, in the extract featured on this recording, Sun Ra travels through ten caverns. So much for the story.

What you might also notice is that several of the musicians are given roles in the opera, and that Marshall Allen is given the role of Sun Ra. There is, of course, a lovely irony in this casting – given that 93 year old Allen has been leading (the jazzmen from Jupiter) Sun Ra's orchestra since his leader left our planet. As the only saxophone of this recording, Allen plays some sharply observed and spikey improvised commentary on the music.

Given the mix of orchestral, operatic, free jazz and electronic on display here, it is quite amazing how this all hangs together. But it does. Dave Soldier is, of course, no stranger to pushing concepts into music and making this work (I can't think of anyone else who has organised 14 elephants into an 'Elephant Orchestra' for example). What I particularly like is the juxtaposition of the oldest of musical scores with the newest of musical sounds (the electronic sounds and the improvised jazz have a very contemporary feel), leavened by the operatic, choral and orchestral to produce a coherent and stimulating experience like nothing you are likely to have previously encountered. **Chris Baber**

WORLD JAZZ NEWS

<http://worldjazznews.blogspot.com/2017/07/usa-dave-soldier-eighth-hour-of.html>

Marshall Allen, the leader of the Sun Ra Arkestra, is featured in the part of the Egyptian god Sun Ra, in Dave Soldier's new classical/jazz/electronic opera based on the oldest musical score known, the 8th hour of the Book of the Amduat. In this version from 1425 BC, the sounds and music are clearly specified during Sun Ra's nightly travels on the underworld river to age, die, and be reborn to rise again every morning. The ancient hieroglyphs are translated to Italian by

Egyptologist Rita Lucarrelli (professor at UC Berkely) and the parts of the other gods and demons are sung by mezzosoprano (Sahoko Sato Timpone from the Metropolitan Opera) and a choir and by additional improvisers (Dan Blacksberg, Nick Millevoi, Michael Winograd, Rebecca Cherry) with a classical orchestra. Marshall Allen plays the alto saxophone and EWI electronic wind instrument as Sun Ra, who doesn't speak in the book but calls the other gods and demons, and this 93 year old master musician, performing in a version of the world's oldest musical text, sounds more Futuristic than anyone else ever has.

BROOKLYN RAIL

<http://brooklynrail.org/2017/09/music/Outtakes-September2017>

Check out David Soldier's "classical/jazz/electronic" opera *The Eighth Hour of Amduat* on Mulata Records, featuring Allen as "the Egyptian god" Sun Ra and based on, according to the press notes, the oldest musical score known. This is quite a strange, almost indescribable journey I recommend you take. But beware, except for the cats' meows, the libretto is in Italian. Aren't almost all great operas? – **Steve Dalachinsky**

CD Review: <http://www.midwestrecord.com/MWR1177.html>

What happens when a brain doctor that is into Sun Ra, Bo Diddley and Eliza Carthy wants to push the envelope farther than he has in past musical explorations? Well taking a leaf from Sun Ra, he revisits the oldest known musical score doing it up in a way that would make that unknown bastard progeny of Sun Ra and Carla Bley proud. For the feint of heart and the casual listener? Not a chance. Utterly left leaning without being precious or creative for the sake of being creative, this near operatic release is even too deep for Sunday afternoon arts society poseurs. While there isn't a false note in the bunch, this set is for deep muso fans that really want to go places they've only heard in dreams. Well done, doc.

CHRIS SPECTOR, Editor and Publisher

https://www.amazon.com/review/RKS0N8WR056S5/ref=pe_1098610_137716200_cm_rv_e_ml_rv0_rv

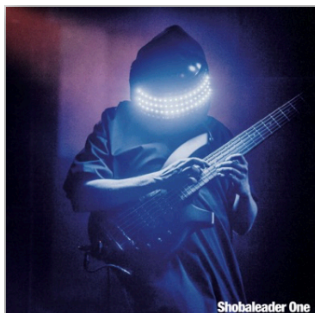
Dave Soldier is a fascinating man – he is a neuroscientist (as Dave Sulzer) at Columbia University where he also is Professor of Psychiatry, Neurology and Pharmacology and teaches a class 'Music, Math and Mind'. A fine introduction to this bizarre but fascinating opus.

