

John Coltrane – My Favourite Things Coltrane At Newport 1963–1965

Written by bluesever

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1. *Want To Talk About You* 2. *My Favourite Things (Previously unreleased)* 3. *Impressions*
4. *Introduction* 5. *One Down One Up* 6. *My Favourite Things* Musicians: * John Coltrane *
McCoy Tyner Piano * Jimmy Garrison Bass * Roy Haynes Drums * Elvin Jones Drums

Newport '63 has the quartet (Trane, McCoy Tyner, Jimmy Garrison) with Ray Haynes subbing in for Elvin Jones, who reportedly was in drug rehab for heroin addiction. The disc opens with a rather lame emcee requesting that the crowd "simmer down" for the Coltrane set, apparently because Jimmy Smith had fired up the crowd with his previous act. Anyway, Trane and Co. then open with "I Want to Talk About You," a fairly contained mid-tempo ballad with Trane on tenor. The sound is pretty good on this one, and Trane opens up near the end with an a cappella solo that builds up note upon note. The band then segues directly into MFT, and you can see why this version is considered definitive. Trane is still firmly rooted in his modal playing, and here he takes that framework to its limit, circling in and out of and around the melody. The liner notes make much of the fact that Roy Haynes has a much lighter touch than Elvin, and you have to agree that this gives Trane space and a certain freedom that comes through in his playing. That is also the benefit of a live concert -- subsequent versions of MFT on *Live at the Village Vanguard Again!* or *Live in Japan* take that space and freedom even further. Tyner solos in the middle where the sound could be better -- Garrison sounds overly full, whereas Tyner is a bit submerged, but soon Trane's soprano takes over again and what follows is simply some of his strongest soprano work ever recorded. Very advanced explorations, though still not as out there as in his final years. The final number from the '63 set is "Impressions," with Trane starting by briefly stating the theme on soprano. Tyner gets some solo space and is better heard than the rest of the CD, but then Garrison takes a solo and the sound of his already muddy bass really degrades -- while this new CD release adds some heretofore missing parts of his solo, the remainder is edited out (seamlessly, I might add) allowing Coltrane to return on tenor. After stating the theme again, he turns to solo explorations, hinting quite a bit at what was to come from latter day Trane. At around 11 minutes, Tyner and Garrison recede, and Trane and Haynes go at it with an incendiary sparring match that foreshadows Trane's later work with Rashied Ali on *Interstellar Space*. Again, the 23-minute number allows Trane space to really go

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ballistic. There's some sound issues at the 17 and 18 minute mark -- it sounds like Trane wanders off mike (maybe he took a stroll to keep McCoy company) -- but that is the flip side of live recording and therefore forgiveable. All in all, I think you'd have to say this is by far the best music by Trane up until 1964 (well, except for Vanguard '61, that is).

The remaining 3 were recorded at Newport '65 just after Ascension and are some of the very last recordings of Trane's group before Pharoah Sanders was added and the lineup began to change. Newport '65 had Monk, Carmen McRae, Diz, Art Blakey, and Archie Shepp preceding, leaving a foreshortened 30 minutes for Trane's group at the end. The first track is just the intro from a rather antediluvian emcee, referring to Elvin Jones, who would have been 38 at the time, as a "newcomer" and a "Detroit boy," and Trane as the "master of them all." The opener is then "One Up, One Down," (featured on the recently released Live at the Half Note dates), and this being 1965, differences are readily apparent. Elvin Jones is a powerhouse and Trane is escaping his modal tethers while the rest are still rooted in their pre-1965 style. Tyner is given generous solo space, but this time he really sounds like he's underwater, in contrast to Garrison whose bass now sounds much more crisp and clear than '63. Trane then rips into things on tenor, getting into his trademark upper register explorations that would typify his final style. Elvin's really bashing away, as if trying to dent the cymbals near the end before they transition to MFT. I'm partial to 1965 Trane, and have never tired of MFT, and this is good stuff, but somehow it seems like things don't quite get the chance to develop this time. The opening soprano salvo isn't that different from previous versions (aside from Garrison's growling vocal accompaniment), though after yet another somewhat anemic Tyner solo (I love Tyner, but I'm telling you, he just isn't well-served by the Newport soundstage), Trane does break into some madcap swirling trills and deconstructions, but all too soon, the playing comes to a close. The crowd erupts into a chant of "More! More!," but the emcee puts the kibosh on that since the venue had to shut down at midnight. Even though you've just heard 80 minutes of CD music, it's hard to not to feel the same as the crowd here, wishing there was more time to hear them play...

