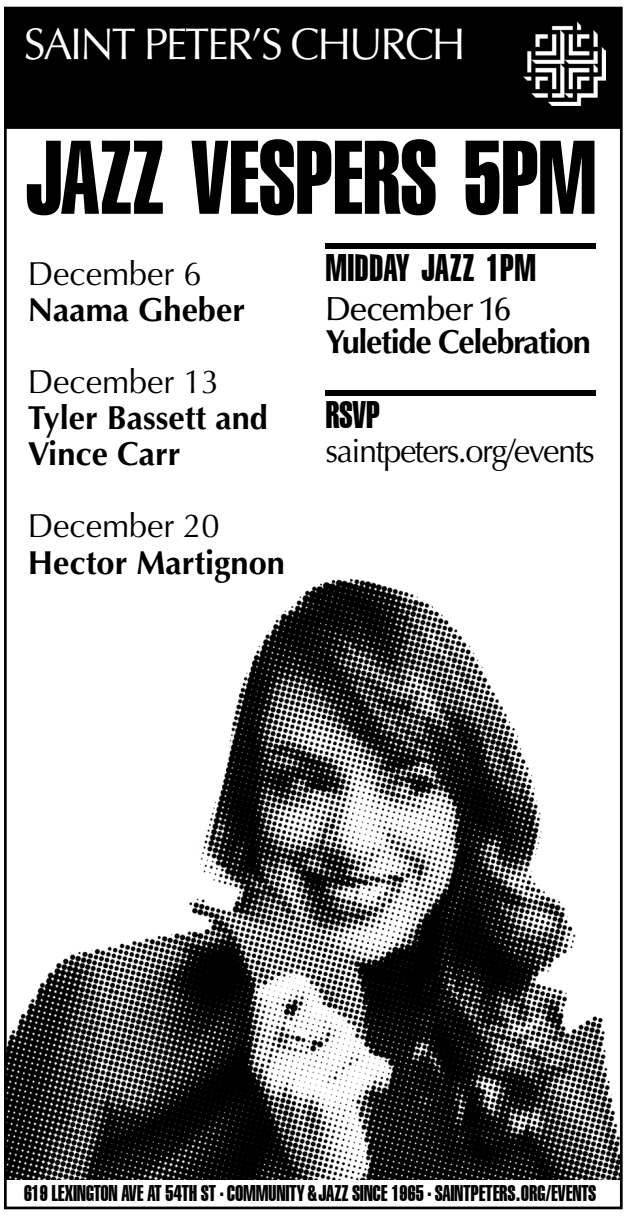



***House of Trane***
**Jim Snidero (Savant)**
**by Scott Yanow**

The title of *House of Trane* might lead one to expect that altoist Jim Snidero's recent recording would be a set of John Coltrane tunes. But the album is actually dedicated to the John and Alice Coltrane Home (in Dix Hills, NY), where John resided during 1964-67 and Alice lived until 1973. Snidero was deeply touched while visiting the house, which is registered as a local, state and national Historic Place and is designated as a National Treasure by the National Historic Trust for Preservation, and will soon be transformed into a museum.

The alto saxophonist assembled an impressive quartet here that features pianist Stefan Karlsson (a member of bassist Eddie Gomez' trio for over 30 years), bassist Nat Reeves (a veteran who has worked with Pharoah Sanders, Jackie McLean, Kenny Garrett and many other greats) and drummer Jason Tiemann (who in the last decade has been a first-call drummer, recording prolifically for labels such as SteepleChase, Posi-Tone and Cellar Music). The group performs six Snidero originals, plus two songs from the Coltrane repertoire.




