

# Mp3 Rashied Ali Quintet - Judgment Day Vol. 2

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One of the most underrated drummers to emerge from the turbulently exploratory 1960s, for the past 20 years Rashied Ali has been operating like an Art Blakey figure in terms of discovering and nurturing new talent. 8 MP3 Songs JAZZ: Free Jazz, JAZZ: Bebop Details: OPENING CHORUS Overdue Ovation - by Chris Kelsey Rashied Ali SOUND JUDGEMENT John Coltrane knew a thing or two about drummers. During his apprenticeship with Miles Davis, he played with Philly Joe Jones, who surely whetted his appetite for the percussive petulance so much so, that when it came time for Coltrane to form his own group, the saxophonist one-upped his former boss and hired Elvin Jones, maybe the only drummer of the era who could out-ass-kick Philly Joe. When Elvin couldnt make it, another fire-breather, Roy Haynes, took his place. But Elvin usually made it. He stayed with Trane until the saxophonist needed something else from a drummer. When that time came, Coltrane turned to his fellow Philadelphian-turned-New Yorker, Rashied Ali. Ali gave him that something else. From the time he joined Coltrane in late 1965 until the saxophonists death in July 1967, Ali helped enable Tranes final, most radical break with convention. The drummers skittering, high-energy playing fractured the pulse into tiny shards, which he reassembled, mosaic like, into something quite different. Ali staked out new areas of rhythmic independence and sound exploration. On late Coltrane recordings such as Live at the Village Vanguard Again! and Interstellar Space, Alis splintering of time paralleled the asymmetrical note groupings and convoluted phasing that the saxophonist explored in full late in his career. Alis primary role was not to provide a rhythmic context, but to freely interact, to shadow and challenge Coltranes every turn of phrase. Rashied Ali is one of the fathers of free-jazz drumming. Every free-jazz drummer (and to an extent, every free-jazz musician) who followed owes him a debt. After Coltranes passing, Ali became one of the leading figures on the New York avant-jazz scene, a position he holds to this day. In the 70s, he founded his own record label, survival, for which hes recorded a string of raw and risky albums featuring such prominent avant-gardists as the late saxophonist Frank Lowe, violinist Leroy Jenkins and guitarist James Blood Ulmer. For several years he ran his own club in downtown Manhattan, Alis Alley, which was a major venue during the loft-jazz era of the 70s. Hes led innumerable bands and played with everyone whos anyone in the

free-jazz community. Today Ali is an elder statesman, yet he's playing better than ever. And he's still capable of surprising us, as proven by his latest releases on survival, Judgment Day Vol.1 Vol. 2. This is not the formally open, structurally abstract free jazz for which he's best known. There's plenty of blowing room, to be sure, but the tunes themselves are meticulously composed and arranged. It swings in a way guaranteed to make the Lincoln Center cats swallow hard and take notice. At times it's nearly straight ahead, yet unlikely latter-day hard bop, it is music of the here and now--with hints of jazz to come. If you really listen to it, I'm trying really hard not to just play time, says Ali. It's true. He's playing out and in simultaneously, generating enough energy to light the East Coast. You can hear that the drums are breaking it up a lot, he says. It's not like I'm playing really straight-ahead drums. It might sound like that on the surface, but underneath you'll hear a lot of stuff that says I'm really an avant-garde player, albeit one who studied with Art Blakey and Philly Joe and therefore knows modern jazz in all its manifestations. With his quintet, the 71-year-old free-jazz vet puts to shame drummers half his age--incessantly driving and creating, sidestepping clichés at every turn. And Ali hasn't forsaken freedom, not by a long stretch. Even when playing straight-ahead, there are times in mid-performance when an abandonment of form and structure is the logical next step. Less intrepid musicians skid to a stop, jam into reverse and head home. Ali and his band make the leap without hesitation. There's jazz without borders, an example of what a group can do if they've the will and discipline to embrace a full range of possibilities. It does have that kind of catchy thing, where anybody can listen to the music and appreciate it--avant-garde people, straight-ahead people, whatever, says Ali, They can all hear something in there. I'm glad it works that way, because that's the kinda stuff I want to be doing right now. Ali talks about his band like a proud papa, and for good reason. I'm playing with kids who are damn near young enough to be my grandkids! he laughs. The group--trumpeter Jumaane Smith, tenor saxophonist Lawrence Clark, pianist Greg Murphy, bassist Joris Teepe--has been together for almost four years. The Ali-Murphy alliance dates back almost two decades. Greg's been in just about every band I've had since we met in the 80s, Ali says. Jumaane I just met by chance. I've been knowing him since he was about 19. He's 25 now. He first saw me when I played a concert with the New Art Quartet in his hometown of Seattle. Then he came out here to attend the New School and Julliard. I met him when he was at the New School. Ali first heard Clark playing at Cleopatra's Needle on upper Broadway. When Frank Lowe passed, I was really looking for a saxophone player, says Ali. I invited Lawrence to come down and check us out. He's a dynamite young player,

