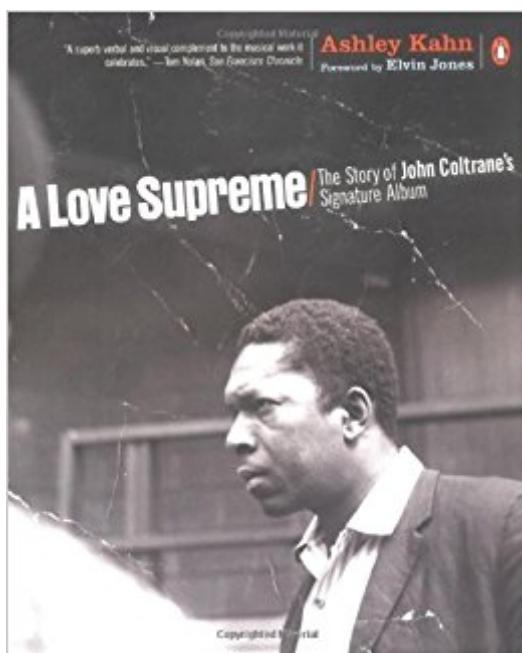


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# A Love Supreme: The Story Of John Coltrane's Signature Album



## Synopsis

Few albums in the canon of popular music have had the influence, resonance, and endurance of John Coltrane's 1965 classic *A Love Supreme*-a record that proved jazz was a fitting medium for spiritual exploration and for the expression of the sublime. Bringing the same fresh and engaging approach that characterized his critically acclaimed *Kind of Blue: The Making of the Miles Davis Masterpiece*, Ashley Kahn tells the story of the genesis, creation, and aftermath of this classic recording. Featuring interviews with more than one hundred musicians, producers, friends, and family members; unpublished interviews with Coltrane and bassist Jimmy Garrison; and scores of never-before-seen photographs, *A Love Supreme* balances biography, cultural context, and musical analysis in a passionate and revealing portrait.

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## Customer Reviews

Along with Miles Davis's seminal album, *Kind of Blue*, saxophonist John Coltrane's *A Love Supreme* is undoubtedly one of the world's most influential jazz recordings. Recorded with pianist McCoy Tyner, bassist Jimmy Garrison and drummer Elvin Jones over the course of one evening in 1964, the record "caught Coltrane at a pivotal point in his creative trajectory: the crystallizing of his four years with this renowned quartet, moments before his turn toward the final, most debated phase of his career." In *A Love Supreme: The Story of John Coltrane's Signature Album*, Ashley Kahn (*Kind of Blue: The Making of the Miles Davis Masterpiece*) covers how the album was made, where it was made, why it is so important and how it reached such a broad audience (it is one of the top-selling

jazz albums of all time). Music fans and historians will devour the book, which is rife with anecdotes and commentary from Bono, Phil Lesh, Alice Coltrane (Coltrane's widow); black-and-white photographs; and previously unpublished interviews with Coltrane himself. It features a foreword written by Elvin Jones. Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Jazz writing appears to be moving toward high art, with Kahn leading the way. In his second study of a groundbreaking jazz recording (the first was on Miles Davis's *Kind of Blue*), he addresses the less obvious aspects of Coltrane's album, including the saxophonist's ideas and the actual recording session, interweaving them all with snippets of interviews with the Coltrane family and musical cohorts. Five brief sections, or interludes, discuss topics like the label that released the record (Impulse), the producer, and related poetry, while the epilog concisely summarizes the text. *A Love Supreme*, Kahn reveals, was a spiritual manifesto that touched countless listeners. Many issues come to the fore: the cultural movements of the mid-1960s, including expression of spiritual values, and technical musical challenges. Coltrane fulfilled his desire to record in one finite session without regard to commercial pressures. He was able to pull together much of his previous work and concentrate it in one piece. The only book-length treatment of the record, this is absolutely essential jazz history for all libraries. [This book's publication coincides with the Verve Music Group's release of an expanded, two-disc version of *A Love Supreme*.-Ed.]--William G. Kenz, Minnesota State Univ., Moorhead--William G. Kenz, Minnesota State Univ., Moorhead Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