One can hear aspects of Trane's sound and style in Snidero's playing even though he is an altoist, which Coltrane did play on super-rare occasions (e.g. with Dizzy's Gillespie's big band; Gene Ammons Allstars' *The Big Sound* album; in Japan a year before he died, and on the posthumously released *Stellar Regions*, recorded shortly before his 1967 passing). Snidero's originals utilize modal structures, showcasing a yearning and passionate sound, which stylistically harks back to the kind of material Coltrane was playing in the early '60s. While Karlsson has a gentler approach than Tyner usually displayed during his years as the pianist in the Coltrane Quartet, he does play in a similar Tyner-influenced style. Snidero's rhythm section as a whole sounds like Coltrane's during his more restrained performances. In addition to the originals, which all reference aspects of Coltrane's life at home, the quartet performs the standard ballad "A Weaver of Dreams" (recorded by Coltrane in 1959) and gives a spirited rendition of his "Resolution" from *A Love Supreme*.

There have been many tributes to Coltrane and to Miles Davis during this, their centennial year. *House of Trane* is one of the better homages, because Snidero plays creatively within the framework and spirit of Coltrane's music rather than copying him too closely, or playing much of his music.

*For more info visit jazzdepot.com. The album release concert is at Five Spot Jazz Dec. 10 and The Side Door Jazz Club (Old Lyme, CT) Dec. 12. See Calendar and 100 Miles Out.*




***A Supreme Blue***
**Nicholas Payton & Butcher Brown (Concord Jazz)**
**by Jeff Cebulski**

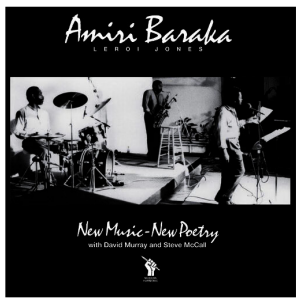
Trumpeter and multi-instrumentalist Nicholas Payton, and the contemporary jazz ensemble Butcher Brown—Marcus "Tennishu" Tenney (saxophones), DJ Harrison (keyboards), Morgan Burrs (guitar), Andrew Randazzo aka R4ND4ZZO (electric bass) and Corey Fonville (drums)—do not refer to *A Supreme Blue* as a "tribute" album. Yet it is clearly an homage to Miles Davis and John Coltrane, whose centenaries are being fêted this year throughout the world. This new album's versions of two seminal works, *Kind of Blue* and *A Love Supreme*, demonstrate respect while using reconstructed melodies and arrangements to point in different directions.

One representative tactic involves layering a familiar tune on top of alternative rhythms that suggest deeper historical connections. On "Freddie Freeloader", after a funky Clyde Stubblefield/"Jabo" Starks-style lead-in from Fonville, Payton hews closely to Davis' original trumpet theme before Burrs chimes in with his own funky statement. Payton responds in similar style on echoey trumpet, accompanied by R4ND4ZZO's resonant bass. "All Blues" pairs African-influenced percussion, including Payton on thumb piano, with the familiar trumpet and saxophone riff. Fonville's groove is augmented by Burrs' subtle picking and Tennishu takes a tenor solo that splendidly binds the two motifs.

Payton shines throughout the album, notably his sterling trumpet on "Blue in Green" and his piano work on "Flamenco Sketches", where his intro is dotted with references to Bill Evans' contribution to "So What". His echoed pronouncement of Coltrane's "call to worship" on "Acknowledgment", this time on trumpet, is striking, as the seasoned listener always expects a saxophone entreaty. R4ND4ZZO proceeds with Jimmy Garrison's iconic bass line, which Fonville supports with a nuanced R&B evolution of Elvin Jones' quietly rumbling cadence. "Resolution" becomes a swinging keyboard-centered hip-hop instrumental, with Tennishu's saxophone taking over. On "Pursuance", Fonville provides a slower, Latin-flavored rhythmic base, while Tennishu flourishes over Burrs' delicate comping. "Psalm" moves from Payton's vocoded performance of Coltrane's prayer-poem into a more sedate charismatic praise service litany.

