Beyond the Changes: John Coltrane's Jazz Revolution

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Individual Documentary

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Annotated Bibliography

Primary Sources

'Round About Midnight. Recorded 26 Oct. 1955. Performance by Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Red Garland, Paul Chambers, and Philly Joe Jones, produced by George Avakian, Columbia, 1957. *YouTube*. Accessed 27 Jan. 2026.

This is an original studio recording on Columbia Records with fully documented personnel and session details. This record shows Coltrane early in his career as a sideman in Miles Davis' band. The recording demonstrates Coltrane's fluency in the hard bop style, with clean melody, precise harmony, and confident bebop execution that establishes a technical baseline for his early career. I used this in the contextual section to show what Coltrane sounded like before his major innovations, and argue that he pushed beyond bebop from a position of mastery.

Blue Train. Recorded 15 Sept. 1957. Performance by John Coltrane, Lee Morgan, Curtis Fuller, Kenny Drew, Paul Chambers, and Philly Joe Jones, produced by Alfred Lion, Blue Note, 1958. *YouTube*.

This is one of Coltrane's earlier albums as a leader, recorded on Blue Note Records with fully documented session details. The album demonstrates his command of dense chords and extended melodic lines that hint at his innovations. I used this to document Coltrane's command of existing jazz language and his own sheets of sound to make the contrast with Giant Steps more meaningful.

"Charlie Parker & Dizzy Gillespie - Hot House (1952)." *YouTube*, uploaded by Jazz Time with Jarvis X, 21 June 2023. Accessed 28 Feb. 2026.

Used to show video clips of Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie performing together.

Coltrane, John.

Coltrane, John. Liner notes. *A Love Supreme*, performance by John Coltrane, McCoy Tyner, Jimmy Garrison, and Elvin Jones, produced by Bob Thiele, Impulse!, 1964.

John Coltrane is the primary subject of this documentary, and as the author of these liner notes, his words carry the highest possible authority on the intent and meaning of A Love Supreme. In the notes, Coltrane describes the album as a humble offering to God, explains its four-part structure, and reflects on his personal religious journey. We cited these notes directly in the script because they provide Coltrane's own voice as evidence for the doc's central argument. Coltrane's own words show him consciously framing his work as a revolution in the purpose and meaning of music.

"Confirmation." *YouTube*, uploaded by Charlie Parker, 10 Aug. 2018. Accessed 28 Feb. 2026.
Used as audio accompaniment during explanation of bebop to give an audible example.

Giant Steps. Recorded 4 May 1959. Performance by John Coltrane, Tommy Flanagan, Paul Chambers, and Art Taylor, produced by Nesuhi Ertegun, Impulse!, 1960. *YouTube*. Accessed 27 Jan. 2026.
This record is one of the most historically significant albums in jazz, recorded for Impulse! Records with fully documented session details and universally recognized as a landmark in jazz harmonic history. The album introduced the Coltrane changes, a system of chord progressions cycling through three key centers, raising the bar for jazz harmony and musicians forever. I used this recording as a central piece of evidence in the musical innovations section, and I played clips to give audiences an experience of the innovation being described.

Gottlieb, William P. *Library of Congress*. *Library of Congress*. Accessed 28 Feb. 2026.
Used to show historical photographs of Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, and various bebop performances.

Grunwald, Evan. Personal interview with the author. 23 Jan. 2026.
Evan Grunwald is a Berklee alum and music theory educator with direct expertise in harmony, improvisation, and jazz theory, making him qualified to explain

Coltrane's technical innovations. In the interview, he discussed the Coltrane changes, how they went against jazz conventions, why they challenged musicians, and how his legacy shaped modern jazz. We used his explanations at key moments, because his musician's perspective allowed us to make arguments rooted in very complex music theory very accessible and easy to understand. His perspective on Coltrane's legacy also connects to the theme of reform, showing how the revolution Coltrane made had lasting reforms in how jazz musicians are trained and evaluated today.

Impressions. Recorded Nov. 1961. Performance by John Coltrane, McCoy Tyner, Jimmy Garrison, and Elvin Jones, produced by Bob Thiele, Impulse!, 1963. *YouTube*. Accessed 27 Jan. 2026.

