

JOHN COLTRANE / Settin' The Pace

prestige

PR 7213



DESIGN/PHOTO: DON SCHLITTEN



SETTIN' THE PACE JOHN COLTRANE

JOHN COLTRANE tenor saxophone RED GARLAND piano

PAUL CHAMBERS bass ARTHUR TAYLOR drums

1 I SEE YOUR FACE BEFORE ME 9:59

4 RISE 'N' SHINE 7:16

2 IF THERE IS SOMEONE LOVELIER THAN YOU 9:22

5 BY THE NUMBERS* 11:59

3 LITTLE MELONAE 14:05

*bonus track



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; March 26, 1958

Supervision by BOB WEINSTOCK 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 JOE GOLDBERG

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JOHN COLTRANE

JOHN COLTRANE tenor saxophone

RED GARLAND piano

PAUL CHAMBERS bass

ARTHUR TAYLOR drums

Settin' the Pace seems to me to be an excellent title for a collection of John Coltrane performances recorded in 1958. By that time, he had already been a member of both the Miles Davis Quintet and the Thelonious Monk Quartet, and his role in jazz (as evidenced by a brief listening to several of the younger tenor players) was shifting from student to teacher.

The decision to release this album now is to a certain extent determined by economic considerations, but it also happens to throw light on certain aspects of the jazz business which warrant discussion. Had the album been released at the time it was recorded it would have reached the small nucleus of Coltrane followers then active, and of the rest been largely ignored. The record that was released at that time (*Training In*, Prestige 7123) made with the same personnel as this, got more or less that kind of reception, but today is regarded as one of the highest points of Coltrane's recorded achievement. *Settin' the Pace*, on the other hand, will undoubtedly find a large waiting audience, for Coltrane has by now stepped into the small circle reserved for those jazz musicians whose every recording is of unique interest.

Of course, by definition, that was true at the time (the record was obviously just as good when it was made as it is today or will be ten years from now), but it takes the audience and the writers a while to catch up.

Much of that circumstance, it seems in retrospect, was a direct result of the jazz audience's tendency to turn the music into a battle of "who is best"—polls are only the most obvious manifestation of this. There are also innumerable private conversations centering on whether or not Musician A can "cut" Musician B. It seems not to occur to very many people that rather than a battle, jazz is simply a matter of each individual standing up and doing what he does; contributing, if he can,

to the total legacy of the music.

By the time the pendulum of fashion had swung from the west coast to the east, there were two preeminent tenor saxophonists, and since they had played with many of the same men, and even, on one notable occasion, recorded together, they became the center of the "who is best" conversations. They were, of course, Coltrane and Sonny Rollins, and for those who are interested, their joint recording is *Tenor Madness* (7047). It is interesting and puzzling to note that at the time of the release of that record, many listeners could not tell the two players apart.

I doubt that anyone was less pleased than the two principals at the sort of publicity-inspired controversy that centered around them. But one of the results it had was that it was not until Rollins's temporary retirement in 1959 (there were those who said the controversy was a contributing factor in his decision) that Coltrane came, in terms of public acceptance, into his own.

That he had come into his own musically long before that time is nowhere better attested to than on this current release. He has, of course, been covered with a great deal of public glory since that time (the 1961 *Down Beat* International Critics Poll found him in first place in three different categories), and he has begun to play another instrument, the soprano saxophone, on which he has played some startling music. But those awards seem to me to be somewhat similar to the Academy Award Humphrey Bogart received in 1951 for his performance in *The African Queen*. It was, at least in part an apology for not having recognized his brilliance in *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* in 1948.

To Coltrane, the new approval manifests itself primarily in terms of economics: more work, and a better price for it. That he already had the assurance can be heard throughout this record.

