

# I SWEAR I HEARD THIS... I SWEAR I HEARD THIS GHOST. LIKE, FOR REAL!

Lee Griffiths

So, from the beginning. I decided to listen to the eponymous debut album by Chris McGregor's Brotherhood of Breath for the first time in... longer than I can remember. It's really good.

On the second track 'Davashe's Dream,' I heard Percy Pursglove. He played that thing he does, where he interjects a fast run of wide intervals shooting up into the higher register, then immediately returns to a relatively calm melodic line. It's so Percy. But here's where it gets weird. Percy was born a full decade after the album was released.

I know what you're thinking. It obviously wasn't Percy playing on the recording, it was Mongezi Feza, as listed in the liner notes and who was very much alive at the time of the recording. Well sure, but if that were true then one of these things would also have to be true: 1) Percy's playing is somewhat old-fashioned, around half a century past being new and innovative; or 2) Feza's solo is startlingly ahead of its time, by a full four to five decades. Neither of those claims seem to make sense to me, so I choose to believe the simplest explanation – that recording captured a ghost of jazz to come.

It's not the only time I've heard a ghost either. I swear!

Around 2014 I heard John Coltrane in Digbeth. Yeah, yeah, I know.

I'd been listening to loads of 'Trane around that time, trying to imitate the enormous sound and frenetic energy of those recordings from *A Love Supreme* onwards. I felt sure that I could bring some of those ideas into the more contemporary stuff I was actually playing in public. I didn't want to sound like a '60s relic, but god I wanted to play like JC.



Then one night in the back room of a pub that no longer exists, with my eyes firmly closed, I heard him. In the room. He can't have been more than 5 feet away from me. Every time I opened my eyes, like a bizarre illusion, I could see a bearded white man with a saxophone strapped to his neck with an old leather belt. A man who'd spoken to me before the gig started in such a soft tone. He appeared to be playing, but it was 'Trane – living, breathing 'Trane – that I heard.

I don't know. I mean he could have sounded *like* Coltrane. But I don't know man. I swear I heard a ghost.

**Lee Griffiths** is a saxophonist, promoter, and researcher who draws on his practice as a writer and musician to explore themes around improvisation, jazz, media, and culture. His doctoral project drew heavily on the philosophy of Karen Barad and he continues to explore a range of New Materialist themes and ideas.

