Ornette Coleman – At The ‘Golden Circle’ in Stockholm (2001)

CD1 *01. Announcement 02. Faces And Places 03. European Echoes 04. Dee Dee 05. Dawn 06. Faces And Places (Alternate Take) 07. European Echoes (Alternate Take) 08. Doughnuts* CD2 *1. Snowflakes And Sunshine 2. Morning Song 3. The Riddle 4. Antiques 5. Morning Song (Alternate Take) 6. The Riddle (Alternate Take) 7. Antiques (Alternate Take)* Personnel: Ornette Coleman (alt sax, violín, trumpet) David Izenzon (double-bass) Charles Moffett (drums)

Ornette Coleman's 1965 trio with bassist David Izenzon and drummer Charles Moffett is easily the most underrated of all his bands. Coming off the light of the famed quartet in which Don Cherry, Eddie Blackwell, and Charlie Haden shone, anything might have looked a bit dimmer, it's true. But this band certainly had no apologies to make. Coleman was deep into creating a new approach to melody, since Haden and Cherry had honed his harmonic sensibilities. Izenzon proved to be the right bassist for Coleman to realize his ambitions. A stunning arco as well as pizzicato player (check his solo in "Dawn") Izenzon offered Coleman the perfect foil. No matter where Coleman's soloing moved the band, Izenzon was there at exactly the same time with an uncanny sense of counterpoint, and he often changed the harmonic mode by force. The first of these two volumes from December 3 shows Coleman in a playful, mischievous frame of mind, toying with the trio ads well as the audience on "Faces and Places" by inserting standard bop phrases and song quotes into the heart of his free soloing. On "Dee Dee," Coleman moves along to rhythmic counterpoint by Moffett, pushing Izenzon into the unlikely role of beat-keeper -- not simple for such an amazing improviser. But it's on the closer, "Dawn," that the band gels as one inseparable, ethereal unit, cascading through scalar invention and chromatic interplay as if it were second nature.

The second night of Ornette Coleman's two-week stand in Sweden was even fierier than the first, if the recorded documents are to be believed. For starters, December 4 was the night that Coleman brought out the violin and the trumpet on the first tune; "Snowflakes and Sunshine" must have taken club-goers by surprise. Those first notes skitter across the neck as the bow

goes "scree" in the middle registers and bassist David Izenzon moves to create an atonal bed of rock for Coleman, while Charles Moffett plays in the triple time to a cipher of a time signature. And just as the violin starts to create a tension that is difficult for the other two members of his trio to endure musically, Coleman switches to trumpet and hauls it back inside, or at least to the ledge's edge before returning to the violin a few minutes later. The rhythm sect tries to rein him in, but he careens off Izenzon's arco playing and into an entirely new harmonic language. For the rest of the gig, it's back to the alto, with Coleman even going as far as to goof on Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue" on the opening bars of "Morning Song" before playing a ballad every bit as tender and angularly beautiful as one of his. "Riddles" is one of Coleman's Eastern screamers, played modally with the same kind of breathy acrobatics Coltrane used on the music that made it onto the posthumous Sunship. There are several drone modes created by Izenzon, with off-measure rhythmic figures cut by Moffett. Coleman plays the alto as one would a Tibetan oboe or a thighbone trumpet, reaching deep into the lower register to touch the drone and then sail off into scalar abandon. There is more than enough fire, but the astonishing thing is the color and texture Coleman gets from the horn. The set closes with a lovely, knotty piece called "Antiques," in which Izenzon and Coleman match modes for an interesting meeting of the minds in a dramatic wash of color and mood. This is the stronger of the two evenings, but they are both fine records by an under-recognized band in Coleman's development. ---Thom Jurek, Rovi

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