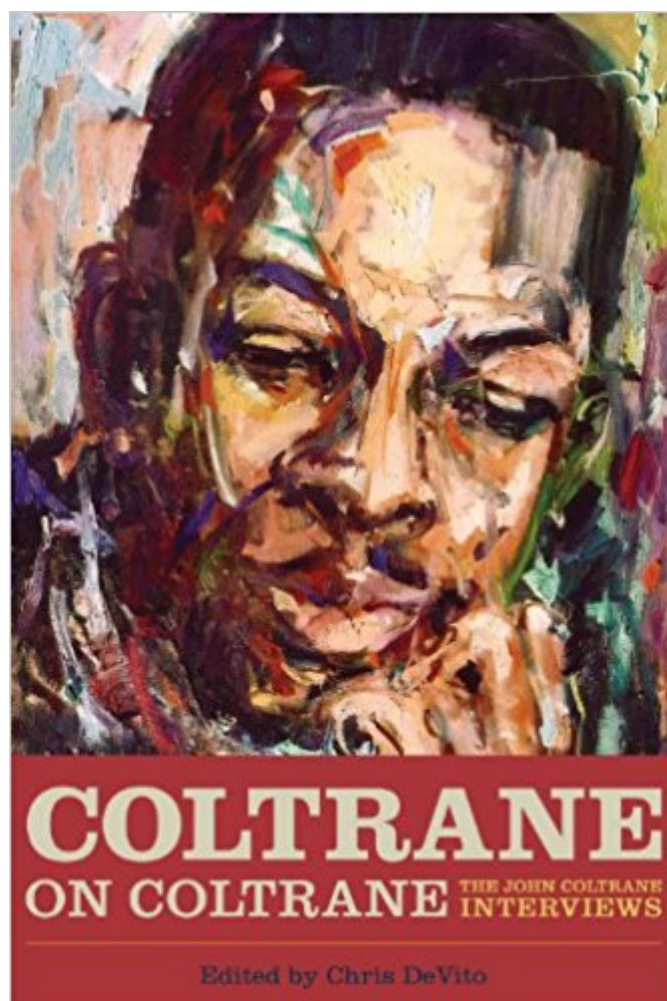


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Coltrane On Coltrane: The John Coltrane Interviews (Musicians In Their Own Words)



Synopsis

Named one of the best jazz books of 2010 by Jazz Times's reader poll, John Coltrane created a new sound, a music that had nothing to do with anyone except himself. The path he chose was difficult and risky. Nevertheless, he persisted, and his recordings now stand among the greatest of all jazz achievements. And his life, thoughts, and words have been just as inspiring as his music. This book collects those words for the first time. Coltrane was a gracious and conscientious interviewee. His responses were thoughtful and measured; he rarely said anything negative about others (though he could be highly self-critical). He freely gave credit to those who influenced and inspired him. Interviewer after interviewer noted how different Coltrane seemed from his music--this quiet man whose music was so volcanic. Coltrane on Coltrane includes every known Coltrane interview, many in new transcriptions, and several previously unpublished; articles, reminiscences, and liner notes that rely on interviews; and some of Coltrane's personal writings and correspondence. John Coltrane never wrote an autobiography. This book is as close to one as possible.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"A fascinating and important compendium of the jazz icon's own words. . . . Through these gripping and revealing interviews, Coltrane comes alive. . . . Though many solid books have been written about Coltrane, this compilation of source materials provides an intimate view of the man and his music. Certainly one of the best music books of the year." —Library

Journalist. "The type of book that should be compiled on every great musician. It is an inspired concept that is perfectly done." • Los Angeles Jazz Scene "From start to finish, it's nothing short of engrossing." • Smooth magazine "There's plenty for a serious jazz fan to absorb from this interesting collection. . . . Coltrane's own words about his music and life deserve our attention." • JazzTimes.com

Chris DeVito is a freelance writer, a copy editor, and the lead author of *The John Coltrane Reference*, which was named the BBC's jazz book of the year in 2008. He lives in Urbana, Illinois.