According to Dave, 'This opera for mezzo-soprano, choir, improvising soloists, orchestra and electronics is adapted from the earliest surviving illustrated book and sound score, "The Book of the Amduat", painted on walls in the tombs of the Valley of the Kings and many papyri. I use the version in Tuthmose III's tomb, who ruled Egypt from 1485-1431 BC. He is widely thought to be the Pharaoh of Exodus: if it wasn't him, it was a close relative. He co-ruled at first with the female Pharaoh, Hatsepsut, and was great grandfather to Akhenaten. He built the obelisks known as Cleopatra's Needle, one of which is on the Thames in London, and the other is near East 81st street in Central Park in New York City.

Each morning, Sun Ra emerges from a hole in the east and sails on a river through our sky. After he descends he continue from west to east on the river through the underworld, the Amudat, to reemerge in the morning. Each night he dies, but is reborn in the 6th night hour when he unites with Osiris and defeats the serpent, Apep. The piece takes place during the 8th hour of the night, 'Mistress of deep night', in the city of the 8th hour, 'Sarcophagus of her gods'. Sun Ra and his companions on the boat are being hauled by a choir on the underworld river.

During the hour they are clothed and encounter other gods who live in ten caverns along the shore, along with living knives who defeat their enemies and four sacred rams. By 'earliest sound score', I mean that the specific sounds from each group of gods in each cavern of the city are described quite literally during the trip. Each version of the Book of Amduat has the same order of caverns. In Tutmosé III's tomb, they don't change simultaneously and the caverns are juxtaposed as in the opera.

. The music is strange, difficult to classify, but fascinating to hear. **Grady Harp**



Shobaleader One

Quercus Nightfall

ECM 2276 ★★★★★

June Tabor (v), Iain Ballamy (s) and Huw Warren (p). Rec. December 2015

June Tabor has enjoyed a long association with jazz musicians of nearly 30 years now, having recorded her first jazz standards album *Some Other Time* in 1989. Here there are interpretations of 'You Don't Know What Love is' – in which Ballamy's dreamy sax synchs wonderfully with Tabor's poignant, austere phrasing, his Getz to her Gilberto and their interpretation of Sondheim/Bernstein's 'Somewhere' draws the curtains on the album with a yearning optimism. The majority of the album is made up of traditional folk material of which 'On Berrow Sands' is a standout, a tone poem with Warren's watery piano and Ballamy's sax merging with Tabor's vocals rather than in an accompaniment role. The instrumentals are worthy of the quality of the rest of the album rather than fillers: Warren's pastoral 'Christchurch' could be a song with sax sitting in for voice, while Ballamy's 'Emmeline' is reminiscent of his sterling work during the 1990s, as on *All Men Amen*. The rendition of the new Nobel Prize Winner's 'Don't think Twice it's Alright' is given a relatively less sombre treatment, but Tabor makes every word count and the sensitive sax and piano accompaniment is seamless. **Selwyn Harris**

Andy Scott + Group S Ruby and All Things Purple

Basho SRCD 52-2 ★★★★★

Andy Scott (ts), Rob Buckland (ss, sno), Krzysztof Urbanski (ss), Simon Willescroft (as, ss), Dave Graham (as), Mike Hall (ts), John Helliwell (ts), Rob Cope (ts, bs), Chris Caldwell (bs), Jim Fieldhouse (bs, bsk), Gwilym Simcock (p), James Pusey (g), Laurence Cottle (b), Elliot Henshaw (d), plus guests Barbara Thompson (ts) and Jon Hiseman (d). Rec. January 2016

Formed in 1995, saxophonist Andy Scott's Manchester-based SaxAssault has recently changed its name to Group S to reflect the less kickass approach on their new release. That doesn't mean though that *Ruby and All Things Purple* is taking the chill-out route. Far from it; there's an

intense drive and energy to the performances even if there's more nuance and contrapuntal detail to the arrangements than previously was the case. By utilising pastoral, classical chamber textures and looping horn vamps, Scott draws from his experience as a long serving member of the acclaimed Apollo Saxophone Quartet. But the more exciting pieces tend to echo such 1970s fusion big bands as Gil Evans, David Shire and Jaco Pastorius, with a disciple of the latter, the bassist Laurence Cottle, in particular making his funky swaggering presence felt. As does the pianist Gwilym Simcock, who helps to divert the music away from a purely 'sax summit' approach, contributing two of his own compositions plus a classy if unmemorable arrangement of the Tom Jones hit 'Sex Bomb'. The royal jazz fusion couple of drummer Jon Hiseman and saxophonist Barbara Thompson (the CD is recorded at their home studio) are special guests, the latter bringing her expressive tenor sound to a sax duo exchange on the dreamy Pink Floyd-ish closing number 'La Grande Image'. It's not going to get many marks for originality and perhaps would sound more natural in a 'live' situation than on a CD. Nevertheless, the collective exuberance and honest musicianship are something to be appreciated. **Selwyn Harris**

