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PRESTIGE

JOHN COLTRANE

STARDUST

DESIGN/PHOTO: DON SCHLITTEN

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REMASTERS

PRESTIGE®

STARDUST

JOHN COLTRANE

JOHN COLTRANE tenor saxophone **WILBUR HARDEN** flugelhorn (#1), trumpet (#3)
FREDDIE HUBBARD trumpet (#4) **RED GARLAND** piano **PAUL CHAMBERS** bass
JIMMY COBB drums (#1 and 3) **ARTHUR TAYLOR** drums (#2 and 4)

1 STARDUST 10:42
2 TIME AFTER TIME 7:45
3 LOVE THY NEIGHBOR 9:21
4 THEN I'LL BE TIRED OF YOU 9:27

I remember the sessions well, I remember how the musicians wanted to sound, and I remember their reactions to the playbacks. Today, I feel strongly that I am their messenger. —RUDY VAN GELDER

Recorded by RUDY VAN GELDER at Van Gelder Studio, Hackensack, NJ; July 11, 1958 (#1 and 3) and December 26, 1958 (#2 and 4).
Supervision—BOB WEINSTOCK (#1 and 3), ESMOND EDWARDS (#2 and 4)
Remastering, 2007—RUDY VAN GELDER (Van Gelder Studio, Englewood Cliffs, NJ)
All transfers were made from the analog master tapes to digital at 24-bit resolution.
Notes by ASHLEY KAHN

www.concordmusicgroup.com • Prestige Records, Tenth and Parker, Berkeley, CA 94710.

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During his final months with Miles Davis's group, John Coltrane participated in a number of recording sessions for Prestige and New Jazz independently of Davis (though frequently with one or more members of the Davis rhythm section) in both leader and sideman roles. This album continues the already extensive series of recordings from that period which is now in release.

While it might be said of the continually probing and growing Coltrane that nearly all of his albums are representative of a stage of transition in his music, the period in his career from which this album, and the others of the series, have been culled was of particularly crucial importance in his development. Coltrane was reaching a point in the Davis unit where it was becoming increasingly necessary for him to venture out on his own so that he might allow a very singular expression that had already attained an exceptional size and intensity while he was with Thelonious Monk, and which was, by this time, becoming confined in the Davis context, to mature and assume its full dimensions. This album, containing perhaps less ambitious music than some of the others of the series, is still, clearly, the work of a major jazz soloist who is taking his first independent steps toward the achievement of his vision.

Davis was still, of course, an indirect presence at most of these sessions, a presence embodied in the rhythm section (Red Garland, Paul Chambers, and Philly Joe Jones, or Jimmy Cobb, or Art Taylor) and also to some degree, in flugelhornist Wilbur Harden who made a good many dates with Coltrane and who was strongly impressed by Davis.

The advantages in playing with these men were, more often than not, greater than the drawbacks for Coltrane, whose investigations were restricted to those areas in which these players were able to accommodate him. Having worked with the musicians for so long a period there did exist a certain, if limited (on Coltrane's expanding terms) empathy which was enough to provide a basis for rapport and interaction, and which enabled these men to produce exceptional music together. But if the group that is heard on "Stardust" and "Love Thy Neighbor" was still, in one sense, the Miles Davis Quintet—with Harden the ringer—it was also far removed from that group. Something very central to the Davis group is missing with the leader. His absence made a considerable difference in the total sound of the band and in the manner in which the individual musicians played. If one hears this group on Davis's terms there are serious deficiencies. There are missing the unique contrasts, tensions, dynamics—the group unity, that characterize a Davis-controlled band. Though Coltrane has since become a band leader of stature and distinction, his earlier work as a leader (confined to recording sessions) was not so commanding, for his preoccupations were necessarily with the explorations as a soloist. There is, then, a comparative lack of group discipline and unanimity of direction. Coltrane was continually being criticized by some commentators during this period on just this point, and it was a point not without validity. The greater freedom Coltrane was permitted at his own sessions did result in certain excess. But it also enabled him to pursue his own order, which, as the past few years have witnessed, he did quite successfully. Though he has since taken his music beyond the range of some ears, Coltrane is today, for those who can hear him, the leading tenor saxophonist in jazz.

