

Ornette Coleman - Tomorrow Is the Question! (1959)

Written by bluesever
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A1 Tomorrow Is The Question 3:09 A2 Tears Inside 5:00 A3 Mind And Time 3:08 A4 Compassion 4:37 A5 Giggin' 3:19 A6 Rejoicing 4:04 B1 Lorraine 5:55 B2 Turnaround 7:55 B3 Endless 5:18 Ornette Coleman - Sax (Alto), Sax (Soprano) Percy Heath – Bass (A1-A6) Shelly Manne - Drums Red Mitchell - Bass (B1-B3) Don Cherry - Trumpet

On his second outing for the Contemporary label, Ornette dusted the piano from the bandstand and focused instead on a quartet. For some unexplained reason, Billy Higgins was replaced by Shelly Manne; the only constants remain Coleman and Don Cherry. The focus, then, is on the interplay between the altoist and trumpeter in executing Ornette's tunes, which were, more than on the preceding album (*Something Else!*, recorded a year earlier), knottier and tighter in their arrangement style. The odd-syncopation style of the front line on numbers such as "Tears Inside," which comes out of the box wailing and then simmers down into a moody, swinging blues, was a rough transition for the rhythm section. And the more Ornette and Cherry try to open it up into something more free and less attached to the tune's form, the more Manne and especially bassist Percy Heath hang on. Still, there are great moments here: for example, the celebratory freedom of "Giggin'," with its wonderful trumpet solo, and "Rejoicing," which has become one of Coleman's classics for its elongated melody line and simple obligato phrasing, which become part of a wonderfully complex solo that keeps the blues firmly intact. The final track, "Endless," is pure magic. After Manne carries it in 6/8, Coleman uses a nursery rhyme to move to the solo terrain and, when he does, the solo itself becomes a part of that rhyme as even Don Cherry feels his way through it in his break. And, if anything, this is one of the things that came to define Ornette -- his willingness to let simplicity and its bright colors and textures confound not only other players and listeners, but also him too. In those days, Coleman's musical system -- although worked out in detail -- always left room for the unexpected and, in fact, was played as if his life depended on it. As a result, *Tomorrow Is the Question!* was a very literal title; who could have guessed the expansive, world-widening direction that Coleman's system would head into next? ---Thom Jurek, Rovi

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