

Mp3 Baba Alade - Unified And One



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Urban Folk rock with more personality than Elmo. 20 MP3 Songs FOLK: Folk Blues, WORLD: African

Details: "Names are things for us to aspire to in our lives and they can actually connote the personage that is wearing the name," says multi-instrumentalist Baba Alade Olamina. He's been given almost as many names in his life as the instruments that he plays. Sherman Alvin Mckinney III was his given name at birth. "I thought that Stuffie Pooky was my name until I was about 5," he recalls, "I had never heard my Christian name until that time. I was called by my nickname - and still to this day I'm called that by some people." The names keep coming, and changing to this day. Celestial Songhouse and Sigidi are others. "The crown honor is befitting of this one," is a close translation to the proverb of Baba Alade. His crown is a story and he finds many ways to tell it. "Unified and One" has as many names as the Blues. "It could have been called any one of the other songs," he says, because, "it's all the blues." As the lead off track, "Unified and One" is given the responsibility of introducing you to a musician that does so many different things. He's a banjo player that can tell you about the history of the kora and other instruments that have been integral to the voyage and continuum of African peoples. He's a guitar player that sings of loves lost and love at first sight that never passes. He was first a bass player, and a cornet player, "and there was always a banjo around in the house," he adds. When he first started playing jazz in his home town of Watts-California Baba Alade played with the Jazz Prophets with Ndugu Leon Chancellor and others and later the Jazz Symphonics with Larry Nash and then with a quartet that featured Herbert Baker and his long time friend Azar Lawrence. He played upright as a young teen and recorded and traveled with the Craig Hundley trio for the World Pacific label. He rose to prominence on the bass playing and recording with avante garde, fusionist saxophone player Charles Lloyd. Baba Alade also plays saxophone. "Some people in the community that know what I do, don't even know about the folk side or the blues side that's

represented on "Unified and One." He recalls walking into some communities where he's only known as a trumpet player, one of the other instruments that he plays. "I have always understood that in pop culture the blues means something. When people see something they expect you to do a certain something." The point of this record wasn't ever intended to "correct the misconceptions" that people have, "that's not my point," he says, "but that's gonna come up." Much like the great music of one of his great teachers and friends, Taj Mahal, Baba Alade presents the blues in many forms and doesn't stray from evolving it. Baba Alade went pretty far out at times within the "jazz" world expressing the blues. I love the avant garde and where we were going with Horace Tapscott and Charles Lloyd but still I always loved beautiful lyrics and lyric. I always had a harmonica with me, and I would always write songs." No matter where Baba Alade found himself, at the University of Ife in Nigeria, in New York with Babatunde Olatunji or here in Los Angeles riding one of his motorcycles or in one of his favorite station-wagons, the voices of Nat King Cole, Robert Johnson, Antonio Carlos Jobim and many others are always with him. "You are what you've listened to." And, he's so much more. He's played in highlife Afro-beat groups with his friend Najite and with the hip-hop, new age Forest for the Trees with his friend Carl Stevenson. "For the last 15 years or more I haven't had the economic powers to enlist a band," he half laments, "so it forced me to work solo and support myself with a different kind of music. I used the folk medium as a vehicle to stay in the ball park, in performing." Baba Alade has performed the music of Unified and One at places like the Watts Towers and the World Stage and more recently at El Rey Theatre, Fais Do Do, the Mint and Temple Bar. Baba Alade has presented himself at times as a one man band, setting up keyboards and drum machines and playing and singing over pre-set rhythms. "Some of the songs were written as far back as 1970. Some of the songs are very new to recording time. In other words, every time we do something in terms of the body of songs that we put on the album, and how I approached the music - it shows another side of where I reach musically in my endeavors. It's all just music. Endless permutations." He's right, wouldn't you say? "I Believe In Love" is really where I'm at. It's an older song but that's exactly about who I am." "There were faces carved in ebony etched inside my mind, voices sing a melody of another kind. Pyramids and kingdoms and ancient times, and candle burns with incense on an alter in my shrine, candle burns with incense on the alter in my mind. I believe in a sun that is forever orever shining, I believe in a sky that is blue. I believe in the flame that forever is burning, I believe in a love that is true." -

BABA ALADE

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