Of the four standards that are played on this record, three ("Stardust," "Time After Time," and "Then I'll Be Tired of You") are ballads. Coltrane has always been an especially outstanding ballad player. His solos are richly lyrical and melodic. If Coltrane, in his up-tempo explorations, went on to exercise the conventional conception of melody, that was not, and it is still not, true of his ballad renditions. Coltrane's ballad playing has, at times, almost of quality of a Billie Holiday interpretation, and there is also, in the unique quality of his tone on these tracks, an urgency and "cry" that lends them a special emotional profundity.

On "Love Thy Neighbor" Coltrane's approach is literally a dancing one (in the ballroom sense). Coltrane's earliest gigs were with small dance groups and the mood of that genre is reflected on this number.

On "Then I'll Be Tired of You" Coltrane is joined by Freddie Hubbard who is one of the most capable young trumpet players on the scene. Coltrane's is the only horn on "Time After Time."

Now in the forefront of the jazz avant-garde, Coltrane is one of a very few players of such persuasion to work with any regularity. In spite of the fact that his music has been the object of reactionary assault at each of its turning points, and most particularly in its current phase, Coltrane has always been able to claim a large and loyal following. Perhaps this is to be explained, in part at least, by the fact that Coltrane's evolution occurred in full view of the audience, thus allowing listeners to adjust themselves to each new step—something that did not happen with either Ornette Coleman or Cecil Taylor.

At any rate, in all stages of Coltrane's development he has been a very beautiful musician, capable of urgent, elevating music. These qualities have been constant and they are very present in this album.

—ROBERT LEVIN

These notes appeared on the original album liner.

STARDUST

STARDUST **LOVE THY NEIGHBOR**
TIME AFTER TIME **THEN I'LL BE TIRED OF YOU**

I WAS THE ENGINEER on the recording sessions and I also made the masters for the original LP issues of these albums. Since the advent of the CD, other people have been making the masters. Mastering is the final step in the process of creating the sound of the finished product. Now, thanks to the folks at the Concord Music Group who have given me the opportunity to remaster these albums, I can present my versions of the music on CD using modern technology. I remember the sessions well, I remember how the musicians wanted to sound, and I remember their reactions to the playbacks. Today, I feel strongly that I am their messenger. ***—RUDY VAN GELDER***

SETTIN' THE PACE REVISITED

IT'S NOT A STRETCH to see John Coltrane's musical personality as two distinct psyches working it out, each alternately taking the lead. There was the assertive seeker, constantly expanding his musical know-how while pushing his instrumental dexterity. Coltrane's feverish, "sheets of sound" approach and his lengthy improvisations manifest this side of the man; his incessant practicing is further evidence of the same.

Then there was Coltrane the sentimentalist. The romantic who agreed to record the *Ballads* album in 1962, even as his own music was reaching in a freer, spirited direction. The lover who wrote the achingly raw and delicate "Naima" for his first wife in 1959. The tune-spotter who apparently never met a song he could not recall.

"There were certain musicians who knew every song ever written, almost—Stan Getz, Red Garland, Al Haig, and John Coltrane," remembered Bob Weinstock, founder of Prestige Records. "You could name any song from any stinking movie of the Twenties, Thirties, or Forties, and [Coltrane] knew it. On sessions, he could say, 'Let's do this,' and they said, 'Okay,' and they did it."

No music sticks like the music of youth. The songs one hears and whistles while growing up, are the melodies that will most easily come to mind fifty or sixty years later. Though Coltrane did not intend the four *Stardust* tunes to constitute a single album—that was Weinstock's prerogative—the four are of the same generation. All became popular between 1930 and 1947, when Coltrane grew from childhood to maturity.

