



HENRYK DEBICH – STRING BEAT

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One of the most legendary and eagerly sought after treasures of Polish jazz funk is about to see the light of day again. First issued in 1975, Henryk Debich's *STRING BEAT* is to be released on vinyl by the Hamburg label BUREAU B, thanks to a friendly tip-off by Roskow Kretschmann of Jazzanova, an expert on jazz and groove obscurities. The vinyl was mastered from the original tapes belonging to the Polish Muza label (catalogue number SX 1276).

It is no great secret amongst aficionados that an awful lot of excellent jazz music has come out of Poland - and still does. A particularly fruitful period for the Polish scene was the mid-seventies and Debich's *STRING BEAT* is the pinnacle of that era. Funk and jazz connoisseurs have long since fallen in love with it, so to call it a hidden gem does not quite do it justice.

What does remain a mystery, however, is what on earth prompted the established director and arranger Henryk Debich, with no previous as a funkateer, to create this jazz funk monster together with the Lodz Radio Orchestra in 1975. All the more mysterious, as this appears to have been an isolated incident. He never returned to such musical territory before he died in his hometown of Lodz in 2001, sadly depriving us of the opportunity to ask him in person. Perhaps he was inspired by the MPS label from the Black Forest, where many of his Eastern European colleagues had displayed their expertise as jazz musicians.

Even the author of the original liner notes, Andrzej Jaroszewski, found it hard to contain his boundless amazement: "We have never before heard such an orchestra playing in such a style. (...) If you bought this record of Henryk Debich's orchestra through choice, you are a connoisseur, if by chance, you are a lucky fellow!"

His enthusiasm is easy to fathom: razor sharp horns, a surgically precise rhythm section and crystal clear arrangements – back then, as now, one would have to search far and wide to find a similar sound in the supposedly further advanced western world. Only the dubious version of "Obladi – Oblada" interrupts the flow a little ...

Along with the Beatles track, there are two other "western" inclusions on the album. Henryk Debich pays tribute to "Black Moses" Isaac Hayes ("Melodia Z Filmu Shaft") and takes a bow before Herbie Hancock ("Kameleon"). Everything else was composed especially for *STRING BEAT* by young, gifted Lodz composers.

Following on from the James Last LP *WELL KEPT SECRET*, reissued under the title "JAMES LAST IN LOS ANGELES" by BUREAU B in late March, *STRING BEAT* is the label's second vinyl release.