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PRESTIGE

# John Coltrane Bahia

PHOTO/GAI TERRELL

DESIGN/DON SCHULTEN



# Bahia

# John Coltrane



**JOHN COLTRANE, tenor saxophone**  
**WILBUR HARDIN, trumpet, A-3, B-1, B-2**  
**RED GARLAND, piano**  
**PAUL CHAMBERS, bass**  
**ART TAYLOR, drums, A-1, A-2**  
**JIMMY COBB, drums, A-3, B-1, B-2**

**Side A**

- 1. BAHIA ..... 6:19**
- 2. GOLDSBORO EXPRESS ..... 4:41**
- 3. MY IDEAL ..... 7:30**
- 4. I'M A DREAMER AREN'T WE ALL ..... 7:10**
- 5. SOMETHING I DREAMED LAST NIGHT . . 10:48**

During his final months with Miles Davis' group, John Coltrane participated in a number of recording sessions for Prestige and New Jazz independently of Davis (though usually 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 especially meaningful period which is now in release.

In an interview with Don DeMichael for *Down Beat* in April of 1962, Coltrane said "I think the main thing a musician would like to do is to give a picture to the listener of the many wonderful things he knows of and senses in the universe. That's what music is to me—it's just another way of saying this is a big, beautiful universe we live in, that's been given to us, and here's an example of just how magnificent and encompassing it is. That's what I would like to do. I think that's one of the greatest things you can do in life and we all try to do it in some way. The musician's (way) is through his music."

The title of the interview from which this statement is taken was "John Coltrane and Eric Dolphy Answer the Jazz Critics" and it was uttered in the context of a defense (the necessity for one is astonishing) of some of the most awesome and incredibly beautiful music to have ever celebrated the state of being alive.

Coltrane was under sometimes particularly vicious attack at the time and still is. His music was called "nihilistic," "destructive", "anti-jazz"

. . . the ferocity of it was scaring some people and so they were becoming angry. Change was being heralded in this music as well, and jazz, like the people who were making it (and this is perhaps, at bottom, the real cause of the reaction) was going to be different.

Coltrane's primary offense, it would seem (and there have been precedents in the emergence of all original and important artists), is that he has chosen not to bend his concepts of music in order to accommodate the pre-determinations and limitations of the audience's ear (eg. He plays a song for as long as it is **artistically necessary** for him to play it), but has instead forced the acceptance (or rejection) of his music on its own terms. Such arrogance results in disturbance, in movement (forwards or backwards, the direction makes less difference than the movement itself—reaction's better than apathy, certainly), in the audience's psyche. How much more genuine and creative and **effective** this method of communication (i.e. stimulating change) than to compromise one's art, make it more palatable and hence, neutral, so as to "communicate." The latter way is only to hold up a mirror to what may be a grand sentiment, but behind which hides a failure of the nerve that might have activated that sentiment. It is dreary and dull. It is to convey only the familiar and there is no possibility of surprise or revelation that way. One is depressed by such music, never upset by it, because it is only half-true and, as such, only half-alive.

Coltrane has not permitted critical assaults to

neutralize the intensity, passion or direction of his work, each new stage of which has provoked considerable hostility, but has gone his own way. This album, with the others in the series, represents the first stage of Coltrane on his own.

By this time Coltrane had served apprenticeships with Dizzy Gillespie and Thelonious Monk and he was in the last months of his period with Miles Davis, with whom he had enjoyed an extraordinary association (the Davis Quintet was perhaps the single most important group of the 1950's), but with whom, as this album demonstrates, it was becoming increasingly urgent to break. Coltrane was becoming restricted within the Davis context and though the Davis influence was still very evident in his recordings outside of it (incarnated in the rhythm section: Garland and Chambers were members of the original Quintet; Taylor and Cobb followed Philly Joe Jones. And trumpeter Wilbur Hardin's style was very strongly effected by Davis'), Coltrane did enjoy a new(er) freedom and the necessary opportunity to probe and explore further dimensions in his music.

Tracks like **Bahia**, **Goldsboro Express** and, to a lesser extent, **I'm A Dreamer** (from a different session) in this set, containing fierce and wailing solos by the tenor saxophonist, are exemplary of a Coltrane moving from one reality toward another and creating urgent, lifting music in the process.

Coltrane has always been an exceptionally stirring player at slow tempo and his ballads reflect the mood of the small dance group out of which he

originally comes. This remains true on **My Ideal** and especially on the slower, **Something I Dreamed Last Night**, where his solo is soaring and richly lyrical.

More albums from this period (the late 1950's) are still to be issued, but this one is, I think, among the best of those already in release. It is valuable historically in its documentation of an important phase in the evolution of John Coltrane but, more important, the music in it is, on its own terms, very beautiful.

Notes: Robert Levin

Supervision: Bob Weinstock

Recording: Rudy Van Gelder