Due to the production atmospherics, some of *A Supreme Blue* (especially the nearly ambient "So What") could become background music in hip bars, but that would miss the point; this non-tribute that moves the famous music forward turns out to be quite a tribute after all.

*For more info visit concordjazz.com. A Supreme Blue (featuring Nicholas Payton) is at Smoke Dec. 28 to Jan. 3. See Calendar.*




***New Music—New Poetry***
***(with David Murray, Steve McCall)***
**Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones) (Modern Harmonic)**
**by John Pietaro**

"Poetry, 1st of all, was & still must be, a musical form. It is speech musicked…highly rhythmic communication. High speech." So begins Amiri Baraka's original, lengthy liner note to *New Music—New Poetry*, an often volcanic album first heard in 1982 (originally released on India Navigation), then lost to time prior to this, the album's first-ever reissue (as LP, CD and digital download), thanks to Modern Harmonic. It was recorded live at NYC's now defunct Soundscape space early into the supposedly trickle-down Reagan years. This was also a period of renewed fightback, still bloodstained from the assassination of Dr. King and the Newark riots. The Newark-born, cultural-political activist Baraka (whose 12-year deathaversary at the age of 79 is next month) makes the argument that "Black poetry means to show its musical origins," claiming that words and music were largely made into one by Langston Hughes at the Five Spot.

Opening with "The Last Revolutionary (for Abbie Hoffman)", Baraka's resolve is on display, as he emotes about the Chicago 7, federal government crimes and the need for ongoing revolution. David Murray's tenor saxophone drops R&B riffs and modern jazz fragments amid the poet's lines as drummer Steve McCall, in turn, creates a uniquely soaring rumble about them. The three immediately demonstrate an artful telepathy ("tremendous wings," as Baraka described the musicians), on equal terms, perhaps harmolodically so.

Among the cuts that capture the ear are the humorously titled (if you follow Italian) "Strunza Med", which asks "If the world was a poem / what kind of poem would it be? / What kind of goddamn poem would it be?," citing beauty, ugliness, tragedy and happiness within a sonic enclosure of bass clarinet and gently-liberated drumming. The piece for John Coltrane, "I Love Music", opens with a frighteningly beautiful ostinato by Murray before Baraka's vocalizations turn the piece inside out, followed by the saxophonist's subtones and embouchure explosions. Another work that magnificently illustrates the jazz

poetry idiom is "Dope", with its cry of "It must be the devil" and its fearless statements conjoining society, pop culture, racism, religion, illicit drugs and perceived weaknesses in the victims. While each selection of this recording speaks to socio-political issues, both "Class Struggle" and "Class Struggle in Music" could stand as anthems for future uprisings, looking ferociously ahead, because, "there is no last revolutionary until the planet explodes." Here's one for the people's victory.

*For more info visit sundazedmusic.bandcamp.com. David Murray is at The Pocket Dec. 3-4. See Calendar.*




***Fifth Quadrant***
**Eric Alexander (Smoke Sessions)**
**by Ken Dryden**

Saxophonist Eric Alexander has long been a part of the New York jazz scene, having studied with Joe Lovano and Rufus Reid at William Paterson University; he was also mentored there by the late pianist Harold Mabern, who became a frequent collaborator. Alexander's distinctive sound and wide breadth of repertoire is a hallmark of his extensive discography. This 2026 studio session, which has the feeling of a live club date minus the applause (note: the last two tracks are from a concert), features the tenor player leading a new quartet consisting of old friends, including Cyrus Chestnut (piano), Nat Reeves (bass) and Carl Allen (drums).

