



## Fourth Annual John Coltrane Festival Set for August 30, 2014 in His Hometown of High Point, NC

By Larry Reni Thomas



[continued from page 1]

saxophone at an early age, way before he became a teenager. Coltrane was a member of a community band, in addition to the school band. In 1938-39, his grandfather and father died, within weeks of each other, causing the shy-acting John, who was around twelve-years-old, to become a little depressed. Four years later, days after graduating from high school, John Coltrane, like countless other blacks in the segregated South, went north. Coltrane joined his mother in Philadelphia.

It was during this period that the great saxophonist began to do what he would do religiously for the rest of his life. John Coltrane became an extremely dedicated musician who believed practice made perfect. He, according to several fellow artists, practiced on his instrument everyday, all day.

"John Coltrane practiced more than anybody I knew," said tenor saxophone legend Jimmy Heath, during an interview several years ago. Heath, whose award-winning autobiography, "I Walked With Giants" also mentioned Heath's close relationship with fellow Philadelphian

John Coltrane, was a friend and leader of a big band that Coltrane was a member of during the late 1940s. "He would practice after the gig. When we got back to the hotel. He would practice. Play all morning. Then he would fall asleep with the horn still around his neck. John was very, very disciplined and never thought there was such a thing as practicing too much."

Larry Ridley, the bassist and educator, who was also a friend of John Coltrane and had sat in with him once in the 1960s at a New York City club, recalled a visit to Coltrane's Long Island home, during an interview for the audio documentary "John Coltrane: A Great North Carolina Jazz Intellectual." Ridley said that he and a group of musicians were sitting around John's living room, talking and socializing, and when he looked around, he noticed that John had left the room. "Where is he? Where is John? Where did he go?" Ridley asked. Then, Larry said he heard John in the back room, practicing on his horn. "He loved to practice. He was a practice fanatic," said Ridley.

So, it was in High Point, a small city known more for furniture making, where all the practicing and spirituality, all began. His grandfather's joyful, uplifting church services and the supreme feeling he got from celebrating the spiritual side of life, all help to make, mold Coltrane into becoming a well-respected, widely-known, historic, influential, jazz giant. It was during those few years in his young life, during his time in High Point, when he was about to become a man, that Coltrane started his journey. It was one of the many turning points in his life, maybe the most important, because High Point was where the spark was lit, and it stands to reason that High Point is where the local citizens should celebrate one of their own and have a festival. After all, High Point was Coltrane's home.

For years, there have been people in High Point who have known that the famous, internationally-known John Coltrane was raised in their hometown. Some noticed that for years, there have been a steady stream of tourists and researchers, visiting the house where Coltrane lived on Underhill Street The

first effort to honor him as a former fellow High Point citizen began in 2004, when a group, called The Downtown Improvement Committee, formed and lead a successful effort to erect a statue of John Coltrane in downtown High Point. The impressive, bronze statue, created by sculptor Thomas Jay Warren, and financed by grants from The Downtown Improvement Committee, The High Point Convention and Visitors Bureau, The High Point Museum, The City of High Point, The Guilford County Board of Commissioners, The High Point Community Foundation and private donations, was dedicated September 20, 2006, at the Coltrane Plaza, in downtown High Point, with a reading sent from musician Carlos Santana.

"The Friends of John Coltrane was formed in 2009," said Joe Williams, one of the organizers, and a member of the group. "We thought that we would use the momentum of the statue being erected and try to organize a music festival that would involve the High Point community. We wanted the whole community to be involved. It took a lot of hard work, but, we were finally able to present the first festival in 2011. It went well. A lot of people showed up from places like Boston, D.C., Atlanta, New York. We even had some folks from Japan contact us."

Williams, a Philadelphian who moved to High Point years ago, said he has experience in show business as a promoter, record representative, and road manager. He was able to draw on his contacts and help book an all-star line-up for every festival since the first one. "This festival is now a nationally recognized festival," said Williams. We have heard from people as far away as Canada, California, Massachusetts and New York. We think that it's very important that High Point residents get involved. Last year was good, great crowd, and the best part about it was that most of the people there were from right here in the area. Everybody is always looking for somewhere to go for The Labor Day weekend. We think that this is the place."

For more information about The Fourth Annual John Coltrane International Jazz and Blues Festival in High Point, North Carolina go to: [www.coltranejazzfest.com](http://www.coltranejazzfest.com). or [www.friendsofjohncoltrane.com](http://www.friendsofjohncoltrane.com)., or call: (336) 819-5299.

Let the  
**AC Phoenix News**  
Work 4 You

Call 336.635.4096  
for Advertising Rates & Information

**The Family That Prays Together— Stays Together.**

**LIFE WITHOUT MUSIC WOULD B<sup>b</sup>**

What's the difference between a cat and a human?  
One has claws at the end of its paws, and one is a pause at the end of a clause.

When you are going through something hard and wonder where God is, remember the teacher is always quiet during a test.

**DON'T EXPECT THIS GUY TO TEACH YOUR CHILDREN ANYTHING ABOUT THEIR HISTORY**

**JAMES BALDWIN**  
IN 90 SECONDS

Watch the premiere of **Black History Mini Docs** featuring James Baldwin

**BLACK HISTORY MINI DOCS**

Click! Like Comment Share