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STEREO

coltrane's sound



John

COLTRANE

Coltrane's Sound

Is there a more listenable disc than *Coltrane's Sound*?

I must admit that, being primarily a "rock guy," I was not fully steeped in jazz when in 1987 I first heard this album. I basically put it on with moderate-to-low expectations, the idea being "I know I should like Coltrane, so let's give this a chance." When I listened to the first notes of "The Night Has A Thousand Eyes" something grabbed me, and I could play it over and over and always discover a little something new.

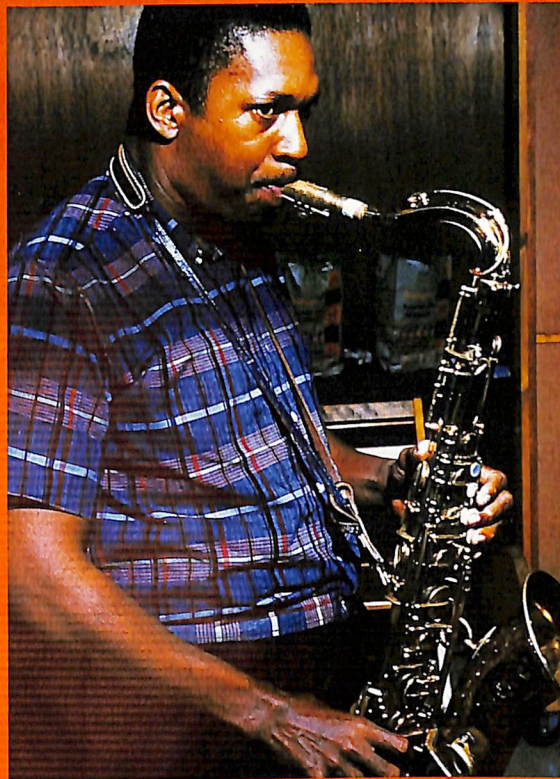
Oh sure, I bought his other classic albums, including the legendary *Giant Steps*, but this record is better, more energetic, and more spiritual. It's my favorite 2 o'clock-in-the-morning music.

I later found out that when Coltrane recorded his *Sound*, he was near the end of his spiritual and musical journey, and at the pinnacle of his creativity. But, then, you don't need to know that to enjoy the music.

Good listening.

—David McLees
Rhino A&R

LEE FRIEDLANDER



JOHN COLTRANE WAS AN ARTIST WHOSE WORK HAS HAD A DEEP AND FAR-REACHING EFFECT ON NEARLY ALL WHO HAVE COME IN CONTACT WITH IT.

His music often seems to conflict with itself and to inspire conflicting reactions in others. The music on *Coltrane's Sound* represents a point at which his influence on other musicians was beginning to take hold; it would soon spread like wildfire. His innovations in saxophone playing as well as in jazz harmony and composition helped many musicians find positive new paths to pursue. It led others, through no fault of Coltrane's, to enter a stylistic prison from which they lacked the resourcefulness to escape. Critics, on the other hand, have ranged from anointing him a groundbreaking jazz musician to dismissing his music as "antijazz."

In the nearly four decades since *Coltrane's Sound* was recorded, there have been more passionately held views expressed about the man and his music than there are notes in his most densely packed solos. He has been the subject of more than half a dozen biographies, some thorough and professional, others impressionistic and fanciful. His solos and compositions have been analyzed perhaps more painstakingly than those of any other jazz musician. His influence has been so pervasive that a backlash against the profusion of his imitators has sometimes been unjustly directed at him, leading some of their detractors to refer to him as "Clonetrane." He is the only jazz musician to have a religious institution named after him—though this occurred posthumously and against the wishes of his surviving family. Such is the impact of Coltrane's music upon listeners, players, and critics that he has always seemed to acquire disciples rather than fans, enemies rather than mere detractors.

A person who had heard and read about Coltrane without having yet listened to his music might come to it expecting to hear a confused jumble of musical ideas—the product of an artist fallen victim to his own personal and creative contradictions. In actuality nothing could be further from the truth. The music on *Coltrane's Sound* is the work of a musician in total command of all of the seemingly conflicting factors at his disposal. He

often stretches jazz harmony to the breaking point and, at other times, reduces it to its bare bones. He looks unflinchingly into the future while employing rhythmic and structural devices from the very origins of jazz. This is the output of an inquisitive genius with seemingly inexhaustible creative juices, an artist who lived by a work ethic that would put the most diligent subsistence farmer to shame. In his composing and arranging, as well as his playing, he consistently finds a near-perfect balance between density and sparseness, agitation and serenity, revolution and tradition. This is the music of a man on an unending creative quest. But it is also—and this is the aspect of Coltrane that those who would deify him refuse to believe or fail to fathom—the work of an intensely practical musician who sought answers not in seclusion on some remote mountaintop but in the proverbial woodshed and on the bandstand. It is the work of a man who, at the time, viewed musical composition not as some mystical calling but as a practical matter of finding sufficiently challenging material to play.

