

= Songs of Experience ( album ) =

Songs of Experience is the second studio album by American composer and producer David Axelrod , released in October 1969 by Capitol Records . It was composed , arranged , and produced by Axelrod , who worked with session musicians such as guitarist Al Casey , drummer Earl Palmer , and conductor Don Randi . As with his 1968 debut album Song of Innocence , Axelrod composed musical interpretations of English poet William Blake 's Songs of Innocence and of Experience , an 18th @-@ century illustrated collection of poems .

A jazz fusion album , Songs of Experience explores darker sounds than its predecessor , as the poems Axelrod drew on for inspiration dealt with the darker side of humanity . Its music was partly inspired by composer Gunther Schuller 's Third Stream concept . Axelrod composed Baroque orchestrations with rock , R & B , pop , and folk music elements .

Songs of Experience received retrospective acclaim from music critics , who found Axelrod 's compositions musically varied and innovative . Contemporary musicians praised it as a source for sampling in hip hop production . Some of its songs have been sampled frequently by hip hop artists and producers . In 2000 , the album was reissued by EMI .

= = Background = =

As he had on his 1968 debut album Song of Innocence , Axelrod composed musical interpretations of the works of English poet William Blake on Songs of Experience . He used eight poems from Blake 's Songs of Experience ( 1794 ) . The album 's gatefold featured Blake 's poems reprinted for each song and liner notes that stated , " an anthology of awareness after birth ... based on the 18th century poems of William Blake . " Blake 's poems began with the premise of birth and innocence , and explored themes of life experience , rite of passage , and changes of perspective in life .

= = Composition = =

A jazz fusion album , Songs of Experience was partly inspired by Gunther Schuller 's Third Stream concept , which fused American jazz with European classical music . Axelrod supported his Baroque orchestrations on the album with rhythms and melodies from rock , R & B , and pop music . The album 's suite is more orchestral and less rock @-@ oriented than Song of Innocence . Its symphony is embellished with percussive sounds , British and Irish folk song elements , and stylistic innovations from contemporary arranger Gerald Wilson .

With Songs of Experience , Axelrod explored darker sounds , as the poems he had chosen dealt with the darker side of humanity . For " The Human Abstract " , he used ascending piano , bass , and percussion instruments to evoke the ghost described in Blake 's poem . It is a bass @-@ driven , funky song that juxtaposes augmented sevenths strummed on an electric guitar against an acoustic piano and muted horns . According to music critic Thom Jurek , " The Divine Image " and " A Little Girl Lost " elicit feelings of majesty and " pastoral sadness " , respectively . " London " was recorded by Axelrod as a tone poem to reflect Blake 's opening stanza about the spiritual climate of London at the onset of the Industrial Revolution : " I wander thro ' each charted 'd street / Near where the chart 'd Thames does flow / And mark in every face I meet / Marks of weakness , marks of woe . "

= = Release and reception = =

Songs of Experience was released in October 1969 by Capitol Records on stereo LP . In a retrospective review , AllMusic 's Thom Jurek gave the album four @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half out of five stars and said that Axelrod " succeeded in spades " in his search for a sound that " best exemplified not only his feelings but also the heady text he sought to sonically illustrate . " Jurek felt that his compositions were diverse , lush , and able to resemble literature by " using as much space as they do sound for dramatic and dynamic effect " , and that Axelrod created original palettes for

rock instrumentation through his complex use of the horn section 's " various colors " . Lynell George of the Los Angeles Times called it a " prescient , genre @-@ defying " solo project , and NME viewed it as a " landmark " album . Mojo cited the album , along with Song of Innocence , as Axelrod 's artistic peak and particularly praised " The Human Abstract " as " beautiful and blank " , evoking " the view from Arthur Lee 's castle of an endless pale blue sky and the vast deathly city beneath it . " Songs of Experience was reissued on CD in 2000 by EMI .

= = Influence = =

Songs from the album have been sampled frequently by hip hop producers and artists , including Black Moon , who sampled " A Divine Image " , and DJ Shadow , who sampled the luminous piano line from " The Human Abstract " on his 1996 song " Midnight in a Perfect World " . English hip hop producer Metabeats called Songs of Experience one of his favorite sources for sampling music and said of the album in an interview for Hip Hop Connection : " You could sample everything on this record , and I think everyone already has . Axelrod is pretty much a sound library in himself ? the quality is amazing . " American musician John McEntire ranked it third on his list of top @-@ five albums and called it " early crate @-@ digger stuff . Great , funky rhythm @-@ section playing , crazy , overblown string arrangements . " In a 2000 interview for The Wire , rapper and producer Mike Ladd viewed the song " London " as " crazy stuff " that deviates from the one @-@ dimensional rhythm loops of contemporary hip hop production and stated , " This is definitely the kind of stuff I 'm planning to do for the next album , incorporate more fusion elements and stuff like that . This is a really good production . I like it because it 's little parts with gaps , which I don 't normally have . Somebody told me I should listen to [ Axelrod ] . This is one I 'm definitely going to buy I 'd like to do more stuff with complicated melodies , everybody playing together , drum breaks , things like that . "

= = Track listing = =

All songs were composed , arranged , and produced by David Axelrod .

= = Personnel = =

Credits are adapted from the album 's liner notes .