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john coltrane
LIVE
TRANE
THE
EUROPEAN
TOURS



Original recordings produced by norman granz

This compilation produced by eric miller

Production coordination—rikka arnold, terri hintz

Art direction, package design—jamie putnam Book design—deb sibony

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The result of these technical advances is greater clarity, depth, and soul. These recordings resound with a physical forcefulness that is vigorous and magnetic.

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LIVE
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an appreciation by carlos santana with hal miller

john coltrane almost forces one to believe in the existence of a higher power, by whatever name, in whatever form. How else can one explain or ever hope to understand the essence and the power of his genius? Clearly—or so it seems to me—John Coltrane broke through to the other side. He found The Light and, for a time he became The Light.

Fittingly, there have been volumes written about this man and his music, and there's been little that I myself—like so many others—haven't read and studied in an effort to discover more about the man, his music, and his journey. In today's technologically adept society, there is virtually no Coltrane solo that hasn't been transcribed, dissected, and analyzed, and the critics, musicologists, fellow musicians and fans have all weighed in with their explanations about who John Coltrane was and what his music was/is all about. And at least to some extent all have provided some insight, and some clues for which I—and countless others, of course—are altogether grateful.

I can never hope to understand so much that has been written about Coltrane nor can I hope to derive satisfactory answers or meaning from the music sheets crammed with their record of his every note. And while, like every other musician who must daily confront and acknowledge his limitations, I wish that I could take better advantage of the research, scholarship, and analyses of others, there is still something deep inside of me that tells me that it is not the how that matters, for all its marvelous ingenuity: no, it is only the what that counts. And what John Coltrane played only started with notes and phrases.

I love to listen to Coltrane. I have to listen to Coltrane.

It has not always been that way. There was a time when jazz—or, at least what I thought was jazz—had no real meaning or value to me. Oh, I knew that the musicians were incredibly proficient on their instruments and I knew that the music's history—Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Billie Holiday—was also one of the great American stories, but all this notwithstanding, I felt no emotional connection to or with this music.

And then I discovered Miles... and after that John Coltrane... and things haven't been the same since.

I will be forever grateful to my dear friend Michael Shrieve, himself a musician and a person of remarkable depth, for recognizing in me a readiness and willingness to go to the deep end of the pool way back when. It was Shrieve, and afterwards so many others, who introduced me to the music of Miles Davis. I heard *Bitches Brew* and knew for the first time that there was indeed magic in the mystery of jazz. And when I began to work backwards—eventually tracing Miles back to his earliest days with Charlie Parker—I came across another discovery: John Coltrane. All this occurred some 30 or so years ago, and for all the subsequent distance I may have traveled as a man and as a musician, I've never been far from Miles or Coltrane since.

For me it is the sheer sound of John Coltrane which grabs, transfixes, and almost stuns. For in that sound I hear passion, depth, exaltation, and conviction. The notes—for all their brilliance—become just a means to an end, but it is the sound which illuminates, which captivates, and which renders me powerless to do anything else but listen and marvel and accept.

In his music I hear and feel drama, and a sense of urgency. (This music cannot wait.) I hear something which feels almost like an invitation—perhaps a summons—to share his journey and make no mistake, the Coltrane musical saga was indeed a journey, with no end in sight, as far as I am concerned.

Like most musicians I acknowledge and applaud artistic excellence, for this is something to which we all aspire. We spend our lives learning, expanding, and perfecting our craft in the hope that we will find the means to convey that which resides within us to those who care enough to listen. However noble and fulfilling that quest, there is something else even beyond all this. And this is what John Coltrane found and this is what we hear when we experience Coltrane. For Coltrane found his way to the other side: he found The Light.

As a musician I have been deeply influenced by John Coltrane, the man and the musician. When you hear me play you will not hear his notes, his constructions, or his phrases, for that kind of technical mastery and instrumental prowess lies well outside and beyond my capabilities. And besides, I have never confused the notes for the music, for as I have said, the notes are just the means to the end. My Coltrane influence comes through my awareness that it is possible to achieve a kind of transcendence wherein one no longer thinks in terms of notes or the instrument itself and wherein one's feelings and emotion become the sound. This, I believe, is what John Coltrane did and it is what I aspire to.

