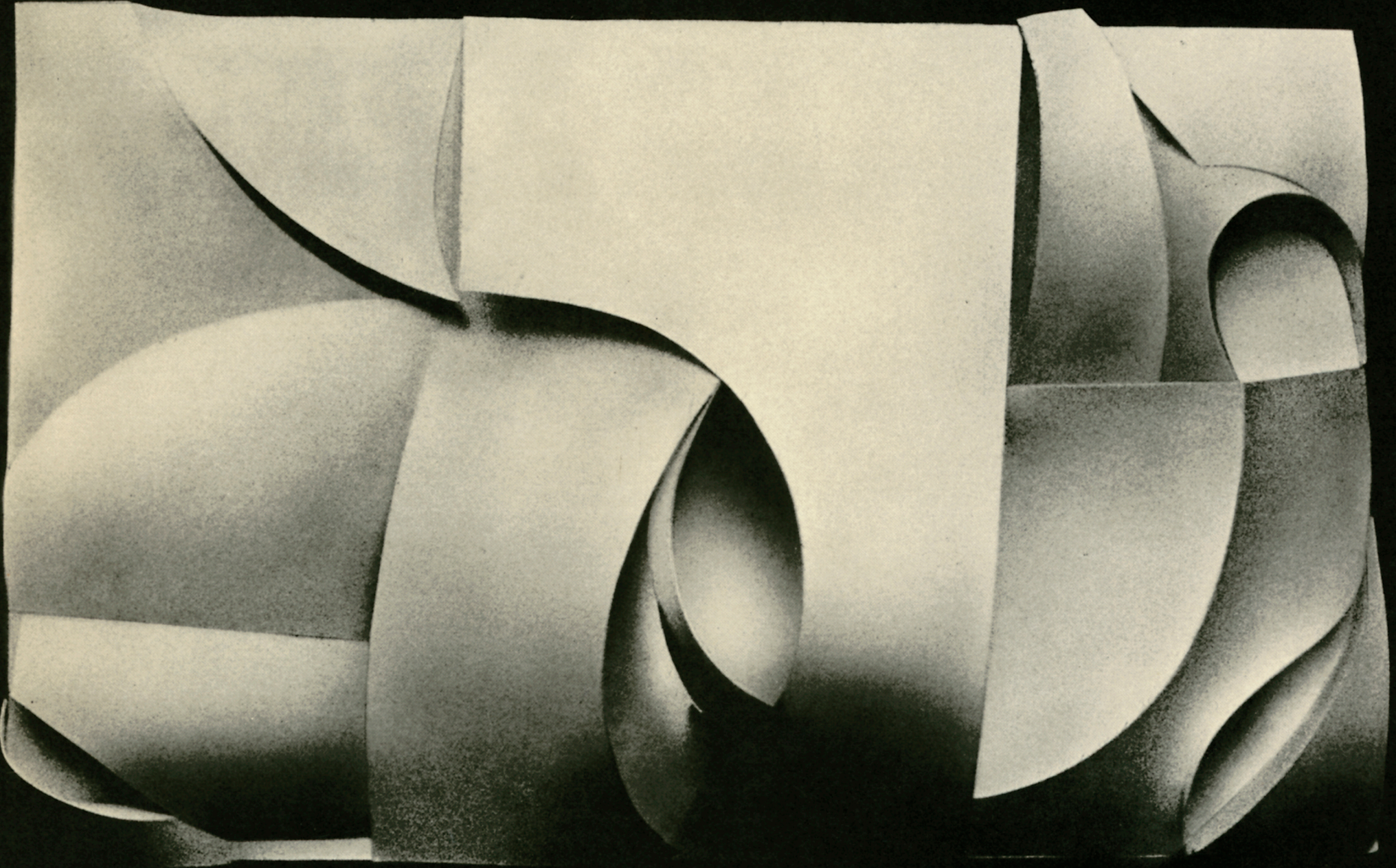


KENNY BURRELL & JOHN COLTRANE



NJ 8276



DESIGN: DON SCHLITEN SCULPTURE: STYLIANOS GIAMAKOS

KENNY BURRELL & JOHN COLTRANE

KENNY BURRELL guitar JOHN COLTRANE tenor saxophone
TOMMY FLANAGAN piano PAUL CHAMBERS bass JIMMY COBB drums

- 1 FREIGHT TRANE 7:19**
- 2 I NEVER KNEW 7:04**
- 3 LYRESTO 5:41**
- 4 WHY WAS I BORN? 3:12**
- 5 BIG PAUL 14:04**

FROM 1955, the year he came to prominence with Miles Davis's first "great quintet," the legendary tenor saxophonist John Coltrane (1926-1967) recorded with only one guitar player: the superbly versatile Kenny Burrell (b. 1931). In March 1958, the pair—joined by the crack rhythm section of pianist (and Burrell's fellow Detroit) Tommy Flanagan, bassist Paul Chambers, and drummer Jimmy Cobb (the latter two Coltrane's colleagues at the time with the Miles Davis sextet)—got together to cut the five tunes herein for New Jazz. The result is part hard-bop, part blowing session, and part tuneful bebop, with one very special intimate dialogue between tenor and guitar on "Why Was I Born?," the only duo recording Coltrane ever essayed with a chordal instrument. Throughout Kenny Burrell & John Coltrane, the parts add up to a thoroughly absorbing whole.