5 page Preface, 1 page Prelude (which is a very important statement), 369 pages of interviews (including 33 pages of Appendices with two interviews with a boyhood friend and music teacher of Coltrane's), 5 pages of Credits, and a 15 page index. There's a few b&w photographs throughout the book. The author, Chris DeVito, is the lead author of *THE JOHN COLTRANE REFERENCE*, which was the BBC jazz book of the year in 2008. This wonderful book, as the title suggests, contains interviews with John Coltrane, one of the most important musician/composers in, not only jazz, but music itself. And not just a few interviews, or several cherry-picked articles-but virtually every known interview Coltrane gave. Some are published as they originally appeared, some are new transcriptions, and importantly, some are previously unpublished. The one negative point is the 1961 interview by Ralph J. Gleason. Due to other factors this piece had to be heavily edited, which is a shame. Gleason's knowledge of jazz and his probing questions make for a great interview, especially with someone as thoughtful in his answers as Coltrane. Beginning in 1952, after a concert, Coltrane and his drummer, Specs Wright, sat down for the first interview that was in conjunction with a two page report on the concert, in *THE BALTIMORE AFRO-AMERICAN* paper. The interviews conclude in 1966, with a Nat Hentoff interview for the liner notes for the album "Kulu Se Mama", released in 1967. Also included is a section entitled "Quotable Coltrane", which includes short pieces by/about Coltrane from/to various musicians (Thelonious Monk, Sunny Murray) and others (Ralph J. Gleason, Nat Hentoff, LeRoi Jenkins, and others), and 'Trane's "three wishes" from the great jazz book "Three Wishes: An Intimate Look at Jazz Greats". The interviews themselves, obviously by different writers, are of sometimes varying quality. However, even the slightly lesser interviews have useful, interesting information, that help bring a larger picture of Coltrane into sharper focus. Taken as a whole, these articles are about as close to something approaching a Coltrane autobiography that we'll ever see. In these interviews (some lengthy) Coltrane expounds on his approach to music, and his unending quest to find his own voice through music. His thoughtful

answers to questions are full of insight into both his music and the inner workings of a man known for his off-stage gentleness-which, at times, could be the extreme opposite of his music. With the inclusion of a "Blindfold Test" conducted by Leonard Feather, correspondence to both fans (including an inquiry about job opportunities in Ghana), journalists, and liner notes from several albums, this is a full, rich picture of Coltrane. For anyone who has been captivated by the music-the sound, the combination of both gentleness and fury found in his playing-this is a book worth having in your library. Having these interviews in one volume, where the impact of Coltrane's thoughts and ideas is much greater than a single interview, is well worthwhile. No matter if you've read several interviews, or one or two, the total weight of Coltrane's responses to probing questions are brought together in an easy to read, chronological order. His influences are still being felt today-find out why in this book.

Coltrane on Coltrane consists of more than 50 interviews and articles. this is not a novel in the sense of a good guy, bad guy unless one thinks of drugs as the bad guy. fortunately, this collection is longer on music than drugs. John Coltrane was one of the most important figures in african american music. he experienced extreme and ignorant criticism from "jazz" writers. as a musician once said, that's what their job is to criticize and i could add categorize. some of these critics and biographers take an attitude superior to the artist or ego trip one might say. most accept that music is a language with notes, chords, melodies and rhythm like language has letters, words, sentences and phrases. african american speech has rhythm, and this can be heard most distinctly in the west african languages. although the difference between speech patterns among different american groups has become less distinct, it was often easy to distinguish african american from euroamerican or even asian american speech. this is reflected in the voices of the music; this idea is mostly rejected by the critics who are outsiders even though they might know the language, it's still babble or sheets of sound. supposedly, coined by ernest hemingway, sheets of sound is a reflection of not understanding the language. even musicians can't always connect, because of bias against new ideas or the threat of the way they are playing becoming obsolete. as saxophonist bill wiggins said, "maybe you can't hear it." this is the dilemma of the critic, he might not hear it because of ignorance or preconceived ideas. we all know that people can't repeat what they were told, so in a sense they didn't really hear it. it's interesting that the loss of individuality so highly sought by the ancestors has been lost parallel to the loss of characteristic speech patterns. the value of this book is that mr coltrane describes what he is doing and reveals that he is not speaking in tongues. nevertheless, the emotional impact is the same for mr coltrane was schooled in the tradition as well as the theory of music. this is why

mr coltrane speaks of the central role of the spirit. and like most aframerican music, it cannot be transcribed in the western system. mr coltrane or trane was a very humble musician as noted by harold mabern and others. he was also very open and defended nontraditional musicians like albert ayler, ornette coleman and eric dolphy. i recommend the book whole heartedly. it's long, but not for lovers of mr coltrane.

Boy, this is a great read! I love Mr. Coltrane's music--all of it! And this book has so many great little anecdotes. Mr. DeVito's little editorial corrections to the casual slips of memory Mr. Coltrane made in correspondence and interviews are interesting, too. But it is the character of Mr. Coltrane that emerges in these pages that is most interesting. He is humble, somewhat shy and gracious. And so fiercely dedicated to his craft. I was especially interested to see a casual reference to an after-hours session in some woman's attic Mr. Coltrane attended (early in his career) where Messrs. Art Tatum & Slam Stewart, and Oscar Peterson & Ray Brown were all playing. Considering the amazing finger-busting playing that probably took place there, I wonder how all of that affected his own attitude toward developing a technique that led to the "sheets of sound" identity that later occurred? Also, the way an interviewer prepares to interview someone like him is also revealed. That in itself is interesting...It is a tough one to put down, and also one you can open anywhere and start reading and find something great!

A little dry and meandering at times, but if you're a fan, you're a fan. If you would snap up a CD of alternate takes of Trane classics, then this book is for you. Transcriptions of interviews both foreign and domestic that give insight into the thoughts and spirit of Trane; not nuts and bolts of his music but, rather, an effort to give context to the the times and social period in which he created.

Yes, he would be the one to speak with about himself!

fantastic

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