The title track, Alexander's fiery post-bop anthem, evolved from an overtone exercise that he used with his students. The band is fully engaged, devouring the new composition as if it has long been part of their working repertoire. The breezy setting of "One Hundred Ways" is soulful and passionate, while his warm, thoughtful arrangement of Gordon Parks' lush "Don't Misunderstand" is the work of a master, along with Chestnut's understated solo. The leader's "Newk" is a funky blues and an obvious tribute to Sonny Rollins, his big-toned tenor paying homage to the late jazz master without resorting to mimicry. Chestnut's laid-back arrangement of Stevie Wonder's "Ribbon in the Sky" brings out its lyricism, while the playful exchange between the tenor saxophonist and pianist provides a fun coda. Rodgers and Hammerstein's "It Might as Well Be Spring" has long been a popular standard for jazz musicians. Alexander's thoughtful approach embellishes its melody while retaining its essence.

The last two tracks were recorded live at NYC's Smoke Jazz Club on what would have been Mabern's 90th birthday earlier this year (Mar. 20). Both "Afro Blue" (Mongo Santamaria) and "Sugar" (Stanley Turrentine) were part of Mabern's repertoire, but Alexander finds his own path through each of them. He makes numerous musical references in his explosive rendition of the former, while his soulful, brisk setting of the latter spotlights each member of the quartet.

*Fifth Quadrant* is available as a CD, download, even LP, although the live bonus tracks are limited to the digital formats.

*For more info visit smokesessionsrecords.com. The album release concert is at Smoke Dec. 2-6. Alexander is also at The Django Dec. 10 (with Alex Minasian) and 18 (with Dave Stryker). See Calendar.*

## BOXED SET




***Coltrane 100***
**John Coltrane (Rhino)**
**by Tom Greenland**

Just a few months ago, he would've been 100 years old (Sep. 23), perhaps the greatest improviser in all jazzdom. We're speaking of John Coltrane, whose centennial birthday is celebrated by Rhino's 6-LP boxed set *Coltrane 100 (Selections from 1951-1967)*. It's yet another in a long line of Coltrane compilations—allmusic.com lists over 400, with another 75 or so available through digital platforms (!)—but this one stands tall in the crowd. Because Rhino is the reissue arm of Warner Music Group, it's no surprise that over half of the 37 tracks were originally released on WMG's subsidiary, Atlantic, while only a third were on Impulse! and a fourth on Prestige. To accomplish producing a collection of this breadth and diversity, Rhino had to negotiate licensing with Concord, Sony, UMG and BMG. That said, this compilation contains most of the "hits" and standout songs, plus some welcome surprises.

The set contains almost four hours of music, spread over six high-quality vinyl records. The sound should please audiophiles, while the sequencing should satisfy experts and neophytes alike. Selections are chronologically ordered, with tracks to each side ensuring a balanced listening experience. LP 2's first side, for instance, opens with a fourteen-minute version of "India", recorded at the Village Vanguard (Nov. 1961) with Eric Dolphy in the band; it features Coltrane's screaming, rampaging soprano saxophone over two extended solos. This is immediately followed by a markedly contrasting cut: a four-minute version of Duke Ellington's ballad "In a Sentimental Mood" (Sep. 1962) featuring Coltrane's warm, mellow tenor horn and Ellington's delicate, rhapsodic piano, both men sticking close to the melody, with limited improvisation.

The first cut on the collection is "We Love to Boogie", one of the saxophonist's earliest recordings (Mar. 1951) with Dizzy Gillespie's Sextet (originally on Dee Gee). Besides its historical importance, the track shows Coltrane's inchoate style emerging from the influence of bebop, heard in his fluid, rolling legato phrases, inner guide-tone lines and chromatic side-slipping—all suggesting a penchant for adventure. "Straight Street", from 1957's *Coltrane*, his debut album as sole leader, features a straightforward melody reading, but you can already hear the barely subdued passion in his unadorned, vibrato-less tone.