I remember the sessions well, I remember how the musicians wanted to sound, and I remember their reactions to the playbacks. Today, I feel strongly that I am their messenger. —RUDY VAN GELDER

Recorded by RUDY VAN GELDER at Van Gelder Studio, Hackensack, NJ; March 7, 1958.

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During his final month with Miles Davis's group, John Coltrane participated in a number of recording sessions for Prestige independently of Davis (though frequently with one or more members of Davis's rhythm section) in both leader and sideman roles. Many of the resultant albums, of which this is one, have already been released—still more are to follow.

Coltrane no longer plays in quite the same way that he did in 1958, the year this recording was made (in that year he was playing differently than he had in 1956), and there are many who believe that this was his most creative period. Perhaps it was, but growth is perpetual new beginnings and for Coltrane to have remained where he was would have meant for him not only to deny a possibility of greater expression in his music (a possibility I think he has realized) but to reduce the vitality of what he was already into, as well.

The Davis unit (the original Quintet with Red Garland, Paul Chambers, and Philly Joe Jones comprising the rhythm section) was perhaps the single most important group in jazz of the late Fifties and Davis himself was the single most important instrumentalist of that decade. Coltrane's growth was immeasurably nourished and accelerated by Davis's influence and the tenor saxophonist quickly became the leading force on his instrument.

But in this record, as in his others of the time, including those with Davis, one can hear Coltrane in the process of breaking away from what were coming to be restrictions within the Davis context and frame of reference. What Coltrane had learned from his stint with Thelonious Monk was not an insignificant factor. If an artist is going to say something original he must necessarily

find a new form with which to say it. This album and other documents of Coltrane's earlier work are insights into the stages of development toward that end, and the new beginnings to follow it, of a major jazz artist.

There used to be a great deal of talk about Coltrane's lack of "discipline" in recordings such as this one outside the Davis group. What was meant by that criticism was that Coltrane seemed to be going in any number of directions at once, that his solos were often without at least an accessible sense of order, and that his ideas were frequently unresolved. This is not without truth, but it is also beside the point, certainly beside the most important point anyway, for if Coltrane had taken heed of such criticism he might never have discovered the true size and breadth of his talent. At any rate, and as this album will testify, he gave us music of great beauty, emotional impact, and urgency during that period. Here, on the opener "Freight Trane," his solo begins with what has been called the "shock effect" open cry that is almost a Coltrane trademark, and that "cry" and (one keeps returning to the term) the sense of *urgency* that is one of the unique qualities of his sound are integral facets of the immediacy and charge of all his solos on this record.

Kenny Burrell, whose date this was, plays, I think, exceptionally well with Coltrane and would seem to have been extended by him. One might go directly to the brief rendition of "Why Was I Born?," on which only Burrell and Coltrane participate, to hear one very lovely result of their juxtaposition. Though he has been challenged by Wes Montgomery and, more recently, by Grant Green, Burrell remains the leading guitarist of neo-Bop persuasion and the

standard-bearer of the Charlie Christian tradition. He plays, on this recording, with both fire and eloquence and his solos on "Freight Trane," "Big Paul," and "I Never Knew" are among his best on records. "Lyresto," incidentally, which provides for what is probably Coltrane's best solo here, is Burrell's line.

Much of the credit for the success of this session can be claimed by the frequently brilliant rhythm section. Tommy Flanagan, whose accomplishment as a "comper" has come to overshadow his abilities as a soloist, delivers imaginatively potent work in the latter as well as the former role and has several especially good solos on "Freight Trane" and the extended introduction to "Big Paul." Paul Chambers, who has worked with Miles Davis since the inception of the original Quintet, was a primary component of that group's extraordinary stature. His solos on "Freight Trane," "I Never Knew," "Lyresto" (bowed), and "Big Paul" are exemplary demonstrations of his achievement. Jimmy Cobb, also from the Davis rhythm section, is the steady time-keeper.

Burrell, the rhythm section, and the "new" Coltrane would probably not meet on such equitable terms were they to record today. But that has nothing to do with what they were able to accomplish together in this album. And that was the creation of a music of high order and occasional revelation.

—ROBERT LEVIN
original liner notes

1 FREIGHT TRANE

(Tommy Flanagan) Prestige
Music-BMI 7:19

2 I NEVER KNEW

(Fiorito-Kahn) Bourne Co./
Gilbert Keyes Music-ASCAP 7:04

3 LYRESTO

(Kenny Burrell) Elliot Music Co.-ASCAP 5:41

4 WHY WAS I BORN?

(Kern-Hammerstein) Universal-
Polygram Int'l Publ.-ASCAP 3:12

5 BIG PAUL

(Flanagan) Prestige-BMI 14:04

KENNY BURRELL guitar

JOHN COLTRANE tenor saxophone

TOMMY FLANAGAN piano

PAUL CHAMBERS bass

JIMMY COBB drums

Recorded by RUDY VAN GELDER at
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Supervision by BOB WEINSTOCK

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NEW JAZZ

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