Shobaleader One Elektrac

Warp ★★★★★

Squarepusher/Tom Jenkinson (six-string el b), Strobe Nazard/Dan Nichols (ky), Arg Nutton/Chris Montague (g) and Company Laser/Adam Betts (d). Rec. 8 May 2016

Do you know Squarepusher? This is a question anyone who's followed the mercurial multi-instrumentalist, aka Tom Jenkinson, for the last two decades must have asked themselves with some regularity. Blazing his own trail as a pioneer of drum'n'bass and jungle in the mid-1990s, Jenkinson's barely concealed virtuosity on the bass guitar has fought tooth and nail with his equally prodigious skills deep inside the computer music matrix. By hand-coding his own software synths and some of the most furiously intense breakbeats ever his work is notable for its contrasts, but also his personal quest to push himself to his limits. Reaching a zenith of this process with his face-melting, if uncomfortably visceral 2015 album, *Damogen Furies* (a counter-blast against electronic music's commodification) the only logical next step was to ditch the electronics and go totally live. A

studio version of Shobaleader One emerged in 2009, but its live incarnation now sports a trio of likeminded jazz musicians who inject all previously-sequenced parts with a manic virtuosity. Jenkinson's full-throttle bass work is given free reign too, across 64 minutes of adrenalin-soaked, beat-driven proggy electronica. If early 1990s cuts such as 'Coopers World' and 'Squarepusher Theme' still sound fresh played live and direct, then it's the white-hot blast of febrile energy supplied by the jackhammer drums of Laser/Betts, which adds an aptly untinged intensity. Yet it's the raw punkish attitude that pushes the likes of 'Austromm Feck 4' and Jenkinson's jazzy call-to-arms, 'Don't Go Plastic', well and truly into the realms of the organically interactive. **Mike Flynn**

Dave Soldier The Eighth Hour Of Amduat

Mulatta MUL035 ★★

Dave Soldier (water bows, elec), Marshall Allen (as, EVI), Sahoko Sato Timpone (mezzosoprano), Rebecca Cherry, Akhmed Manedov, Juana Pinilla Paez (vn), Dan Blackberg (wepawet, tb), Nick Millevoi (g), Olivia Gusmano (via), Carolina Diazgronados (clo), Dani Bash (hp), Anthony di Bartolo, Thomas Kolakowski (perc), Michael Winograd (nehes, cl), Enrique Rivera-Matos (hu, tba), Adam Vidiakis (cond) and choir. Rec. date not stated

Dave Soldier is a collaborative musician, even working with animals. One of his most famous (and interesting) projects was to form the Thai Elephant Orchestra, an ensemble of 14 elephants who played instruments that Soldier had built for them. He is also involved in composing rock and jazz, together with experimental music, and music for children. On his latest composition he has teamed up with Egyptologist Rita Lucarelli to help him in the translation of the Thutmose III version of *The Book Of The Amduat*, one of the earliest known illustrated book and sound scores, painted on walls in the tombs of the Valley of the Kings. This translation forms the basis for Soldier's opera *The Eighth Hour Of Amduat*, a mixture of choral and improvisational music that leads the listener through the Egyptian Netherworld – occasionally stopping off at some jazz club, where Marshall Allen (in the guise of sun god Sun Ra) unleashes a much needed blast of alto. Elsewhere, electronic cats howl, the orchestra saws away and mezzosoprano Sahoko Sato Timpone hits all the right notes, but for the most part it is hard to fully comprehend the narrative. That said *The Eighth*

Hour Of Amduat is not without its moments of excitement – the musical confrontation between Marshall Allen and guitarist Nick Millevoi being one thrilling chapter that suddenly slaps some action into Soldier's otherwise bewildering production. **Edwin Pouncey**

Loz Speyer's Inner Space Life on the Edge

Leo CDLR 782 ★★★★★

Loz Speyer (t, flhn), Chris Biscoe (as, act), Rachel Musson (ts, ss), Olie Brice (b) and Gary Wilcox (d). Rec. December 2015