We can't know for sure how and when Coltrane (born in 1927) first noticed these melodies. But the ways through which new songs reached American ears before WWII were limited—78 rpm recordings, movie soundtracks or big band broadcasts—and so were the recorded versions. It's safe to say that Coltrane probably knew of "Then I'll Be Tired of You" from Nat Cole's 1947 recording. That same year, the budding musician (and movie fan) may have heard Frank Sinatra's hit take of "Time After Time" from the musical *It Happened in Brooklyn*, while an older Hollywood product starring another crooner—*We're Not Dressing* from 1934 with Bing Crosby—included "Love Thy Neighbor." And how Coltrane became hip to the title tune of this collection requires no conjecture at all.

By the time Coltrane reached an age of musical awareness, "Stardust" was known to all and performed by all, its wistful melody and lyric already locked into the jazz canon. The Hoagy Carmichael song yielded 15 hit versions between 1930 and 1943, by a top-tier of swing-era stars—like Bing Crosby and Louis Armstrong—and star-led bands, like Benny Goodman, Artie Shaw, Glenn Miller, and (twice by) Tommy Dorsey.

Coltrane's last few sessions for Prestige in 1958 became heavy with standards the closer he came to the end of their contract.[1] His studio bands were top-notch, his stature in Miles Davis's group helping to draw first-class musicians, including his fellow sidemen in Davis's band. "The basic circumference of the rhythm section was Red [Garland], Paul [Chambers], and Philly [Joe Jones] most of the time," recalls drummer Jimmy Cobb. "Or Arthur Taylor, or me."

Meriting special note on *Stardust*—in fact on the majority of Coltrane's Prestige recordings—is the bounce and precision of Red Garland. Whatever the tempo, his piano propelled the drama of each tune, while helping to anchor arrangements that were known to Coltrane alone until recording date.

"He had everything based in his mind when he got there," Cobb adds, noting Coltrane's way of handling Prestige's preference for rehearsal-less sessions. "You only had a certain amount of time, so you had to prepare for it [beforehand.] He would say, 'this is what I want to do here, and I want it in this tempo.' And the ballads, ain't no thing about the tempos because they're all slow."

In 1958, Coltrane was meeting a number of recent arrivals to the New York jazz scene. The undeservedly obscure Wilbur Harden, whose debut recording dates for Savoy Records featured Coltrane earlier that summer, returned the favor in mid-July. Playing trumpet, he served a playful, jaunty foil to the saxophonist's somber and fleet slaloms on "Love Thy Neighbor" (check out his "Three Blind Mice" quote just before the 3:00 mark.) On "Stardust," Harden played flugelhorn with grace and lyrical spark, exploiting its smoother-than-trumpet timbre (not unlike a saxophone at times.)

To younger players like trumpeter Freddie Hubbard—fresh, eager, and new to town in 1958—Coltrane was a 31-year-old master who "used to give me a headache! I would go and practice with him at his house on [West] 103rd. I would try and cop all his information, how to play changes and keep all that in my head. When I would leave Coltrane's house, I would be baffled."

Coltrane had befriended the young Hubbard at a Monday jam session at Count Basie's club in Harlem, and with Wayne Shorter, it soon became a woodshedding gathering. Coltrane surprised Hubbard the Friday after Christmas of '58 (Fridays were reserved for Prestige at Rudy Van Gelder's studio in Hackensack, New Jersey). "He said, 'Come on, why don't you make the date with me?' He didn't tell me what to do—he just showed me the chords and said, 'You got it?' 'Well, uhh, maybe . . .' (laughs) I sound like a little baby on that."