playing a lot more stuff now than he ever has. And I'd met Joris through Frank Lowe. They're all as comfortable playing changes as they are playing free. When you play with me, you better be able to do it all, Ali says. Repertoire is one of the band's strengths. All the sidemen write. I do most of the arrangements and pick most of the tunes, says Ali. I haven't written for the band as of yet, but we're playing a lot of stuff by the guys. Jumaanes written a lot of the stuff, and Lawrence is writing a lot, and so is Joris and so is Greg. We're playing a lot of original music. All that might go for naught if no one heard it. Fortunately, the band's getting gigs. We just got back from London, a week ago or two ago. We got really good reviews over there, says Ali. People seem to dig it. I'm having very good feedback from just about everybody. The quintet is his main focus, but Ali keeps irons in other fires, as well. I'm doing a duo record with Borah Bergman for Soul Note or Black Saint. I played this last Vision festival with Borah, William Parker and Louis Belogenis. That was pretty cool. Another project is By Any Means, his trio with bassist Parker and saxophonist Charles Gayle. The band recorded the critically acclaimed Touchin on Trane in the early 90s, but until recently had not performed together in almost a decade. We've just started getting back together. We played the Vision Festival, Ali says. We're a heavy avant-garde band, because we don't play any melodies at all, it's all improvised. We just start and stop. We haven't been into the studio yet, but we plan to this year. Between the quintet and his other projects, Ali's working more than ever. While he'll always be known for this time with Coltrane, the world's getting hip to the nearly four-decades-worth of beautiful music he's made since. I think it's the longevity. I've been here long enough for people to think, Hey man, maybe this cat really do have something! he laughs. It's just all coming together. In a way, it's a drag, that now that I've become a super-senior-citizen that I got to do all this traveling now, but it's cool, because I'm in shape and ready and-willing to play. I wish I could've been doing this when I was 35, but that's alright. It's just an awesome experience for me right now. I'm really having fun with this stuff. I couldn't ask for anything more, except maybe more money and recognition, he continues, but that doesn't really matter to me; what matters mostly is the music, and I'm definitely in pursuit of the music. I feel really good about what's happened to me. I mean, I've been able to have a wife and a couple of kids and send my kids to college. I was able to own my own place. I'm pretty stable and secure, like a senior citizen should be. The only thing I ever did in my whole life is play drums, man. I never had another job. I played drums my whole life, and that's, like, a miracle.

JazzTimes November 2006 Rashied Ali Quintet Pizza on the Park, London  
From the October 2006 issue of Jazzwise Magazine Billed as Rashied Ali Coltrane's last

drummer, the saxophonist is inevitably the ghost at this banquet. You have to remind yourself that music such as this is as old as 12-minute guitar solos and liquid light shows. How do you avoid turning it into a Lincoln Center Museum piece? Rashied Ali's answer is simple, play it like it's now, like life depends on it and that's just what his band did for a good-size audience on the last night of a three-date run at this excellent, up-market club. It was hard to decide what was most impressive about this group. Tenorist Lawrence Clark has listened well to Trane but unlike his peers has gone deep into the giant's late period as well and trumpeter Jumaane Smith plays as if he's absorbed it all from Louis and Henry Red Allen to Don Cherry. On James Blood Ulmer's Theme For Captain Black, the two horns soloed simultaneously, weaving around each other like two prize-fighters, while pianist Greg Murphy threw these fantastic tone clusters in to his solo on Ulmer's Thing For Joe that were totally out yet rhythmically and dynamically in keeping with the piece. Bassist Joris Teepe is less obviously outstanding but his solo on Dolphy's 245 was rhythmically adventurous and he anchors this craft magnificently, while his mid-paced composition Flight 643 swung beautifully. But time and again, you were drawn back to the man behind the kit that was where it all seemed to begin. Loose-limbed, constantly shifting patterns, kaleidoscopes of sound, distant thunder, strange accents but perfect time. Always maintaining momentum but never resorting to the obvious, Rashied Ali was inspired and inspiring. - by Duncan Heining Seattle Times October 27, 2006 (Earshot Jazz Festival) The hometown team gave a hearty welcome to Roosevelt grad Jumaane Smith, back from New York to play at The Triple Door Tuesday with drummer Rashied Ali. His set of originals, some written by guitarist James "Blood" Ulmer, bristled with brash urgency, puncturing the skin of post-bop decorum with fierce rhythms and warbling cries. Tenor saxophonist Lawrence Clark was the highlight, especially when he and Ali chewed tenaciously on a phrase, recalling Ali's historic duets with John Coltrane. Smith, though exciting, was stuck in high gear. Drum Beat from the May 2006 issue of JazzTimes RASHIED ALI Judgement Day, Vol. 1 2 (Survival) For the past 20 years Rashied Ali has been operating like an Art Blakey figure in terms of discovering and nurturing new talent. His current working quintet is another cross-generational affair featuring veterans Greg Murphy (piano) and Joris Teepe (bass) and two new firebrands in Lawrence Clark on tenor sax and Jumaane Smith on trumpet. Together this tightly knit group swings in fairly conventional postbop fashion on rarely covered tunes like Frank Lowes Sidewalks in Motion, Jaco Pastorius uptempo blazer Dania, Wayne Shorter's The Big Push and James Blood Ulmer's M.O. Teepe, a powerful, deep-toned bassist in the Paul Chambers tradition,