The sleeve notes reference Ornette – with Dewey Redman and the Art Ensemble of Chicago thrown in for good measure – but anyone anticipating music of that somatic power might at first be puzzled. The opening track, 'Long Road', is oddly reminiscent of the debonair way Humphrey Lyttelton's latter-period bands managed to incorporate subtle hints of ska and South African jazz into what amounted to a post-Count Basie mainstream sound, spoken with a discernible English accent. But trumpeter Loz Speyer has always had plenty to say about overlaps in the Venn diagram between composition and improvisation, and *Life on the Edge* slowly reveals itself to be more multidimensional and exploratory. Chris Biscoe and Rachel Musson – rooted in the likes of Dolphy, Rollins and Coltrane and UK free improv – present a dream team who sail through the Ornetteian obstacle course presented by the head of Speyer's 'Unfold Entity', while Musson's solo, an inexorable sortie that meanders with clear purpose in and out of the changes, is an album high point. It's the strut of Olie Brice's burly, pepper hot bass and Gary Wilcox's drums that kick-starts 'Long Road'; but the integrity they bring to the emerging free jazz push-pull structure of 'Space Music' pilots the musicians further towards destinations unknown. **Philip Clark**

Trio Mediaeval & Arve Henriksen Rimur

ECM 4814742 ★★★★★

Anna Maria Friman (v, Hardanger fiddle), Linn Andrea Fugiseth (v, shruti box), Berit Opheim (v) and Arve Henriksen (t). Rec. February 2016.

Time was when it was a sax, but these days there's nothing that says 'jazz' quite so clearly as the presence of a shruti box among any hard-boppin' combo's instrumentation. Actually, that's not true. In some ways you might even say it's total nonsense or silly sarcasm. But in another way, it is true. Nothing says 'contemporary-jazz-redefined-as-an-expanded-field-of-improv-based-musical-research-collapsing-traditional-boundaries-

New Issues

DAVE SOLDIER THE EIGHTH HOUR OF AMDUAT

MULANA 035

MISTRESS PRAYER/
SATISFYING HER LORD &
MYSTERIOUS CAVERNS/
TOWER'S PRAYER/
NETHERWORLD CAVERN/
TOMB OF THE GODS/
BARCAROLLE/ KNIVES AT
WAR/ MOURNING & SHE
WHO ANNIHILATES THE
IGNORANT CAVERNS/
RA CALLS THE RAMS/
ENVELOPES HER IMAGES
& UNITING DARKNESS
CAVERNS/ REMOVING HER
BA-SOULS/ RA DANCES
WITH RAMS/ GREAT OF
TORCHES/ DAWN MARCH

58:37

Sahoko Sato Timpone,
mezzo; Marshall Allen, sax &
electronic valve instrument;
Rebecca Cherry, vln; Dan
Blacksburg, tbn; Nick Millevoi,
g; Michael Winograd, C cl;
Enrique Rivera-Matos, tba;
Adam Vidiksis, conductor;
Akhmed Manedov, vln; Olivia
Gusmano, vla; Carolina
Diazgronados, cel; Dani Bash,
harp; Anthony di Bartolo,
perc; Thomas Kolakowski,
perc; Dave Soldier, water
bowls, elec CHoir: Chace
Simmonds-Frith, Natasha
Thweat, Sophie Laruelle,
Xiaoming Tian, Eugene
Sirotkine, Alicia Waller,
Melinda Learned, Sahoko
Sato Timpone. No recording

information

This is an opera for mezzo, choir, improvising soloists and electronics and is based on a text from 15th century B.C.E. in the time of Tutmosé 111. It is a story of Sun Ra and his companions on the underworld river. The music is eclectic, using various jazz and classical styles., with some jazz solo work. The primary soloists are Marshall Allen, in the role of Sun Ra, Rebecca Cherry, Dan Blacksberg and Nick Millevoi. I enjoy mixing styles and going back and forth between styles. In this sense the piece works well. It would have been nice to know the details of the story but all I could find on the composer's website was the text of three of the songs. Knowing the full story may have made some of the switches in style and mood more understandable. But since I believe that the music must stand on its own, I just tried to listen and appreciate the music.

There is lots of drama in the music, and lots of peaceful sections as well. I really enjoyed the choir sections. They provided a nice change from some of the instrumental sections. The accompanying sounds to some of the solos are quite interesting in their own, especially those behind some of Allen's solos.

A definite must for people who are into contemporary opera and/or eclectic music.

Bernie Koenig