There are VERY few jazz albums which have achieved the status and attention of John Coltrane's *A Love Supreme*. And listening to it decades after it was first released (I first heard it in 1996), we forget how revolutionary that album was: a jazz suite, religious in nature, less centered on chord changes than meditating over modal accompaniment. In *A Love Supreme*, journalist Ashley Kahn attempts to tell the story of the making of *A Love Supreme*. Of course, with it, we also get a good account of who John Coltrane was, his rise into the Miles Davis "Kind of Blue" sextet, drug addiction and self-imposed rehabilitation, the civil rights and black power movements of the 1960's, and the evolution of jazz music. All of these are told in crisp journalistic prose supplemented by interview excerpts from those close to the press-shy Coltrane: Elvin Jones, Kenny Burrell, Rudy van Gelder, even Alice Coltrane. I will never listen to *A Love Supreme* in the same way again. Yes, I always knew - it is just obvious in the suite's movements - that ALS is infused with meaning and

significance. But now, I feel like I know a little more about what Coltrane had in mind for the suite. Interestingly, at the time this book was written, the audio for the mysterious second day's session (with two saxophones and two bass players) had not been released to the public, so Kahn puts the pieces together about what transpired on that second day as a detective putting together the facts of a case. Of course, now, that second day's material has been released and is available for listen on an 2 CD set of *A Love Supreme* put out by Impulse!. Of course, this just adds to the book because now, we can hear what Kahn describes. Anyhow, this is a very well done book about one of the most evocative jazz albums of all time. Strongly recommended for both jazz novices and true fans.

You KNOW the music. Now learn about the events in the life of John Coltrane that lead up to the pinnacle, the mountaintop of his career. First of all, let me explain that I have a substantial library on jazz music - mostly about Miles and Trane. I found this book to be very insightful, regardless of what anyone else has written in their review. I don't want to be disrespectful of those reviews but I fail to see how some arrived at a mediocre or low opinion of this book. Not at all! In fact, I've learned so much and enjoyed this book so much that I'm definitely going to purchase Kahn's *Making of Kind of Blue* and *Impulse the House That Trane Built*. Personally, I can't wait to read 'em! Kahn provides first hand accounts of both the December 9 & 10 sessions at Rudy Van Gelder's studio from Archie Shepp, Art Davis, McCoy Tyner, Elvin Jones, Bob Theil, and of course Rudy himself. The book tells us what made recording at Rudy's so special, he describes the studio and even gives a high-level look at Van Gelder's methodology (the details are Rudy's closely guarded secret). There is a title by title analysis of the suite in layman's terms but he & Ravi Coltrane DO give the listener some sign-posts to listen for each time you listen to the suite. I know that as a semi-professional jazz musician, I've learned new things about this music that I can actually apply to my own playing. The description of how Impulse started, how they packaged and produced the recordings and took them to market was fascinating (to me anyway). I learned some things that I'd always wondered about. There is some discussion on Billboard and how the news about this fantastic work of art quickly spread 'round the USA. There is a chapter toward the end "The Unbroken Arc of *A Love Supreme*" where I felt like Kahn was flirting with becoming trite and a little over-the-top but thankfully, he didn't quite go there... but it was close. That is my only criticism of this book. He just goes a little over-board with the reverence for this music, i.e., he sort of hits the reader over the head again and again with it. Ok, I get it. This is a special recording. Of course, we already KNOW that otherwise we wouldn't be reading a book devoted to a specific recording. Duh? It's not an annoyance but some

reader may begin rolling their eyes, let's put it that way. This book is perfect for the non-musician and a great read for musicians. The only downside (if you can call it that) for musicians is that there really isn't a detailed analysis of the music - no transcripts. If you are a musician you will want to purchase Lewis Porter's *John Coltrane: His Life and Music*. That book will give you transcripts galore. In fact, Porter is cited often in this book & this book is cited often in the Porter book. I enthusiastically recommend both books and of course, the deluxe edition of *A Love Supreme*. Buy them all, I guarantee whether you are a musician or just a jazz lover, you are going to learn something.

Easily the best biography of Coltrane. Although its primary focus is the seminal album, it gives an excellent review of Coltrane's entire life leading up to the classic. It gives abundant and perhaps unparalleled quotes from Coltrane and the members of his Classic Quartet. Highly recommended.

This book is written in a way that a music lover, not only a musician can appreciate. The details are really interesting!

The book talks about the path that John Coltrane before and after the great masterpiece "*A Love Supreme*". It presents a clear picture of what Coltrane was thinking around that time using plenty of interviews (McCoy Tyner, Elvin Jones, Dave Liebman, Michael Brecker, Branford Marsalis, etc.). Simply reading the words from those interviews is fun.

Classic and required for any serious jazz collection.

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