

SUN RA: DO THE IMPOSSIBLE

Directed and Produced by Christine Turner for Firelight Films

Runtime: 84 minutes



Sun Ra photograph by Hans Kumpf. Download the image [here](#) and include the photo credit. Download additional publicity stills [here](#).

A kaleidoscopic portrait of the visionary jazz musician, composer, and poet known as Sun Ra and the musical, historical, and philosophical currents that shaped him.

Poet, philosopher, Egyptologist, bandleader. Jazz visionary Sun Ra was all of these – and more. With his ever-evolving band, the Sun Ra Arkestra, he produced more than 200 albums, stretching the boundaries of free-form jazz while weaving ancient Egypt, interstellar metaphors, and scientific musings into a singular musical and spiritual vision of Afrofuturism that continues to reverberate across generations. Director Christine Turner takes us on an illuminating journey through the life of this multi-faceted artist, gracefully balancing recollections from the Arkestra's still-devout band members and dancers with insightful interviews from music scholars, and unforgettable film

and performance footage of Sun Ra himself. The result is a portrait – informative, inspiring, and mind-bending – of a man whose audacious vision, otherworldly imagination, and uncompromising artistry helped shape not only the sound of jazz, but the cultural landscape of the 20th century and beyond.

About Sun Ra

Herman Poole Blount was born on May 22, 1914, in Birmingham, Alabama, and departed this earth on May 30, 1993, as Sun Ra. Along the way he became a conscientious objector, legally changed his name to Le Sony'r Ra, forged a vision of a Black Space Age future, created a big band that toured the world and continues to this day, wrote over 1000 jazz compositions, issued more than 200 self-produced records, pioneered the use of electronic keyboards, and published volumes of broadsheets and poetry.

Sun Ra reached back in time to ancient Egypt to claim civilization as Black and fused it with the dawn of the Space Age to assert Blackness as the very nature of the “omniverse.” Compelling and strange, he claimed to have been “teleported” to Saturn, where he was told that the world would descend into chaos and that he must speak through music. Though his “Earth departure day” may have occurred more than three decades ago, his influence continues to grow with each successive generation.

About the Filmmaker

Christine Turner is a filmmaker whose portraits of artists, activists, and everyday people capture the beauty and struggle of life. Previously, her short documentary, [The Barber of Little Rock](#) (The New Yorker), about a local barber’s fight for a just economy, was nominated for Best Short Documentary at the 2024 Academy Awards. Her film [J’Nai Bridges Unamplified](#), released in 2023, follows the titular opera singer as she takes the stage in “A Knee on the Neck,” a tribute to George Floyd (PBS/American Masters). Other notable work includes: [Lynching Postcards: ‘Token of a Great Day’](#) (Paramount+), which was nominated for a Peabody and won an NAACP Image Award; [Homegoings](#) (PBS/POV), a critically-acclaimed portrait of a renowned Harlem funeral director; and the two artist profiles [Bettye Saar. Taking Care of Business](#) (New

York Times Op-Docs) and [Paint & Pitchfork](#) (The New Yorker). Learn more at christineturner.com.

[Download filmmaker headshot](#)

About Firelight Films

Founded by award-winning filmmaker Stanley Nelson, Firelight Films produces documentary films and develops strategies, partnerships, and materials to reach and engage diverse audiences. Firelight Films productions have garnered multiple Primetime Emmys, Peabodys, and Sundance awards. Among them are the Academy Award®-nominated *Attica* (Showtime); *Crack: Cocaine, Corruption & Conspiracy* (Netflix); and *Miles Davis: Birth of the Cool*, *The Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution*, and *Freedom Riders*, all for PBS. Recent Firelight Films productions include *WE WANT THE FUNK!* (PBS' Independent Lens), *Critical Condition: Health in Black America* (PBS' NOVA), *Becoming Frederick Douglass* and *Harriet Tubman: Visions of Freedom* (Maryland Public Television/PBS), and *Sound of the Police* (ABC News Studios/Hulu). Forthcoming projects include *In Our Own Image: The Story of African-American Art*, *Harlem: The Soul of the Nation*, and *Creating the New World*, a four-part series, all for PBS' Independent Lens. Learn more at firelightfilms.tv.

CREDITS

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