SETTIN' THE PACE

I SEE YOUR FACE
BEFORE ME
IF THERE IS SOMEONE
LOVELIER THAN YOU

LITTLE MELONAE
RISE 'N' SHINE
BY THE NUMBERS*

* bonus track

One aspect of Coltrane's work, apparent here, is just beginning to be noticed. He is one of our most lyrical musicians, but it is not a standard form of lyricism—it does not gush and does not cloy—and that quality went unnoticed for a long time when the discussions of his work were primarily concerned with the technical innovations he was making. While Ornette Coleman, in whose playing John is extremely interested, has been concerned with more freedom from what has been termed "the chord barrier," Coltrane was pushing to the ultimate harmonic limit. As Cannonball Adderley put it in *Jazz Review*, "Coltrane knows more about chords than anyone. John knows exactly what he's doing; he's gone into the melodic aspects of chords. He may go 'out of the chord,' so-called, but not out of the pattern he's got in his mind." That insistence on implicit harmonic effect, coupled with his rhythmic innovations ("I found," Coltrane wrote in *Down Beat*, "there were a certain number of chord progressions to play in a given time, and sometimes what I played didn't work out in eighth notes, 16th notes, or triplets. I had to put the notes in uneven groups like fives and sevens to get them all in") resulted in the so-called "sheets of sound" that for a time, blinded people to anything else he was doing.

But there can be no doubting the lyricism of a performance like "I See Your Face Before Me." That, and "If There Is Someone Lovelier Than You," are both songs much more closely associated with Frank Sinatra than with the standard jazz repertoire (although Miles Davis has recorded "Face" beautifully on Prestige 7007, *The Musings of Miles*). Coltrane, however, is one of those valuable musicians, who never feel constricted by what is generally thought to be acceptable, and, as usual, he validates his choices. This is, to my knowledge, the first jazz recording of "Someone," made more unusual by the medium tempo.

Only one of the four tracks on this set is what is usually thought of as a "jazz" piece. That is Jackie McLean's "Little Melonae." Prior to this, it was recorded and played primarily by the group of musicians most closely associated with McLean. It probably suggested itself to John for recording because of its unusual harmonic and rhythmic implications. The last track, "Rise 'n' Shine," is perhaps the most unexpected. A Hollywood flag-waver type of piece, John rescues it here from what had seemed to be an interminable purgatory in which it served, because of its title, as the theme song for early-morning small-town disc jockey shows. It is hard to avoid making the obvious remark that this performance would probably wake anyone up much quicker than the dozens of others.

The rhythm section here has appeared on several Prestige recordings as the Garland Trio, and both Garland and bassist Paul Chambers were co-members with Coltrane of the Miles Davis quintet. Drummer Arthur Taylor also worked with Davis for a while. So the highly necessary community of purpose necessary to a successful recording was already there as an element to be used, rather than a needed quality to be strived for.

It seems pointless, in a case like this, to go into lyrical annotator's puffs and shout "This is the best record John Coltrane has ever made!" or something of the sort. Certainly, portions of it are as good as anything he has ever done, and all of it is an excellent example of one of the most productive periods in the career of one of the few undeniably important figures in contemporary jazz.

—JOE GOLDBERG

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**

SETTIN' THE PACE REVISITED

WHEN THIS ALBUM was first recorded and annotated, almost exactly half a century ago, John Coltrane was still regarded as a human being. Since then, many things have happened.

First of all, John died much too soon, and, one assumes, ascended to heaven. At least there is a church named for him. Not even Charlie Parker got that.

At the time of this recording, John had left the Thelonious Monk Quartet, with which he had played an epochal, months-long engagement, to return to Miles Davis's group—a quintet when he had left it, now a sextet—which he had been fired from, enabling Monk to hire him. He had not yet formed his own quartet that would make him a critical member (in several meanings of the word) of three of the most influential groups of the era, and of all the days to follow.

It was an exciting time, and to date, it has not been equaled. New saxophonists appeared after the big revolution—Parker, followed by Rollins and Coltrane—both who played while Parker was still alive, as well as with him. But when Coltrane (the last great innovator) died in 1967, jazz stopped too. Partly because 1967 was also the year of rock's great launch, the year of Sgt. Pepper.

Free Jazz had led many club owners to switch to rock, which the kids could dance to, and Miles Davis had switched to a rock-and-electronics hybrid called fusion, that had the same effect on many establishments as prohibition.

