

**Reference:
Albert Ayler Quintet
Copenhagen,
Bordeaux 1966
& Newport 1967 Live
First Release**



**Sound restoration & Mastering
by Michael Brändli**

Reference:
Albert Ayler Quintet
Copenhagen, Bordeaux 1966
& Newport 1967 Live
First Release

The 1966 “Newport in Europe” tour organized by George Wein featured such mainstream jazz stars as Dave Brubeck, Stan Getz, Max Roach, Sonny Rollins, and remarkably, the Albert Ayler Quintet. Although primarily known, and certainly controversial, at this time for his 1964 recordings on the independent ESP label, earlier sessions for the even more obscure Bird Notes (Sweden) and Debut (Denmark) companies had introduced him initially to a limited Scandinavian and European avant-garde audience. What no one knew at the time was that the concert performances on this tour – in Berlin, Lörrach, Rotterdam, Helsinki, Stockholm, Copenhagen, Paris, and Bordeaux – recorded by local radio and television stations, produced tapes that would survive and more than fifty years later substantially increase the documentation and appreciation of this extraordinary group.

Ayler’s musical conceptions, of course, went through significant changes in his all-too-brief eight-year career, which could be characterized as his developmental period (1962–63), the breakthrough year (1964), ensemble expansion (1965–67), and the “other” Ayler (1968–70). These powerful performances from Copenhagen and Bordeaux, released officially here for the first time, and the Newport Festival in the U.S., provide further evidence of the music’s collective necessity – the true ensemble coordination which Ayler adopted, elaborated and romanticized, from his awareness of historic New Orleans precedents, with direct emotional and constructive links in the march themes (interactive repetition and commentary), layers of tonal contrast (Donald Ayler’s piercing, pungent brass; Albert’s melismatic reeds; the driving and droning strings; Beaver Harris’ propulsive drums), and explosive cohesion in and out of the melodic currents.

Nevertheless, despite its undeniable energy and audible passion, the extreme nature of Ayler’s music, his willingness to exploit the unrecognizable peripheries of freedom (that is, a rejection – or such a radical reorganization – of musical orthodoxy) as a conduit to spiritual transformation, has led to much speculation and interpretation. The position of Ayler as an innovator is not in question; what is not considered often enough is his relationship to an equally fervent, maverick attitude of jazz and blues-based improvisation – in addition to the Holiness Church tradition of saxophone and vocal catharsis – that

sought a similar moment of escape, of ecstasy, through Ayler's same procedures, pure sound and energy. Ayler acknowledged this relationship; just as Robert Palmer, in his liner notes to *The Village Concerts*, perceptively compared Ayler's other-worldly tonal extravagances and fluid, emotionally-registered phrasing to that of the haunting sound of bluesman Blind Willie Johnson – and further back to villagers in Guinea and the Ivory Coast of Africa – there are further correspondences in Ayler's impulsive upper-register squeals and sharp attack to the apocalyptic fervor and hyper-expressionistic shrieks of r&b saxophonists like Big Jay McNeely (for example, "Blow, Blow, Blow" of 1955) and Willis Jackson ("Gator Tail," 1949 with Cootie Williams).

The two jazz musicians most influential on Ayler were Sidney Bechet and Sonny Rollins (it's arguable that Ayler influenced John Coltrane, musically, more than Coltrane influenced Ayler). Bechet's vibrant-to-rich tone and intensity of phrasing prompted Ayler to admit (in a *down beat* interview), "I was crazy about him. For me, he represented the true spirit, the full force of life, that many of the older musicians had – like in New Orleans jazz – and which many musicians today don't have. I hope to bring that spirit back into the music we're playing." Another clue to Ayler's devotion was his choice of songs to record while still focusing on standards in 1962 and '63. He chose "Summertime," one of Bechet's greatest performances from 1939, twice, in Helsinki in '62 and on *My Name is Albert Ayler* from Copenhagen in '63.

