

COLTRANE/PRESTIGE 7105

John Coltrane...

*a major voice in the Miles Davis Quintet...
the NEW tenor saxophone STAR*



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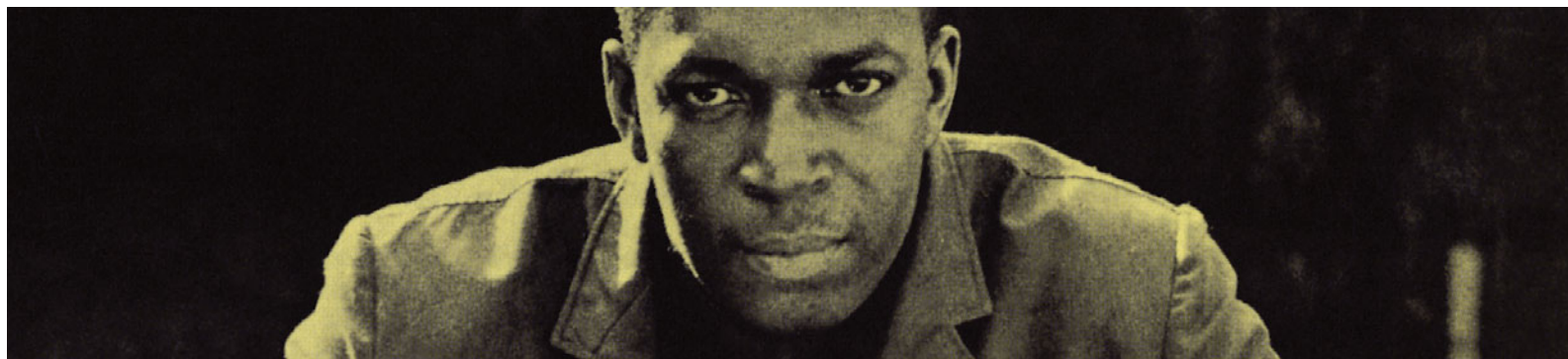
COLTRANE
JOHN COLTRANE

JOHN COLTRANE tenor saxophone **JOHNNIE SPLAWN** trumpet (#1, 4-6)

SAHIB SHIHAB baritone saxophone (#1, 4, 6) **RED GARLAND** piano (#1-3) **MAL WALDRON** piano (#4-6)

PAUL CHAMBERS bass **ALBERT "TOOTIE" HEATH** drums

- 1 BAKAI 8:46
- 2 VIOLETS FOR YOUR FURS 6:19
- 3 TIME WAS 7:30
- 4 STRAIGHT STREET 6:21
- 5 WHILE MY LADY SLEEPS 4:44
- 6 CHRONIC BLUES 8:15



*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; May 31, 1957

Supervision by BOB WEINSTOCK Remastering, 2009—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 Ira Gitler

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In writing of John Coltrane on the back of *Mating Call* (Prestige LP 7070), I took stock of his previous playing experience with Eddie Vinson, Dizzy Gillespie, Earl Bostic, Johnny Hodges, and Miles Davis. I wrote, "From his employment record you can see that he did not appear on the scene full blown. It is rather a matter of dues that he has been paying for a while."

This is the age of the big build-up. Movie stars, television personalities, presidential candidates, soaps for use in washing machines; they are all sold to the public in the same manner. With the advent of hi-fi, the boom in long-playing records, and the discovery of "jazz" by Madison Avenue, musicians are getting similar treatment. Every other month we are greeted with albums by new stars. Some of them parlay a style and their publicity to a point of temporary popularity but then fail to stand even a short test of time.

John Coltrane is, in a sense, a new star but he has not arrived through high-pressure press agency. He has been building on more solid ground. From the time of his joining the Miles Davis quintet in late 1955 through to his brilliant work with Thelonious Monk at the Five Spot Café

in the summer of 1957, Trane has steadily increased his accomplishments on his instrument and gained new admirers for his playing among fellow musicians and the serious listening public. The very nature of his development and progress marks him not as a fly-by-night "star" who comes bursting across the sky and then fizzles out but as a definite addition to the select group of musicians who play influential roles through their ability to say something valid in a new way.