This recording represents a period when Coltrane was in the process of summing up all his explorations of bebop harmony while just starting to hint at the modal direction his music was about to take. *Coltrane's Sound* was recorded in October 1960 and released in June 1964. The principal difference in our perspective on this music today, as opposed to when it was first recorded, is that from the vantage point of nearly 40 years of intervening history, we now know what Coltrane was going to do next. In the early '60s it was anybody's guess.

By 1960 Coltrane had already undergone a number of sweeping changes as a musician. In the five years since he made his first recordings with the Miles Davis Quintet, his tenor sound had undergone an extensive maturing process. On those first Davis recordings Coltrane's tone was so bright and brittle that one almost had the feeling that the horn was made of glass and might shatter at any moment. By the time this recording was made, his tone had darkened and deepened, and his control over the horn had grown to the point that he was capable of a complete range of dynamics and tone colors throughout the tenor's range. There was the added warmth that comes with maturity, but it was combined with the spine-tingling, somewhat metallic quality that was a Coltrane trademark from the start.

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The next major change in Coltrane, the saxophonist, was his addition of the soprano saxophone to his tonal palette. Before he began playing soprano, you could count the number of post-Sidney Bechet soprano styles and players—to borrow an old Fred Allen line—on the thumbs of one hand. Steve Lacy. Period. In the intervening years the soprano has gone from a dusty pawnshop relic to perhaps the most overused jazz instrument of them all. By the '70s it had become an almost required double for all saxophonists, particularly tenor players. This led many players to pick up the horn without sufficient respect for the difficulties involved in mastering its quirks of intonation and tone production, giving credence to Lacy's philosophy that the soprano is a full-time job. Though Lacy was the first to develop a distinctive modern style on soprano, and Jerome Richardson's lead work with the Thad Jones-Mel Lewis Orchestra was the first step toward its revival in saxophone sections, it was the influence of Coltrane that rescued the instrument from the scrap heap. The Atlantic recordings were the first on which he employed the soprano, and they serve to demonstrate the deliberate and methodical way with which he went about incorporating it. This CD contains two examples of Coltrane's soprano: the ballad "Central Park West" and the out-chorus of "26-2." On the latter he appears to be trying out the sound of the soprano on a fairly "busy" bebop line. On the former he never strays far from the melody and seems to be testing his control of the horn's lower register. Like every other aspect of Coltrane's art, his development as a soprano player was incremental.

This brings up an important aspect of Coltrane's greatness, one that is often misunderstood. Though his music was constantly developing and changing throughout his too-brief time among us, those changes were not on the order of mercurial lightning bolts of inspiration, instantly transformed into powerful expressions of genius. This is not to imply that Coltrane was not supremely gifted, but rather to explain that he accepted responsibility for those gifts, never took them for granted, and always worked his hardest in order to get the most out of them. We are aware, in retrospect, of Coltrane's intense spiritual quest and of the sometimes primordial, sometimes celestial, quality of his later music. This has often led to a tendency, particularly among musically naive journalists—some of whose writing about him tends to border on hagiography—to forget that John

LEE TANNER/JAZZ IMAGE



Coltrane was a mortal human being who operated in the real world. It should be remembered that Coltrane was admired by those who knew him, not only for his creativity but also for his humility and his seemingly boundless capacity for practice and study. He was a jazz musician, and as such he was a practitioner of an intensely social and interactive art form. Like every other great jazz soloist, with the possible exception of Art Tatum, he was the product of notable groups, namely those of Dizzy Gillespie, Thelonious Monk, and Miles Davis.