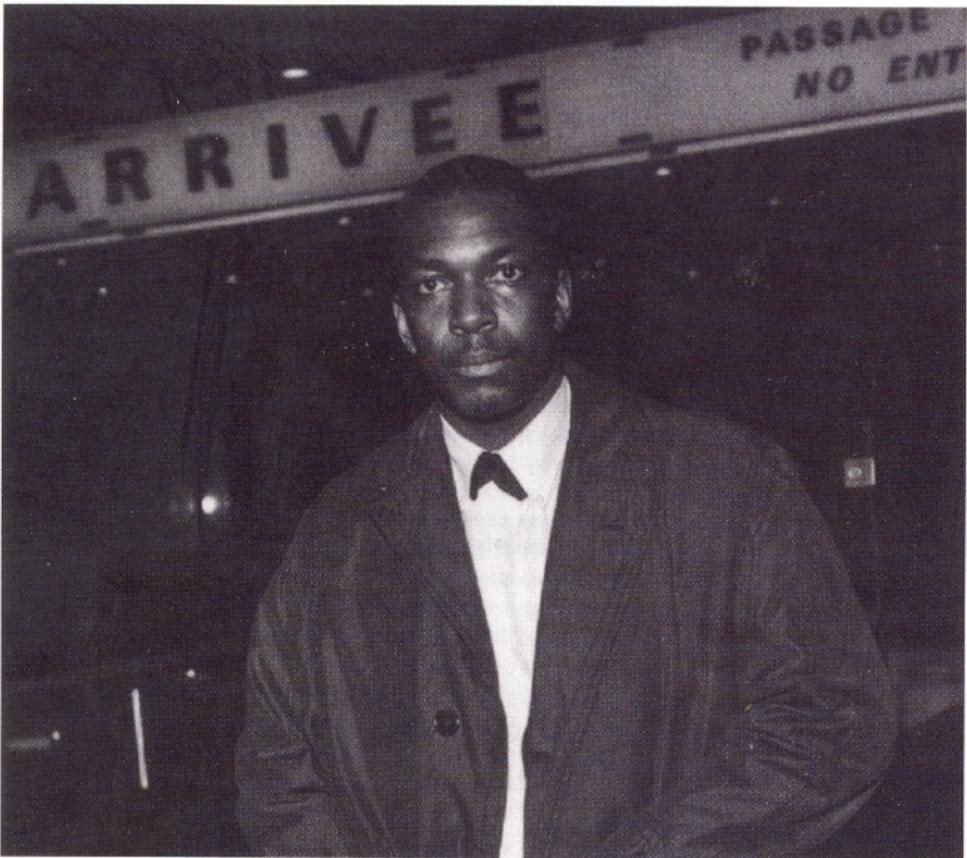
That belief in a higher-power intervention gains more credence and relevancy for me every time I think about the individual talents of the members of his gifted quartet and how indispensable they were to the music and the impact of John Coltrane. I can't help but believe that what they did—the music they made—could have come only from these musicians and the few others in the Coltrane circle. Chance meetings? Perhaps.

I think about the path he followed, which took him through Earl Bostic, Dizzy Gillespie, and Johnny Hodges, and onto Miles and Monk. And, for sure, there was Rollins, Dexter Gordon and Ornette, and John Gilmore, and Bill Evans, too. To work with and learn from just one of these masters is good fortune, sheer serendipity; to encounter, learn from, and pass through all of them is something else indeed. A higher power, a grand design? Perhaps.

There is something within me which tends to resist the temptation to infer some kind of extra-human uniqueness from the artistry of that ultra-select group of musicians whose gifts and impact seemed to so far exceed the norms of human endeavor. I don't know how to explain the existence of a Picasso, Louis Armstrong, Mahalia Jackson, Charlie Parker, Miles Davis, or Jimi Hendrix. To simply ascribe it all to mathematical happenstance and a pat explanation that exceptions are the rule in human history somehow falls short for me. And perhaps it is just that I want to believe that there is something else at work, I will concede that.

When it comes to John Coltrane, however, I am not afraid nor reluctant to speculate that there is more here than that which meets the eye or ear and just, perhaps, defies conventional explanation. I can only speak for myself in this regard but I am secure and gratified in the knowledge that many, many others share my sentiments. His was and is the sound of a distant past about which we can only wonder and of a far-off future which we may never reach. In short, I guess that what I'm saying is that in John Coltrane I hear a completeness, a monumental magnificence, which defines for me the human potential, a statement of what is possible in the best of all possible worlds.

Every time I listen to John Coltrane, I am reminded that passion and conviction are inseparable from the highest artistic expression, and I am encouraged to continue my own quest to make the most of whatever gifts I have. And I can't shake the feeling that he did find the way to the other side and that perhaps in his music lies the path for those of us bold enough to follow.



producer's note by eric miller

births, deaths, earthquakes, and other historic moments leave a mark: you recall where you were, the time of day or night, the weather, and so on.

Such a single event for me was a 1960 Norman Granz concert, at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles that featured Miles Davis with John Coltrane and company.

I was already a Coltrane fan from listening to his records. I had many of the Prestige recordings (they showed Coltrane in several contexts), and I loved them all. But I was not prepared for the impact of his music live. Passion falls short of describing the overwhelming, spine-tingling, hypnotic effect the music had on me.

Not many years later, I started my long working friendship with Granz; to my delight, some of the first tapes I found in our vaults were live John Coltrane sessions. The music in these sets is full of the magic only a live performance can create. This music is thrilling—and that is what we live for.

My research was greatly assisted by Yasuhiro Fujioka, Lewis Porter, and Yoh-Ichi Hamada, the writers of *John Coltrane: A Discography and Musical Biography*. Along with my friends Trevor Bailey in the United Kingdom, Jean-Claude Marc in Paris, and Leon Leavitt in California, they enabled us to discover and correct a few discrepancies in dates and locations that had been listed in the original Pablo releases. I am grateful to all for their efforts.

I would also like to thank my friend, the wonderful engineer Dave Luke, for never losing the musicality in the process of making these tapes "state of the art." Thanks as well to my pals Kirk Felton and Joe Tarantino for great digital editing, also done with a love of music.

DISC 1

1 impressions 11:14 **2 my favorite things** 25:11 (Rodgers-Hammerstein) Williamson Music-ASCAP

3 blue train 8:54 **4 naima** 4:05 **5 impressions** 7:17 **6 my favorite things** 20:27 (Rodgers-Hammerstein) Williamson-ASCAP

john coltrane tenor saxophone, soprano saxophone (#2, 4, 6)

eric dolphy alto saxophone (#1, 3, 5), flute (#2, 6), bass clarinet (#4)

mc coy tyner piano **reggie workman** bass **elvin jones** drums

Recorded in Paris, November 18, 1961 (#1, 2); and Stockholm, November 23, 1961 (#3-6).

Previously unreleased.