You have heard Coltrane on Prestige with Miles Davis (LPs 7014, 7094), with Hank Mobley (LP 7043), with Sonny Rollins (LP 7047), the aforementioned *Mating Call* with Tadd Dameron, and *Tenor Conclave* (LP 7074). This, however, is his first date as a leader and in that role, Trane has chosen the musicians, contributed several compositions, and also has written some arrangements.

John Splawn, a young trumpeter from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania (born there on January 31, 1931), plays in the ensemble on four numbers and solos on two of these. His father, John Splawn Sr., is a trumpet player too. The elder Splawn, who is still gigging around

COLTRANE

BAKAI • VIOLETS FOR YOUR FURS
TIME WAS • STRAIGHT STREET
WHILE MY LADY SLEEPS • CHRONIC BLUES

Harrisburg, started Johnnie playing at about the age of five. Johnnie, who says he likes "everybody" on trumpet but "specially Brownie (Clifford Brown)", has been with Sonny Stitt, Lou Donaldson, and, most recently, Bull Moose Jackson.

Sahib Shihab, the saxophonist who is best known for his alto work with Thelonious Monk in the Forties and Fifties and his baritone playing with Dizzy Gillespie in the Fifties, here appears on the larger horn in three selections. He is heard in solo on two of these. His is a deep, hard-toned voice which fits the needs of Coltrane's and Cal Massey's arrangements admirably.

Mal Waldron, at present Billie Holiday's accompanist, and Red Garland, a Miles Davis quintet regular, split the piano assignment.

The remainder of the rhythm section remains constant throughout the entire session. On bass is the impeccable Paul Chambers from the Miles Davis group and on drums, Al Heath, younger brother of Percy, from Philadelphia where he has played with the best of the local musicians.

"Bakai" (which I'm told means "cry" in

Arabic), by Cal Massey, opens side one. Its handsome minor theme is expounded by Red Garland, Coltrane (who really cries), and Shihab.

The rest of side one is handled by the quartet featuring Trane and Red. Two ballad standards, "Violet for Your Furs," and "Time Was," are the subjects; the former receives a sensitive ballad treatment while the latter is done in bright medium time.

Side two opens on "Straight Street," a Coltrane composition and arrangement which features solos by the leader, Johnnie Splawn, and Mal Waldron.

An interestingly different Coltrane interpretation of the seldom-done "While My Lady Sleeps" is Trane's alone until Splawn joins him for a final eerie note.

Trane's "Chronic Blues" is the closer and gives all the horns and Waldron solo room.

— IRA GITLER

*These notes appeared on
the original album liner.*

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

COLTRANE REVISITED

IF YOU ARE IN ANY WAY connected to the world of jazz, hardly a day goes by when you don't see or hear something about or by John Coltrane. Example (and coincidence): As I was starting to think about these notes I received an e-mail that contained a recent interview with James Moody in a San Diego publication. One topic was his long association with Dizzy Gillespie and how much he had learned with the master. "Dizzy taught me that no matter who you are or what your instrument is, you should learn to play the piano," Moody told writer George Varga who reported, "Moody demonstrated by playing the chord sequence to John Coltrane's 'Straight Street' on his Yamaha Clavinova piano."

Coltrane also had the chance to learn from Gillespie first hand as an alto saxophonist in Dizzy's big band of 1949-50, and on tenor saxophone in his smaller group from 1950-51. He gained further experience on tenor by playing with the bands of alto saxophonists Earl Bostic, an incredible technician, in '52-53; and the suave stylist Johnny Hodges from 1953-54. In Philadelphia, early on, in-between and later, he played all kinds of gigs from Jimmy Heath's youthful big band to "walkin' the bar." In 1955 he was in a band led by conga-player Bill Carney, in which he felt like he was able to grow some more. "We were too musical for some rooms," he told me.

Trane's next step was a long one. In 1955, Philly Joe Jones recommended that Miles Davis hire him for the tenor spot in his new quintet. Trane was still developing, but Miles heard something worth a trial. He soon realized that he had the man he wanted. When Trane went back to Philly to play a gig with organist Jimmy Smith (simultaneously the quintet landed a job in Baltimore), Miles summoned Coltrane who didn't have to be coaxed—he already knew that this was where he wanted to be. In the beginning Miles took a lot of heat about Trane from acquaintances, fans, amateur critics and professional critics. The band's initial release, *Miles: The New Miles Davis Quintet* (Prestige 7014), was praised mostly for Miles's playing by *Down Beat*'s Nat Hentoff, who labeled Trane with "a general lack of individuality."

