

# record reviews

★★★★ EXCELLENT

★★★★ VERY GOOD

★★★ GOOD

★★ FAIR

★ POOR



## MOSE ALLISON

**EVER SINCE THE WORLD ENDED**—Blue Note 48015: *EVER SINCE THE WORLD ENDED*; *TOP FORTY*; *PUTTIN' UP WITH ME*; *JOSEPHINE*; *I LOOKED IN THE MIRROR*; *GETTIN' THERE*; *TAI CHI LIFE*; *WHAT'S YOUR MOVIE?*; *TROUBLE IN MIND*; *I'M ALIVE*.

**Personnel:** Allison, piano, vocals; Dennis Irwin, bass; Tom Whaley, drums; Bob Malach, alto saxophone (cuts 1, 7, 9), tenor saxophone (4, 6); Arthur Blythe, alto saxophone (1, 6); Bennie Wallace, tenor saxophone (1, 2, 7, 9); Kenny Burrell, guitar (2, 5, 8).

★★★★★

This album is Allison's first renewal form for his poetic license since 1982, and, in approving the application, let it be said that he is aging more like a fine wine than a sharp cheese. Allison has often been mentioned in the same breath with William Faulkner, since both are associated with Mississippi, but, in comparing him with 20th century American writers, a more apt matching would be with Kurt Vonnegut. They share more than their birthday, most importantly an awed fascination with the writings of Céline. Both have also been scorned by "serious" (read: constipated) academicians for their utterly simple language.

Allison's pithiness is certainly the equal of Vonnegut's, and he can be as quasi-pornographic as Céline ever was, but added to those elements is a uniquely southern flavor that lends a philosophical dimension to gallows humor. No one else could write a love song for his wife built around the theme of being unable to forgive her for putting up with him, and get away with it.

Now that he's hit 60, and/or since he's sitting pretty, at long last, with a label that takes care of its artists, Allison has finally gone public with his view of the recording industry in *Top Forty*. It is, for him, a verbose extension of something he said about one of his former labels about a decade ago, when he was questioned about the long intervals between albums: "They don't do much for me, I don't do much for them." He has a way of summing things up with just enough of a twist to the dagger to make it tickle.

Lyrics-wise, the new gem here is *I Looked In The Mirror Today*, an ode to aging that speaks more to the process of maturing than merely getting older, with Allison's unique combination of the dirty old man and the wise old sage, waxing sentimental and smart-aleck at once, but also revealing in a phrase the true basis of his music these past 30 years: "... Mixin' up the boogie and the do-si-do."

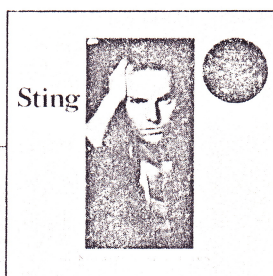
It goes deeper than that. His technique is

grand in its subtlety. Allison can wring overtones on 10-note chordings that hover in all dimensions for longer than it would take Jarrett to twitch up and down from the piano bench six times, yet these are only occasional emphases, always brief. They are as close as he comes to ornamentation.

The other players sound more integrated and of a common purpose with the leader than in Allison's past recordings. Without intending to demean the talents of Irwin and Whaley, it must be said that they remain in the background, providing a foundation solid enough to support any given pyramid. Blythe emotes more on his two cuts than on any of his own recent recordings. Malach, not yet widely known on this side of the Atlantic, easily could become someone to watch. Burrell is simply himself. Enough said. Bennie Wallace, the Tennessee Tenor Terror, sounds righteously right in this context. Though Allison figuratively provides full job descriptions for his soloists, Wallace still manages to turn things through some surprising directions and comes back on the way instead of *in* the way. Him'n'Mose would make a good pair of ambassadors to represent southern white boys who play jazz.

All in all, this album is a perversely joyous reaffirmation of the possibility of not merely surviving but flourishing in an insane world by taking everything with a grain of salt, usually in an open wound, reminding yourself, as you grit your teeth, that there's a joke in every episode of the human drama, no matter how sad it might seem.

—w. patrick hinely



## STING

**... NOTHING LIKE THE SUN**—A&M 6402: *THE LAZARUS HEART*; *BE STILL MY BEATING HEART*; *ENGLISHMAN IN NEW YORK*; *HISTORY WILL TEACH US NOTHING*; *THEY DANCE ALONE (GUECA SOLO)*; *FRAGILE*; *WE'LL BE TOGETHER*; *STRAIGHT TO MY HEART*; *ROCK STEADY*; *SISTER MOON*; *LITTLE WING*; *THE SECRET MARRIAGE*.

**Personnel:** Sting, vocals, bass, guitar (cuts 4, 6); Branford Marsalis, saxophone; Kenny Kirkland, keyboards; Manu Katche, Andy Newmark, drums; Mino Cinelu, percussion, vocoder; Andy Summers (1, 2), Fared Haque (5), Mark Knopfler (5), Eric Clapton (5), guitar; Ruben Blades, Spanish recitative (5); Gil Evans and his orchestra (11); Ken Holman, piano (12); Dolette McDonald, Janice Pendarvis, Vesta Williams, Rene Gayer, vocals.

★★★★ ½

I had a lot of reasons ready not to like this