DISC 2

1 mr. p.c. 11:17 **2 miles' mode** 10:34

3 my favorite things 19:09 (Rodgers-Hammerstein) Williamson-ASCAP

4 norman granz introduction 1:44

5 bye bye blackbird 19:48 (Henderson-Dixon) Ray Henderson Music/Olde Clover Leaf Music-ASCAP

6 the inch worm 10:17 (Frank Loesser) Frank Music-ASCAP

7 every time we say goodbye 4:58 (Cole Porter) Chappell & Co.-ASCAP

john coltrane tenor saxophone, soprano saxophone (#3, 6, 7)

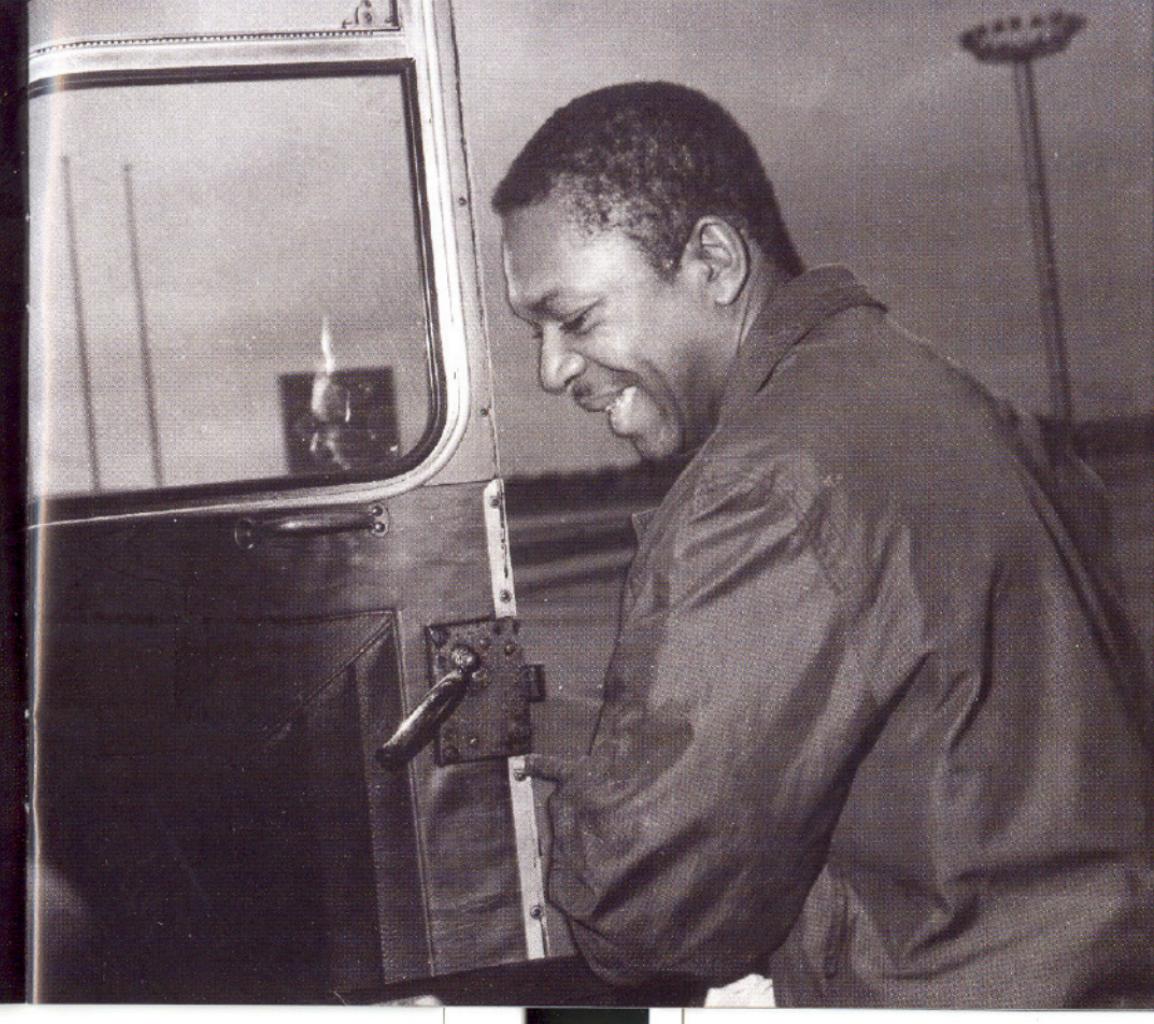
eric dolphy alto saxophone (#1, 2), flute (#3)

mc coy tyner piano **reggie workman** bass **elvin jones** drums

(Jimmy Garrison replaces Reggie Workman on #5-7.)

Recorded in Hamburg, November 25, 1961 (#1-3); and Paris, November 17, 1962 (#4-7).

#1-3, 5 previously unreleased. #6, 7 from *The Paris Concert* (Pablo 2308-217-2/OJCCD-781-2).



DISC 3

1 mr. p.c. 15:13 2 my favorite things 23:55 (Rodgers-Hammerstein) Williamson-ASCAP

3 the inch worm 7:06 (Loesser) Frank-ASCAP 4 mr. p.c. 15:03 5 naima 9:24

john coltrane tenor saxophone, soprano saxophone (#2, 3)

mc coy tyner piano jimmy garrison bass elvin jones drums

Recorded in Paris, November 17, 1962 (#1-4); and Stockholm, November 19, 1962 (#5).

Previously unreleased.

