

SOULTRANE

JOHN COLTRANE PRESTIGE 7142



esmond edwards



SOULTRANE JOHN COLTRANE

JOHN COLTRANE tenor saxophone
RED GARLAND piano PAUL CHAMBERS bass ARTHUR TAYLOR drums

- | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1 GOOD BAIT 12:07 | 4 THEME FOR ERNIE 4:56 |
| 2 I WANT TO TALK ABOUT YOU 10:54 | 5 RUSSIAN LULLABY 5:35 |
| 3 YOU SAY YOU CARE 6:16 | |

Soultrane is one of the essential albums in John Coltrane's career. Recorded during the first year of his Prestige contract, between his critical service in Thelonious Monk's quartet and his return to the band of Miles Davis, it finds the tenor saxophonist displaying a new level of both technical and conceptual refinement, dispensing torrents of notes that annotator Ira Gitler famously dubbed "sheets of sound." The Red Garland Trio, a key component on many Coltrane recordings of the period, is at its eloquent best; and the program, with two compositions from the early days of modern jazz, two lesser-known standards, and a recently penned requiem for the late Ernie Henry, is ideal for verifying that Coltrane's swiftly evolving approach was both innovative and comprehensive. Coltrane's status as the primary influence on both saxophonists and musicians generally became undeniable after the release of this immortal performance.

*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; February 7, 1958.
Supervision by BOB WEINSTOCK Remastering, 2006—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 • Total Time 37:53

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JOHN COLTRANE

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When reading *The New Yorker*, I am usually most amused by an S.J. Perelman gem, the cartoons, or something in "The Talk of the Town." In the May 17, 1958 issue, however, it was the jazz department that gave me my biggest guffaw when Whitney Balliett, in the course of reviewing a Miles Davis album, wrote, "Coltrane, a student of Sonny Rollins . . ." Of course, we know he didn't mean that Trane was going to Sonny's house, armed with a Klose book, for weekly lessons but the implication was clear, in the perfunctory dismissal, that Coltrane was indebted to Rollins for his style.

It is true that when Coltrane joined Miles Davis's quintet in late 1955, Sonny (the Rollins of that time and slightly before) was exerting a peripheral influence over him. Even this proved to be transient. The influences of Dexter Gordon (vintage 1946), Sonny Stitt, Stan Getz (certain facets of sound), and a general essence of Charlie Parker were more evident, even then. Since that time, Trane has developed along personal lines to become quite an influence himself. He and Sonny are parallel figures now, each contributing new ideas to jazz in his own way.

"Soultrane" is a ballad, written by Tadd Dameron, which appears on *Mating Call* (Prestige 7070—an album which features Coltrane and Dameron). This album, called *Soultrane*, does not include that tune but Prestige thought the name an apt one for an entire collection of Coltrane because it plays on his name in a truly descriptive way.

Trane is very serious about his playing; playing jazz is what he is most concerned with. There is a constant effort, on his part, to keep improving. He is self-critical and helpfully, because of clear insight, self-analytical. Practice is not foreign to him.

As in his last album (7123), Trane has the support of Red Garland, Paul Chambers, and Arthur Taylor. These four have done much playing together. In this case, familiarity breeds rapport.

Another admirable facet is duplicated from the last album. That is the playing of seldom-done tunes. 7123 had "Soft Lights and Sweet Music," "You Leave Me Breathless," and Alonzo Levister's "Slow Dance." In *Soultrane*, none of the selections have been overdone and three are entirely new to jazz interpretation.

The opening selection is an

SOULTRANE

GOOD BAIT
I WANT TO TALK
ABOUT YOU

YOU SAY YOU CARE
THEME FOR ERNIE
RUSSIAN LULLABY

exploration, at length, of "Good Bait," a Tadd Dameron-Count Basie collaboration, first recorded by Dizzy Gillespie in the Forties. The way Trane plays the little turns in the melody gives it a slight minuet flavor. The excitement he builds in his choruses is done by degrees. The solos by Garland and Chambers (pizzicato) are in the same firm, solid groove that the rhythm section sets down for the entire performance. Before the theme is restated, Trane and Arthur Taylor have a most intelligent, four bar-styled conversation.

"I Want to Talk About You" is a ballad, written and originally recorded by Billy Eckstine when B was leading his band in the mid-Forties. To my knowledge, this extremely pretty song had not been done since until now. This is how to play a ballad with jazz feeling. Trane is emotional but never baroque. Garland's languid, blue piano and another excellent picked solo by Chambers enhance the romantic mood.

Side two opens with a Jule Styne-Leo Robin tune, "You Say You Care," which I have never heard before in a jazz context. Trane

makes the most of the interesting chord changes in a swinging, medium-up setting. Garland's fluid single-line and Chambers's flying fingers are also featured before the final theme statement.

