

**NOMINATION OF HISTORIC BUILDING, STRUCTURE, SITE, OR OBJECT**  
**PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**  
**PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

SUBMIT ALL ATTACHED MATERIALS ON PAPER AND IN ELECTRONIC FORM (CD, EMAIL, FLASH DRIVE)  
ELECTRONIC FILES MUST BE WORD OR WORD COMPATIBLE

**1. ADDRESS OF HISTORIC RESOURCE** *(must comply with an Office of Property Assessment address)*

Street address: 5626 Morton St

Postal code: 19144

**2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE**

Historic Name: Sun Ra House, Arkestral Institute

Current/Common Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**3. TYPE OF HISTORIC RESOURCE**

☒ Building

☐ Structure

☐ Site

☐ Object

**4. PROPERTY INFORMATION**

Condition: ☐ excellent ☐ good ☒ fair ☐ poor ☐ ruins

Occupancy: ☒ occupied ☐ vacant ☐ under construction ☐ unknown

Current use: Residential

**5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

*Please attach a narrative description and site/plot plan of the resource's boundaries.*

**6. DESCRIPTION**

*Please attach a narrative description and photographs of the resource's physical appearance, site, setting, and surroundings.*

**7. SIGNIFICANCE**

*Please attach a narrative Statement of Significance citing the Criteria for Designation the resource satisfies.*

Period of Significance (from year to year): from 1968 to 1993

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: 1880

Architect, engineer, and/or designer: Unknown

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan: Colson Heiskill

Original owner: Colin Heiskill

Other significant persons: Sun Ra, John Gilmore, Marshall Allen, Danny Thompson

**CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION:**

The historic resource satisfies the following criteria for designation (check all that apply):

- ☒ (a) Has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth or Nation or is associated with the life of a person significant in the past; or,
- ☐ (b) Is associated with an event of importance to the history of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- ☐ (c) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style; or,
- ☐ (d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen; or,
- ☐ (e) Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- ☐ (f) Contains elements of design, detail, materials or craftsmanship which represent a significant innovation; or,
- ☐ (g) Is part of or related to a square, park or other distinctive area which should be preserved according to an historic, cultural or architectural motif; or,
- ☐ (h) Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or City; or,
- ☐ (i) Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in pre-history or history; or
- ☐ (j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

**8. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

*Please attach a bibliography.*

**9. NOMINATOR**

Organization Philadelphia Historical Commission Date March 17, 2022

Name with Title Jon Farnham, Executive Director Email Jon.farnham@phila.gov

Street Address 1515 Arch Street, 13<sup>th</sup> Floor Telephone 215-686-7660

City, State, and Postal Code Philadelphia, PA 19119

Nominator ☐ is ☒ is not the property owner.

**PHC USE ONLY**

Date of Receipt: March 17, 2022

☒ Correct-Complete ☐ Incorrect-Incomplete Date: March 17, 2022

Date of Notice Issuance: March 18, 2022

Property Owner at Time of Notice:

Name: Le Sony'R Ra

Address: 5626 Morton Street

City: Philadelphia State: PA Postal Code: 19144

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: April 20, 2022

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: May 13, 2022

Date of Final Action: May 13, 2022

☒ Designated ☐ Rejected

12/7/18

## 5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

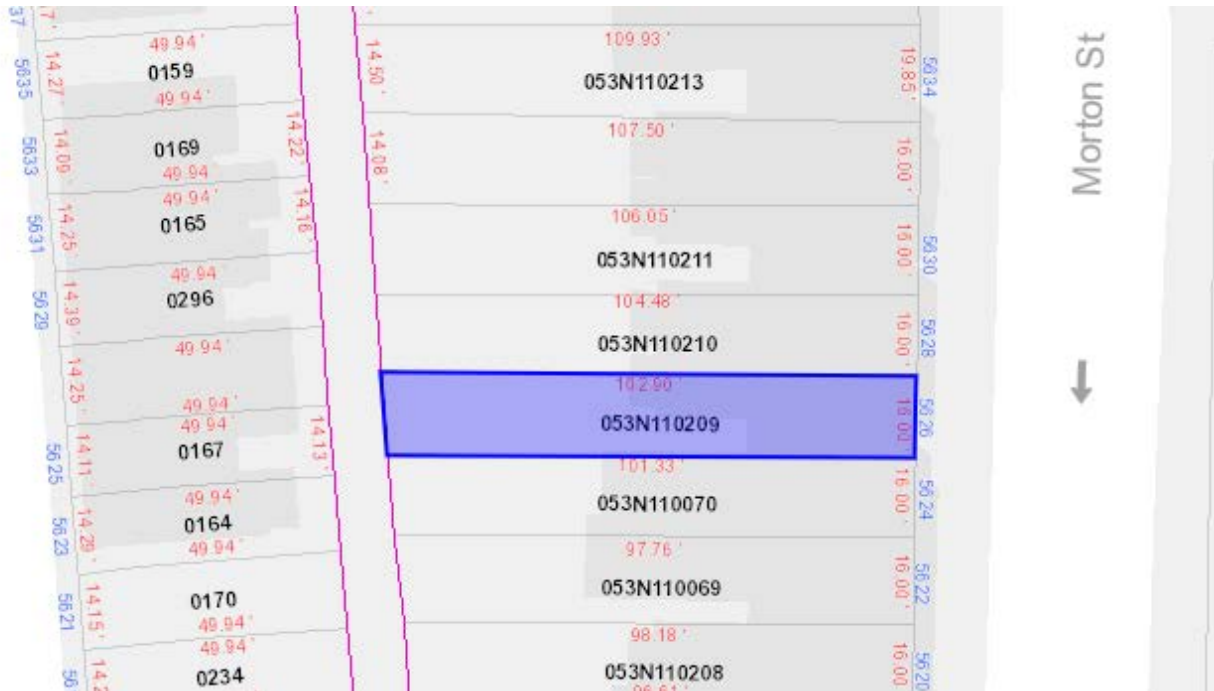


Figure 1. The boundary identifying the parcel at 5626 Morton Street. Source: CityAtlas.

All that certain lot or piece of ground with the brick or stone messuage or tenement thereon erected, situate on the west side of Morton Street, at a distance of 212 feet northward from the northwest side of Armat Street, in the 22nd Ward of the City of Philadelphia, containing in front or breadth on the said Morton Street 16 feet and extending of that width in length or depth westward between parallel lines at right angles to the said Morton Street on the south line thereof 101 feet, 4 inches and on the north line thereof 102 feet, 10-7/8 inches to a certain 3 feet wide alley leading to another alley which leads westward into Heiskell Street.

Parcel: 053-N11-0209

OPA Account: 122175000

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## 6. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION



Figure 4. View of 5626 Morton Street, the Arkestral Institute of Sun Ra (on the left), 11 April 2020. Source: Cyclomedia.

Located on the west side of Morton Street, the Arkestral Institute of Sun Ra is one of 11 surviving Second-Empire rowhouses, constructed as a group of 16 (Figure 4). The house features a three-story main block with a two-story rear ell. The front façade is clad in schist. The house has a stone-clad projecting bay at the first floor, the roof of which extends out over a small porch at the entranceway. The rowhouse shares a porch with its neighbor, a mirror-image rowhouse to the north. The original porch columns have been replaced. The entrance doorway is arched; the door is painted in a Afrofuturistic style. The window openings at the first and second floor are arched, but the one-over-one windows have square heads. The third-floor front façade is a mansard with two pedimented dormers. All front-façade windows have been replaced; the original windows, which survive at some of the buildings in the row, were two-over-two windows, arched at the first and second floors and squared in the dormer. The mansard was originally clad in grey, fish-scale slate, but now has replacement asphalt-



fiberglass shingles. The cornice was wood with decorative floral piercings, but is now covered. The parcel includes an open rear yard and extends west to a shared egress alley.



Figure 5. View of the row of buildings on the west side of the 5600-block of Morton Street, 11 April 2020. Source: Cyclomedia.



Figure 6. The Arkestral Institute of Sun Ra at 5626 Morton Street, 2021. Source: Emma Lee/WHYY.