DISC 4

1 traneing in 18:44 (John Coltrane) Prestige Music-BMI

2 bye bye blackbird 17:52 (Henderson-Dixon) Ray Henderson/Ode Clover Leaf-ASCAP

3 impressions 8:01

4 swedish introduction 1:08

5 traneing in 11:50 (Coltrane) Prestige-BMI

6 mr. p.c. 18:27

john coltrane tenor saxophone, tenor and soprano saxophones (#6)

same rhythm section as Disc 3

Recorded in Stockholm, November 19, 1962 (#1-3); and October 22, 1963 (#4-6).

#1, 2 from *Bye Bye Blackbird* (Pablo 2308-227/OJCCD-681-2); #6 from *The European Tour* (Pablo 2308-222-2);
#3 and 5 previously unreleased.

DISC 5

1 naima 6:49 2 the promise 6:57 3 spiritual 12:22

4 impressions 11:35 5 i want to talk about you 9:53 (Billy Eckstine) Unichappell Music-BMI

6 my favorite things 13:56 (Rodgers-Hammerstein) Williamson-ASCAP

john coltrane tenor saxophone, soprano saxophone (#2, 6),
tenor and soprano saxophones (#3)

same rhythm section as Disc 3

Recorded in Stockholm, October 22, 1963. #1, 2, 5 from *The European Tour* (Pablo 2308-222-2);

#3, 4 from *Afro Blue Impressions* (Pablo 2PACD-2620-101-2); #6 previously unreleased.

DISC 6

1 mr. p.c. 26:28 2 lonnie's lament 10:12 3 naima 8:03

4 chasin' the trane 5:41 5 my favorite things 21:04 (Rodgers-Hammerstein) Williamson-ASCAP

john coltrane tenor saxophone, soprano saxophone (#5)

same rhythm section as Disc 3

Recorded in Paris, November 1, 1963 (#1 only); and Berlin, November 2, 1963.

#1 from *The Paris Concert* (Pablo 2308-217-2/OJCCD-781-2);

#2-5 from *Afro Blue Impressions* (Pablo 2PACD-2620-101-2).

DISC 7

1 afro blue 7:41 (Mongo Santamaria) Mongo Music-BMI **2 cousin mary** 9:54

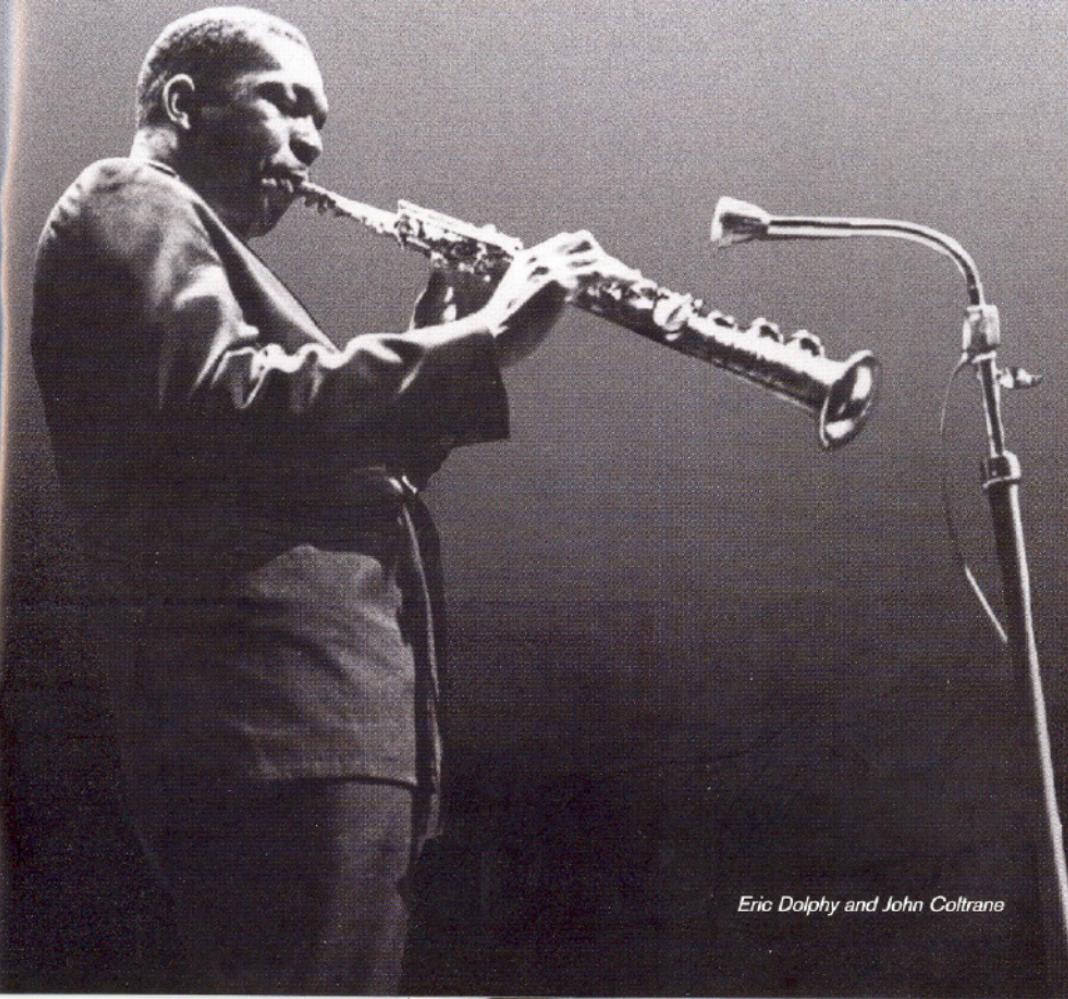
3 i want to talk about you 8:23 (Eckstine) Unichappell-BMI **4 impressions** 27:15

john coltrane tenor saxophone, soprano saxophone (#1),
tenor and soprano saxophones (#2)

same rhythm section as Disc 3

Recorded in Berlin, November 2, 1963 (#1-3); and Stuttgart, November 4, 1963 (#4).
#1-3 from *Afro Blue Impressions* (Pablo 2PACD-2620-101-2); #4 previously unreleased.