By 1960 Coltrane had begun to solidify his own vision of a group, and by the time *Coltrane's Sound* was recorded, three-fourths of what would come to be known as the "classic Coltrane quartet" had materialized. In McCoy Tyner and Elvin Jones, Coltrane had found collaborators with the rare combination of unmistakable individuality and seemingly limitless flexibility. Whether being called upon to negotiate the harmonic complexities of Coltrane's reharmonizations of standards—which employed the substitution formulas used in pieces such as "Giant Steps" and "Countdown"—or to capture the deep, primal blues feeling of tunes such as "Village Blues" and "Equinox," Tyner was able to put his personal stamp on the music while giving Coltrane precisely what he needed. Elvin Jones, though probably the closest thing to a true force of nature as exists in any art form, was (and still is) one of the greatest team players in jazz, and as such has been able to grace recordings with artists as diverse as Gil Evans, Ornette Coleman, Stan Getz, Sonny Rollins, Lee Konitz, and Earl Hines. The role of the bassist in this group is similar to that of the center on a football team dominated by a backfield of superstars. His is the least glamorous role, but without a strong player to occupy the position, the entire entity might collapse. Philadelphian Steve Davis is the only holdover from the first Coltrane quartet, which also included pianist Steve Kuhn and drummer Pete La Roca. Davis provides a strong, steady pulse in a deceptively simple, percussive style reminiscent of that of Wilbur Ware. Davis was later replaced by Reggie Workman, who sometimes worked in tandem with Art Davis (no relation), and in late 1961 Workman was replaced by Jimmy Garrison, who remained with Coltrane until the end.

John Coltrane's importance as a composer and arranger is usually overshadowed by the seemingly universal influence of his playing, partly because his talents in these areas

took longer to develop and other musicians took longer to absorb them. It was during his tenure with Atlantic that Coltrane's harmonic innovations began to bear fruit. At first, such pieces as "Giant Steps" and "Countdown" seemed to represent such a radical departure from ordinary jazz harmony that their inner logic and the fact that they enhanced, rather than discarded, the rules of conventional jazz harmony were not immediately recognized. In fact, at one time certain musicians would say, "Hey, it's not 'Giant Steps'" to describe a concept that was less difficult than some thought, thus making it the first song title to be used as a synonym for rocket science. A very oversimplified way to explain what has come to be known as the "'Giant Steps' cycle" is to call it a series of chords arranged within a major-third relationship, an unusual progression at that time. After "Giant Steps"—an original tune in which this cycle is applied to three revolving tonal centers, first in descending, then ascending major thirds—Coltrane began applying this idea as a formula for reharmonizing standard tunes.

"The Night Has A Thousand Eyes" is the title song of a 1948 film in which Edward G. Robinson stars as a magician who possesses the power to predict the future. Originally a slow ballad, it is performed here at a comfortable medium tempo in a well thought-out arrangement in which the "Giant Steps" cycle is applied to the bridge of the tune. Rhythmic variety is provided by alternating passages of suspended time over a pedal point with those in straight 4/4 time.

An original ballad, "Central Park West" alternates six bars of moving chord changes with four bars of pedal point in each ten-bar chorus. Tyner has the main solo spot, while Coltrane displays one of the many examples of his inexplicably underrated talents as a melodist. His control of the soprano's lower register is admirable. It is also interesting to note that even though this melody would have laid perfectly well on the tenor and would have been easier to play in the middle register of the larger horn, Coltrane specifically chooses the smoky, slightly tense color of the lower register of the soprano.

"Liberia" begins with a prayerful-sounding rubato theme statement that flows seamlessly into 4/4 time at the bridge. Its outer sections are harmonically similar to Dizzy Gillespie's "Night In Tunisia," while the bridge is based on one chord.



DAVID REDFERN/RETNA LTD.

Long considered the acid test for tenor saxophonists in the wake of Coleman Hawkins' classic 1939 recording, "**Body And Soul**" is completely transformed by Coltrane's intriguing arrangement featuring a vamp over a pedal point on the tune's outer sections and a gorgeous application of the "Giant Steps" cycle on the bridge.

"**Equinox**" is the blues, featuring a direct and to-the-point Coltrane solo and the sort of wide, deep groove that only Elvin Jones can provide.

"**Satellite**" features the "Giant Steps" cycle applied to the standard "How High The Moon" in a vigorous pianoless trio performance.

Applying the Coltrane chord-substitution concept to the changes of Charlie Parker's "Confirmation," "**26-2**" features the tenorist "strolling" with only bass and drums during his solo. He plays the closing chorus on soprano with a noticeably less-refined tone quality than he displays on "Central Park West."

The alternate take of "Body And Soul" was obviously an earlier one than the master. Coltrane sounds less free and sure of himself on the bridge and the 16-bar intro on the alternate take was wisely cut to a more concise eight bars on the master. Despite these minor flaws, the track provides a revealing picture of Coltrane's creative mind at work.

To this day there is still no such thing as a unified field theory of John Coltrane's music, and perhaps that is as it should be. Whether he is negotiating a maze of harmonic twists and turns or playing the blues with the earthy directness of the earliest jazzmen, Coltrane's sound is always unmistakable.