## 7. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The property at 5626 Morton Street, known as the Arkestral Institute of Sun Ra, is historically significant and should be listed individually on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The property satisfies Criterion for Designation A as delineated in Section 14-1004(1) of the Philadelphia Code; it “is associated with the life of a person significant in the past,” Sun Ra, who was a poet, author, composer, actor, philosopher, mystic, founder of the Afrofuturism movement, and one of the most influential jazz musicians of the twentieth century (Figure 7). He and some of his band members lived and rehearsed in the house from 1968 to his death in 1993 and some band members continue to live and play there to this day in 2022.



Figure 7. Sun Ra rehearsing at the Arkestral Institute, 5626 Morton Street in Germantown, c. 1978.



## BACKGROUND ON THE PROPERTY AT 5626 MORTON STREET

The property at 5626 Morton Street is located on the west side of the street about 212 feet north of Armat Street. Prior to the middle of the 1870s, the land along the west side of the 5600-block of Morton Street, then called Willow Avenue, was undeveloped. The Wingohocking Creek ran across the open land on a line parallel to and west of Morton Street. The creek was converted to a sewer, which runs under Heiskill Street, when the land was developed in the late nineteenth century.

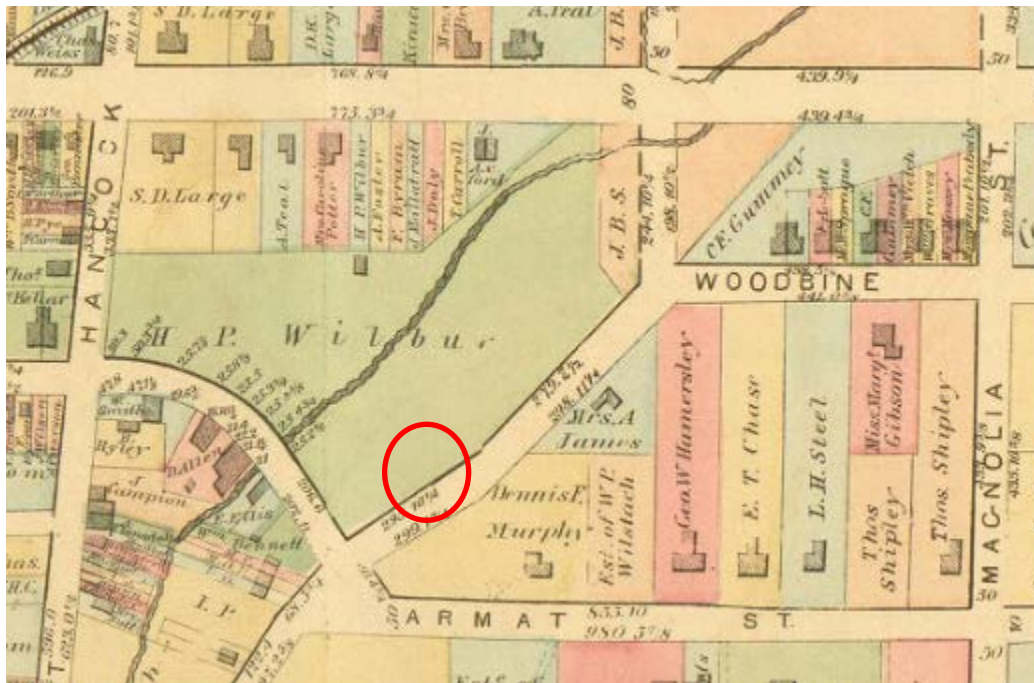


Figure 8. Detail showing the H. P. Wilbur parcel from Plate 8, G. M. Hopkins Atlas of the Late Borough of Germantown, 22nd Ward, City of Philadelphia, 1871.

In 1873, merchant and real estate investor Colson Heiskill purchased at sheriff's sale a large, open plot of land on the west side of Morton Street that had belonged to attorney and real estate investor Horace P. Wilbur (Figure 8). Heiskill transferred a section of the large parcel to carpenter Edwin Dunn for the development of a row of 16 houses in 1874. Over the next few years, the construction project and its associated mortgage passed from Dunn to house carpenter John O'Donnell, to lumber merchant Thomas B. Hoffman, to carpenter Thomas J. Weaver, to William Rickey, to Sylvester Mussina of Williamsport, Pennsylvania, to carpenter William Sennieff, to George F. Kelly, manufacturer of millwork, and finally to Samuel B. McDowell, also a manufacturer of millwork.<sup>1</sup> The row of houses had been passed from tradesman to tradesman as an intact unit until Kelly, who subdivided the row into individual properties and created many small mortgages from the single large mortgage. When the property passed from Kelly to McDowell in May 1877, the deed noted that the houses were "unfinished." Colson Heiskill, the original developer who held the mortgages, objected to the reconfiguration of the finances from a single large loan to several small loans in the names of multiple parties as well as the facts that the houses were not being built according to the contract and that other liens had intervened and the mortgages were no longer the first encumbrances. After much litigation between Heiskill and Kelly, Heiskill prevailed twice at the

<sup>1</sup> A chain of title is provided as an appendix.



Pennsylvania Supreme Court and reacquired the properties through a sheriff's sale in March 1879.<sup>2</sup> The rowhouses, which were presumably completed by 1880, remained in the Heiskill family's ownership as rental units until the early twentieth century, when they were sold off to owner occupiers. The rowhouse at 5626 Morton Street passed through several hands in the first half of the twentieth century.

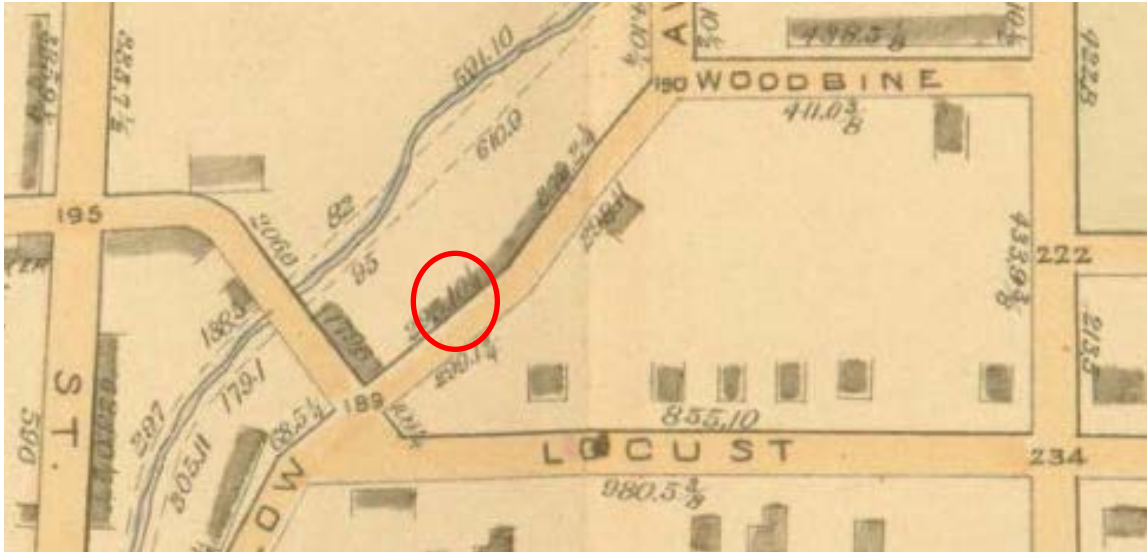


Figure 9. The row that includes 5626 Morton Street was first depicted on a map in 1888, as seen in this detail from Plate 32, G. Wm. Baist, *Property Atlas of the City of Philadelphia, Penna, complete in one volume*, 1888.