ALL SELECTIONS COMPOSED BY JOHN COLTRANE AND PUBLISHED BY JOWCOL MUSIC (BMI), EXCEPT AS INDICATED



Eric Dolphy and John Coltrane



invention and transformation by neil tesser

revisiting the music of john coltrane from our perspective in a new century, almost 35 years after his death, I often return to one essential and remarkable and bluntly stated fact. Coltrane did what he did—*everything* he did, from walking the blues bars in his hometown Philadelphia to touching the cosmos in the months before his death—during a lifetime that spanned just four decades.

That means that in an adult life of barely 20 years, he mastered bebop, the signal development in jazz since its emergence as a soloist's idiom; escaped the gravitational pull of bop to create his famous, harmonically rigorous “sheets of sound”; and then, in an utter transformation, abandoned these chord-rooted lines in favor of the marathon melodies that reached as far as the ear could hear or the mind could imagine. (All in 20 years. When you consider how brief a period Coltrane and three of his peers spent on the planet—Gershwin, Parker, and Hendrix, all of whom died at the age of 40 or younger—you have to wonder how American music might have evolved if any of them had made it to middle age.)

What's more, when you examine his real productivity, you realize that “20 years” overstates the case. In fact, Coltrane left his impact on the world of jazz, the world of music—the *world*—in the space of only about a dozen years. That's the blink-of-an-eye in which he appeared prominently on recordings—first in Miles Davis's quintet, then on a slew of others' before joining Thelonious Monk's quartet, and finally at the helm of his own powerful and intrepid bands. Few artists before him, in any idiom, accomplished so much—and in so few years—

and I think it had something to do with the times in which he lived.

You see, the music Coltrane created during those dozen years falls almost too neatly, and almost symmetrically, into two distinct periods. The first of these was marked by those "sheets of sound" (Ira Gitler's ingenious description of his music): vertiginous improvisations built on swooping scales and roller-coaster arpeggios, which erupted from increasingly complicated chord patterns. This period spans the five years between Coltrane's initial recording with Davis, in the fall of '55, and the October 1960 date that became the album *My Favorite Things*.

Like his contemporaneous jazz evolutionaries Ornette Coleman and Cecil Taylor, Coltrane by the late Fifties found himself hamstrung by the dominant improvisatory practice, handed down from bebop, of hurdling a steeplechase of chord changes. During these years, he largely replaced this concept with an idiom based on scales and modes instead of interlocking chords—an approach that reached its first milestone by way of an unexpected vehicle, the Rodgers & Hammerstein tune "My Favorite Things." But soon enough, that song became the theme of Coltrane's second (and radically different) creative burst, the six-and-a-half-year period that led up to his death in the summer of 1967.

During these years, he switched his focus from the towering structures he had created in the Fifties to the expansive, stretch-to-the-horizon melodies that made him a cult figure in the Sixties—solos most frequently played above one chord, or at most a handful of them, instead of the harmonic cornucopia he'd previously explored. In essence, Coltrane had turned his method of improvising on its ear, from vertical to horizontal. And again, the transition falls almost too neatly—this time on a crucial dividing line in American culture and history.

Coltrane's "vertical" period came during a decade when the country, flush with wartime victory and peacetime prosperity, grew up and out, maturing as a world leader, trying to touch the moon, marking the mood with a seemingly endless parade of new skyscrapers and high-rise apartments. Then, in 1960, Coltrane released the landmark *Giant Steps*; its title song proved the apotheosis of



McCoy Tyner, Jimmy Garrison, Elvin Jones, and John Coltrane



chord-based improvising, which had made its practitioners sound like "rats in a harmonic maze" (Martin Williams, borrowing from the psychological jargon of the day).

And then, as the Sixties dawned, Coltrane entered his "horizontal" phase, the music free of harmonic constraints, often thrilling in its melodic sweep and incantatory power, and refusing to conform to the clock. (The performance of a single tune could run 25 or 30 minutes.) After 1961, when the world first got to hear his recording of "My Favorite Things," Coltrane's music anticipated and then mirrored the new decade's hallmarks: America's rejection of Fifties values, its fascination with meditation and introspection, even its newfound suspicion of hierarchy.

The music in this collection captures this exact moment in Coltrane's career, the crux of his artistic development. It does so exclusively with performances of Coltrane in concert—many previously unissued, others heard only on badly produced bootlegs.

"Live" recordings of even a single concert can offer mixed results—onstage distractions, crowd noise, and worst of all, a performance that "you had to be there" to appreciate—and here we've got eight hours' worth, recorded over a two-year period. But Coltrane has a track record concerning "live" recordings. His other in-concert recordings—*Live at the Village Vanguard* (1961), *At Birdland* (1963) and *At Newport* (also 1963, and featuring the most famous version of "My Favorite Things"), and *Live in Seattle* (1965)—each constituted an iconic chapter in his discography, and for one obvious reason. More than any other factor, Coltrane's music of the 1960s bears the mark of experimentation, of restless recombination. The test trials for this alchemy took place not in the studio, in front of an engineer and producer, but on stage, in front of audiences whose own palpable energy nurtured the musicians.

