

Ornette Coleman Quintet - Complete Live At The Hillcrest Club (1958)

Written by bluesever

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1. *Klactoveedsestene* 12:07 2. *I Remember Harlem* 3:52 3. *The Blessing* 9:38 4. *Free* 5:39 5. *Ramblin'* 14:06 6. *How Deep Is The Ocean?* 4:35 7. *When Will The Blues Leave?* 14:29 8. *Crossroads* 1:54 Alto Saxophone – Ornette Coleman Bass – Charlie Haden Drums – Billy Higgins Piano – Paul Bley Trumpet – Don Cherry Recorded Live October 1958 at the Hillcrest Club, Los Angeles California

Ornette Coleman's epic 1959 LPs *The Shape of Jazz to Come* and *Change of the Century* were pivot points in modern post-bop jazz and early creative music. This recording is a prelude to those epics, a live two-night engagement in October of 1958 at the Hillcrest Club in Los Angeles. The Coleman quintet, with trumpeter Don Cherry, bassist Charlie Haden, and drummer Billy Higgins, plus a then-young pianist Paul Bley, sets up that new shape of jazz. This eight-selection set features three of Coleman's signature originals, two standards, and three lesser-known, fairly rare pieces that Coleman did at the time. The program kicks off with Charlie Parker's "Klactoveedsestene," an on-fire free bopper where Coleman's alto sax in tandem with Cherry reflects a quest for cleanliness and innocent, alive freshness, well transferred, balanced, and reproduced digitally. Whoever tagged this music unlistenable needs to revisit the symbiosis of the front-line horns present. Three of Coleman's all-time immortal compositions on call are the relaxed and easily swung harmolodic dream "The Blessing" accented by Ornette's piquant alto, the call-and-response-laden "When Will the Blues Leave?," and the post-bop evergreen "Ramblin'." The stairstep ascending and descending melody for "Free" also remains arresting, taking no prisoners. It's interesting how alleged rebel Coleman pays reverence to two ballad standards, Roy Eldridge's pensive "I Remember Harlem" and Cherry's trumpet-led "How Deep Is the Ocean?" Closing is the frantic, scattershot two-minute improvisation "Crossroads." A major fault of this recording is Bley's piano, which is unfortunately so far down in the mix that it is virtually inaudible. One really has to strain, even with headphones, to hear the true depth of Bley's clearly brilliant, probing, but muffled and muted playing. There's no doubt as to the historical and musical significance of this date, and it belongs in the collection of any follower of Coleman, despite the one production flaw. --- Michael G. Nastos, Rovi

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