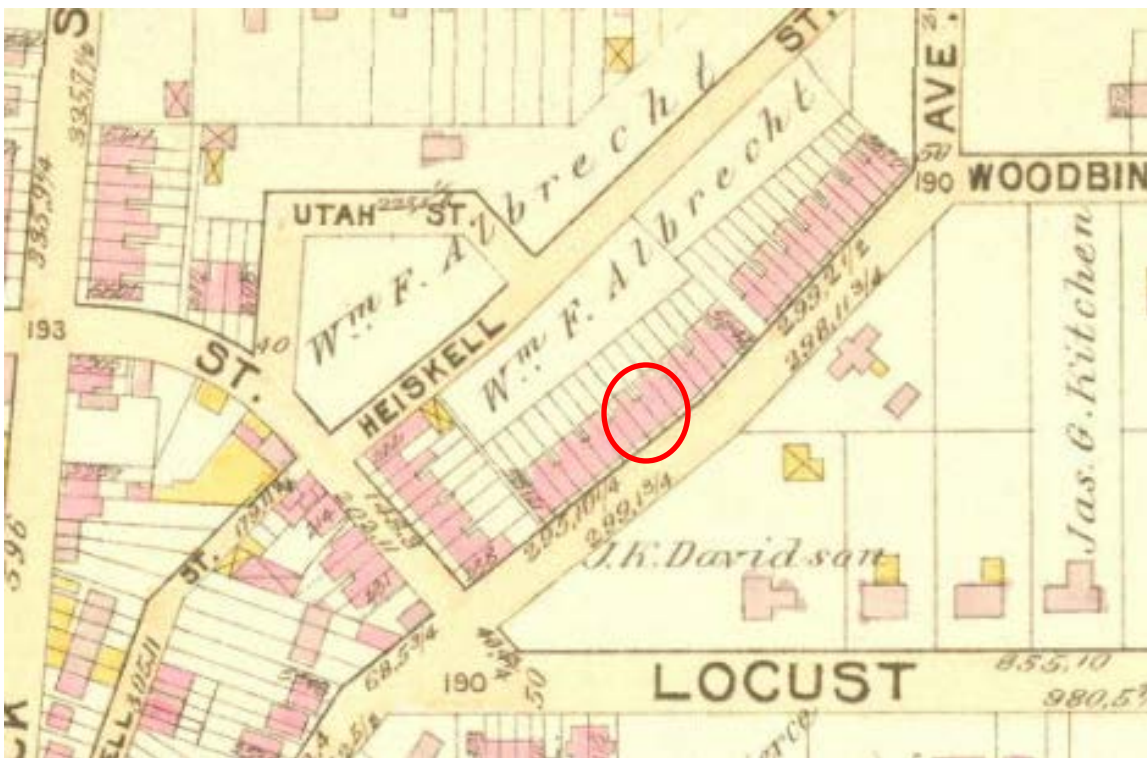


Figure 10. By 1895, the Wingohocking Creek had been enclosed in a sewer and Heiskell Street had been opened. Plate 37, George W. & Walter S. Bromley, *Civil Engineers, Atlas of the City of Philadelphia*, 1895.

<sup>2</sup> "Transactions in Real Estate," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 11, 1881, p. 2.

In 1964, Nathan and Henrietta Allen purchased the property at 5626 Morton Street for \$4,200 from Harry and Roslyn D. Rosenthal.<sup>3</sup> The Allens were the parents of Marshall Allen, a musician who joined Sun Ra's band, the Arkestra, in 1957 and later served as band leader. In 1968, Sun Ra, Marshall, and several other band members moved from New York City to the rowhouse owned by the Allens in Germantown. The rowhouse, dubbed the Arkestral Institute of Sun Ra, was the home and rehearsal studio for Ra until his death in 1993 and continues to be the home of several members of the Arkestra, who have carried on since the master's passing. The title to the rowhouse was transferred from Nathan Allen to Le Sony'R Ra, one of Ra's monikers, in 1984 and remains in his name to this day.<sup>4</sup> As the *New York Times* noted in October 2020, "an unassuming rowhouse in [Philadelphia's] Germantown neighborhood, it is where Ra — a pianist, composer, poet, and mystic whose influence on culture has only seemed to grow since his death in 1993 — held court for the last quarter-century of his life. Members of his ensemble, the Sun Ra Arkestra, continue to live and rehearse there, surrounded by his artifacts and aura."<sup>5</sup>

### SUN RA AND THE ARKESTRA

Sun Ra was born Herman Poole Blount on May 22, 1914, in Birmingham, Alabama. He was named after the popular vaudeville stage magician Black Herman, who had deeply impressed his mother, but was nicknamed Sonny from his childhood. For decades, very little was known about Sun Ra's early life, and he contributed to its mystique. As a self-invented person, he routinely gave evasive, contradictory or seemingly nonsensical answers to personal questions, and denied his birth name. The facts of Sun Ra's early life remained shrouded in mystery until John F. Szwed, the John M. Musser Professor of Anthropology, African American Studies and Film Studies at Yale University, published the definitive biography of the enigmatic musician in 1997.<sup>6</sup>

As a child, Blount was a skilled pianist. By the age of 11 or 12, he was composing and sight reading music. Birmingham, Alabama was an important stop for touring musicians and he saw live performances of prominent musicians including Fletcher Henderson, Duke Ellington, and Fats Waller. In his teenage years, Blount demonstrated prodigious musical talent. Many times, according to acquaintances, he went to big band performances and then produced full transcriptions of the bands' songs from memory. By his mid-teens, Blount was performing semi-professionally as a solo pianist and as a member of various informal jazz and R&B groups. He attended Birmingham's segregated Industrial High School, now known as Parker High School, where he studied under music teacher John T. "Fess" Whatley, a demanding disciplinarian who was widely respected and whose classes produced many professional musicians. Though deeply religious, his family was not formally associated with any Christian church or sect. Blount had few or no close friends in high school but was remembered as kind-natured and quiet, an honor roll student, and a voracious reader. He took advantage of the Black Masonic Lodge, one of the few places in Birmingham where African Americans had unlimited access to books. Its collection on Freemasonry and other esoteric concepts made a strong impression on him. By

<sup>3</sup> Philadelphia Department of Records, Deed Book CAD-098-487, Harry & Roslyn D. Rosenthal to Nathan & Henrietta Allen, 14 January 1964.

<sup>4</sup> Philadelphia Department of Records, Deed Document 41555922, Nathan Allen to Le Sony'R Ra, 11 May 1984.

<sup>5</sup> Giovanna Russonello, "Earth couldn't contain Sun Ra's ideas. His Arkestra is still exploring them," *New York Times*, 27 October 2020, <https://nyti.ms/34yqcKQ>

<sup>6</sup> The biographical information in this nomination is based on John F. Szwed, *Space Is the Place: The Lives and Times of Sun Ra*, (New York: Pantheon, 1997).

his teens, Blount suffered from a medical disorder that left him with a nearly constant discomfort that sometimes flared into severe pain. Szwed, his biographer, suggests that Blount felt shame about it and the condition contributed to his isolation.

In 1934, Ethel Harper, his biology teacher from the high school, who had organized a band to pursue a career as a singer, gave Blount his first full-time musical job. Blount joined a musicians' trade union and toured with Harper's group through the Southeast and Midwest. When Harper left the group mid-tour to move to New York, Blount took over leadership of the group, renaming it the Sonny Blount Orchestra. The group continued touring for several months before dissolving as unprofitable. Though the first edition of the Sonny Blount Orchestra was not financially successful, it earned positive notice from fans and other musicians. Blount afterward found steady employment as a musician in Birmingham, where the night clubs often featured exotic trappings, such as vivid lighting and murals with tropical or oasis scenes. Some believe these exotic sets influenced Sun Ra and that he later incorporated elements from them into his stage shows. In 1936, his former high school teacher's intercession led to a scholarship at Alabama Agricultural and Mechanical University. Blount majored in music education, studying composition, orchestration, and music theory, but dropped out after one year.

Blount left college because, he claimed, he had a visionary experience that changed his life. In 1936 or 1937, in the midst of deep religious concentration, a bright light appeared around him, and, as he later said:

My whole body changed into something else. I could see through myself. And I went up... I wasn't in human form... I landed on a planet that I identified as Saturn... they teleported me and I was down on [a] stage with them. They wanted to talk with me. They had one little antenna on each ear. A little antenna over each eye. They talked to me. They told me to stop [attending college] because there was going to be great trouble in schools... the world was going into complete chaos... I would speak [through music], and the world would listen. That's what they told me.

According to Szwed, Sun Ra's biographer, the musician's closest associates cannot date the story any earlier than 1952. Sun Ra also said that the incident happened when he was living in Chicago, where he did not settle until the late 1940s. Sun Ra discussed the vision, with no substantive variation, to the end of his life. His trip to Saturn allegedly occurred a full decade before flying saucers entered public consciousness with the 1947 encounter of Kenneth Arnold. It was earlier than other public accounts, about 15 years before George Adamski wrote about contact with benevolent beings; and almost 20 years before the 1961 case of Barney and Betty Hill, who recounted sinister UFO abductions. Szwed says that, "even if this story is revisionist autobiography... Sonny was pulling together several strains of his life. He was both prophesizing his future and explaining his past with a single act of personal mythology."