This record is a studio recording on Impulse! Records with fully documented session details, representing one of the clearest examples of Coltrane's mature modal approach and widely studied as a landmark of 1960s jazz. The title track is built on a two-chord modal progression which gives Coltrane nearly unlimited freedom and harmonic space. I used this alongside My Favorite Things to show the beginning of his spiritual framing.

Jazz Collection. *Louisiana State Museum Jazz Collection Photography and Film*. Accessed 28 Feb. 2026.

Used to show archival photographs of New Orleans jazz, establishing the African American roots of jazz.

"John Coltrane - A Love Supreme only once in own concert (1965)." *Vimeo*, uploaded by Jean CECE. Accessed 28 Feb. 2026.

Used to show video footage of a performance of A Love Supreme.

"John Coltrane Footage at Newport 1966." *YouTube*, uploaded by HighwaySynch Synch, 25 Mar. 2012. Accessed 28 Feb. 2026.

Used to show live performance footage of Coltrane late in his career.

"John Coltrane - Giant Steps (2020 Remaster) [Official Audio]." *YouTube*, uploaded by John Coltrane, 21 Aug. 2020. Accessed 28 Feb. 2026.

Used to provide an example of the Coltrane changes in action.

John Coltrane: Images of Trane. *Jazz Times*. Accessed 28 Feb. 2026.

Used to provide historical photographs of Coltrane as visual accompaniment during narration.

"John Coltrane Quartet My Favorite Things Live in Comblain-La-Tour 1965." *YouTube*, uploaded by Vince Cho, 4 Aug. 2022. Accessed 28 Feb. 2026.

Used to show Coltrane performing modal improvisation.

Kind of Blue. Performance by Miles Davis, Cannonball Adderley, John Coltrane, Bill Evans, Wynton Kelly, Paul Chambers, and Jimmy Cobb, produced by Irving Townsend, Columbia, 1959. *YouTube*. Accessed 27 Jan. 2026.

This is the best-selling jazz album of all time and one of the most studied recordings ever, produced by Columbia Records with fully documented personnel. The album pioneered modal jazz in its full form, and expanded beyond bebop with its modal scales. I used this recording in the modal jazz context section to show that Coltrane's later work grew out of the movement that he was part of from its earliest moments.

Love Devotion Surrender. Performance by Carlos Santana and John McLaughlin, Columbia, 1973. *YouTube*. Accessed 27 Jan. 2026.

This is a studio recording on Columbia Records created explicitly as a tribute to Coltrane by two major rock and jazz-fusion artists, Carlos Santana and John McLaughlin, both followers of Sri Chinmoy and deeply influenced by Coltrane's spiritual approach to music. The album covers several of Coltrane's compositions and adopts his musical approach to rock audiences who had never engaged with

jazz. I used this in the legacy section to support the argument that his influence altered how musicians and audiences alike, from across genres, understood music.

A Love Supreme. Recorded 9 Dec. 1964. Performance by John Coltrane, McCoy Tyner, Jimmy Garrison, and Elvin Jones, produced by Bob Thiele, Impulse!, 1965. *YouTube*. Accessed 27 Jan. 2026.

This record is one of the most critically acclaimed and historically significant recordings in American music, recorded in a single session with Coltrane's classic quartet, and with documented personnel. The four-part suite functions as a structured spiritual testimony, with each movement corresponding to a phase of religious devotion and recurring motifs that act like chants or prayers. I used this recording as the main piece of evidence for the documentary's spiritual revolution argument.

"Miles Davis John Coltrane - So What (Live Video)." *YouTube*, uploaded by Duka Härbe, 8 Feb. 2010. Accessed 28 Feb. 2026.

Used to show an example of modal jazz and introduce John Coltrane as a sideman to Miles Davis.

"Miles Davis - Straight, No Chaser." *YouTube*, uploaded by JazzTuna, 20 Sept. 2011. Accessed 28 Feb. 2026.

Used to show Coltrane's sheets of sound technique in action.

Milestones. Recorded 4 Feb. 1958. Performances by Miles Davis, Cannonball Adderley, John Coltrane, Red Garland, Paul Chambers, and Philly Joe Jones, produced by George Avakian, Columbia, 1958. *YouTube*. Accessed 27 Jan. 2026.

