

**WEATHER**  
Mostly sunny,  
near 65.  
Tomorrow:  
Partly cloudy,  
60s.  
  
SUNRISE: 4:31 A.M.  
SUNSET: 8:22 P.M.  
SUNRISE  
TOMORROW  
4:31 A.M.

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10 Cents

**BLUE  
FINAL**



The John Coltrane Quartet at the Rudy van Gelder Studio

## Coltrane still pushing the envelope!

by Hawk Johnson for NYB

This week saw the end of the two-week residency of John Coltrane (37) and his quartet at Birdland, 1678 Broadway at 52. Street. At the end of the residency Mr. Coltrane took time for a studio session at the van Gelder Studios with the quartet. The session was for the record label Impulse!, that Mr. Coltrane has been associated with for the last two years.



Elvin Jones and John Coltrane

I had the pleasure of being invited by Mr. Coltrane to join on the trip to Englewood Cliffs, NJ, and watch the proceedings of the session. This is my report.

During the two weeks prior to Wednesday, March 6, the John Coltrane Quartet has played every day, sans Mondays, at Birdland to a decent crowd every night.

The last week they played opposite Art Blakey. Last Friday, March 1, 'Trane', as he is affectionately called among friends and followers, and his fellow musicians,

McCoy Tyner, Jimmy Garrison and Elvin Jones made a live radio broadcast from Birdland. The shows were broadcast immediately after midnight the same night, as part of the *Symphony Sid Show* at the AM station of WADO (1280 kHz), with the popular radio host 'Symphony' Sid Torin as MC.

Last Friday, the trumpeter Miles Davis was in the audience – possibly to listen to his former collaborator. Those present that night, and those who heard the broadcast, heard Mr. Sid Torin's announcement. The announcement, following the quartet's performance of Coltrane's tribute to his former collaborator, the bassist Paul Chambers, «Mr. PC», was;

*...Say welcome to a very good friend of ours - Trane's ex-boss - Miles Davis, ladies and gentlemen! There's Miles—Miles, standing at the bar. Miles Davis!*

Following this, we heard John Coltrane and Elvin Jones play the first few bars of «Bye, Bye Blackbird» as a greeting to Mr. Davis.

Tonight, the Quartet will finalize their residency at Birdland, again playing opposite Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers. In Mr. Blakey's band, we have had the pleasure this week of hearing the tenor saxophonist that everyone has talked about over the last two years.

Having listened to the tenor player over several nights, we can confidently say

that the still not 30 years old Wayne Shorter is destined for great things in the future.

It seems obvious that this young musical director of Mr. Blakey's Jazz Messengers will not be part of the so-called Blakey Academy of Hard Bop for much longer. One of the big names in modern jazz will probably pick him up very soon. Maybe that was the real reason for Miles Davis' presence Friday night?

On the other hand, maybe Mr. Shorter will strike out on his own? It is less than a year since he released his third solo album on the Vee-Jay label, «Wayning Moments». With him was fellow alumnus of Mr. Blakey's college, Freddie Hubbard on trumpet, and Jymie Merritt on bass. This recording was one of the last things Mr. Merritt did, before he retired due to illness at the end of last year.

Two days ago, the pianist in Mr. Coltrane's band, McCoy Tyner, was in the studio of Rudy van Gelder in Englewood Cliffs, NJ, with his own trio. The session of Monday, March 4 will, according to Mr. Tyner, result in a record that will be released on Impulse! later this year. McCoy Tyner suggested a preliminary title for the record – «Days of Blues and Ballads» for his third album on the Impulse! label.

Today, Mr. Tyner is back in the same beautiful studio as part of the John Coltrane Quartet. The Impulse! producer

Bob Thiele has prepared everything for yet another studio session with the John Coltrane Quartet today, and engineer and studio owner Rudy van Gelder is in the booth.

It is not clear what Mr. Coltrane wants to achieve this afternoon, and it is far from evident that this will generate a new record.

Last time the John Coltrane Quartet visited the church-like studio of Mr. van Gelder was November 13 last year. That date produced the album «Ballads», released to great ovations in January this year. The record «Duke Ellington and John Coltrane», recorded at the same place a couple of months earlier, saw release simultaneously.



*John Coltrane*

Bob Thiele tells us that no plans have been made concerning the content of today's session. But he goes on to tell us enthusiastically that another studio session with the John Coltrane Quartet has been scheduled for tomorrow, Thursday, March 7.

Tomorrow's session was scheduled a long time ago. The session will be with the quartet, together with the baritone vocalist Johnny Hartman. Mr. Thiele explains that there are definite plans for an album from this session. According to Mr. Thiele that album will be released this summer.