—Kenny Berger

Kenny Berger is a baritone saxophonist, composer, arranger, and educator. He currently leads the McNeil-Berger Report with trumpeter John McNeil and is a member of the jazz faculty of the Newark, New Jersey, campus of Rutgers University.

When Ernest Hemingway died, Nelson Algren in a moving tribute from one great novelist to another assessed Hemingway's importance, saying, "No American writer since Walt Whitman has assumed such risks in forging a style ... they were the kind of chances by which, should they fail, the taker fails alone; yet, should they succeed, succeed for everyone."

That is—from where I stand—a perfect description of precisely what is going on with the tenor saxophonist John Coltrane.

Coltrane personifies the young jazz musician who, in searching for personal style, in striving to establish his art as valid and individual and real, takes chances in forging a style which, by definition, challenges the form of tradition while remaining loyal to its essence, and assaults the conventional and the orthodox.

Jazz musicians like Coltrane are linked inexorably with those creative artists such as Joseph Heller, Ken Kesey, Lenny Bruce and others who are searching for what Kesey (in a recent issue of *Genesis West*) referred to as "a new way to look at the world, an attempt to locate a better reality."

And it ought to be noted about such jazzmen that they not only represent the improvisatory aspect of our society, but by the very nature of what they do, take more chances, even, than Hemingway. For the jazz musician such as John Coltrane is improvising, making it up right now, creating instant art in the supermarket of the jazz club, which is like writing poetry in the men's room at Grand Central Station.

And they perform this improvisation without the chance of revision, with the knowledge beforehand that what comes out may be good or may be bad; it depends. But in any case they can't change it, it must rest where it is and be judged as it came out.

In the process of this striving, a creative jazzman such as John Coltrane may very well annoy and antagonize in exactly the same way as Joyce and Stravinsky and Bartok, in their times, have annoyed and antagonized.

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For this he has been criticized as "an angry young tenor." Coltrane's reply is interesting. "The only one I'm angry at is myself," he says, "when I don't make what I'm trying to play."

"What is he trying to do?" is the question frequently asked about Coltrane and constantly hurled at musicians and critics by irritated listeners who feel their good will toward jazz frustrated by what they find to be the inexplicability of Coltrane's playing.

He has a simple answer. "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."

Once he remarked on his fascination with harmony, "When I was with Miles, I didn't have anything to think about but myself, so I stayed at the piano and chords! chords! chords! I ended up playing them on my horn!"

From his association with some of the most famous and most individual performers in jazz, such as Miles and Monk and Dizzy, Coltrane finds a similarity underlying their work. There's just "one thing ... remains constant," he says. "That's the tension of it, that electricity, that kind of feeling. It's a *lift* sort of feeling. No matter where it happens, you get that feeling and you know. It's a happy feeling," he adds.

Coltrane, a mild, soft spoken and highly introspective man, says of his own music, "Sometimes I let technical things surround me so often and so much that I kind of lose sight... basically all I want to do would be to play music that would make people happy."

The long solos, the unorthodox "cries" and the sheets of sound, the hard tone, the swift changes of mood from the lyric to the turbulent urgency of his modal improvisations, indicate a restless nature. And Coltrane is still unsatisfied with his own playing. He is searching. "I don't know what I'm looking for," he has said, "something that hasn't been played before. I don't know what it is. I know I'll have that feeling when I get it and I'll just keep on searching."

There's a story told by Cannonball Adderley who worked with Coltrane in the Miles Davis group. "Once in a while," Cannonball says, "Miles might say, 'Why you play so long, man?' and John would say, 'It took that long to get it all in.'"

That's a pretty good summary of what motivates and inspires and directs the life of this jazz man. His music is all-encompassing; his vision of life so packed, that he does,



indeed, sometimes have trouble "getting it all in."

What John Coltrane has "gotten in" on this album, into the music that is, strikes me as an accurate cross-section of his musical capabilities. He is heard on a lovely ballad, *The Night Has A Thousand Eyes* as though to refute those who claim he will not play ballads (his hard-edged approach to the ballad is intriguing); he is heard in numerous examples of the jet speed runs and explosions of notes contrasted to and intertwined with the similar eruptions from Elvin Jones' drums ("sometimes he's too much for me!" John has said of Elvin); he is heard in reflective moments, in intense moments and in lyric moments. In fact, almost all the facets of Coltrane are displayed here, including his ventures into the language of the soprano saxophone.