This is studio recording on Columbia Records that shows a pivotal transition in jazz. Miles Davis' early modal experiments on this album gave Coltrane space to develop his signature sheets of sound. Additionally, he also displayed a mastery of bebop on the record. I used solo passages from this album to give viewers an

example of the technique and illustrate his mastery of the jazz language of the time.

My Favorite Things. Recorded 21 Oct. 1960. Performance by John Coltrane, McCoy Tyner, Steve Davis, and Elvin Jones, produced by Nesuhi Ertegun, Atlantic, 1961. *YouTube*. Accessed 27 Jan. 2026.

This record is a landmark Coltrane recording on Atlantic Records with fully documented session details, and is a pivotal moment in his artistic development and in the history of modal jazz. The recording applies Coltrane's modal approach to a Broadway show tune, using non-Western techniques and extended improvisation. I used this recording to show how Coltrane was innovating jazz in ways that had never been seen before, and to mark the start of his shift to spirituality in his music.

"Naima - John Coltrane Quartet 1965." *YouTube*, uploaded by Mr Wolf, 27 Sept. 2021. Accessed 28 Feb. 2026.

Used to introduce John Coltrane's playing and show emotional depth during his classic quartet period.

Om. Recorded 1 Oct. 1965. Performance by John Coltrane, Pharoah Sanders, Donald Rafael Garrett, Joe Brazil, McCoy Tyner, Jimmy Garrison, and Elvin Jones, produced by Bob Thiele, Impulse!, 1968. *YouTube*. Accessed 27 Jan. 2026.

This record is a studio recording on Impulse! Records with fully documented session details, representing the outer edge of Coltrane's avant-garde and spiritual experimentation. The album opens with chanting from the Bhagavad Gita and has free improvisation with lots of intensity, with Coltrane describing his intent as capturing the primordial vibration underlying all existence. I used this in the spiritual expansion section to show a progression from structured testimony to this album's pure spiritual energy.

"Two Bass Hit." *YouTube*, uploaded by Miles Davis, 19 May 2015. Accessed 28 Feb. 2026.

Used to demonstrate Coltrane's bebop mastery and show his fluency in hard bop.

Washington, Kamasi. "From Snoop to Coltrane, Kamasi Washington talks us through five of his most influential albums." Interview by Finn Blythe. *Hero Magazine*, 20 Aug. 2018. Accessed 27 Jan. 2026.

Kamasi Washington is one of the most celebrated contemporary jazz saxophonists, widely recognized as a central figure in the modern revival of jazz's spiritual traditions. In this interview, Washington identifies Coltrane;s work as foundational to his own approach, describing how Coltrane's virtuosity and spiritual intent defined what serious jazz meant to him. I used this source in the legacy section to demonstrate that Coltrane's influence spans far beyond his own generation. This connects to the theme because it shows that Coltrane's revolution produced a lasting reform on jazz.

Secondary Sources

Berkman, Franya J. "Appropriating Universality: The Coltranes and 1960s Spirituality." *American Studies*, vol. 48, no. 1, spring 2007, pp. 41-62. *JSTOR*. Accessed 27 Jan. 2026.

Franya J. Berkman is a scholar published in American Studies, a peer-reviewed academic journal. Her article explores how John and Alice Coltrane drew on Eastern spiritual traditions and how their music was received. I used this source in the spiritual expansion section to explain how Coltrane's turn toward Eastern philosophy on albums like Om had larger cultural significance beyond the music itself. This strengthened the documentary's connection between his personal spiritual beliefs and his cultural impact. This connects to the theme because Berkman shows how Coltrane's spiritual revolution caused a public reaction and impact.

Bertholf, Garry J. "John Coltrane: Jazz Improvisation, Performance, and Transcription." *Honors Theses*, no. 657. Accessed 27 Jan. 2026.

Garry J. Bertholf completed this honors thesis at Colby College, where it was reviewed by faculty advisors, giving it credibility as an analytical study. The

thesis focuses on close transcription and analysis of Coltrane's solos, examining how his melodic language evolved from bebop through modal and avant-garde solos. We used this source in the musical innovations section, particularly for explaining sheets of sound and understanding harmonic evolution. This connects to the theme of revolution because Bertholf's analysis shows at the level of individual notes how radical Coltrane's departure from existing jazz conventions actually was.