Much of Ayler's early repertoire was also drawn from Rollins' recordings, including his compositions "Sonny Moon for Two" and "The Stopper" (under the title "Rollins' Tune"), plus "On Green Dolphin Street" (twice), "I'll Remember April," "Tune Up," and "Softly, as in a Morning Sunrise." Moreover, Rollins' obsessive struggle to liberate himself from the confining harmonic and formal procedures of popular songs led to his pianoless trio of 1957 (which likely eased Ayler into a similar format, first for his Swedish studio session in '62, and then with Gary Peacock and Sonny Murray by '64), as well as his far-reaching solo excursions and phrasing disruptions, which found their freest expression in the 1962–63 quartet with trumpeter Don Cherry. Rollins biographer Aidan Levy reported that Ayler attended the quartet's Copenhagen concert in January '63, and afterwards met and jammed with Cherry, anticipating their collaboration the next year.

Once Donald Ayler replaced Cherry on trumpet in 1965, it seems the die was cast; the Town Hall recording of *Bells* confirmed the coexistence of free interplay and a further appropriation of hymns and marches; Dutch violinist Michel Samson joined the ensemble following an unlikely meeting in Cleveland, Albert's hometown; the new rhythm section quickly adapted to their roles. This quintet made no studio recordings, but we are fortunate to have the 1966 tour documenting so thoroughly what may have been Ayler's most successful ensemble.

Art Lange, Chicago, August 2025

thingamajig 2501

These powerful performances from Copenhagen and Bordeaux, released officially here for the first time, and the Newport Festival in the U.S., provide further evidence of the music's collective necessity – the true ensemble co-ordination which Ayler adopted, elaborated and romanticized, from his awareness of historic New Orleans precedents. *Art Lange*

P + C 2025
AlAy AG
Lindenweg 5, 4052 Basel
Switzerland
All rights reserved.
Unauthorized duplication
is a violation of
applicable laws.
CD manufactured in the E.U.



7 649988 716805 >

Reference: Albert Ayler Quintet Copenhagen, Bordeaux 1966 & Newport 1967 Live First Release

Albert Ayler **tenor saxophone**
Donald Ayler **trumpet**
Michel Samson **violin**
Bill Folwell **double bass**
Beaver Harris **drums**

Tivoli Koncertsal Copenhagen November 11, 1966

- | | | |
|---|---|------|
| 1 | Truth Is Marching In | 9:57 |
| 2 | Holy Ghost / Bells /
Light In Darkness | 8:43 |
| 3 | Our Prayer
by Donald Ayler | 3:57 |
| 4 | Spiritual Rebirth
(incomplete) | 3:44 |

Sigma Festival Bordeaux, France November 14, 1966

- | | | |
|---|------------------------|------|
| 5 | Infinite Spirit | 5:31 |
|---|------------------------|------|

Newport Jazz Festival June 30, 1967

Remastered from new discovered tapes and the right order of the performance.

Albert Ayler **tenor saxophone**
soprano & alto saxophones
(track 3) vocal (track 2)
Donald Ayler **trumpet**
Michel Samson **violin**
Bill Folwell **double bass**
Milford Graves **drums**

- | | | |
|---|--|------|
| 6 | Truth Is Marching In | 8:58 |
| 7 | Japan (traditional) /
Universal Indians | 5:41 |
| 8 | Our Prayer
by Donald Ayler | 7:42 |

Total Time ADD 54:17

All compositions by Albert Ayler, except
otherwise indicated.
ISRC coded CD

Sound restoration & mastering by Michael
Brändli, Hardstudios AG; Cover photo by Jan
Persson CTSIMAGES; Liner notes by Art
Lange; Graphic concept by fuhrer vienna;
Produced by Werner X. Uehlinger.

Honorary producer: Bernhard «Benne» Vischer.

These performances have been authorized
October 2025 and will be released by the
request of The Estate of Albert Ayler,
represented by Desiree Ayler-Fellows.

2025 Edition
www.alay.ch

thingamajig 2501

A. Ayler Quintet, Copenhagen, Bordeaux & Newport, First Release