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Harrison Bankhead Sextet: Morning Sun, Harvest Moon (2011)

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By [RAUL D'GAMA ROSE](#), Published: August 12, 2011

Harrison Bankhead's uniqueness is not restricted solely to his bass playing, which is touched by the melodicism of [Ray Brown](#) and the authority and inventiveness of [Charles Mingus](#) in a voice singularly his own. Bankhead is a composer with a sensibility finely attuned to a painterly impressionism, while being unafraid to fly in the face of convention, dappling his music with torrid references to avant-garde atonalism. All of this is in evidence on his solo debut, *Morning Sun, Harvest Moon*.



Artist Name

Album Title

Record Label

Author of Review

Style

Region

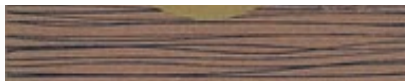
His music contains no evidence of fractal structuring in melody and harmony—something that seems to haunt many first albums for leaders. Bankhead writes music that is erudite, intellectually challenging and well-rounded, with a sublime sense for the elements of song, often indulging in the notion of "singing" on the bass, even when he is not the lead voice. He is also a sublime accompanist and the manner in which he urges horn men [Ed Wilkerson](#) and [Mars Williams](#) to wax eloquent, when their times come to stretch out, is remarkably reminiscent of Mingus.

Bankhead favors violinist [James Sanders](#) equally, and is heard dueling with him and the horns with exquisite results on the lively, elongated "Over Under, Inside Out." Not only is this a wonderfully impressionistic track, but the angular nature of its abstract architecture makes it all the more alluring, as bass and violin groan and wail in counterpoint with the undulating horns. This chart also sets up the following one, an obvious homage to Mingus and his tantalizingly oblique "Orange was the Color of Her Dress, Then Blue Silk." Bankhead calls his musical adventure, "Red is the Color in Jean-Michel Basquiat's Silk Blue." Although set in a more avant-garde mode, Bankhead's "Silk Blue" seems to follow Mingus' "Blue Silk" in its dramatic twists and turns, abrupt changes in rhythm and overall dramatic minor modes. Even the dreamy interludes appear to mirror the original, but then the violin interacts with the horns and the tenor saxophone dances with Bankhead's bass, with arms intertwined as Bankhead stretches the music with an elasticity uniquely its own.

"22nd Street Hustle (In Memory of [Fred Anderson](#))" is a touching tribute to this relatively unsung modern master of the tenor saxophone. "A Sketch of [Leroy Jenkins](#)" is another tribute to a musician who, for all intents and purposes, passed like a ship in the night. In both songs, Bankhead shows great sensitivity for the music made by the men he honors, with respect and a sense of gravitas; the expert use of clarinets woven into the softness of the other winds provides a great touch here and elsewhere.

And lest this seem like an album of solemnity, the masterfully executed portrait, "Chicago Señorita," ultimately gives the album a lithe character, with Bankhead and violinist Sanders breaking fresh melodic ground to give *Morning Sun, Harvest Moon* its true beauty.

Track Listing: Morning Sun/Harvest Moon; Chicago Señorita; East Village; Over Under Inside Out; Red is the Color in Jean-Michel Basquiat's Silk Blue; 22nd Street Hustle (In Memory of Fred Anderson); Flying Through Your Dreams.



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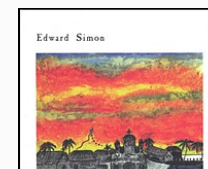
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Personnel: Harrison Bankhead: bass; Ed Wilkerson: tenor saxophone, clarinet, alto clarinet, didgeridoo.
Mars Williams: alto, tenor, soprano and sopranino saxophones, clarinet, autoharp, wooden flute; James Sanders: violin; Avreeayl Ra: drums, percussion, wooden flute. Ernie Adams: percussion.

Record Label: [Engine Studios](#)

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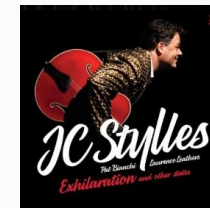
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Aug 12	Zappa Plays Zappa, Return to Forever, [unconfirmed]chick="" >[unconfirmed]stanley="" ,="" <span="" clarke<="" class="unconfirmedBooking" corea<="" span>="" span><="" td=""> <td>Beacon Theatre</td> <td>New York, NY</td> 	Beacon Theatre	New York, NY

Aug 12	Aidan Carroll Quartet	Smalls Jazz Club	New York, NY
Aug 12	Marco Benevento, Bustle In Your Hedgerow, Joe Russo, Seth Winters, Ume, Brenmar, DILLON FRANCIS	Brooklyn Bowl	Brooklyn, NY
Aug 12	Albert Aprigliano	Olivia Italian Restaurant/Bar	New York, NY
Aug 12	The Birdland Big Band, Kurt Rosenwinkel Big Band	Birdland	New York, NY
Aug 12	Okäru Lovelace	University of the Streets (New York, NY)	New York, NY
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Aug 12	Dende	Miss Favela	Brooklyn, NY
Aug 12	Carla Cook	The Jazz Standard	New York, NY
Aug 12	Laura Hull	Hibiscus Restaurant	Morristown, NJ
Aug 12	John Medeski, Medeski Martin & Wood	Whitney Museum of American Art	New York, NY

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