

John and Alice Coltrane - Cosmic Music (1966)

Written by bluesever

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1. *Manifestation* 2. *Reverend King* 3. *Lord Help Me* 4. *Sun* Alice Coltrane - Piano John Coltrane - Clarinet (Bass), Sax (Tenor) Rashied Ali - Drums Ray Appleton - Percussion Jimmy Garrison - Bass Ben Riley - Drums Pharoah Sanders - Flute, Piccolo, Sax (Tenor)

Issued in 1968, more than a year after John Coltrane's death, *Cosmic Music* is co-credited to John and Alice Coltrane. Trane appears on only two of the four tracks here (they are also the longest): "Manifestation" and "Dr. King." They were both cut in February of 1966 at Coast Recorders in San Francisco, with the great saxophonist fronting his final quintet with Alice, Pharoah Sanders, Jimmy Garrison, Rashied Ali, and Ray Appleton adding percussion. "Manifestation" is also the first recorded instance of Sanders playing the piccolo in addition to his tenor saxophone; he takes an extended solo on the instrument. "Dr. King" was written to honor the civil rights leader during his lifetime. King's assassination occurred less than a year after the saxophonist's death. While it begins with a sketchy modal theme, the track soon moves toward the far side of the quintet's free expression. The mix on both these tracks is a bit problematic. Much like *Om*, which was also released in 1968, the sound on these two cuts is somewhat muddy, hinting that these were idea sketches and not finished works. The piano and bass are all but hidden except during solos, and Ali's fiery drumming is often out of balance -- either buried or too bright. By contrast, the other two tracks, "Lord, Help Me to Be" and "The Sun," offer exceptional fidelity. They are essentially Alice's first two recorded pieces for Impulse after signing a solo contract with the label. She is accompanied by Sanders, Garrison, and drummer Ben Riley. These are both fine pieces, with Alice's bluesy modal chord constructions at the fore, recorded in their home studio. The final track, while only a touch over four minutes, is a fine vehicle for Alice's signature pianism. While this record holds up quite well -- despite the problems of sound mentioned above -- it is still a minor Impulse album compared to some of the saxophonist's master works. --Thom Jurek, Rovi

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