Kompilacja występów z 1963 i 1965 roku pozwala porównać ewolucję muzycznej myśli Coltrane'a na przestrzeni dwóch lat, a to zjawisko ważne i fascynujące w swoim przebiegu. Odnośnie tytułowych tematów, "faworytinki", począwszy od modalnego walca na płycie z 1960 roku, po godzinną, freejazzową odyseję na "Live in Japan", z reguły wiernie odzwierciedlały aktualny stan muzycznych poszukiwań Mistrza. Set z 1963 roku można potraktować jako uzupełnienie studyjnych sesji zawartych na płycie "Dear Old Stockholm". Kwartet z Royem Haynesem na perkusji brawurowo wykonuje "Impressions", ale ponad 10minutowy dialog saksofon/perkusja wymaga sporej cierpliwości; wprawdzie podczas krótkiego sola Garrisona Haynes cudownie szemrze talerzami, ale już na maratonie tenorowym Coltrane'a jego akompaniament jest nazbyt schematyczny. Gdzie ten okrężny beat, do którego

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przyzwyczajł Jones? Aczkolwiek jest to jakaś rytmiczna odmiana, niewątpliwie. Na festiwalu w Newport w 1965 roku Coltrane był już muzykiem, który przyłączył się do nowojorskiej awangardy; wcześniej powstało credo zbiorowej improwizacji - Ascension. Niedługo poszerzy stały skład zespołu o drugiego saksofonistę w osobie Pharaoha Sandersa, pod koniec roku odejdzie Elvin Jones... Ale póki co, z muzykami Wielkiego Kwartetu eksploatuje do końca tonalność. Musiał wyczerpać jedną formułę, aby przejść do drugiej. Improwizacje Coltrane'a to jedno, a fortepian McCoya Tynera to drugie, nie do pominięcia, zjawisko muzyczne. Rejestracje różnią się pod względem gry pianisty. Krytycy utrzymują, że w 1965 roku Tyner zagrał najlepsze partie dla Coltrane'a. Styl gry pianisty uległ zmianie pod wpływem dokonań Cecila Taylora. Słychać, jak uderza klasterami i potęguje dynamikę. I ta płynna pulsacja Jonesa! W "One Down, One Up" muzycy momentami prowokująco zawieszają akcję, jakby mieli odłożyć za chwilę instrumenty; jest w tym wykonaniu jakaś nonszalancja, dekadenski dreszcz. Zmieniała się percepcja muzyki kwartetu. Jest faktem, że w tamtym czasie twórczość radykalnych freemanów, jak "późny" Coltrane, Cecil Taylor czy Albert Ayler nie była powszechnie akceptowana, aczkolwiek znajdowali publiczność i krytyków-entuzjastów. Muzyczne przesłanie Coltrane'a wciąż jest aktualne, o czym na różny sposób nie pozwalają zapomnieć m.in. Billy Harper, Branford Marsalis, Peter Brotzmann, Charles Gayle czy David S. Ware. Coś z ducha Coltrane'a przeniknęło również do innych rodzajów muzyki; ikona rockowej gitary, Hendrix, twierdził, że usiłuje przełożyć ekspresję saksofonu Coltrane'a na gitarowe dźwięki. Podsumowując: dawka muzycznej adrenaliny gwarantowana. Płyta przynosi atmosferę festiwalowego występu, szacowni konferansjerzy witają i żegnają słuchaczy. Jakość nagrań od strony technicznej bez zarzutu; nie ma falowania głośności czy nagłych spadków dynamiki, separacja instrumentów wyrazista, jest przestrzeń i scena. Trzeba słuchać, bo Coltrane'a nigdy za wiele.

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