After a while, it seemed that Coltrane was pursuing his quest by himself, but he kept up his lonely mission until he died.

Crucial to any evaluation of Coltrane is speed. Not only speed of execution, although Lord knows he had that, but the speed with which he changed his style, to a music that itself changed far more quickly than most.

I once spoke to John about this and, modest man that he was, he expressed puzzlement at the attention paid him, because, he told me, "I'm not doing anything all that different."

Well, he was doing something profoundly different—something that forever altered the way his instrument was played. If he didn't think so, it might have been because he heard some local hero whose fame never spread beyond the neighborhood.

But I doubt it. Coltrane's style is rooted in an astonishing virtuosity that few others could have possessed and was shaped by the two great teachers he worked for before going out on his own.

There is a new biography of him subtitled *The Story of a Sound*, but that seems a reductive title to me. The sound was certainly unique, but there was so much more to him than that. And he might have been less enamored of it than others were. Asked once what he thought of Stan Getz's tone, he said, "We'd all sound like that if we could." It says a lot that the two new recordings of his work released in 2005, nearly forty years after his death, were the first and third biggest selling jazz records of that year. And *Blue Train*, the only record he made for Blue Note, was for years that label's biggest seller. (I assume he has been outdistanced by his friend Ravi Shankar's daughter, Norah Jones.)

His Prestige records were usually straight blowing sessions, many of them with Red Garland and Paul Chambers, also members of the Miles Davis band, as was, at the time, Art Taylor, the drummer of this session.

Most of the recordings were first takes—there are very few alternate masters of Coltrane's Prestige records—and if there was more than one take of a blues that was thought up on the spot, the alternate would be given its own title and released another time. Waste not, want not.

For all the anger people heard in his music, Coltrane could be the gentlest of ballad players.

And, whether or not it was with the assistance of Red Garland, who knew all kinds of obscure tunes, he managed to find material that had not been overdone. (On a ballad album made late in his career, he recorded what must be the only jazz version of "Too Young to Go Steady.") Here, we get "Rise 'n' Shine," "I See Your Face Before Me," a Dietz and Schwartz gem that Frank Sinatra included in his masterpiece *In the Wee Small Hours*, and the relatively obscure "If There

Is Someone Lovelier Than You," on which, in his second solo, we get a foreshadowing of what would come to be one of his favorite improvisational methods—taking a small melodic fragment and turning it over and over, every which way, to see what it is made of. Then, from the jazz library, there is Jackie McLean's "Little Melonae," which Miles Davis had recorded, and finally, a long themeless blues credited to Coltrane, where his solo is bracketed by long Red Garland solos.

The last track, "By the Numbers," was finally issued on *The Last Trane* (John's final Prestige album), and is included here as a bonus track to make up the complete music played at that session.

In the early days of the great Coltrane Quartet, Amiri Baraka wrote gleefully that he called the group the Assassins. I can't imagine that John, who was a quiet, gentle, deeply spiritual man, took any pleasure in that.

On the other hand, just recently, both New York state and federal agencies have declared the Coltrane Long Island home a historic landmark, saving it from real estate developers who wanted to tear it down to facilitate their own idea of progress. Which seems fitting. How many of us could, over the course of a few hours, making it up as we go along, create music which would give pleasure to so many people half a century later?

—**JOE GOLDBERG**
October 2007

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(Dietz-Schwartz) Chappell & Co.-ASCAP

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(Dietz-Schwartz) Warner Bros. Music-ASCAP

3 LITTLE MELONAE 14:05

(Jackie McLean) Prestige Music-BMI

4 RISE 'N' SHINE 7:16

(DeSylva-Youmans) Warner Bros./Chappell-ASCAP

*5 BY THE NUMBERS 11:59

(John Coltrane) Prestige-BMI

* bonus track

JOHN COLTRANE tenor saxophone

RED GARLAND piano

PAUL CHAMBERS bass

ARTHUR TAYLOR drums

Recorded by RUDY VAN GELDER at Van Gelder Studio, Hackensack, NJ; March 26, 1958

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