Monaural

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A NIGHT AT BIRDLAND
WITH THE
ART BLAKEY QUINTET
VOLUME 1

CLIFFORD BROWN, trumpet; LOU DONALDSON, alto sax;
HORACE SILVER, piano; CURLY RUSSELL, bass; ART BLAKEY, drums.

1 **SPLIT KICK**
(Horace Silver) 8:26

2 **ONCE IN A WHILE**
(B. Green-M. Edwards) 4:56

3 **QUICKSILVER**
(Horace Silver) 6:26

4 **WEE-DOT* (Alternate Take)**
(J.J. Johnson-L. Parker) 6:55

5 **BLUES***
(Traditional) 8:35

6 **A NIGHT IN TUNISIA**
(D. Gillespie-F. Paparelli) 9:45

7 **MAYREH**
(Horace Silver) 6:02

Produced by ALFRED LION
Produced for release by MICHAEL CUSCUNA
Cover Design by REID MILES
Cover Photos by FRANCIS WOLFF
Recording by RUDY VAN GELDER
Recorded on February 21, 1954
Digital Transfer by RON McMASTER
TOTAL TIME: 50:20
*Does not appear on L.P. configuration

The classic Blue Note albums which span the mid 1950's to late 1960's were recorded directly on to two track analog tape. No multitrack recording was used and consequently no mixing was required. Therefore, this CD was made by transferring the one step analog master to digital.

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a night at bird land

ART BLAKEY

jazz corner of the world

CLIFFORD BROWN
LOU DONALDSON
HORACE SILVER CURLY RUSSELL
ART BLAKEY



THE FINEST IN JAZZ SINCE 1939
BLUE NOTE

BLUE NOTE · VOLUME 1

COMPACT disc DIGITAL AUDIO

"*WOW!* First time I enjoyed a record session!"

With these significant words, in a comment you will hear on one of these sides, Art Blakey offers an eloquent tribute to the motive that produced this unique series of recordings.

Because Art had organized this constellation of jazz names a while before taking it into Birdland, and had worked up a library of both old and new material, he was able to produce results that transcended the capabilities of a disorganized jam session.

Because this material was by now familiar enough to the musicians, they were able to express themselves fully and freely. While they could avail themselves of the lack of any time limitation on the performances, they still took no undue advantage, never distorted liberty into license; as a result, there are no 20-minute voyages into tautophony.

And because Birdland attracts the kind of audiences who come to listen to the music rather than to incite violence or tear up chairs, the musicians felt that their offerings were falling on appreciative ears.

Thus *A Night At Birdland* combines the three elements essential to an enjoyable evening of modern jazz: preparation, improvisation and inspiration. And the greatest of these three is inspiration.

THE MEN...Art Blakey's extraordinary talent antedated his recent public recognition by far too many years. Born in Pittsburgh in Oct. 1919, he played in Fletcher Henderson's band in 1939, worked for Mary Lou Williams when she formed her own combo, drifted to Boston and has his own band there, and acquired a limited measure of fan acceptance when he played in the fondly-remembered, star-rich Billy Eckstine band of 1944-7.

He has been heard in night clubs and on records with most of the familiar names of the bop era (he traveled the Blue Note circuit with Monk, Milt Jackson, Miles Davis, Horace Silver, Clifford Brown, Kenny Drew) and worked briefly with Duke Ellington, Lucky Millinder and other big bands.

Although largely ignored by the jazz historians, Blakey deserves a place along with Max Roach and Kenny Clarke in the annals of modern drumming. As diligently as either Max or Klook, he helped effectuate the metamorphosis from bass-and-snares rhythmic and tonal monotony to the full use of all the percussion accoutrements so essential to modern drumming. Before forming his own group he put in year with Buddy De Franco, during which his ability to swing a small group to phenomenal heights was dramatically illustrated.

Art's teammates on *A Night At Birdland* are all members of what might be called the Blue Note family. Lou Donaldson's place in the scene was firmly etched with his great work on three BN LPs; Horace Silver's two sets of solos, now on 12" BLP 1520, won wide acclaim. Clifford Brown, after co-starring with Lou and Jay Jay Johnson, made his first LP as a leader for Blue Note, and Curly Russell has been such a frequent visitor that we won't even attempt to list all of his performances.

THE TIME...Too many records are made under the inexorable pressure of daytime studio working conditions, with half the musicians trying to stay awake after a rough night's work. This

session was made between the hours of 11 p.m. and 3 a.m. on Washington's Birthday eve, February 21, 1954, before a large and obviously receptive audience.

THE PLACE...More than any other club since 52nd Street days, Birdland has earned a global reputation through its effort to promote the best in jazz. Situated below street level on Broadway, near 52nd, it was opened in December 1949 and has played host to virtually every major name in the field.

The ebullient voice that starts the session is that of Pee-Wee Marquette, the club's emcee-mascot, who atones in vocal fortitude for all that he lacks in physical stature.

Special thanks are due to Oscar Goodstein, the club's manager, whose genial cooperation made this novel venture possible.

Recorded by Rudy van Gelder, an engineer who understands jazz and knows how to balance it, the session truly captured the spirit of the occasion and the atmosphere of the world's most rhythmic aviary.

THE MUSIC...BLP 1521 brings a new version of *Split Kick,* which Horace Silver first wrote and recorded when he was with Stan Getz, as well as a combo version of his *Quicksilver,* which he made as a piano solo on BLP 1520. *Once In A While* features a lyrical flight of fancy by Brownie, who at this tempo engages in everything from long, flowing phrases to a flurry of 32nd notes. Listen for the unusual triplet-accent effects in one passage of the accompaniment. *Night in Tunisia* is preceded by Art's oral revelation that he was present when Dizzy wrote the tune—"in Texas,

on the bottom of a garbage can." The sanitation department can take a low bow. Horace's *Mayreh* is based on the chords of a well known song in which all God's children had rhythm.

BLP 1522 features a 12-bar blues theme, *Wee-Dot*, penned some years ago by trombonist Jay Jay Johnson, in which Brownie delivers a tremendous solo. This LP also offers Lou in ballad mood with a fine solo on the old British standard *If I Had You*, plus two familiar themes by Charlie Parker: *Now's The Time* and *Confirmation*. The former, a 12-bar blues, was written some time before the highly successful *Hucklebuck*.

To quote Art Blakey again, we'd like to close by echoing his opinion that he has surrounded himself with "some of the greatest jazz musicians in the country today." As you'll hear him say on the record—"Yes, Sir, I'm going to stay with the youngsters—it keeps the mind active." We might add that at 34, Art is still young in years, in mind and in music, and must surely have many years of success and still greater recognition ahead of him.

—LEONARD FEATHER

These notes were written before the tragic death of Clifford Brown in an automobile accident on June 27, 1956.

* During Blue Note vault research in 1975, four additional full performances from this historic Birdland recording were discovered. Three of them were issued in the U.S. in 1978 as part of a Blakey double album. All four were issued in 1983 in Japan as A NIGHT AT BIRDLAND, Volume Three, which had a short playing time. Due to the expanded time limitations of the CD, half of these discoveries have been added to each of the original Birdland volumes.

—MICHAEL CUSCUNA