

# R.I.P. Ornette Coleman

[youtube id="d0HB8ybKJzo"]

Free and avant-garde jazz pioneer Ornette Coleman died today in NYC at the age of 85. Coleman was a leader of the free jazz movement in the '50's and '60's with albums like *The Shape Of Jazz To Come*, *Change of The Century*, *Something Else!* and *Free Jazz: A Collective Improvisation*. Coleman's original quartet consisted of Billy Higgins, Charlie Haden, and Don Cherry and he described the unique style lead by his alto saxophone as harmolodics. He was married to the late jazz poet Jayne Cortez for ten years between '54-'64 with whom he had his son Denardo Coleman. Denardo became a drummer for both of his parents and made his first recording with his father at age 10 on the 1966 album *The Empty Foxhole*. In the '70's Ornette Coleman took on a funk/rock sound with his band Prime Time that helped the careers of Ronald Shannon Jackson, James Blood Ulmer and Jamaaladeen Tacuma. Coleman's music was of the first wave to challenge Charlie Parker's ideas and he became a jazz icon despite little recognition in the mainstream. In 2007 he became the second musician to receive a Pulitzer Prize for his 2006 album *Sound Grammar*. He was the second jazz artist to receive the honor. He was also the recipient of a MacArthur Genius Grant, A Lifetime Grammy Achievement Award and an honorary doctorate from University Of Michigan.

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## In 2012 We Said Goodbye

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Jimmy Castor Funk Pioneer



Johnny Otis Godfather of  
R&B



Etta James The Matriarch Of The Blues



Clare Fischer Master Arranger



Belita Woods Soul Singer



Don Cornelius Soul Train Founder



David Peaston R&B singer



Whitney Houston Pop Queen Actress



Dick Clark Media Mogul



MCA One third of pioneering rap group The  
Beastie Boys Film Director Activist



Ms. Melodie Member of Boogie Down  
Productions



Donald "Duck" Dunn Bass of Stax  
Records



I.G. Off NYC Underground Rap Star of the '90's



Chuck Brown King of Go-Go



Donna Summer Queen Of Disco



Faruq Z. Bey Detroit jazz innovator



Robin Gibb One-third of the Bee Gees



Fontella Bass "Rescue Me" singer



Jayne Cortez Master Poet Activist



Dave Brubeck Progressive Jazz Leader

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# R.I.P. Jayne Cortez

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[Jayne Cortez](#), the poet, activist and independent publisher passed in New York City today. Cortez's picturesque poems challenged imperialism, sexism, racism and homophobia with the with rhythms and moxie of jazz. In the '60s she was involved in the Civil Rights Movement via SNCC and organized writing workshops in her native California. She established Bola Press in 1972 and began publishing the first of ten eventual titles. Her musical output started in 1974 with her band The Firespitters and the *Celebrations and Solitudes* debut album. A ten-year marriage to avant jazz pioneer Ornette Coleman produced her son Denardo, who has worked as a drummer in both of his parents' bands. Cortez received the Langston Hughes Award for excellence in the arts and letters, the American Book Award, and the International African Festival Award, among others. Although she was not as known as peers like Amiri Baraka she was acknowledged by them for her searing literary heft. Cortez's poetry-laced funk/jazz excursions called out the oppressor with the authority of a spiritual PI ultimately in search of accountability for the soul.