



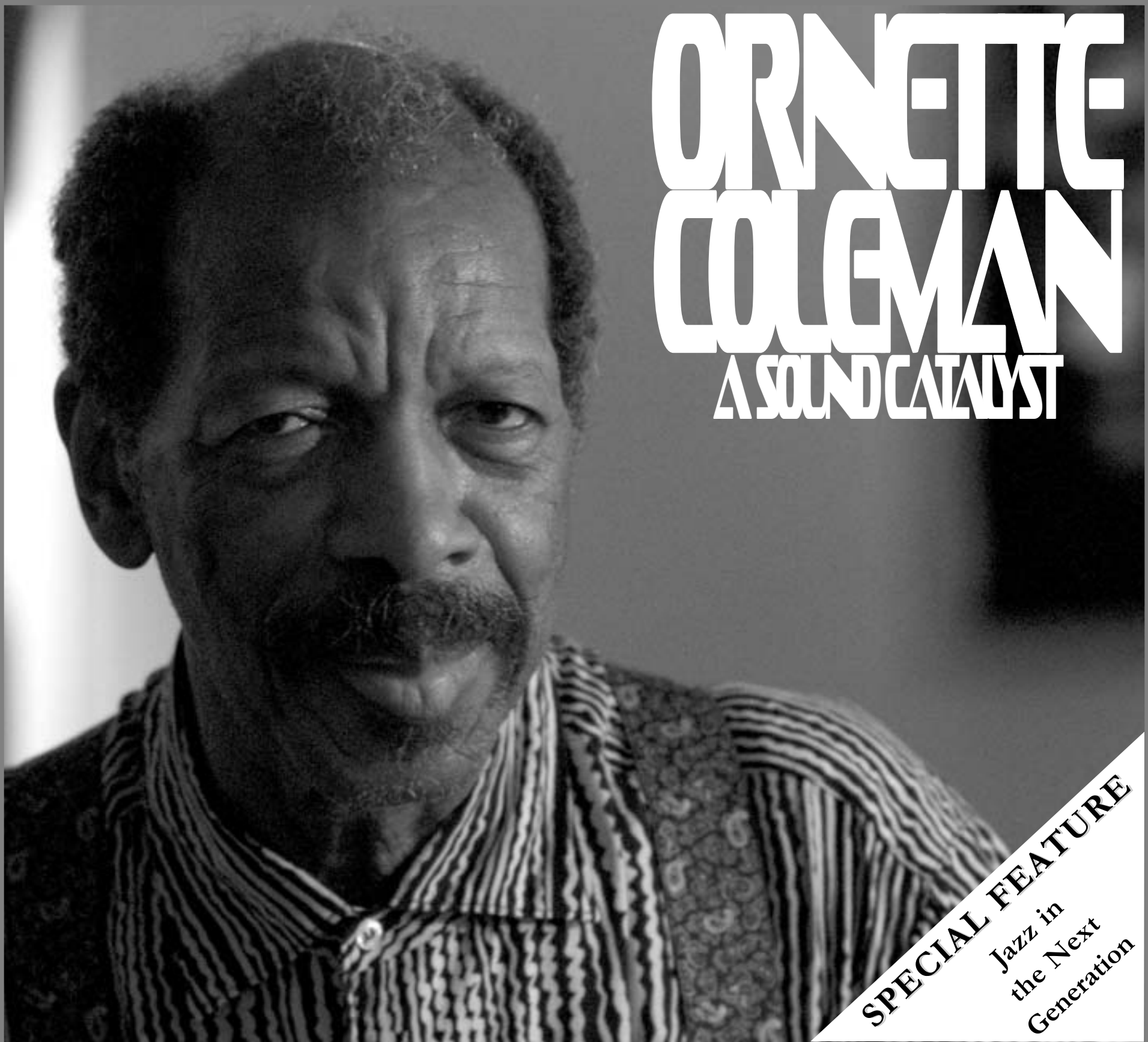
# all about jazz

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# ORNETTE COLEMAN A SOUND CATALYST

**SPECIAL FEATURE**  
Jazz in  
the Next  
Generation

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**Circumstance**  
David Smith (Fresh Sound-New Talent)  
by Terell Holmes

There's a gnawing frustration when listening to the David Smith Quintet's *Circumstance*, a disc filled with potential that just falls short of the mark. The band played a CD release party set at Smalls recently. Bassist David Ephross and guitarist Nate Radley played at the live set and on the disc; at Smalls Seamus Blake and Mark Ferber were replaced on saxophone and drums respectively by Joel Frahm and Ted Poor. The show was good but the problems that weighed down the disc were evident in the live performance.

