

Kirk was born Ronald Theodore Kirk in Columbus, Ohio, where he lived in a neighborhood known as Flytown. He felt compelled by a dream to transpose two letters in his first name to make "Roland". He became blind at an early age as a result of poor medical treatment. In 1970, Kirk added "Rahsaan" to his name after hearing it in a dream.

Kirk's musical career spans from 1955 until his death in 1977. He preferred to lead his own bands and rarely performed as a sideman, although he did record with arranger Quincy Jones and drummer Roy Haynes and worked with bassist Charles Mingus. One of his best-known recorded performances is the lead flute and solo on Jones' "Soul Bossa Nova", a 1964 hit song repopularized in the Austin Powers films (Jones 1964; McLeod et al. 1997).

Kirk was politically outspoken. During his concerts, between songs he often talked about topical issues, including African-American history and the Civil Rights Movement. His monologues were often laced with satire and absurdist humor. According to comedian Jay Leno, when Leno toured with Kirk as Kirk's opening act, Kirk would introduce him by saying, "I want to introduce a young brother who knows the black experience and knows all about the white devils Please welcome Jay Leno!"

In 1975, Kirk suffered a major stroke which led to partial paralysis of one side of his body. He continued to perform and record, modifying his instruments to enable him to play with one arm. At a live performance at Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club in London he even managed to play two instruments, and carried on to tour internationally and to appear on television.

He died from a second stroke in 1977 after performing in the Frangipani Room of the Indiana University Student Union in Bloomington, Indiana.



I Talk With The **SPIRITS** roland kirk



Mastered in DSD256

Multi-instrumentalist Roland Kirk leaves the stritch, manzello and other exotic instruments at home for this all-flute outing from his pre-"Rahsaan" days. Consisting mostly of originals, with a couple of show tunes and a swinging take on John Lewis' "Django" thrown in, I Talk to the Spirits provides the best sampling of Kirk's unique flute style. He hums along with himself as he plays, inserts pieces of lyrics when the mood hits, finds overtones and multi-part harmonies as he blows madly through the upper register and sails sweetly through the lower. Included here is the original version of "Serenade to a Cuckoo," a song later taken to rock audiences with its inclusion on the first Jethro Tull album. (In fact,

for the Tull fan who wants to hear where Ian Anderson borrowed his style, I Talk to the Spirits is the place to go.) The playing on this outing is uniformly excellent, with Kirk ranging from his trademark up-tempo overblowing on "A Quote from Clifford Brown" to bluesy growling on "The Business Ain't Nothing But the Blues" to placid beauty on the ballad "Trees." He guides Kurt Weill's "My Ship" on a five-minute voyage through calm seas and turbulent double-timed storms. Kirk's sense of whimsy and musical fun is evident throughout.



I Talk With The Spirits - Roland Kirk

I Talk With The SPIRITS roland kirk

- 1 Serenade To A Cuckoo 4:30
Medley
- 2 We'll Be Together Again
People (From "Funny Girl") 4:38
- 3 A Quote From Clifford Brown 4:22
- 4 Trees 6:18
- 5 Fugue'n And Alludin 0:41
- 6 The Business Ain't Nothin' But The Blues 5:02
- 7 I Talk With The Spirits 3:56
- 8 Ruined Castles 1:18
- 9 Django 4:50
- 10 My Ship (From "Lady In The Dark") 5:05
- Total Time: 40:40

Producer - Bobby Scott

Recorded September 16 and 17, 1964 at Nola Studios, New York City.

Released by Mercury Limelight Series 1965

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