For Coltrane aficionados, then, *Live Trane* represents Christmas in July; some of them have been thirsting for this music, clarified and properly identified, since first hearing the bootlegs a quarter-century ago.

Eric Miller has waited for even longer to put this material on disc—since the early Seventies, in fact, just a couple years after Coltrane's death, when he first learned of a vast cache of unreleased tapes produced or supervised by Norman Granz, featuring various artists (including Coltrane). Granz is the jazz *auteur* whose first success involved his invention of the touring jazz shows known as "J.A.T.P." ("Jazz At The Philharmonic"); by the mid-Fifties, when Granz founded Verve Records, "J.A.T.P." had become the closest thing to a brand-name that jazz had to offer.

As a record producer, Granz first met Coltrane in the mid-Fifties, while supervising a Johnny Hodges recording session on which Coltrane played. As a transatlantic concert promoter several years later, Granz again ran into Coltrane, as he explained for a 1977 LP that first issued several of the performances heard here:

"Between the Hodges album and 1960, I had little to do with Trane but when I presented Miles Davis on his first extended European tour, Trane . . . was part of his group. Two years later, he selected me to be the impresario for his first European tour as a leader. The first tour John played with only a rhythm section; a year later, I presented his second tour, this time with Eric Dolphy. . . ." Granz's liner notes added the prediction that listeners "will agree that here Coltrane is, possibly, more exciting and inspired by the public than in his usual studio work." (Granz's analysis was more on-target than his memory. Dolphy had actually gone along for Coltrane's first European sojourn, which came in 1961, only *one* year after the Miles Davis tour described above. As *Live Trane* shows, Granz again presented Coltrane on the continent in the fall of '62 and '63.)

As you'd expect from an inveterate record producer, Granz arranged to record at least the concerts that he produced, although this by no means includes all the dates Coltrane played on his Europe tours. This collection, for instance, features music from Coltrane's 1961 dates in Paris, Stockholm, and Hamburg—on a tour that actually landed the band in a total of 21 different cities, from Scotland to Scandinavia to Germany. But locating any of these concerts within the archives proved almost as circuitous as Coltrane's tour schedule. "Most of the tapes in the vault

weren't listed by artist," Miller explains, "but rather by the name and year of the concert tour, things like 'J.A.T.P. Cologne 1953.' I worked for Granz for eight years, I left for two, I went back for seven, and I still kept discovering things that had never come out, by Bird, Tatum, Ellington, Basie, Ella, Coleman Hawkins: it's endless. I started 30 years ago, and I have yet to hear all of it.

"The first of the Coltrane tapes were the tracks that we issued in '77 on the Pablo album *Afro Blue Impressions*.¹ I started looking for all the Trane stuff, and found that a lot of it had come out in Europe, but was never released here. . . . I started finding versions of some of these tunes that we hadn't located earlier. I pulled out 40 or 50 reels and started bumping into Coltrane."

On those reels that did contain Coltrane, Eric Miller found a lot of the same tunes, over and over again. The band's book at the time was somewhat limited. It included a few songs left over from the 1950s, such as "Blue Train," the title track from Coltrane's 1957 Blue Note album; "Bye Bye Blackbird," from his days in Miles Davis's band; and the dedication to Davis, "Miles' Mode." Most of the remaining repertoire featured highlights from his more current discs—"Naima" and "Mr. P.C." (from *Giant Steps*), "Impressions" from the album *Live at the Village Vanguard*, "Lonnie's Lament" (*Crescent*), and "Afro Blue" (from *At Birdland*). And if you don't like at least some of those compositions, you won't like this compilation: in the nine concerts immortalized here, "Impressions" appears five times, as does "Mr. P.C.," with "Naima" close behind (four versions).

But none of them overtake "My Favorite Things," which shows up in six performances within the crucial years covered in these discs. They illustrate why the song became important to Coltrane, a touchstone for his fans, and a continuing barometer of the changes in his music.

a hit song from a hit show about Austrian folk-singers: that hardly seems the stuff of jazz legend, and even less the purview of John Coltrane. Yet "My Favorite Things," from the Broadway

¹ These tracks included the entire concert from Berlin 1963, along with the versions of "Spiritual" and "Impressions" recorded in Stockholm two weeks earlier.



Coltrane with Norman Granz

McCoy Tyner



blockbuster *The Sound of Music* (starring Mary Martin, before Julie Andrews took ownership of the role on the big screen), was tailor-made for Coltrane's newly revised approach to jazz improvisation. The song uses surprisingly few chords and has a simple, diatonic melody line written in the Dorian mode (which to most American ears would sound quite similar to a minor key). That same description would apply to several of Coltrane's own compositions, such as "Impressions" and "Cousin Mary"; and in fact, some of his fans who had not followed the Broadway season assumed that Coltrane himself had written "My Favorite Things." The construction of all these songs offered an exit sign from bop's shackling chord changes, and made an ideal setting for the open-ended solo explorations that would increasingly characterize his music.

Those Coltrane fans who did know the song's provenance expressed surprise (and sometimes dismay) at finding it played by their hero, but probably none of them were as surprised as Coltrane's own band. As pianist McCoy Tyner recalled in a 2000 interview: "When John first brought in 'My Favorite Things,' I thought, *The Sound of Music?* Mary Martin? He wants to do this?" Some fan had brought it in and said, 'John take a look at this'; I think it was at the Jazz Gallery [a New York nightspot where the Coltrane Quartet often worked at the time]. Before I knew it, we were playing it."