After leaving college, Blount became known as the most singularly devoted musician in Birmingham. He rarely slept, citing Thomas Edison, Leonardo da Vinci, and Napoleon as fellow highly productive cat-nappers. He transformed the first floor of his family's home into a conservatory-workshop, where he wrote songs, transcribed recordings, rehearsed with the many musicians who drifted in and out, and discussed Biblical and esoteric concepts with whomever was interested. Blount became a regular at Birmingham's Forbes Piano Company, visiting the Forbes building almost daily to play music, swap ideas with staff and customers, and copy sheet music into his notebooks. He formed a new band, and like his high-school teacher Whatley, insisted on rigorous daily rehearsals. The new Sonny Blount Orchestra earned a reputation as an impressive, disciplined band that could play in a wide variety of styles with equal skill.



In October 1942, Blount received a selective service notification that he had been drafted into the U.S. military. He quickly declared himself a conscientious objector, citing religious objections to war and killing, his financial support of his great-aunt Ida, and his chronic hernia. The local draft board rejected his claim. In an appeal to the national draft board, Blount wrote that the lack of black men on the draft appeal board “smacks of Hitlerism.” His refusal to join the military deeply embarrassed his family, and many relatives ostracized him. He was eventually approved for alternate service at Civilian Public Service camp in Pennsylvania, but he did not appear at the camp as required on December 8, 1942. Shortly after, he was arrested in Alabama. In court, Blount said that alternate service was unacceptable; he debated the judge on points of law and Biblical interpretation. The judge ruled that Blount was violating the law and was at risk for being drafted into the U.S. military. Blount responded that if inducted, he would use military weapons and training to kill the first high-ranking military officer possible. The judge sentenced Blount to jail, pending draft board and Civilian Public Service rulings, and then offensively remarked that he had never seen anyone like Blount, using a racial epithet. Blount replied, “No, and you never will again.”<sup>7</sup> In January 1943, Blount wrote to the United States Marshals Service from the Walker County, Alabama, claiming that he was facing a nervous breakdown from the stress of imprisonment, was suicidal, and was in constant fear of sexual assault. When his conscientious objector status was reaffirmed in February 1943, he was escorted to Pennsylvania. He did forestry work as assigned during the day and was allowed to play piano at night. Psychiatrists there described him as suffering from psychological problems, but also as well-educated and intellectual. In March 1943, the draft board reclassified Blount as 4-F because of his hernia, and he returned to Birmingham, embittered and angered. He formed a new band and soon was playing professionally. After his beloved great-aunt Ida died in 1945, Blount felt no reason to stay in Birmingham, where he had experience continued racism, and moved to Chicago.

In Chicago, Blount quickly found work, notably with blues singer Wynonie Harris, with whom he made his recording debut on two 1946 singles, *Dig This Boogie/Lightning Struck the Poorhouse*, and *My Baby's Barrelhouse/Drinking By Myself*. *Dig This Boogie* was also Blount's first recorded piano solo. He performed with the locally successful Lil Green band and played bump-and-grind music for months in Calumet City strip clubs.



Figure 11: Undated portrait of Herman Sonny Blount, probably taken in Chicago in 1946. Alton Abraham Collections of Sun Ra, Hanna Holborn Gray Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago.

<sup>7</sup> Quoted in Szwed, *Space Is the Place*, p. 44.

In August 1946, Blount earned a lengthy engagement at the Club DeLisa under bandleader and composer Fletcher Henderson. Blount had long admired Henderson, but Henderson's fortunes had declined, owing to long-term injuries from a car accident. Henderson hired Blount as pianist and arranger, replacing Marl Young. Blount's arrangements initially showed a degree of bebop influence, but the band members resisted the new music, despite Henderson's encouragement.

In 1948, Blount performed briefly in a trio with saxophonist Coleman Hawkins and violinist Stuff Smith, both preeminent musicians. There are no known recordings of this trio, but a home recording of a Blount-Smith duet from 1953 appears on *Sound Sun Pleasure*, and one of Sun Ra's final recordings in 1992 was a rare sideman appearance on violinist Billy Bang's *Tribute to Stuff Smith*.

In addition to enabling professional advancement, his encounters in Chicago changed Blount's personal outlook. The city was a center of African-American political activism and fringe movements, with Black Muslims, Black Hebrews, and others proselytizing, debating, and printing leaflets and books. Blount absorbed it all and was fascinated with Chicago's many ancient Egyptian-styled buildings and monuments. He read books such as George G.M. James's *Stolen Legacy*, which argued that classical Greek philosophy had its roots in ancient Egypt. Blount concluded that the accomplishments and history of Africans had been systematically suppressed and denied by European cultures.

On October 20, 1952, Blount legally changed his name to Le Sony'R Ra. Sun Ra claimed to have always been uncomfortable with his birth name of Blount. He considered it a slave name, from a family that was not his. David Martinelli suggested that his change was similar to "Malcolm X and Muhammad Ali [dropping] their slave names in the process of attaining a new self-awareness and self-esteem."<sup>8</sup>

By 1952, Blount, now Sun Ra, was leading the Space Trio with drummer Tommy "Bugs" Hunter and saxophonist Pat Patrick, two of the most accomplished musicians he had known. They performed regularly, and he began writing more advanced songs. When Patrick left the group, his friend John Gilmore joined the band on tenor sax, and Marshall Allen soon followed on alto sax. Patrick was in and out of the group until the end of his life, but Allen and Gilmore became the two most devoted members of the band, which evolved into the Arkestra (Figure 12). In fact, Gilmore and Allen would move with Sun Ra to New York City and then Philadelphia and eventually carry on the Arkestra after Sun Ra's death in 1993. Saxophonist James Spaulding and trombonist Julian Priester also recorded with Sun Ra in Chicago, and both went on to prominent careers. The Chicago tenor saxophonist Von Freeman also did a short stint with the band of the early 1950s.

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<sup>8</sup> David A. Martinelli, "The Cosmic-Myth Equations of Sun Ra," M.A. Thesis, Department of Ethnomusicology, UCLA, 1991; <https://web.archive.org/web/20080222063541/http://www.ethnomusic.ucla.edu/staff/martinelli/Sun%20Ra.htm>



Figure 12: The first incarnation of the Sun Ra Arkestra at the Parkway Ballroom, Chicago, 1955. From left to right: Pat Patrick, Julian Priestner, John Thompson, Sun Ra, John Gilmore, Dave Young, Robert Barry, Richard Evans, Jim Herndon. Alton Abraham Collections of Sun Ra, Hanna Holborn Gray Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago.

In Chicago, Sun Ra met Alton Abraham, a precociously intelligent teenager and something of a kindred spirit. He became the Arkestra's biggest booster and one of Sun Ra's closest friends. Both men felt like outsiders and shared an interest in esoterica. Abraham's strengths balanced Ra's shortcomings. Although he was a disciplined bandleader, Sun Ra was somewhat introverted and lacked business sense, a trait that haunted his entire career. Abraham was outgoing, well-connected, and practical. Despite his young age, Abraham eventually became Sun Ra's *de facto* business manager. He booked performances, suggested musicians for the Arkestra, and introduced several popular songs into the group's repertoire. Sun Ra, Abraham, and others formed a sort of book club to trade ideas and discuss the offbeat topics that so intrigued them. The group printed a number of pamphlets and broadsides explaining their conclusions and ideas. Some of these were collected by critic John Corbett and Anthony Elms as *The Wisdom of Sun Ra: Sun Ra's Polemical Broadsheets and Streetcorner Leaflets*.<sup>9</sup>

In the mid-1950s, Sun Ra and Abraham formed an independent record label that was generally known as El Saturn Records, but was known by several name variations. Initially focused on 45 rpm singles by Sun Ra and artists related to him, Saturn Records issued two full-length albums during the 1950s: *Super-Sonic Jazz* (1957) and *Jazz In Silhouette* (1959). Producer Tom Wilson was the first to release a Sun Ra album, through his independent label Transition Records in 1957, entitled *Jazz by Sun Ra*. During this era, Sun Ra recorded the first of dozens of singles as a band-for-hire backing a range of doo wop and R&B singers; several dozen of these were reissued in a two-CD set, *The Singles*, by Evidence Records.