contributes the moving ballad *You're Reading My Mind*, while saxophonist Clark, who blows heroically throughout these two discs, offers the exhilarating title track, a modal workout with distinctly Middle Eastern touches that has pianist Murphy dipping deeply into his McCoy Tyner bag. Other highlights in these two energized sets include Murphys burning Skanes Refrain and Smiths frantically swinging *Yesterday (J-Man) Tomorrow*, along with dynamic readings of Billy Strayhorns *Lush Life*, Thelonious Monks *Round Midnight* and Don Cherrys *Multi-Culti*. Though this band rarely plays outside of New York City, this is one of the more potent working quintets in jazz today. -Bill Milkowski 1999-2006 JazzTimes, Inc. All rights reserved Dusted Reviews Artist: Rashied Ali Album: *Judgment Day, Vols. I II* Label: Survival Review date: Feb. 26, 2006

These two new quintet dates confirm what I have long believed, that Rashied Ali is one of the most underrated drummers to emerge from the turbulently exploratory 1960s. Only one aspect of his multicolored playing has gotten anything even close to the examination and discussion it deserves, and anyone reading this knows of the fire, brimstone and thunder he brought to Coltranes final period. Yet, listen to the subtlety, introspection and sublimated magic of his brushwork on a track like *Ogunde* from *Expression*, or to Marion Browns second ESP date, and you will have some idea of what else to expect in these more recent ventures. All of the tunes on *Judgment Day* are either acknowledged classics or homages to established masters. Steve Dalachinskys unerringly perceptive liners quote Ali as saying *If they can play Beethoven, why not Coltrane?* While Coltrane is not represented here Alis *Prima Materia* project paid him beautiful respect the quotation is apt in that the music of such undeniably influential figures as Monk, Shorter and Strayhorn are rendered with faithfulness and fluent unpredictability. *Round Midnight*, from Vol. II, is a stunning case in point. The familiar introduction is treated here with just a hint of the free playing associated with Alis early recordings, bassist Joris Teepees tasty interjections being particularly noteworthy. Trumpet and sax use vibrato to great effect, a signifier that, in tandem with Greg Murphys slyly intuitive incorporation of Monks pianisms, invokes the swing at the heart of Monks rhetoric and rhythm. Lawrence Clarks tenor tone is lush and full, enhancing the allusion. Just as the tune is about to end, Ali breaks into a funky Latin-tinged groove, the quintet sound turning lush and sumptuous all at once. Its a gesture of which Monk would certainly have approved, given his ear for all manner of shifts in arrangement. Both volumes abound with small but revelatory surprises of that nature. Trumpeter Jumaane Smiths *Shied Indeed* one for the leader sports one of the hippest stop-time unison breaks Ive heard in quite a while. It jumps right out of the

middle of a simple but effectively modal head, broadsiding the unsuspecting listener with a brick-textured chunk of hard-edged compositional prowess. As with the Monk treatment, Dalachinsky is right to point out the temporally multifarious aesthetic of the playing; roots and branches of the creative music tree are often apparent in one sweeping gesture. Nowhere is the fluidity of temporal perception more evident than in Ali's drumming. Ali has expressed repeatedly his preoccupation with the expansion of time, of his constant development of time elasticity. The Jaco Pastorias tune Dania, from the first volume, has one of the briefest but most powerful solos I've ever heard from him, and much of its interest is generated by its architecture. Ali breezes effortlessly through some of the most intense circumlocutions and syncopations imaginable, only to return to a steady four, as if he'd never left. Throughout these temporal juxtapositions, his ear is constantly on timbre, key rhythmic moments warranting bullets and bombs from his multivalent arsenal of snare attacks. The quintet, diverse in age and background, manages to sound unified without any player losing individuality, and part of this is due to the skill with which the albums were recorded and mixed in Ali's Survival Studios. The sound is direct without being overbearing, just as the playing is referential without being idiosyncratic or maudlin. These are fantastic discs that exist inside the tradition while offering repeated opportunities for its fresh appraisal. By Marc Medwin 2002-2005 Dusted Magazine. All Rights Reserved.

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