

CARAVAN

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ART BLAKEY JAZZ MESSENGERS



SIDE 1

1. Caravan (9:44) (*Ellington-Mills-Tizol*) (ASCAP)
2. Sweet 'n' Sour (5:28) (*Wayne Shorter*) (BMI)
3. In the Wee Small Hours of the Morning (4:01) (*James-Elliott*) (ASCAP)

SIDE 2

1. This Is for Albert (8:15) (*Wayne Shorter*) (BMI)
2. Skylark (4:45) (*Carmichael-Mercer*) (ASCAP)
3. Thermo (6:44) (*Freddie Hubbard*) (BMI)

This is an event: the *Riverside* debut of Art Blakey's assertive and stimulating band, in an album that finds the group celebrating its new affiliation by performing at top-level form. The name "Messengers" has been an apt description of Art's several groups down through the years to this sextet. For the ability to communicate directly to an audience — to deliver the message — is and always has been a Blakey hallmark.

The name was actually first used in the mid-1940s, when Art led a big band in New York known as the Seventeen Messengers, but its current history began in '55, when he used the "Jazz Messengers" handle for the quintet that included Horace Silver, Kenny Dorham, Hank Mobley, and Doug Watkins. Until mid-1961, Blakey continued to lead five-piece groups with periodically shifting personnel, groups to which new flavors were frequently introduced by such composer-members as Bobby Timmons, Benny Golson, and Jackie McLean.

Then in 1961, several key changes took place. Timmons and Lee Morgan stepped out on their own and were replaced by Cedar Walton and Freddie Hubbard. Wayne Shorter remained, and perhaps his new status as the band's "veteran" sideman has accelerated his rapid growth as both performer and writer. Most significant, however, was the addition of Curtis Fuller, not merely because of the trombonist's great individual ability, but also because this made the group a sextet for the first time. The three-horn lineup immediately presented the opportunity for more tonal colors and voices in motion. The most recent change, the 1962 shift to Reggie Workman as bassist, completes the current Blakey band, a group with more room for musical depth and with no lessening of the outpouring of spirit that has been at the center of all Messenger units.

The unmistakable solo power of the front line is very much in evidence here. Significantly, Shorter, Hubbard

and Fuller have in recent years each been voted a New Star award in the *Down Beat* International Critics Poll. By now, although all are still young men, the word "new" no longer applies, but the description "star" certainly does. The rhythm section is a "tough" one: Walton, the solid comper with a personal solo style; Workman, the firm bassist whose playing makes his name seem an inevitable one; and Blakey, the swinging strong man. In the hands of a lesser artist, Art's style might easily become blast and bombast. But as Miles Davis has said, in discussing precisely this point: "Art's got so much talent."

The three horn men and Walton are all contributors to the band's overall book, but only Shorter and Hubbard are represented here. The first of Shorter's two pieces leads us to recall that, long ago, the combination of Wayne and waltz could only mean orchestra leader Wayne King, "The Waltz King", a sort of predecessor of Lawrence Welk. Today, a jazz waltz is by no means a rarity — which does not mean that there is anything commonplace about the artful construction and general effectiveness of *this* Wayne's waltz, *Sweet 'n' Sour*, which takes its name from its use of musical contrasts. Shorter's other number, *This Is for Albert*, is harmonically provocative, with a notably rich ensemble sound. (It is dedicated to Bud Powell — although standard reference works don't list it, Wayne says Art and other contemporaries of Powell insist that the pianist's actual first name is Albert.) Hubbard's original, *Thermo*, is a darting minor-key theme, as hot and explosive as its title, that moves right along with an absence of strain in theme and solo sections alike.

The ballad performances, *Skylark* and *Wee Small Hours*, belong for the most part to, respectively, Hubbard and Fuller. Freddie is singing and soaring on the former; Curtis is warm, full-toned and more ruminative on his featured number.

Actually, Blakey is (for him) relatively subdued through most of the album. This is not to say that one is unaware of his presence. His sticks and feet accent imaginatively; his brushwork behind piano solos is masterful; his general vitality is always felt. And on the album's lead track and title tune, *Caravan*, he is really in high gear. From his opening salvos, leading into the North African motifs that precede the theme, through his volatile accompaniment to the horn choruses and his excitingly polyrhythmic solo, to the rumbling, dramatic ending, Blakey is consistently the master drummer. There is technique galore in his solo, but you're much too concerned with what he is saying to stop and marvel at it from any academic standpoint. The band responds marvellously throughout, and especially delightful is the mercurial counterline that Hubbard and Shorter play against Fuller's line during the bridge.

—IRA GITLER

ART BLAKEY, drums; FREDDIE HUBBARD, trumpet; CURTIS FULLER, trombone; WAYNE SHORTER, tenor sax; CEDAR WALTON, piano; REGGIE WORKMAN, bass.

PRODUCED BY ORRIN KEEPNEWS. RECORDING ENGINEER: RAY FOWLER. (RECORDED AT PLAZA SOUND STUDIOS; NEW YORK CITY.) ALBUM DESIGN: KEN DEARDOFF. BACKLINER PHOTOS BY STEVE SCHAPIRO.

(Freddie Hubbard courtesy of ABC-Paramount Records.)

SWEET 'N' SOUR (Take 4) 5:26
THERMO (Take 2) 7:24

Two initially-unissued takes have been added to the original album for this Compact Disc release. Both had been marked "Hold" (indicating tentative acceptance) when recorded, but later takes were used on the album. Take 2 of "Thermo" was made on the first (October 23, 1962) of two sessions; it has appeared only on the Milestone reissue 'twofer' *Thermo* (M-47008). The originally-issued "Thermo" and both versions of "Sweet 'n' Sour" were recorded on the following day.—O.K.

(Liner notes and credits taken directly from back cover of original album. For full contents and sequence of this Compact Disc, see label.)

**DIGITAL
REMASTER**
STEREO

1. Caravan
- *2. Sweet 'n' Sour (take 4)
3. Sweet 'n' Sour
4. In the Wee Small Hours of the Morning
5. This Is for Albert
6. Skylark
- *7. Thermo (take 2)
8. Thermo

*Additional tracks not on original
LP release.

Art Blakey—drums
Curtis Fuller—trombone
Freddie Hubbard—trumpet
Wayne Shorter—tenor sax
Cedar Walton—piano
Reggie Workman—bass

Recorded at Plaza Sound Studios,
New York City; October 23 and 24, 1962.

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