<sup>9</sup> John Corbett and Anthony Elms, eds., *The Wisdom of Sun Ra: Sun Ra's Polemical Broadsheets and Streetcorner Leaflets* (Chicago: WhiteWalls, University of Chicago Press, 2006).



Sun Ra's band became a central part of the early avant-garde jazz movement in Chicago, being one of the first jazz bands to employ electronic instruments, as early as 1956, including electric piano, clavioline, celeste, and synthesizers. In the late 1950s, Sun Ra and his band began to wear outlandish, Egyptian-styled or science fiction-themed costumes and headdresses. The costumes expressed Sun Ra's fascination with ancient Egypt and the space age, provided a new identity for the band onstage, and added comic aspect to the shows (Figure 13). Sun Ra thought that *avant garde* musicians typically took themselves far too seriously.



Figure 13: Sun Ra and his Arkestra, Chicago, c.1960. Photo by Charles Shabacon. Alton Abraham Collections of Sun Ra, Hanna Holborn Gray Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago.

Sun Ra and the Arkestra moved to New York City in the fall of 1961. To save money, Ra and his band members lived communally. Living together, the band could rehearse spontaneously. During this time in New York, Sun Ra recorded the album *The Futuristic Sound of Sun Ra*.

In March 1966, the Arkestra secured a regular Monday night gig at Slug's Saloon, which allowed Sun Ra to break through to new audiences and secure widespread recognition. Sun Ra's popularity reached an early peak during this period, as the beat generation and early followers of psychedelia embraced him. Regularly for the next year and a half and intermittently for another half-decade afterwards, Sun Ra and Arkestra performed at Slug's for audiences that eventually came to include music critics and leading jazz musicians. Opinions of Sun Ra's music were divided and hecklers were not uncommon. High praise, however, came from two of the architects of bebop. Trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie offered encouragement, once stating, "Keep it up, Sonny, they tried to do the same shit to me," and pianist Thelonious Monk chided someone who said Sun Ra was "too far out" by responding, "Yeah, but it *swings*."

Also in 1966, Sun Ra, with members of the Arkestra and Al Kooper's Blues Project, recorded the album *Batman and Robin* under the pseudonym, The Sensational Guitars of Dan and Dale. The album consisted primarily of instrumental variations on the Batman Theme and public domain classical music, with an uncredited female vocalist singing the "Robin Theme."

Despite their planned management of money, the cost of living in New York eventually became too high for Sun Ra and the Arkestra. In 1968, when the New York building they were renting was put up for sale, Sun Ra and the Arkestra relocated to Philadelphia, to the house at 5626 Morton Street, which was owned by Marshall Allen's parents (Figure 14). The house became the Arkestra's base of operations until Sun Ra's death in 1993. Apart from occasional complaints about the noise of rehearsals, they were soon regarded as good neighbors because of their friendliness, drug-free living, and rapport with youngsters. As saxophonist John Gilmore once explained: "There's always about six or seven of us [living at 5626 Morton Street]. There's Marshall Allen, Elo Omoe, James Jacson, Danny Thompson, Sun Ra, and myself, and guests that come through. There's always a place downstairs for somebody. Basically speaking, it's between six and seven of us living here all of the time."<sup>10</sup> The saxophonist Danny Ray Thompson owned and operated the Pharaoh's Den, a convenience store in the neighborhood, where neighbors could pick up milk, bread, and candy as well as an introduction to Sun Ra's music and Afrofuturistic philosophy (Figure 15).<sup>11</sup> When lightning struck a tree on their street, Sun Ra took it as a good omen. One of the members of the band, James Jacson, fashioned what they called the Cosmic Infinity Drum from the scorched tree trunk. The musicians commuted via railroad to New York for the Monday night gig at Slug's and for other engagements.



Figure 14: Sun Ra and members of the Arkestra on the front steps at 5626 Morton Street, c. 1970.

<sup>10</sup> Interview with John Gilmore in Robert Mugge's documentary *A Joyful Noise*, 1980.

<sup>11</sup> John Morrison, "Remembering two Sun Ra disciples: Danny Thompson and Leroy Butler, *The Key*, 22 March 2020; <https://thekey.xpn.org/2020/03/22/sun-ra-danny-ray-thompson-leroy-butler/>



Figure 15: The Pharaoh's Den, a market run by Sun Ra band member Danny Thompson at 5657 Heiskeill Street.



Figure 16: Danny Thompson serving customers at the Pharaoh's Den. In the background, a sign informs patrons that "Space Is the Place."

Sun Ra became a fixture in Philadelphia, appearing regularly on WXPB radio, giving lectures to community groups, and visiting the city's libraries. In the mid-1970s, the Arkestra sometimes played free Saturday afternoon concerts in a Germantown park near their home. At their mid-1970s shows in Philadelphia nightclubs, the band sold unmarked LPs in plain white sleeves, pressed from recordings of their live performances. As Marshall Allen explained to interviewers in 2014:

It's a commune. All the musicians living here would have other skills as well. One could fix doors, another could cook, others were good painters. In the commune, we were doing everything ourselves. We wouldn't need outside help, we were truly independent from the outside world. In this house, Ra was telling us that we had to do our own everything. We even sewed our own costumes. We had our needles and thread and a sewing machine and designed and tailored our own show uniforms. We didn't have no money, so what could we do? We then learned to manage ourselves; we learned to read contracts, because if you don't learn that, it's always the middle men who'd rip you off. So we made our albums, made our music, made our covers, made our own designs. We



even had a vinyl press for some years and we glued the label on the LP's ourselves. Over the decades we eventually manufactured some 500,000 records in this house.<sup>12</sup>



Figure 17. Su Ra, Label from an LP with *Springtime Again* and *Sleeping Beauty*, 1 November 1979. Note the address on the label, Saturn, 5626 Morton St, Philadelphia, PA 19144.



Figure 18. Su Ra, Label from an LP with *Stars that Shine Darkly*, 11 October 1986. Note the address on the label, Saturn, 5626 Morton St, Philadelphia, PA 19144.

In late 1968, Sun Ra and the Arkestra made their first tour of the West Coast of the United States. Reactions were mixed. Hippies accustomed to long-form psychedelia like the Grateful Dead were often bewildered by the Arkestra. By this time, the performance included 20 to 30 musicians, dancers, singers, fire-eaters, and elaborate lighting. John Burks of *Rolling Stone* wrote a positive review of a San Jose State College concert. During this tour, Damon Choice, then an art student at San Jose, joined the Arkestra and became its vibraphonist. Sun Ra was featured on the April 19, 1969 cover of *Rolling Stone* magazine, which introduced his inscrutable gaze to millions (Figure 19). By the 1970s, the Sun Ra Arkestra and its various permutations began touring Europe extensively. His performances had by then expanded to include martial arts practitioners and film, becoming a true multimedia attraction. Their performances would often stretch on for hours, including hypnotic, chanting processions

<sup>12</sup> "André Vida and Max Dax talk to Marshall Allen of the Sun Ra Arkestra," *Electronic Beats*, 31 March 2014; <https://www.electronicbeats.net/andre-vida-and-dax-talk-to-marshall-allen-of-the-sun-ra-arkestra/>

through the audience. Sun Ra continued playing in Europe almost to the end of his life. The saxophonist Danny Thompson became a *de facto* tour and business manager during this era, specializing in what he called “no bullshit C.O.D.,” preferring to take cash before performing or delivering records.

