

June 2018 Vol 71 No 6

©JJ Publishing Ltd.

ISSN 2041-8833

Jazz Journal is published monthly by JJ Publishing Ltd, Caxton House, Wellesley Road, Ashford, Kent, TN24 8ET

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From the editor

The infallibility of star-ratings on reviews was questioned from the beginning (March 2012) by the editor and even by the reader who in that issue called for their institution. Although some liked them (labels and musicians obviously, when they were fours and fives), they drew dissent from readers and writers from the start. One reviewer resigned in disgust at reviews turning into a beauty pageant. As noted back then their lack of universal meaning means they can never compete with bespoke verbal description and anyway – except on a mathematical level (there is an interesting survey in musical dynamics) – music isn't measurable like some domestic appliance. Perhaps most importantly, star-ratings have been subject to what educationists call grade inflation. Early on one or two readers noted the excess of five-star reviews and how their number defied logic and reality. This phenomenon may in some cases be an expression of the hyperbole that afflicts the arts media these days – always to be avoided. So this issue we turn out the stars and, I hope, let a little more light in.

JAZZ JOURNAL is available from newsagents to order, or by annual subscription from the publisher at £49 (UK), £64 or €90 (overseas surface including Eire, except USA), £80 or €113 (air-mail). USA rates: airmail \$135, airfreight \$98. Personal US\$ cheques and € cheques accepted. All cheques must be made payable specifically to JJ Publishing Limited T/A Jazz Journal.

Address all distribution enquiries to: JJ Publishing Ltd, Caxton House, Wellesley Road, Ashford, Kent, TN24 8ET Telephone: +44 (0)7928 585397 Email: subs@jazzjournal.co.uk

Colour origination by Truprint Nordic, Margate, Kent. Printed by Hobbs the Printers Ltd, Brunel Road, Totton, Hampshire, SO40 3WX

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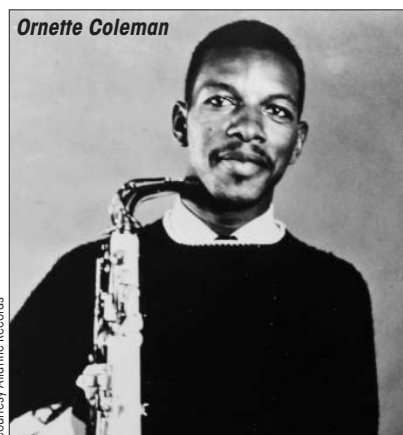
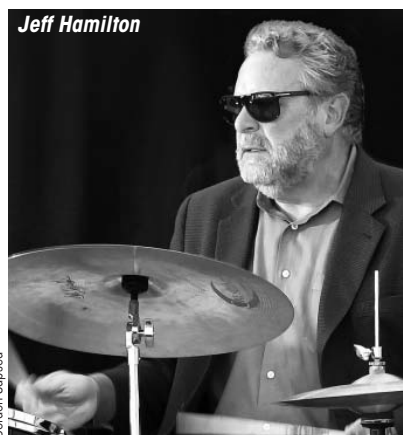
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