

Ornette Coleman Quartet - Live In Paris (1971)

Written by bluesever

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Ornette Coleman Quartet - Live In Paris (1971)



1. *Street Woman* (15:01) 2. *Summer-Thang* (11:10) 3. *Silhouette* (13:04) 4. *Rock The Clock* (14:36) Ornette Coleman - alto sax, trumpet, violin Dewey Redman - tenor sax & musette Charlie Haden - bass Ed Blackwell - drums

Ahhh, glorious, simply glorious. Coleman's turn of the '70s, pre-Prime Time quartet with Dewey Redman, Charlie Haden, and Ed Blackwell always felt somewhat overshadowed in his discography -- it was the Skies of America era, too, and the expanded lineups for the Science Fiction/Broken Shadows sessions -- so this more than welcome spotlight on that unit is exactly what a veteran Ornette Coleman hand would hope for. There's nothing remotely bootleg about the sound quality, the jacket photos by Val Wilmer are great, the liner notes informative enough, and the music simply exceptional. Two pieces were staples of his concert repertoire for this 1971 tour, and another pair ("Silhouette" and "Summer-Thang" -- ouch) apparently listed as untitled improvisations or compositions in discographies, were as fresh to the players then as it is to the listener now. With all four compositions clocking in between ten and 15 minutes, there are plenty of open spaces for the quartet to listen and play off one another -- and they take full advantage of it. The opening "Street Woman" is taken at a measured and leisurely clip, with Coleman musing in a trio setting or with just Haden behind him before Redman enters the arrangement to exchange comments. Live in Paris 1971 really serves to illuminate the latter's role as Coleman's foil, less in the traditional vein as a second soloist but more a complementary player whose tenor lines intertwine strategically around Coleman's alto melodies to give the music greater body and breadth. "Summer-Thang" features Redman at first with Blackwell driving hard as the former patiently develops his solo with occasional phrases structured on Coleman patterns, before Coleman breaks in with quicksilver runs that ultimately trigger a lively solo that stretches his tonal envelope more than usual. The uptempo "Silhouette" is serious intertwine time for Coleman and Redman, with the latter developing thick, knotted lines during his solo that work beautifully with Blackwell. Coleman's solo lightens things up, the music getting more playful, open, and spacious but it is a prime Coleman outing as the music rides the current through varied changes and Blackwell, excellent throughout, takes a short solo before a brief final statement. Rock the Clock initially sports the combination of Coleman on trumpet and Redman on musette with Haden (who has no featured solos on this disc) prominent in support.

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The trumpet works as a soothing tonal contrast to the musette, Redman then returns the favor before their joint finale of flurries leads to Coleman jettisoning trumpet for violin and Redman switching to tenor. The rhythm section drops out and what must be Coleman's wah-wah violin (it almost sounds like a Jew's harp twang) playing down low (or could it be Haden bowing high?) takes over, followed by the rhythm section dropping in and out behind Redman. In other words, there's no way of anticipating what's going to happen when by who, always a sure sign of vintage Coleman. In fact, it was Haden doing the wah-wah twang because Coleman comes flying back in on trumpet, Redman switches back to musette, Haden returns to pizzicato plucking, and Blackwell rejoins the proceedings. And the end comes very abruptly and suddenly behind the musette. Live in Paris 1971 is hands down the best CD to emerge from that particular tour to date and certainly ranks as a prime showcase for this quartet. Glorious music, simply glorious. ---Don Snowden, Rovi

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