And playing it. And *playing* it: what began as a 14-minute extravaganza, on the 1960 album of the same name, had become a stage for continually lengthening solo turns barely a year later. Of the six versions of "My Favorite Things" contained herein, only one, from the Stockholm concert in '63, approximates the tune's original length; the rest of them clock in at times ranging from 19 to 25 minutes. Not that "My Favorite Things" stood out in this regard; other portions of the Coltrane hymnal also provided the text for similar testifying. "Mr. P.C.," the durable blues line dedicated to bassist Paul Chambers, debuted on *Giant Steps* at about 7 minutes; three years later in Berlin, it had grown to nearly four times that length. "Impressions" too inspired the occasional marathon; one performance of it on *Live Trane* extends to nearly a half-hour.

Still, by the time of these performances—and hard as it may be to believe—Coltrane had begun working to *shorten* his solo statements, or to at least make them more concise. As he explained to Ralph J. Gleason at the end of 1961, “I like to play long. . . [but] I ran across a funny thing. We went into the Apollo and the guy said, ‘You’re playin’ too long’. . . . [S]ometimes we get up and play a song and I play a solo maybe 30, or at least 20, minutes. Well, at the Apollo we ended up playing three songs in 20 minutes! I played all the highlights of the solos that I had been playing in hours, in that length of time. . . . It’s made me think, if I’m going to take an hour to say something I can say in 10 minutes, maybe I’d better say it in 10 minutes!. . . At the Apollo, ‘My Favorite Things,’ which runs 13 minutes [on the original recording], we played that about seven minutes long: cut it right in half.”

This editing process allowed Coltrane to clearly view the inner foundation of his own improvisations, and then to build ever larger structures upon that foundation, creating epic solos that, to a large extent, avoided self-indulgent meandering. Not always, of course: the open-ended form of these performances encouraged exploration, and sometimes exploration leads nowhere. In addition, as Coltrane explained to two French interviewers for an article published in 1963, he had become quite enamored with the music of Ravi Shankar, the master of raga, the Indian improvisational idiom in which a single piece can run for hours. But for the most part, Coltrane—a rigorous artist and experienced performer—still adhered to a plan. Speaking again of “My Favorite Things,” he told Gleason: “I’ve got several landmarks that I know I’m going to get to, so I try to play something in between that’s different, and keep hoping that I hear something different on it. But it usually goes almost the same way every night.”

These “landmarks” evolve over the many versions of the song presented here, but the format does not. As Coltrane explained during this period, “This piece is built, during several measures, on two chords, but we have prolonged the two chords in order to set the scene and make it last. In fact, we have extended the two chords for the whole piece.” In order to provide variety and

movement, though, each of the soloists—Trane, pianist Tyner, and, in the first three performances (from 1961), Eric Dolphy—divides his solo into two portions. The first traverses the minor-key modality that characterizes most of the song as written; the second switches to the parallel major key found at the end of the song (at the resolution of the lyric, the part where Maria sings, “When the dog bites, when the bee stings . . . ”).

In order to exploit the possibilities of those two-chord vamps mentioned by Coltrane, he chose not to spell out the length of each soloist’s statement; therefore, they needed a signal by which to tell the rhythm section to go from minor to major. Coltrane chose something both simple and meaningful—a return to the original melody. When you hear any of the soloists reiterate the theme of “My Favorite Things” in mid-improvisation, you know that the rest of the solo will unspool in the major key. This return to home base also serves to ground the solo by reminding both listener and soloist of the starting point. (Coltrane learned this trick from his late-Fifties tenure with pianist Thelonious Monk, who would often restate the theme during a horn solo if he felt it had strayed too far from the song’s original intent.)

If the open-ended structure of “My Favorite Things” hinted at Coltrane’s developing interest in Indian music, his choice of instrument practically announced it. His 1960 recording of the song introduced his adoption of the soprano saxophone—an instrument previously identified with traditional New Orleans jazz and Dixieland—and the tune remained a feature for the soprano exclusively. While Steve Lacy in the Fifties had shown the instrument might contribute to modern jazz, most listeners got their first dose of the soprano through Coltrane, who brought out some of the horn’s reedy nasality. For those who didn’t understand the influence of Indian music on his expanding improvisations, the “Eastern” sound of Trane’s soprano drove the point home.

Listening to the succession of “Favorite Things” offers a map to Coltrane’s music of this time. The first three versions in this set, from his 1961 tour, feature Dolphy, a musician highly respected by Coltrane, who had joined the quartet shortly before the trip. (Dolphy excelled on several

instruments—alto saxophone, bass clarinet, and flute—but played only the last of these on “My Favorite Things.” Apparently, the lighter sound of the flute was deemed the appropriate partner for Trane’s soprano.) Hugely talented, an innovator as well as a virtuoso, Dolphy nonetheless sounds out of place on “My Favorite Things,” and the fact that he never embraces the music’s implications illuminates the turning point in Coltrane’s approach.

For Coltrane, this song represented the first breakthrough in the liberation that would eventually find him on the outer rim of the avant-garde. It allowed him to escape the harmonic framework of the Fifties to envision the canvas in a whole new manner: instead of working his way across it, inch by inch, he could now treat the expanse as an entirety, and fill it up with broad strokes instead of painterly details. He devised specific building-blocks—sections of varying length that explored one small idea—and splashed them around, one “scenario” leading to the next, but not in a linear fashion. Instead of the barreling narratives he presented in the Fifties, his solos from the early Sixties seem more like skillfully arranged (but no less vibrant) collages.