Aficionados will be familiar with the hits—"Blue Train", "Giant Steps", "Naima", "My Favorite Things", "Alabama", "A Love Supreme, Pt. 1—Acknowledgement". Some may wonder why cuts such as "Moment's Notice", "Impressions", "Chasin' the Trane" and "Spiritual" didn't make the cut; or why material from pivotal releases such as *Crescent, Transition, Ascension* or *Interstellar Space* wasn't negotiated for. Others will argue that his second, avant garde-leaning quartet and Impulse! releases are underrepresented. Such lacunae are alleviated by the addition of alternate takes, a bootleg track and hidden gems from lesser-known albums, affording an impressive (if somewhat biased) overview of Coltrane's growth and range.

Indications of his developing style may be heard throughout the collection, especially on contributions he made as a sideman for important leaders. His work with Miles Davis is heard on "Two Bass Hit" (an alternate take), "If I Were a Bell", "Milestones", "Oleo" and "So What"; with Thelonious Monk on "Well, You Needn't" and "Trinkle Tinkle"; and with Johnny Hartman on "My One and Only Love". On the Monk recordings, the leader's relentless focus on motivic improvisation based on the tune's melody seems to have rubbed off on Coltrane, who chain-links motifs on "Well, You Needn't" and unleashes a gush of notes like floodwaters through sluice gates on "Trinkle Tinkle", an intimation of the "sheets of sound" style he would later develop. Davis' use of space ("If I Were a Bell") and modal harmonies ("Milestones" and "So What") surely got Coltrane thinking along similar lines, the latter tune an obvious inspiration for his hyped-up contrafact "Impressions". An example of Coltrane in full bebop mode, burning through up-tempo rhythm changes, can be heard on "Oleo", from a live bootleg of Davis' quintet with the saxophonist.

Fans, especially musicians, have always been impressed with Coltrane's penetrating intelligence and formidable technical facility, heard on flag-wavers such as "Giant Steps", but ultimately, it's his emotional charisma that leaves the biggest impression. There are many moments throughout the compilation where his profound commitment to his art manifests in sparser statements, when he sticks close to song melody, with minimal improvisation or embellishment, the sound of the horn itself becoming the primary medium of communication. This often occurs towards the end of an extended improvisation—as on "Syeeda's Song Flute", "My Favorite Things", "Body and Soul", "Blues to Elvin", "Equinox"—when the fire of his imagination cools down and the thick sheets of sound thin out into succinct soulful statements. This quality is particularly prevalent in the slower-tempo pieces and beautiful ballads—"While My Lady Sleeps", "Slow Dance", "I'll Wait and Pray", "Naima", "Central Park West", "Ev'ry Time We Say Goodbye", "In a Sentimental Mood", "My One and Only Love", "Alabama"—which (as noted above) are adeptly arranged in the setlist to serve as counterweights to, and/or palate cleansers for, the more extroverted numbers.

Coltrane is, of course, not the only star in these skies, and the set is considerably enhanced by the wonderful playing of his colleagues, some of the very finest artists in jazz. As a sideman, we can hear him assimilating the ethos and esthetics of his peers, working out his own ways to engage with, develop and personalize these ideas. And as a bandleader, it's noteworthy that a man with so much music and spirit to express—someone who once confessed to Miles Davis, "I don't know how to stop [soloing]"—was nevertheless acutely aware of the power of collective expression and understood the importance of sharing musical space with his bandmates.

Thus, *Coltrane 100*, for its wealth of telling detail and sweeping overview of its namesake's *oeuvre*, offers serious and casual listeners alike a deeper appreciation of his seminal contributions and lasting impact.

Happy Birthday, John. We're still listening!

*For more info visit store.rhino.com. Coltrane tributes this month include "Countdown 2027 Coltrane Festival" at Smoke Dec. 9 to Jan. 10 (featuring Melissa Aldana, Ravi Coltrane, Eric Scott Reed, Vincent Herring, Sarah Hanahan, Nicholas Payton, James Carter, Steve Turre and others) and "Celebration: Music from the Years 1961 & 1966" at Deer Head Inn (Delaware Water Gap, PA) Dec. 5 (with Griffin Woodard). See Calendar and 100 Miles Out.*