Brown, Leonard L. *John Coltrane and Black America's Quest for Freedom : Spirituality and the Music*. Oxford UP, 2010.

Leonard L. Brown is a professor of Africana Studies at Northeastern University and a practicing jazz musician, giving him both scholarly and practical expertise on this subject. His book examines how Coltrane's music was connected to Black America's spiritual and political struggles during the Civil Rights era. He argued that albums like A Love Supreme functioned as a cultural testimony expressing collective identity instead of just a musical achievement. I used this source to support the argument that Coltrane's revolution was interconnected with the revolution and reform of the Civil Rights Era. Additionally, it helped bridge the musical and cultural pillars of our thesis.

Clements, Carl. "John Coltrane and the Integration of Indian Concepts in Jazz Improvisation." *Jazz Research Journal*, vol. 2, no. 2, 31 May 2009, pp. 155-75. Accessed 27 Jan. 2026.

Carl Clements is a published jazz musician with a Ph.D. in Ethnomusicology, and an MFA and BM in Jazz Performance, Composition, and Arranging. His article traces how Coltrane incorporated concepts from Indian classical music, such as raga structures, drones, and the spiritual philosophy behind the music. I used this source to support the claim that Coltrane used modal experimentation and incorporation of non-Western techniques to further his jazz revolution.

Duarte, Eduardo. "Driving That Trane: Hegel and How John Coltrane Invited the Warlocks to Become the Grateful Dead." *Proceedings of the Grateful Dead Studies Association*, vol. 1, 2021, pp. 71-80. Accessed 27 Jan. 2026.

Eduardo Durate is a Professor at Hofstra University and has his PhD in Philosophy. His article argues that Coltrane's model of long-form collective improvisation directly influenced the Grateful Dead. We used this source in the legacy section to demonstrate that Coltrane's revolution extended well beyond jazz, showing how his ideas reshaped live performance across genres. The source connects to the theme because it shows the reform Coltrane sparked in music culture and performance.

Giant Steps. *CD's Guitar Blog*. Accessed 28 Feb. 2026.

Used to provide a visual explanation of the Coltrane changes and convey the complexity.

"Grateful Dead - 05-03-1968 Columbia U. (video)." *YouTube*, uploaded by Davidaron60, 12 June 2013. Accessed 28 Feb. 2026.

Used to show early Grateful Dead footage illustrating the long-form collective improvisation that was influenced by Coltrane.

"John Coltrane - Giant Steps - Circle of Fifths Diagram." *YouTube*, uploaded by Kyrla, 3 Jan. 2019. Accessed 28 Feb. 2026.

Used to visually illustrate the geometric structure of Coltrane changes and how they move through three key centers.

"Kamasi Washington: Tiny Desk Concert." *YouTube*, uploaded by Npr Music, 21 Oct. 2024. Accessed 28 Feb. 2026.

Used to show Kamasi Washington, a contemporary jazz artist whose work continues Coltrane's legacy.

Lawson, Bill E. "Jazz and the African-American Experience: The Expressiveness of African-American Music." *Language, Mind, and Art*, 1994, pp. 131-42. Accessed 27 Jan. 2026.

Bill E. Lawson is a Professor of Philosophy at the University of Memphis. His essay argues that jazz must be understood in the context of the African American experience, as a form of cultural communication rooted in improvisation, expressiveness, and memory instead of entertainment. I used this source to establish the context, and the fact that jazz was always a vehicle for identity, which set the stage for Coltrane's move towards spirituality. This connects to the theme because Lawson shows that jazz emerged as a reaction to the African American historical experience, which gave the foundation for understanding why Coltrane's revolution had such deep cultural and political meaning.

Porter, Lewis. *John Coltrane His Life and Music Lewis Porter*. U of Michigan P, 2017.

This scholarly biography by Lewis Porter, a respected jazz historian, professor, and musicologist, gives a detailed account of John Coltrane's life and musical development. Porter analyzes Coltrane's innovations, spirituality, and stylistic evolution using musical examples, first-hand accounts, and historical context. I used this source to support my explanation of the "Coltrane changes," his modal shift, and the spiritual framing of *A Love Supreme.* This book was one of the most important secondary sources because it connected music theory to historic significance, and gave general insight into his life and music. This helped me explain why Coltrane's innovations mattered beyond music.