But Dolphy, on these recordings, was new to this long-limbed, “modal” style, and to the possibilities it offered for extravagant reconception. Rather than stepping back to view the entire picture, he dives into the song almost as if it still had a strongly stamped chord scheme for him to navigate. His hypersensitive ear for harmony has him busily scurrying up and down the walls instead of surging down the middle; in effect, he invents chordal motion where none exists. Listening to Dolphy’s solo on the first version of “My Favorite Things,” recorded in Paris in 1961, makes me nervous. Coltrane, on the other hand, ignores traditional phrasing entirely. Listen to what would become a familiar trilling figure (at 13:30) and the descending sigh that follows at about 14:05—and to how he exploits these two “building-blocks” to launch the rest of his solo (leading to the striking figure that comes in at about 15:20).

Dolphy sounds more comfortable five days later, in Stockholm, starting to make adjustments that would allow him to better apply his own style to this new form. A good example comes at

Eric Dolphy





John Coltrane, McCoy Tyner, Jimmy Garrison, and Elvin Jones

about 8:50, when he steps outside the key to sketch a jaunty figure that sounds almost martial in its rapid rhythm; two days later, in Hamburg, he develops this figure into the little “call to arms” that bursts in, *a la* Charles Ives, at about 10:15. That figure could almost stand for Dolphy’s approach in general: his flute style, vibrant and even buoyant, ignores the song’s minor or major modality as he sees fit, employing something very close to the pantonal philosophy that Ornette Coleman had introduced to jazz a couple of years earlier.

Nonetheless, Coltrane’s entrance, a surging blast of welled-up power that flows straight at you, all but washes away the baroque details of Dolphy’s solo. Using headstrong passages made up of simple elements—repeated trills or recurring runs of notes—he creates a tremendous propulsion without escaping the incantatory stasis of the rhythm section. Whether by design or instinct, he provides an almost perfectly balanced solo: the minor-key portion runs about ten seconds shorter than the major-key section that follows. Dolphy had come far during his week with the band in Europe, but Coltrane’s Hamburg solo reveals the state of the art. (In contrast, Dolphy sounds much more at home on “Impressions,” which uses a recurrent if simple set of chord changes and thus approximates the harmonically defined songs he still preferred.)

The following year, Dolphy had gone back on his own; but even without his solos as a point of comparison, you can hear Coltrane’s progress. In Paris in 1962, the band truly “breathes” the piece; Coltrane takes a leisurely stroll through the theme, extending the vamp sections to a greater extent than before; in so doing, he acts to integrate his solo with the theme, blurring the line between them (foreshadowing the practice of his last years, when the actual themes practically disappeared altogether). The skipping figures he plays here are nothing new—they seem to grow right out of the waltz-time rhythm—but he soon settles into these drawn-out moans that say, “Relax. No rush. We’ll get to all that soul-searing intensity by and by.”

Not surprisingly, this is one of the longest renditions of “My Favorite Things” on disc: it runs almost 24 minutes *without* a second horn, thanks to the monumental piano excursion led by

McCoy Tyner, and to the textured soprano solo, which oscillates between quieter, more contemplative moments and the by now expectable high emotion. Further proof that Coltrane and company had gained full command of this piece comes a year later, in Stockholm (1963), when they take off at a blistering tempo (and perform the shortest version on this set). Traditionally, as jazz musicians become more familiar with a piece, they start pushing the tempo to keep it interesting and provide new challenges, and that has happened here—with a vengeance.

The tempo relaxes some in their Berlin concert eleven days later, but the intensity that Stockholm generated remains in place. And yet, both Tyner and Trane have reached a new plateau in their development of this simple song, employing a mature and admirable lyricism amidst the intensity. It’s the calm within the storm, and it hints at the mixture of serenity and anxious questing that would soon distinguish his masterpiece, *A Love Supreme*.

coltrane played europe often, as these recordings suggest, and found great support for his music there—for the most part. J.C. Thomas described the 1961 tour in his book *Chasin’ the Trane*:

It was their first overseas engagement, and Coltrane was so pleased with the band that he increased the musicians’ salaries to \$300 a week. . . . The European critics were more responsive than the U.S. critics to the music for what it was, an art form and not simply sounds to drink beer by, and they wrote some excellent reviews. . . . The audience appreciated the band sufficiently to set up a continuous hand-clapping, foot-stomping demonstration that made the musicians feel very much wanted.

France was the exception. . . . During an extended version of “Impressions” [heard here on Disc 1] . . . some clods threw pennies on the stage at the Olympia Theater. . . . As Elvin said afterward, “We can always use the money, and it could have been worse—they could have thrown wine bottles.”

The band found neither bottles nor pennies onstage in Paris the following year: listen to the applause that greets the opening notes of “My Favorite Things,” by now a crowd favorite as

well. The 1962 tour took the band from Paris through Scandinavia, down to Germany and Austria, through Switzerland and the Netherlands south to Italy; the 1963 trip, a shorter affair, again stopped at Stockholm and Oslo, Helsinki and Copenhagen, and several cities—including West Berlin—in Germany.

Referring back to his concert at the Olympia Theater in '61, J.C. Thomas wrote: "[T]here were more cheers than jeers, although Coltrane heard them all, telling an interviewer at the time: '... there were also boos at this concert; I heard them clearly. That doesn't make me happy, of course, but at least it shows that one is being discussed.'" Some four decades after that statement, we can reflect that on this matter, Coltrane needn't have worried: he has engendered more discussion, investigation, scholarship, and analysis than any other jazzman save Duke Ellington and Miles Davis. And the reason for that lies within these tracks, recorded in the ideal setting for his art—the concert performance—at the time he transformed his music (and by extension, the rest of jazz) forever.

Chicago writer and broadcaster NEIL TESSER is the author of *The PLAYBOY Guide to Jazz*.



