

Alice Coltrane - Lord Of Lords (1972)

Written by bluesever

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01. *Andromeda's Suffering*; 02. *Sri Rama Ohnedaruth*; 03. *Excerpts from The Firebird (I. Stravinsky)*; 04. *Lord of Lords*; 05. *Going Home*. Personnel: Alice Coltrane - Harp, Piano, Organ, Timpani, Percussion Charlie Haden – bass Anne Goodman, Edgar Lustgarten (2), Jan Kelly, Jerry Kessler, Jesse Ehrlich, Raphael Kramer, Ray Kelley – cello Ben Riley – drums , percussion David Schwartz, Leonard Selic, Marilyn Baker, Myra Kestenbaum, Rollice Dale, Samuel Boghosian - viola Bernard Kundell, Gerald Vinci, Gordon Marron, James Getzoff, Janice Gower, Leonard Malarsky, Lou Klass, Murray Adler, Nathan Kaproff, Ronald Folsom, Sidney Sharp, William Henderson (2) – violin

The two Impulse albums by Alice Coltrane presented on this single CD are actually the bookends of a trilogy, representing the artist's final recordings for the label. Universal Consciousness was recorded in three sessions in 1971 and released in 1972, and Lord of Lords, recorded in a single 1972 session, was released in 1973. The album between them is World Galaxy. Universal Consciousness utilized a small string section to augment its trio and quartet settings; by contrast, Lord of Lords emulated its immediate predecessor (World Galaxy) in employing a 16- piece string section behind the trio of Coltrane, bassist Charlie Haden, and drummer Ben Riley. The former album features bassist Jimmy Garrison on four of its six tracks, and drummer Jack DeJohnette on three. Rashied Ali assists on two others; Clifford Jarvis plays with DeJohnette on "Hare Krishna" and holds down the kit himself on "Sita Ram."

Coltrane plays organ and harp on both recordings, and adds her piano and percussion to the mix on Lord of Lords. Even with World Galaxy missing from this trilogy, the listener gets the picture. UC reveals the beginning of Coltrane's string work in earnest, and its ultimate fruition on LOL. An elaborate tension between improvisation and composition -- with sometimes jarring juxtapositions -- makes both albums sound ahead of their time even in the 21st century. The opening title track of UC, with its interplay between violins and Garrison's arco work, is texturally expanded by DeJohnette's triple-timed breaks, rolling fills, and accents, as Coltrane employs her organ to maximize the free play available within a given (Eastern) mode. "Oh Allah" brings

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jazz firmly back into the picture with its lilting melody and her pulsing, minimal chord changes amid the Wurlitzer's more futuristic tones. Here, the strings act as a bridge and an anchor to the jazz lineage. The traditional Hindu tunes, "Hare Krishna" and Sita Ram," are droning exercises in the sublime.

The latter album is knottier, with Coltrane, Riley, and Haden playing off one another intuitively on "Andromeda's Suffering" and its dramatic string section flares. The haunting and beautiful adaptation from Stravinsky ("Excerpts from the Firebird") reveals a startling union between Eastern and Western classical musics. The title track is a fiery yet restrained free piece with scripted sections for strings, while the closing "Going Home" brings the blues to the fore inside Hindustani drones and the dynamic harmonic palette of Western jazz. Taken as a whole, these two albums offer a thoroughly engaging and edifying listening experience, and the price can't be beat. ---Thom Jurek, Rovi

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