It took me more than a little while to get used to Coltrane. The effort was rewarded many times over and I recommend it to anyone who has not yet grasped that this music is an extraordinary example of the complex beauty of this most complex age.

—Ralph J. Gleason

Original Album

1. THE NIGHT HAS A THOUSAND EYES

(By Buddy Bernier & Jerry Brainin; Paramount Music Corporation, ASCAP. Time: 6:42)

2. CENTRAL PARK WEST

(By John Coltrane; Jowcol Music, BMI. Time: 4:12)

3. LIBERIA

(By John Coltrane; Jowcol Music, BMI. Time: 6:45)

4. BODY AND SOUL

(By Johnny Green, Robert Sour, Edward Heyman & Frank Eyton; Range Road Music Inc., WB Music Corp., Quartet Music Inc. & Druropetal Music, ASCAP/BMI. Time: 5:35)

5. EQUINOX

(By John Coltrane; Jowcol Music, BMI. Time: 8:33)

6. SATELLITE

(By John Coltrane; Jowcol Music, BMI. Time: 5:48)

Bonus Tracks

7. 26-2

(By John Coltrane; Jowcol Music, BMI. Time: 6:09)

8. BODY AND SOUL (Alternate Take)

(By Johnny Green, Robert Sour, Edward Heyman & Frank Eyton; Range Road Music Inc., WB Music Corp., Quartet Music Inc. & Druropetal Music, ASCAP/BMI. Time: 5:57)

Personnel

JOHN COLTRANE, tenor or soprano sax; **McCOY TYNER**, piano; **STEVE DAVIS**, bass;
ELVIN JONES, drums.

JOHN COLTRANE plays soprano sax on "Central Park West," tenor and soprano sax on "26-2" and tenor sax on all the other tunes. **McCOY TYNER** is not heard on "Satellite."

"Central Park West," "Body And Soul," and "Satellite" recorded at Atlantic Studios, New York City, October 24, 1960; all other titles recorded at Atlantic Studios, New York City, October 26, 1960.

Recording engineer: **TOM DOWD**

Cover photo: **MARVIN ISRAEL**

Supervision: **NESUHI ERTEGUN**

This is a high fidelity recording.

Original album released as Atlantic SD-1419, June 1964; "26-2" was previously released on The Coltrane Legacy, Atlantic SD-1553, April 1970; "Body And Soul (Alternate Take)" was previously released on Alternate Takes, Atlantic SD-1668, January 1975.

Reissue supervision: **BOB CARLTON & PATRICK MILLIGAN**

Reissue art direction: **HUGH BROWN & RACHEL GUTEK**

Reissue design: **GEOFF GANS & RACHEL GUTEK**

Remastering: **DAN HERSCH/DIGIPREP**

Reissue liner notes: **KENNY BERGER**

Editorial supervision: **STEVEN CHEAN**

Editorial research: **DANIEL GOLDMARK**

Editorial coordination: **ELIZABETH PAVONE**

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BILL INGLOT, TED MYERS, PETER PASTERNAK, BRIAN SCHUMAN,

THANE TIERNEY, STEVE WOOLARD

Special thanks: **LEON LEAVITT, VINCENT PELOTE/
INSTITUTE OF JAZZ STUDIES**



COLTRANE'S SOUND

SIDE ONE

1. THE NIGHT HAS A THOUSAND EYES

(By Dudley Brown & Jerry Brown, Paramount, ASCAP) Time 6:42

2. CENTRAL PARK WEST

(By John Coltrane, Jonico, BMI) Time 4:12

3. LIBERIA

(By John Coltrane, Jonico, BMI) Time 6:43

SIDE TWO

1. BODY AND SOUL

(By Johnny Green, Robert Shaw, Edward Heyman & Frank Eyton, Warner Inc., ASCAP) Time 5:11

2. EQUINOX

(By John Coltrane, Jonico, BMI) Time 3:33

3. SATELLITE

(By John Coltrane, Jonico, BMI) Time 4:42

John Coltrane, tenor or soprano sax; McCoy Tyner, piano; Steve Davis, bass; Elvin Jones, drums.

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Recording engineer: Tom Dowd

Cover: Martin Inoué

Supervision: Nereid Ertegen

This is a high fidelity recording. For best results observe the R.I.A.A. high frequency roll-off characteristic with a 500 cycle crossover.

John Coltrane can also be heard on the following Atlantic LPs: *Coltrane Plays The Blues* (1382), *Old Coltrane* (1373), *Rugi G* (1354), *Milt Jackson & John Coltrane* (1368), *My Favorite Things* (1381), *Coltrane Jazz* (1356), *Giant Steps* (1311).

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