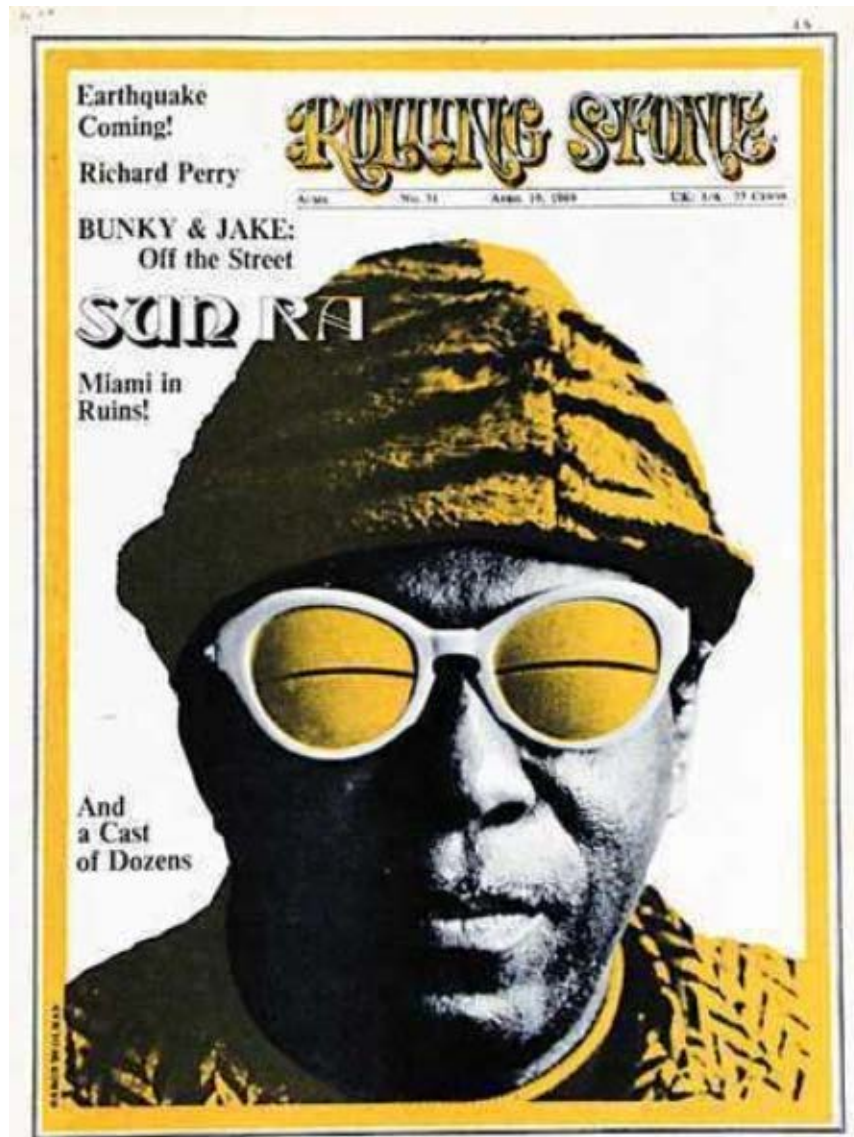


Figure 19. Sun Ra on the cover of *Rolling Stone*, 19 April 1969.

In early 1971, Sun Ra was appointed as artist-in-residence at University of California, Berkeley, teaching a course called *The Black Man in the Cosmos*. Few students enrolled, but his classes were often full of curious people from the surrounding community. One half-hour of each class was devoted to a lecture complete with handouts and homework assignments, the other half-hour to an Arkestra performance or Sun Ra keyboard solo. Reading lists included the works of Madame Blavatsky and Henry Dumas, the Tibetan Book of the Dead, Alexander Hislop's *The Two Babylons*, The Book of Oahspe, and assorted volumes concerning Egyptian hieroglyphs, African American folklore, and other topics. That same year, in 1971, Sun Ra traveled throughout Egypt with the Arkestra at the invitation of the drummer Salah Ragab. He returned to

Egypt in 1983 and 1984, when he recorded with Ragab. Recordings made in Egypt were released as *Live in Egypt*, *Nidhamu*, *Sun Ra Meets Salah Ragab*, *Egypt Strut*, and *Horizon*.

In 1972, Sun Ra collaborated with director John Coney, producer Jim Newman, and screenwriter Joshua Smith to produce *Space Is The Place*, an 85-minute feature film starring Sun Ra and his Arkestra (Figure 20). The film was released in 1974. The Criterion Channel, a streaming service for art house films, exclaimed that *Space Is The Place* “is a wild, kaleidoscopic whirl of science fiction, sharp social commentary, goofy pseudo-blaxploitation stylistics, and thrilling concert performance, in which the pharaonic Ra and his Arkestra lead an intergalactic movement to resettle the Black race on their utopian space colony.”<sup>13</sup> According to Science on Screen, “mind-bending, visually dazzling, and infused with electrifying music, *Space Is The Place* is a landmark early work of Afrofuturist cinema, combining sharp social critique with visionary metaphysical theories.”<sup>14</sup> The term “Afrfuturism,” which was coined by critic Mark Dery in 1994, has become an essential framework for art about imagined and alternative global Black experiences. As the author Ytasha Womack writes, “Afrfuturism combines elements of science fiction, historical fiction, speculative fiction, fantasy, Afrocentricity, and magic realism with non-Western beliefs.”<sup>15</sup> Of Sun Ra, Kristen Adams has said that “his essence embodied and pioneered Afrofuturism, which reimagines the future of art, science and more through the Black lens, acknowledging what Africa and Black people could have been in the absence of the colonialist system.”<sup>16</sup> In his academic treatise on Sun Ra and Afrofuturism, Paul Youngquist demonstrates that Sun Ra offered both a holistic response to a planet desperately in need of new visions and vibrations and a new kind of political activism that used popular culture to advance social change. In a nation obsessed with space and confused about race, Sun Ra aimed not just at assimilation for the socially disfranchised but even more at a wholesale transformation of American society and a more creative, egalitarian world.<sup>17</sup> Writing in the *New York Times* in 2015, film critic J. Hoberman concluded that:

Sun Ra was one of the founders of Afrofuturism and *Space is the Place* is one of its most profound realizations. As a founder of Afrofuturism, Sun Ra created one of the most fertile aesthetic, philosophical, and political trajectories of the last 50 years, a trajectory that runs from Ra through George Clinton and Bootsy Collins and their permutations of Parliament Funkadelic, to the novels of Samuel R. Delany and Octavia Butler, to the Black Panther comics and blockbuster movie.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>13</sup> The Criterion Channel, “Space is the Place,” <https://www.criterionchannel.com/space-is-the-place>

<sup>14</sup> Science on Screen, “Space is the Place,” <https://scienceonscreen.org/films/space-is-the-place>

<sup>15</sup> Quoted in The Criterion Channel, “Afrfuturism,” <https://www.criterionchannel.com/afrfuturism>

<sup>16</sup> Kristen Adams, “Sun Ra & the Classical Undertones Of Afrofuturism,” November 11, 2019, <https://www.castleskins.org/biba-blog/sun-ra-the-classical-undertones-of-afrfuturism>

<sup>17</sup> Paul Youngquist, *A Pure Solar World: Sun Ra and the Birth of Afrofuturism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016).

<sup>18</sup> J. Hoberman, “*Space Is the Place* Offers Otherworldly Takes on Identity,” *New York Times*, 2 April 2015.





Figure 20. Sun Ra in a still from the film *Space Is The Place*, 1972, released in 1974.

In the late 1970s, Sun Ra added a large electronic creation to his performances, the Outerspace Visual Communicator (OVC), which produced images rather than sounds and allowed artists to create and finger-paint with light akin to the way musicians create and explore sound with their instruments. The OVC was played with hands and feet by its inventor, Bill Sebastian, who collaborated with Sun Ra. During concerts, the OVC usually was positioned at center stage behind the Arkestra while Sebastian sat on stage with the musicians.