Reynolds, Nick. "Charting the Spiritual Experience in Jazz." *Religions*, vol. 14, no. 7, 27 June 2023, p. 842. Accessed 27 Jan. 2026.

Nick Reynolds is the head of jazz at the University of Chichester, and wrote his PhD on the role of spirituality on jazz education. His article shows how spirituality has been expressed across jazz history and gives a detailed analysis of Coltrane in particular. We used this source in the A Love Supreme section to support the claim that framing music as devotion instead of just entertainment was

a historically significant cultural act. This connects to the theme of reform, as Reynolds demonstrates how Coltrane's spiritual framing reformed the cultural purpose of jazz and changes what audiences expected music to do.

"Sheets of Sound." *The Jazz Piano Site*. Accessed 28 Feb. 2026.

Used to visually explain the sheets of sound technique to show what Coltrane was doing harmonically.

Yang, Julian. "The Birth of New Jazz: How Progressive Musical Ideas Influenced Jazz Beyond its Sonic Elements." *Scaffold*, vol. 3, 2021 Accessed 27 Jan. 2026.

Julian Yang is a scholar published in Scaffold, an undergrad academic journal that undergoes faculty review. His article examines how Coltrane's innovation influenced not just the sound of jazz, but how it was understood culturally and academically. We used this source to provide context in early jazz, and also contextualize jazz in the Civil Rights movement. We also used it to explain how Coltrane was on the cutting edge of innovation early in his career. This connects to the theme of revolution, because Yang shows that Coltrane's revolution made lasting reform, and how the context of the beginning of jazz laid the foundation for his revolution.

Process Paper

I chose John Coltrane because I wanted a topic that was both musically rich and historically significant. As a musician myself, I was drawn to how his work connects technical innovation and cultural upheaval. The theme of Revolution, Reaction, and Reform fit Coltrane perfectly, as his career sparked a musical revolution, and ultimately reformed how jazz was understood as an art form.

My research began broadly. I first researched the historical context of jazz, and studied Coltrane's early work with Miles Davis. At this stage, my goal was to answer a foundational question: what exactly did Coltrane Change? As I moved into his solo career, I analyzed records like *Blue Train, Giant Steps,* and *My Favorite Things,* comparing their improvisational approaches. A major challenge I faced was translating very complex music theory topics, such as the "Coltrane changes", into explanations accessible to a general audience. To address this, I conducted an interview with Evan Grunwald, a Berklee-trained musician and music theory educator. Grunwald's clear breakdown of Coltrane's harmonic systems helped me refine my own understanding. I also relied heavily on Lewis Porter's *John Coltrane: His Life and Music* and Leonard Brown's *John Coltrane and Black America's Quest for Freedom*, which helped me connect Coltrane's technical innovation to cultural movements. As my research progressed, I noticed a shift in Coltrane's focus from technical mastery to spiritual expression, leading me to analyze his liner notes for *A Love Supreme* as a primary source. This discovery reframed my thesis, allowing me to explore how Coltrane's revolution was not only musical, but philosophical. Tracing this evolution chronologically allowed me to see how each stage of his career built from the last, which strengthened my claim that Coltrane's work reformed within a tradition of jazz.

I built a my documentary structured in four sections: jazz origins and bebop, Coltrane's musical innovations, his spiritual expansion, and his legacy. The structure moves chronologically through Coltrane's career while building toward a single argument unified argument.

John Coltrane sparked a jazz revolution that permanently reformed both it's sound and it's cultural meaning. Having mastered bebop, he introduced a new harmonic system, while developing a modal approach that transformed improvisation and explicitly framing it as an act of devotion. This was reform from within the tradition, showing how Coltrane took the expressive, identity-centered roots of jazz and pushed them into new territory.

Coltrane's revolution reshaped jazz at every level. His harmonic innovations permanently raised expectations for musicians, and his modal work reformed how improvisation was taught for generations. His influence spread far beyond jazz. For example, the Grateful Dead adopted his model of long-form collective improvisation, and Carlos Santana and John McLaughlin recorded an entire album in tribute to his compositions. Additionally Contemporary saxophonist Kamasi Washington continues to cite him as the defining influence on his approach to music. Coltrane demonstrated that music could function as cultural identity, spiritual practice, and social expression, creating a reform of what art is for that extended well beyond jazz.