

Miles Davis & John Coltrane – The Best Of 1955 – 1961

Written by bluesever

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Miles Davis & John Coltrane – The Best Of (1955 – 1961)



* *Two Bass Hit* * *Dear Old Stockholm* * *Bye Bye Blackbird* * *Round Midnight* * *Straight, No Chaser* * *Milestones* * *So What* * *Blue In Green* * *Someday My Prince Will Come*
Musicians: Miles Davis - Trumpet, John Coltrane - Tenor Saxophone, Hank Mobley - Tenor Saxophone (9) Red Garland (1-6), Bill Evans (7-8), Wynton Kelly (9) - Piano, Paul Chambers - Bass, Philly Joe Jones (1-6), Jimmy Cobb (7-9) - Drums. Track 1-1955, 2-4 1956, 5&6 1958, 7&8 1959, 9-1961.

Perhaps one of the most significant contributions of Miles Davis to jazz was his introduction and establishment of a series of instrumentalists through his live performances and recordings. This disc obviously features the work of John Coltrane in this context.

Coltrane had two main periods with Davis, the first being from 1955-56. In 1957 Coltrane worked almost exclusively in the quartet led by the pianist and composer Thelonious Monk. His second tenure with the Davis band was from 1958-59, although he performed and recorded with Miles on a more casual basis until 1961.

Tracks 1-4 are interesting as they chart Coltrane's development from a neo-bopper to his arrival at what critic Ira Gitler referred to as his "sheets of sound" style. This was basically a method of cramming many substitute chord changes and derived scale patterns into his improvisations and playing them at great speed with astonishing clarity and dexterity. This is the style that has, in one way or another, influenced the vast majority of subsequent jazz tenor players and indeed, to some degree, most performers on whatever their instrument. The later tracks on this disc illustrate this method of playing at its full fruition—a newcomer to the music might well consider following this recording by listening to Coltrane's "Giant Steps". (Recorded in 1959)

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Miles Davis was certainly at one of the peaks of his career through the years of these performances. His playing, both muted and open, is a model of economy. His style here relies far more on the careful and unusual placement of notes and on various tonal devices such as smearing and bending the pitch.

An extra bonus on many of the tracks is the presence of Cannonball Adderley on alto saxophone. He serves as an antidote to the intensity of Coltrane and to the dark broodings of Davis. His style is full of "bluesy" inflexions whilst still managing to convey the impression of joyous abandon and enthusiasm. I have always felt that Adderley was easily the equal of his contemporaries on these recordings. His solo on "Milestones" must rank highly on my list of all-time favourite moments in recorded jazz.

Another favourite player, Hank Mobley, is featured on "Someday My Prince Will Come". This is not Mobley at his most assured, but his performance is still well worth a listen. Mobley can be heard, with Coltrane, to far better advantage on his own disc "Tenor Conclave". (This recording also includes Al Cohn and Zoot Sims, but I feel Mobley outplays the others in terms of coherency of thought and execution!)

To anyone not over familiar with Miles Davis and John Coltrane this disc provides a fascinating introduction. The rhythm sections are superb and there some excellent piano solos throughout-particularly from the sadly almost forgotten Red Garland.

The remastering is first-rate and the presentation, complete with new liner notes and rare photographs, is excellent. ---Dick Stafford, musicweb-international.com

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