On May 20, 1978, Sun Ra and the Arkestra appeared as the musical guest on the TV show *Saturday Night Live*. Introduced by Buck Henry and performing alongside skits about Richard Nixon, Lisa Loupner, and Samurai TV Repairman, Sun Ra performed "Space Is The Place" and "Space Loneliness." The performance was one of the most adventurous ever staged by *Saturday Night Live* and perhaps the closest Sun Ra ever travelled toward mainstream American media and culture.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>19</sup> The *Saturday Night Live* episode is summarized by the Paley Center for Media at <https://www.paleycenter.org/collection/item/?q=t.c.b.&p=8&item=T:20261>

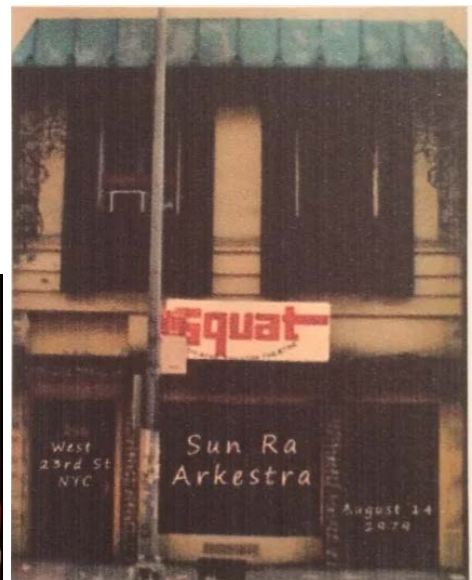


Figure 21. Sun Ra on *Saturday Night Live*, 20 May 1978.

In New York City in the fall of 1979, Sun Ra and the Arkestra played as the "house band" at the Squat Theatre on 23rd Street, which was the performance venue of the avant-garde Hungarian theater troupe. Janos, their manager, transformed the theater into a nightclub while most of the troupe was away that season performing in Europe. Debbie Harry, the Velvet Underground's John Cale and Nico (from Andy Warhol's Factory days), John Lurie and The Lounge Lizards, and other pop and avant-garde musicians were regulars. Soft-spoken and charismatic, Sun Ra turned the Squat Theater into a universe of big band "space" jazz backed by a floor show of sexy Jupiterettes. He directed while playing three synthesizers at the same time.



Figure 22. Sun Ra at the Squat Theater, 1979.



In 1980, director Robert Mugge released a documentary film titled *A Joyful Noise* about Sun Ra and the Arkestra.<sup>20</sup> The film includes concert footage shot on the roof of International House and at Danny's Hollywood Palace (5222-24 Walnut Street), both in West Philadelphia, and at the Famous Ballroom in Baltimore. The film also includes footage of Sun Ra in costume waxing philosophic as he wanders through the Egyptian exhibits at the University Museum at the University of Pennsylvania. Sun Ra's world view was often described as a philosophy, but he rejected the term, describing his own manner as an "equation" and saying that while philosophy was based on theories and abstract reasoning, his method was based on logic and pragmatism. According to ethnomusicologist David Martinelli, "Sun Ra presents a unified conception, incorporating music, myth, and performance into his multi-leveled equations. Every aspect of the Sun Ra experience, from business practices like Saturn Records to published collections of poetry to his 35-year career in music, is a manifestation of his equations. Sun Ra seeks to elevate humanity beyond their current earthbound state, tied to outmoded conceptions of life and death when the potential future of immortality awaits them."<sup>21</sup> Scenes in *A Joyful Noise* document the Pharoah's Den, the corner store run by the band, and provide glimpses into the interactions of the musicians and their neighbors in East Germantown. The film provides several interviews with members of the Arkestra at the house at 5626 Morton Street, inside and out on the street, discussing Sun Ra, music, and life at the communal residence. Most importantly, the film confirms the significance of the house at 5626 Morton Street, the Arkestral Institute of Sun Ra. The musicians attest to the importance of communal living, of the opportunities to rehearse every day, sometimes at midnight, sometimes at 6:00 a.m., sometimes for 12-hour stretches. Scenes of the band practicing show the musicians crammed into the living room with Sun Ra at the helm. Saxophone player John Gilmore explained that he did not really understand the music and the philosophy underlying it until he had lived at the house for six months. Musicians Danny Thompson, Elo Emoe, and James Jaceson speak of giving themselves over to the music and the lifestyle that only living at the house can provide.



Figure 23. Saxophonist John Gilmore and Sun Ra in front of the house at 5626 Morton Street, c. 1980.

<sup>20</sup> The film, *A Joyful Noise*, is available on Youtube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ioFrtlNXZk>

<sup>21</sup> David A. Martinelli, "The Cosmic-Myth Equations of Sun Ra," Master's Thesis, 1991, [http://www.ethnomusic.ucla.edu/staff/martinelli/Sun\\_Ra.htm](http://www.ethnomusic.ucla.edu/staff/martinelli/Sun_Ra.htm)





Figure 24. Poster and photograph of Sun Ra concert at the Chestnut Cabaret, 38<sup>th</sup> and Ludlow Streets, Philadelphia, October 29, 1984.

Sun Ra and the Arkestra continued touring and recording through the 1980s and into the 1990s (Figure 24). In 1986, Sun Ra and the Arkestra collaborated with Americana legend Phil Alvin of the Blasters on the album *Un "Sung Stories."*<sup>22</sup> Sun Ra had a stroke in 1990, but kept composing, performing, and leading the Arkestra. Late in his career, he opened a few concerts for the New York-based, experimental, noise rock group Sonic Youth, including one in New York's Central Park. When too ill to perform and tour, Sun Ra appointed Gilmore to lead the Arkestra. In late 1992, Sun Ra returned to his birth city of Birmingham, Alabama to be with his older sister, Mary Jenkins, who, along with various Blount cousins, became his caretaker. In January 1993, he was admitted to Princeton Baptist Medical Center, suffering from congestive heart failure, respiratory failure, strokes, circulatory problems, and other serious maladies. He died in the hospital on May 30, 1993, and was buried at Birmingham's Elmwood Cemetery. The marker reads "Herman Sonny Blount aka Le Sony'R Ra" (Figure 25). After Sun Ra's death, John Gilmore led the Arkestra until his death in 1995. Marshall Allen took over leadership of the Arkestra after Gilmore's death and still leads it today at the age of 97.



Figure 25. Sun Ra marker at Elmwood Cemetery, Birmingham, Alabama

<sup>22</sup> Jon Solomon, "Phil Alvin of the Blasters on death, Sun Ra and the greatest horn player in rock and roll," *Westword*, May 6, 2014, <https://www.westword.com/music/phil-alvin-of-the-blasters-on-death-sun-ra-and-the-greatest-horn-player-in-rock-and-roll-5707868>



## CONCLUSION

During the nearly three decades since Sun Ra's death, the influence and significance of the enigmatic artist has come into clearer focus. An outsider who linked the Black experience with ancient Egyptian mythology and outer space, Sun Ra was years ahead of all other avant-garde musicians in his experimentation with sound and instruments, a pioneer in group improvisations, and the use of electric instruments in jazz. Writing in 2010, music critic Nate Chinen concluded that space is still the place.

So is it any wonder that in the 16 years since Sun Ra's departure, his influence has rippled across so many borders of culture and genre? When soul-punk dynamo Janelle Monáe declares herself "an alien from outer space," or hip-hop trickster Lil Wayne rants about being a Martian, they're riding a wavelength best exemplified, if not generated, by the potent precedent of Sun Ra. And those are just the more flagrant manifestations of a process that reaches meaningfully into the worlds of rock, techno and electronica, along with avant-garde jazz and new music. "He never got as much recognition, even posthumously, as he should have," says Jeff Parker, the guitarist for Tortoise, the acclaimed Chicago post-rock band. "But the influence, man, it's everywhere."<sup>23</sup>

In 2017, *Rolling Stone* critic Brad Farberman pronounced of Sun Ra that "the Afrofuturist pioneer's influence is popping up everywhere, from Solange gigs to the underground. ... And Solange is not the only artist currently carrying the Sun Ra torch; his influence as a musician – one who prized theatricality, wrote poetry, released his own music and reported Saturn as his birthplace – seems to be everywhere lately."<sup>24</sup> Writing in 2019, another critic noted that, "though he passed away on May 30, 1993, his music, philosophy, and impact continue contributing to the sounds of creation today. Musicians and artists of all genres find inspiration in him."<sup>25</sup> In February and March 2022, New York's Carnegie Hall staged a citywide music and arts festival called Afrofuturism. Acknowledging Sun Ra's sway over contemporary culture while promoting the event, Miles Marshall Lewis contended that "Sun Ra's influence gleams from the ankh jewelry and Epperson fashions of singer Erykah Badu to the African diaspora sci-fi of poet Saul Williams, and to all of the musicians performing as part of Carnegie Hall's Afrofuturism festival."<sup>26</sup>

