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RIVERSIDE

ART BLAKEY and the JAZZ MESSENGERS

KYOTO



ORIGINAL Jazz CLASSICS COMPACT DISC ®

1. THE HIGH PRIEST 5:55
(Curtis Fuller) Second Floor Music-BMI

2. NEVER NEVER LAND 5:50
(Comden-Green-Styne) E. H. Morris-ASCAP

3. WELLINGTON'S BLUES 5:03
(Art Blakey) Jazz Standards-BMI

4. NIHON BASH 8:30
(Sadao Watanabe) Berklee College of Music, Inc.-BMI

5. KYOTO 7:03
(Freddie Hubbard) Jazz Standards-BMI

FREDDIE HUBBARD—trumpet
WAYNE SHORTER—tenor sax
CURTIS FULLER—trombone
CEDAR WALTON—piano
REGGIE WORKMAN—bass
ART BLAKEY—drums
WELLINGTON BLAKEY—vocal
("Wellington's Blues")

Produced by Orrin Keepnews

Recorded in New York; Februrary 20, 1964

Digital mastering, 1990—Phil De Lancie
(Fantasy Studios, Berkeley)

Photography—Lee Tanner
Album design—Sam Alexander

Riverside Records
Fantasy, Inc.
Tenth and Parker
Berkeley, CA 94710
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Ugetsu was the title number of Art Blakey's last Riverside LP. The name of this album is *Kyoto* after the song that honors the large city of central Japan. Both reflect the great affection that Blakey and his Jazz Messengers have felt for Japan since playing there in the early '60s.

In a 1961 *Down Beat* interview Blakey spoke of Japan: "We've played a lot of countries but never has the whole band been in tears when we left. My wife cried all the way to Hawaii."

The warm reception the Messengers received in Japan began as soon as they got off the plane. Although the other debarking passengers included Edward G. Robinson and Shirley MacLaine, Blakey and his men were anything but unnoticed: their ears were greeted by their own recordings; their eyes, noses and arms by an abundance of flowers.

In many ways jazz musicians are like any other public performers: the more encouragement they receive, the better they will play. The Messengers are no exception. The enthusiasm of the Japanese fans further kindled the already bright Blakey fire. Although this kind of positive response is most welcome, it is not necessarily needed to inspire a group such as Blakey leads. The very records that had made the Messengers well known to the people of Japan were done, quite often, without any audience save an engineer, an a&r man and a few intimates. *Kyoto* is such an album.

The men who carried the message with Art at the time of this recording are now all working in other surroundings. (The Messengers has been a great developing ground for young musicians.) Together they were a formidable array

of talent, a band rather than just a collection of soloists, although as soloists they were also superb. Of course, the "were" is still an "are" in the grooves of this recording. This is a real band with a sound of its own and several talented writers from within its ranks able to effectively utilize the trumpet-tenor-trombone front line.

Trombonist Curtis Fuller is first to be represented. I don't know if *The High Priest* was written in honor of Thelonious Monk or a Japanese holy man encountered on the tour but it has a staccato, punching main theme—with Blakey as a locomotive—and a stately bridge. Curtis launches immediately into the opening solo with the kind of fiery control we have come to expect in his playing. The solos that follow by Wayne Shorter, Freddie Hubbard and Cedar Walton are equally hot. Cedar gets into a Bud Powell groove in the last portion of his solo, spinning fiercely back into the theme. A vamp is used to advantage in each solo.

The mood changes abruptly, but with no loss in vitality, in *Never Never Land,* Jule Styne's beautiful ballad from *Peter Pan.* Fuller's full sound carries the melody as the ensemble chants between statements. Hubbard handles the bridge with sensitivity. In Curtis' sections, Walton does some complementary underlining. Cedar has the first solo in the second chorus wherein he musically links *Never Never Land* with *Glocca Morra.* Freddie again has the bridge with hints of *Spring (It Might As Well Be)* before Fuller returns to take it out.

Reggie Workman's deep-throated bass line introduces Wellington Blakey shouting Wellington's Blues. The band comes in behind him in the second chorus as the intensity starts to build. Wellington, who is Art's cousin, has a crying, pleading urban blues style. Fuller and Hubbard solo with Freddie especially plaintive. In Wellington's final chorus, Shorter backs him with some appropriate moans and cries.

Side two is completely Japan-oriented. The modal minor that opens is *Nihon Bash* by saxophonist-flutist Sadao Watanabe who came from Japan to Boston several years ago in order to study at the Berklee School. Shorter is into a Coltrane groove from the first bars of his solo with Blakey bashing behind him. Fuller is more static, punching away with short phrases. Hubbard begins with a held note and then begins to weave intricate patterns over the insistent machine that is the rhythm section. Walton's solo is perhaps the most Oriental of all but blended with Western jazz motifs—a real meeting of East and West. To the squealers and squallers *Nihon Bash* is probably conservative; to this listener it is an example of how to be avant garde without sacrificing music at the altar of sound effects.

Hubbard's *Kyoto* features a brilliant opening solo from the composer, followed by a vocal Shorter, suede-toned Fuller and lucid Walton. Freddie returns to re-state his lovely sad-waltz melody.

Although Blakey does not solo during the course of this album, one is acutely aware of him because he is always at the center of things, stoking the fire and making the cauldron bubble. A story he told on himself during a percussion discussion for *Down Beat* in March 1964 is very instructive. "I had temple blocks and a stick with a black string on it to the ceiling," said Art in talking about his early playing days. "I was playing the Ritz in Pittsburgh, and I wasn't playing drums. I was twirling sticks, and I'd say

"bam" and throw the stick out, and the people would say "aaaah," and it'd come back, and I'd catch it. Big deal. Chick Webb came in to hear me, and he said, "You're a drummer, kid?" And I said, "Yeah." He said, "Bring your drums in the dressing room." So I brought my drum in there; he said, "Roll." I said, "Ra-ta-ta-ta-ta-ta." He said, "— — —," slammed the door and walked out. I said, "Mr. Webb . . ." He said, "Look, rhythm is on the drum—it ain't in the air."

When Art Blakey plays, the rhythm is on the drum, in the air—it's everywhere!

Ira Gitler

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