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[1] Prestige chief Bob Weinstock reported signing a three-year contract with Coltrane in the first half of 1956 ("It was [an] exclusive [deal]… we signed three years at a time") which suggests that the label head did not push for an album immediately, but allowed Coltrane to get himself together for more than a year before recording his debut-as-leader *Coltrane* in mid-'57.

Hubbard's solo on "Then I'll Be Tired of You" constituted his second New York session, revealing a confidence and clarity of ideas still in their nascent stage; blowing after Coltrane, Garland, and Chambers was surely daunting. But it's indicative of Coltrane's career-long habit of allowing newer talent to stand—and grow—alongside him (Hubbard would return to play, with increased effectiveness, on landmark sessions like Coltrane's *Africa/Brass* [1961] and *Ascension* ['65].)

Everyone likes to get a peek at genius in the bud. But Coltrane was no rookie when he came to Prestige, and was 31 when he recorded most of *Stardust*. His mature command of his instrument, and the singular vocabulary he had already developed, are arguably the most compelling aspects common to these four tracks. His palette of devices and riffs were his alone; saxophonist Dave Liebman talks of "Trane's unique tone during this period, full of edge and bite, and the lyrical quality of his phrasing, especially on ballads. And of course the very scalar, legato approach that he was into at the time."

The extended solos reveal their own, mature logic: Coltrane knew when to be explosive, seductively expressive, or airy and light (listen to his treatment of "Time After Time.") In 1958, Coltrane's sound began to sway a generation of saxophonists: Benny Golson, Wayne Shorter, and Frank Foster among the first acolytes. Many would soon follow.

Many jazz fans however did not, and were left behind. Prestige released *Stardust* in 1963, a five-year-old love letter delivered to a jazz scene that had grown hostile to the persistent change in Coltrane's music. The grumbling had begun during his days alongside Miles when these tracks were recorded—Coltrane's penchant for practicing in public (as one writer called it) causing dismay, and his lengthy solos dividing one enthusiast from another.

In 1960, Los Angeles columnist Matt Weinstock [no relation to Bob] complained: "I don't insist that they play 'Stardust,' but Coltrane lost me in his interminable blowing and I walked out . . ." In San Francisco, Ralph J. Gleason leapt to the defense, calling Weinstock a "casual commentator" and writing: "If you want a photographic reproduction, don't buy Picasso. If you want a popular song, don't listen to Coltrane."

The irony in that statement is that with Coltrane, it was possible to have it all. One aspect of his genius that never faded was an unerring ability to make the standard sound so modern and hip: think of his rethinking of "Body and Soul" in 1960, "I Want to Talk About You" in '63, or "Nature Boy" in '65. Or "Stardust" in '58.

Coltrane was driven and dramatic, excited and exultant, but he never stopped striving to find a balance between the serenity and the intensity. Even in the last six months of his life, when his music had grown dense and was at its most controversial, there remained a soft, lyrical flow in tunes like "Ogunde," "To Be," and "Offering." True, those tunes were more of a spiritual nature than romantic (suggesting another diametric Coltrane embodied: the sentimentalist and the transcendentalist.)

But they were all parts of the same man. Listening to Coltrane's late-career benedictions alongside the ballads of his Prestige years is like hearing an older man counseling a younger, less experienced peer. Both speaking the same idiom with a similar accent, both burning to bring forth a deep, inner flame.

— ASHLEY KAHN
March 2007

Ashley Kahn is the author of *The House That Trane Built: The Story of Impulse Records* and other jazz titles. He often contributes to National Public Radio's "Morning Edition."

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1 STARDUST 10:42
(Hoagy Carmichael) Songs of Peer, Ltd.-ASCAP

2 TIME AFTER TIME 7:45
(Styne-Cahn) Sands Music-ASCAP

3 LOVE THY NEIGHBOR 9:21
(Gordon-Revel) WB Music-ASCAP

4 THEN I'LL BE TIRED OF YOU 9:27
(Schwartz-Harburg) Next Decade Entertainment/Bienstock Publ.-ASCAP

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