"Theme for Ernie" is a dedicatory piece by Philadelphian Freddie Lacey to Ernie Henry, the ex-Gillespie alto saxophonist who died suddenly in December of 1957 at the age of 31. Trane plays the lament without much deviation from the melody but imbues it with an air of reminiscence and melancholy. Red and Trane divide the last chorus.

Red begins "Russian Lullaby" with an out-of-tempo introduction before Trane comes ripping in. Taking this and "Soft Lights and Sweet Music" as evidence, it would seem that the boys like to play their Irving Berlin at high velocity. I'm sure this "Lullaby" would keep Nikita awake and swinging all night. Trane's "sheets of sound," which he has since put to wider use, are demonstrated in the beginning of the tag.

—IRA GITLER
original liner notes

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

SOULTRANE REVISITED

ALMOST 40 YEARS since his passing, John Coltrane remains a strong presence. His music from all of his various periods can be heard; his compositions are played by today's musicians; and he is an ongoing topic of conversation. When the CD *Thelonious Monk Quartet with John Coltrane at Carnegie Hall* was issued last year, it elicited much deserved praise and also brought forth all kinds of ancillary commentary.

One writer, a member of an Internet jazz research group to which I belong, chimed in with “. . . The Carnegie Hall concert is concrete evidence of the remarkable transformation of John Coltrane from an interesting but minor sideman to a major soloist who had a huge impact on the course of the jazz tradition—all within a matter of months.”

“Interesting but minor” sideman? There's no doubt that in his time as a member of Monk's group Trane was growing into seven-league boots, but before he joined Monk in the summer of 1957 he was already a very important sideman, having recorded for Prestige with the Miles Davis Quintet; the duet with Sonny Rollins on “Tenor Madness”; Elmo Hope's two-tenor date with Hank Mobley; *Tenor Conclave* with Mobley, Al Cohn, and Zoot Sims; Tadd Dameron on *Mating Call*; a date with Mal Waldron; and *Cattin'*

with Paul Quinichette. Trane's last Prestige recording prior to becoming part of Monk's quartet at the Five Spot took place on May 31 and was his first as a leader. It was titled simply *Coltrane*. A short blurb on the front cover read “John Coltrane. . . a major voice in the Miles Davis Quintet. . . the NEW tenor saxophonist STAR.” I didn't write that copy (only the back liner notes) but it was no press agent hypery. It was the truth.

With the Davis Quintet, both on record and live at the Cafe Bohemia, Trane began to intrigue the jazz audience, if not the critics, and in 1956 became a growing influence on an ever-increasing cadre of tenorists. They were paying attention to his blazing attack on up tempos and yearning tenderness on ballads, using that singular upper register to different effect, no matter the meter.

Post-Monk he rejoined Miles at the end of 1957. The group became a sextet with Cannonball Adderley and Trane in the front line. Two sessions Trane made as a leader in this general period are among my personal favorites: *Traneing In* (I came up with the title), done in August '57, and *Soultrane* from February '58.

It was on *Traneing In* that his “Soft Lights and Sweet Music” solo inspired me to comment on the “. . . excruciatingly exhilarating intensity of rapid, exigent runs with their residual, harmonic impact.” Trane really jump-started my prose. I didn't have to search too hard for those words or the sequence. They just seem to pour forth with a will of their own, goosed by a goose-necked saxophone.

What I was trying to express in Trane's playing I later dubbed “sheets of sound” when describing his “Russian Lullaby” solo on *Soultrane*.

Of all the words and phrases I've written about jazz since I reported on Dizzy Gillespie for my high school newspaper in 1946, none have been more quoted, with and without attribution, than “sheets of sound.” People told me I should have copyrighted it. That was long before Pat Riley came up with “three-peat,” but I'm not complaining, as long as I can listen to Coltrane playing “I Want to Talk About You” or any other track on *Soultrane*.

—IRA GITLER

April 2006



- 1 GOOD BAIT**
(Dameron-Basie) WB Music-ASCAP 12:07
- 2 I WANT TO TALK ABOUT YOU**
(Billy Eckstine) Unichappell Music-ASCAP 10:54
- 3 YOU SAY YOU CARE**
(Styne-Robin) Dorsey Bros. Music-ASCAP 6:16
- 4 THEME FOR ERNIE**
(Fred Lacey) Prestige Music-BMI 4:56
- 5 RUSSIAN LULLABY**
(Irving Berlin) Irving Berlin Music-ASCAP 5:35

JOHN COLTRANE *tenor saxophone*
RED GARLAND *piano*
PAUL CHAMBERS *bass*
ARTHUR TAYLOR *drums*

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The image displays a collection of 50 vinyl record covers from the RVG Remasters series, arranged in a 10x5 grid. The covers feature various jazz artists, including Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Sonny Rollins, Eric Dolphy, and others. The central logo reads "RVG REMASTERS".