It seems that Smith is not strong coming out of the box; he needs a few measures to warm up. On the studio version of "Soul Eyes", for example, he plays a note at the outset that sounds like it was dropped; then he gathers himself, soaring higher and with more confidence as the solo progressed. Unfortunately, just as Smith and Blake start to build a frenetic exchange the tune fades out. Smith's trumpet solo on the live version of "Charade" was his most passionate playing anywhere, supplemented by Radley's feathery guitar. The highlight of both set and disc was the hardbop burner "Tubicinate". Frahm blew like a madman at the show but Smith's solos, live and on disc, were so short that they might have been warm-up exercises, turning a great tune into a good one. Smith has a solid group of musicians playing with him, but *Circumstance* ultimately disappoints because it doesn't fulfill its promise. Smith's playing is well-intentioned but not passionate enough to stir deep emotions.

For more information, visit [www.freshsoundrecords.com](http://www.freshsoundrecords.com). Smith is at Sweet Rhythm Jan. 16th with Sara Lynch. See calendar.



**Bazaar**  
Rez Abbasi (Zoho)  
by Tom Greenland

One of the healthiest trends, it seems, in "our music" is a certain restlessness, a dissatisfaction perhaps, with accepting the tradition as is. Rez Abbasi, originally from Pakistan and raised in southern California, now a 15-year veteran of the Manhattan scene, is a living embodiment of East-meets-West-meets-East. The music on *Bazaar*, the guitarist's fifth CD release as leader, reflects Abbasi's itinerant cultural awarenesses and offers yet another indication of where the restless spirit of the music may be headed.

Featuring the leader on electric, acoustic and sitar-guitar, Gary Versace on Hammond B3 organ, Dan Weiss on drum kit and tablas and Kiran Ahluwalia (Abbasi's wife) on vocals, with able assistance from saxists Rudresh Mahanthappa (alto) and Marc Mommaas (tenor and soprano) and peppered with Gautam Siram's mridnagam (an Indian hand-drum) and Naren Budkakar's unusual and evocative whistling, *Bazaar* is a market- and meeting-place of

world music sensibilities. For example, Ahluwalia's vocal improvisations, steeped in the timbres and textures of ghazal and Punjabi folk genres, reference the Indian subcontinent of their origin. Weiss, who has immersed himself in the intricacies of Indian rhythms under the tutelage of Samir Chatterjee, uses his mastery of additive and cyclic rhythms to expand and expound on the fairly straightforward metrical organization of the compositions. Organist Versace also speaks in varied rhythmic accents, as on "Mid-life", where his unusual punctuations create suspenseful syntax. Abbasi's phrasing is chain-motivic in the manner of, say, Ornette; he makes unusual connections and resolutions at the termini of his lines, occasionally launching into scorching hyperdrive.

On Nov. 28th, the trio showcased material from the album at Jazz Standard, with Ahluwalia, Mahanthappa and Mommaas sitting in for a couple of numbers each, to the critical acclaim of an appreciative and open-eared audience. Abbasi and his genre-busting globe-trotters are doing us all a favor: they're asking where is the music? And in their attempt to improvise answers for us in a fusion and fission of cultural influences, they challenge us to reconsider our own understandings of "East" and "West".

For more information, visit [www.zohomusic.com](http://www.zohomusic.com). Abbasi is at Blue Note Jan. 27th with Travis Sullivan. See calendar.



**Change Over Time**  
Sonic Liberation Front (High Two)  
by Jeff Stockton

12 musicians play in the Sonic Liberation Front (SLF) on *Change Over Time* but only three appeared on their previous release, 2004's critically acclaimed *Ashe a Go-Go*, including musical directors Kevin Diehl and Chuckie Joseph. As you would expect from a band led by drummers, the music leads with an African-Cuban-Caribbean percussive attack that reminds you of David Murray's work with the Gwo-Ka Masters, Fela's blend of ripping saxophone, multiplicity of drums and hypnotic vocals and, when they talk trash and funk it up on the title track, the Rebirth Brass Band.

SLF sprinkles a bit of electronica here and there, as well, enhancing "D'Accord, Baby" by providing a bass line that allows for Matt Engle's plaintive playing with his bow. On "Glass Eyes", which begins echoey and dirge-like, Engle's bass is punishing and Dan Scofield (Engle's bandmate in Shot x Shot) and altoist Julian Pressley (sideman for Illinois Jacquet and Odean Pope) bruise with horn solos that recall Ornette fronting Prime Time. On Engle's own composition "Dominical", he gives himself an excellent opportunity to show off his pizzicato skill, but occasionally the electronic effects get in the way and interrupt the flow. On "Ouaga to Bobo" the transistor noise finally yields to the ever-present bata drum beat.

Considering the near-complete lineup overhaul, the theme of *Change Over Time* is the evolution of a band and its sound. But it's more a testament to the multicultural work ethic and rich cosmopolitanism of SLF's Philadelphia than a departure from the music this band has previously made. Sonic Liberation Front makes jazz music with ears tuned to the big world around them.

For more information, visit [www.hightwo.com](http://www.hightwo.com). This group is at Spoken Words Café Jan. 25th. See calendar.



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