In summary, the property at 5626 Morton Street merits listing on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, satisfying Criterion for Designation A. The rowhouse was the residence of Sun Ra and several of his bandmates and the rehearsal space for the Arkestra from 1968 to Sun Ra's death in 1993. The property remains in Sun Ra's name to this day and members of the Arkestra continue to reside and perform there. After interviewing Marshall Allen, the current leader of the Arkestra, at 5626 Morton Street for *Electronic Beats* magazine in 2014, musician and composer André Vida and visual artist Max Dax concluded: "So this is a very special house not only for the Arkestra but also for American history."<sup>27</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Nate Chinen, "Space: Still the Place," *The Gig*, May 25, 2010,

<https://thegig.typepad.com/blog/2010/05/sun-ra-space-is-still-the-place.html#more>

<sup>24</sup> Brad Farberman, "Why Is Sun Ra Suddenly Having His Moment?," *Rolling Stone*, October 18, 2017, <https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-features/why-is-sun-ra-suddenly-having-his-moment-197156/>

<sup>25</sup> Kristen Adams, "Sun Ra & the Classical Undertones of Afrofuturism," November 11, 2019,

<https://www.castleskins.org/biba-blog/sun-ra-the-classical-undertones-of-afrofuturism>

<sup>26</sup> Miles Marshall Lewis, "Jazz and Afrofuturism: From Sun Ra to Flying Lotus"

<https://www.carnegiehall.org/Explore/Articles/2022/02/09/Jazz-and-Afrofuturism>

<sup>27</sup> "André Vida and Max Dax talk to Marshall Allen of the Sun Ra Arkestra," *Electronic Beats*, March 31, 2014; <https://www.electronicbeats.net/andre-vida-and-dax-talk-to-marshall-allen-of-the-sun-ra-arkestra/>



Figure 26. Members of the New Zealand band Orchestra of Spheres in front of 5626 Morton Street with Arkestra's Marshall Allen and Fred Allen (L-to-R Andy Wright, Fred Allen, Marshall Allen, Daniel Beban and Nell Thomas).



Figure 27. The rehearsal room on the first floor at 5626 Morton Street, c. 2017.

## 8. MAJOR SOURCES CITED

The Sun Ra discography is one of the largest discographies in music history. Sun Ra recorded dozens of singles and over one hundred full-length albums, comprising well over 1,000 songs, and making him one of the most prolific recording artists of the 20th century. At list of Sun Ra's recordings is available at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sun\\_Ra\\_discography](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sun_Ra_discography)

Sun Ra authored many books, poems, and other material expounding on his music and spiritual and philosophical beliefs. A magazine titled *Sun Ra Research* was published irregularly for many years, providing extensive documentation of Sun Ra's perspectives on many issues.

- Sun Ra, *Sun Ra, The Immeasurable Equation: The Collected Poetry and Prose* (Chandler, Arizona: Phaelos Books, 2005).
- Sun Ra with John Corbett and Anthony Elms, eds., *The Wisdom of Sun Ra: Sun Ra's Polemical Broadsheets and Streetcorner Leaflets* (Chicago: WhiteWalls, University of Chicago Press, 2006).
- Sun Ra, *This Planet Is Doomed* (New York, N.Y, Kicks Books, 2012).

The University of Chicago has an extensive collection of Sun Ra's works and personal items in the Special Collections Research Center at the Regenstein Library. The collection was assembled by Sun Ra's business manager Alton Abraham and is open to the public upon request.

Numerous biographies and analyses of Sun Ra's cultural production have been published. Two of the most significant are:

- John F. Szwed, *Space Is the Place: The Lives and Times of Sun Ra* (New York: Pantheon, 1997).
- Paul Youngquist, *A Pure Solar World: Sun Ra and the Birth of Afrofuturism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016).

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- Dan DeLuca, "Still traveling those spaceways," *Inquirer*, November 15, 2020, pp. D9-D10.
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- Jim Knipfel, "Angels and Demons at Play: Reclaiming Sun Ra's Legacy," *The Believer*, 19 July 2017, <https://believermag.com/logger/angels-and-demons-at-play/>
- Daniel Kreiss, "Performing the Past to Claim the Future: Sun Ra and the Afro-Future Underground, 1954-1968," *African American Review*, v. 45, no. 1/2 (Spring/Summer 2012), pp. 197-203.
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- Giovanna Russonello, "Earth couldn't contain Sun Ra's ideas. His Arkestra is still exploring them," *New York Times*, 27 October 2020, <https://nyti.ms/34yqcKQ>
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# **APPENDIX - CHAIN OF TITLE FOR 5626 MORTON STREET**

- Horace P. Wilbur to Colson & Nancy D. Heiskell, 28 September 1873, sheriff's deed book 99-286.
- Colson & Nancy D. Heiskell, merchant, to Edwin D. & Catherine Dunn, house carpenter, 31 August 1874, FTW-155-136, \$33,000, part of a larger lot, mortgage \$13,300.
- Edwin D. & Catherine Dunn, house carpenter, to John and Matilda O'Donnell, house carpenter, 29 April 1876, DHL-29-238, \$13,000, subject to mortgage.
- John and Matilda O'Donnell to Thomas B. Hoffman, 13 May 1876, DHL-29-284, \$13,000 mortgage debt plus interest.
- Thomas B. Hoffman, lumber merchant, to Thomas J. Weaver, carpenter, 20 May 1876, DHL-29-246, \$18,300.
- Thomas J. Weaver to William Rickey, 8 September 1876, DHL-45-257, \$18,300, same lot that Hoffman conveyed to Weaver.
- William Rickey to Sylvester Mussina, Williamsport, PA, 3 October 1876, DHL-54-46, \$18,300, same lot that Weaver conveyed to Rickey.
- Sylvester Mussina to William Sennieff, carpenter, 1 December 1876, DHL-74-428, \$14,000, same lot that Rickey conveyed to Mussina.
- William Sennieff to George F. Kelly, bookkeeper, 26 March 1877, DHL-74-453, \$14,000, same lot that Mussina conveyed to Sennieff.
- 053-N11-0048 subdivided to 52, 53, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59
- George F. Kelly, manufacturer of millwork, to Samuel B. McDowell, manufacturer of millwork, May 1877, DHL-110-233, \$2,700, "all that certain lot or piece of ground with the unfinished message or tenement," part of a larger lot that Sennieff sold to Kelly, with mortgages.
- 053-N11-0052 and 53 consolidated to 68
- John O'Donnell by sheriff to Colson Heiskill, 22 March 1879.
- 053-N11-0068 subdivided to 69, 70, 97, 98, 118, 192; 5626 Morton Street became 053-N11-0192
- Colson Heiskill Jr to Fidelity Insurance, Estate of Colson Heiskill, 12 April 1897.
- Fidelity Trust, Nathan Myers et al, 11 March 1902.
- Fidelity Trust, Estate of Colson Heiskill Jr, 26 March 1902.
- 053-N11-0192 subdivided into 209 to 217; 5626 Morton Street became 053-N11-209
- Fidelity Trust Co. to Philadelphia Savings Fund Society, 3 December 1902.
- Philadelphia Savings Fund Society to Eleanor E. Maison, 16 December 1902.
- Eleanor E. Maison to John F. Reardon, 17 December 1902.
- John F. Reardon to George W. Harnischfeger, 11 September 1903, WSV-253-39.
- George W. Harnischfeger to Louis A. Arnholt, 8 April 1908, WSV-965-353, \$1.
- Louis A. Arnholt to Cornelius & Harriet B. Hudson, 27 October 1908.
- Cornelius & Harriet B. Hudson to Anna G. McCann, 28 July 1919.
- Anna G. McCann to Domenico & Anna Mari, 28 May 1924, JMH-1819-511.
- Domenico & Anna Mari to Old Timers Building & Loan Association, 21 December 1936.
- Old Timers Building & Loan Association to Domenico & Anna Mari, 19 February 1937, DWH-265-221.
- Domenico Mari to Harry & Roslyn D. Rosenthal, 14 January 1964, CAD-097-332.
- Harry & Roslyn D. Rosenthal to Nathan & Henrietta Allen, 14 January 1964, CAD-098-487, \$4200.
- Nathan Allen to Le Sony'R Ra, 11 May 1984, Document 41555922, \$1.