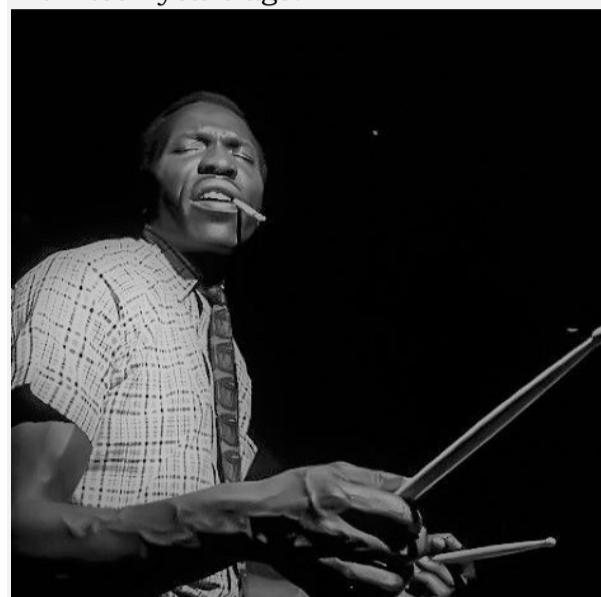
This will be the first time John Coltrane makes a record with a vocalist, at least since he came to national prominence in New York almost eight years ago.

We have over the last couple of years heard how Mr. Coltrane turned one of the popular tunes from the 1959 Broadway success «Sound of Music» – «My Favorite Things» – upside down and inside out. «My Favorite Things» has been a major vehicle for the development of Mr. Coltrane's music over these last few years.

In the studio today, we heard Mr. Coltrane try out another popular tune from

the musical scene. This time it was «The Vilja Song» from Franz Lehár's operetta «The Merry Widow». Is this going to be the new «My Favorite Things», the new vehicle for propelling Mr. Coltrane's improvisations and music into the future?

Mr. Coltrane was evidently in an experimental mood this afternoon. He recorded a version –with instructions for Mr. Tyner to lay out completely – of Eden Ahbez' «Nature Boy», the song that Nat King Cole made into a huge commercial hit fifteen years ago.



*Elvin Jones*

The song is not unknown in the repertoire of modern jazz. Trumpeter Miles Davis recorded it with bassist Charles Mingus on the Debut Records album «Blue Moods» already in 1955.

It was according to this observer's view an exciting, but somewhat unfulfilled version we heard in the studio. The tune showed, however, the power that lies in the relation between the drums of Elvin Jones and Mr. Coltrane's saxophone playing.

It was interesting to hear that this commercial hit that has been recorded in so many sweet, sugar-laden versions, is able to carry a modern avant-garde approach to improvisation. We do not exclude the possibility that this may, in the future, be a mainstay in the repertoire of the John Coltrane Quartet.

The band made four takes of a tune we have heard the John Coltrane Quartet and Quintet (with Eric Dolphy) play several times during the last years.

As far as I know, this tune has not been given any name yet, even though many today designate it as «So What» -- referring to the famous Miles Davis classic from the 1959 album «Kind of Blue».

Indeed, Mr. Coltrane's tune has some obvious structural similarities to Mr. Davis' 1959 tune. They are both scale-based modal pieces with four sections in the form of AABA, each part being eight bars. The A-parts are over a D Dorian scale. This is a scale that starts on the white

key of D on a piano and steps up, playing all the white keys until you reach the D an octave over the first one. The B parts of both tunes are over a scale a half-step up, an Eb Dorian scale.

Does that necessarily imply they are the same? Melodically the themes of «So What» and Mr. Coltrane's tune are very different. Demanding equality would suggest that every other contrafact of «I Got Rhythm» is nothing but just another variant interpretation of the original.

However, as Mr. Coltrane is rumoured to have presented the tune himself as «So What», perhaps we may have to accept this name?

This is, I believe, the first time the tune was recorded in studio, even though Mr. Coltrane and his quartet has played it several times during concerts.

Perhaps most memorable of these were the many versions we heard of it, during Mr. Coltrane's now legendary residency at Village Vanguard in November 1961, a year and a half ago.



*John Coltrane*

In addition, we heard four completely new compositions by Coltrane. Among these were two blues compositions. On two of the four originals Mr. Coltrane played the soprano saxophone to great effect. If this material ever is released, the listeners to and fans of Mr. Coltrane's music have something to look forward to.

Those that, following the release of «Ballads» and «Duke Ellington & John Coltrane», feared that Mr. Coltrane now was shying away from avant-garde jazz and turning towards a more mainstream pop-based repertoire, may safely relax.

Go to a concert with the John Coltrane Quartet, hear Mr. Coltrane in other constellations, listen to this record when it's out, and relax and enjoy:

Coltrane is still pushing the envelope!