The *New York Times*'s John S. Wilson was harsher. He stated that Trane "often plays his tenor sax as if he were determined to blow it apart, but his desperate attacks almost invariably lead nowhere."

In the next two years Trane won over many of his detractors, gained many new fans, and became an influence on his fellow tenorists. He left Davis in '57 to join Thelonious Monk's quartet during Monk's long summer run at the Five Spot in the East Village, blossoming afresh before returning to the Davis fold in '58 (the sextet with Cannonball Adderley) to much new acclaim. Nevertheless, the sniping hadn't ended.

In a *Down Beat* review of the 1958 Newport Jazz Festival, editor Don Gold took him to task. My opening question to Coltrane in *Trane on the Track*, the first article on him to be published by a major jazz magazine (DB), was about his reaction to the phrase "angry young tenor." Trane answered, "If it is interpreted as angry, it is taken wrong. The only one I'm angry at is myself when I don't make what I am trying to play."

Out of curiosity while writing these notes I looked through my bound copies of '58 DBs and was shocked by the unremembered whole of Gold's diatribe: "Although Miles continues to play with delicacy and infinite grace, his group's solidarity is hampered by the angry, young tenor of Coltrane. Backing himself into rhythmic corners on flurries of notes, Coltrane sounded like the personification of motion-without-progress in jazz."

I imagine I didn't get into the rest of the review because Gold was the editor who asked me to do the piece.

Trane was a very quiet person and although he may have been hurt by the negative commentary, by this time I think he believed more in himself after having achieved what he did with Miles and Monk, and all the diverse dates he did as a sideman for Prestige.

In the article he expressed his regard for M and M: "Miles and Monk are my two musicians," he said.

I had coined the phrase "sheets of sound" in the liner notes for the *Soultrane* LP, earlier in 1958, and used it again in the article. The paragraph that followed opined, "When these effects are successful, they have a cumulative emotional impact, a residual harmonic effect. When they fail, they sound like nothing more than elliptically played scales." (That last sentence is not mine. It's my editor talking.)

As established in my original notes for this recording, this was Coltrane's first album as a leader. To me the most impressive piece and performance is his composition "Straight Street." Titles come in all different guises, named after people, incidents, hotels, cities, animals, almost anything. More than 50 years later I learned the story behind "Straight Street." I was on the phone with Brooks Kerr, pianist, walking encyclopedia of Duke Ellington and just about everything else. I was discussing something with him about cornetist Rex Stewart and Ellington and after a while said I had to go and get back to some notes I was writing. He asked me what CD it was and when I told him Coltrane's first as a leader he immediately said "with Johnnie Splawn from Philadelphia."

I mentioned how much I dug "Straight Street" and he said, "Do you know how it got its name? Father O'Connor (O'Connor was known as the Jazz Priest—he had several radio shows playing the righteous gospels of jazz) had a rehab clinic in Newark called Straight and Narrow. It was on Straight Street. He helped Trane kick his habit."

Trane was a very spiritual person. Many people talked and wrote about his religiosity during the latter part of his career but Trane had it long before that time. I think he always had it. And he had a lot of other things. That's why they're still talking about him and listening to him today.

—IRA GITLER
February 2009

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MILES DAVIS—Miles: The New Miles Davis Quintet (PRS-31343)

- 1 BAKAI** 8:46
 (Calvin Massey) Prestige Music Co.-BMI
- 2 VIOLETS FOR YOUR FURS** 6:19
 (Dennis-Adair) Dorsey Brothers Music, a Div. of Music Sales Corp.-ASCAP
- 3 TIME WAS** 7:30
 (Luna de la Fuente-Prado-Russell) Peer International Corp.-BMI
- 4 STRAIGHT STREET** 6:21
 (John Coltrane) Jowcol Music-BMI
- 5 WHILE MY LADY SLEEPS** 4:44
 (Kahn-Kaper) EMI Feist Catalog-ASCAP
- 6 CHRONIC BLUES** 8:15
 (Coltrane) Jowcol Music-BMI

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