

UGETSU

RIVERSIDE

ART BLAKEY'S JAZZ MESSENGERS AT BIRDLAND



ORIGINAL
Jazz
CLASSICS
COMPANIES

1. **ONE BY ONE** 6:17
(Wayne Shorter) Miyako Music-BMI
2. **UGETSU** 10:57
(Cedar Walton) Orpheum Music-BMI
3. **TIME OFF** 4:54
(Curtis Fuller) Second Floor Music-BMI
4. **PING-PONG** 8:05
(Shorter) Ecaroh Music-ASCAP
5. **I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TIME IT WAS** 6:28
(Rodgers-Hart) Chappell & Co., Inc.-ASCAP
6. **ON THE GINZA** 7:01
(Shorter) Miyako Music-BMI
- *7. **EVA** 5:53
(Shorter) Miyako Music-BMI
- *8. **THE HIGH PRIEST** 5:22
(Fuller) Second Floor Music-BMI
- *9. **THE THEME** 1:45

*Additional tracks not on original LP.

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

Produced by ORRIN KEEPNEWS

Recording engineer—Dave Jones

Recorded live at Birdland (New York City);
June 16, 1963.

Mastering—Kirk Felton
(Fantasy Studios, Berkeley)

Riverside Records
Tenth and Parker
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The first six selections here were the total contents of the original live-at-Birdland Riverside album by this all-star version of Blakey's Jazz Messengers. As is often the case with on-the-job recordings, there were other performances taped that night that couldn't be fitted into the resulting album. The extra length of CD permits the very first release of Wayne Shorter's "Eva" and Curtis Fuller's dedicated-to-Monk "The High Priest," as well as the appropriate finale, a version of "The Theme" previously heard only on the double-album reissue, *The Big Beat* (Milestone M-47016).

—O.K.

Difficult as it may be to believe, one of America's foremost small-band drummers (and the band leader at that!) has led his group through the recording of an entire album, did it in front of a hip New York nightclub audience—and did *not* even *once* take a drum solo! The startling proof of this is in this very album of performances by the always-amazing Art Blakey and his Jazz Messengers!

But even more significant than the mere fact of this rare act of self-control is that Art's apparent 'stepping aside' (and the thinking behind it) is really the **key** to the success of this album and this band. Although Blakey does not solo here, he is clearly (as *Riverside* A & R man Orrin Keepnews expressed it to me) "*a vitally present part of things*". I'd even take it one step further and call him the vitally present *start* of things. Art's brilliant sense of time, his tremendous drive and power, his excellent taste, his feeling of complete authority and mastery of his instrument, can't help but start things and, most definitely, keep them going. When you combine these Blakey attributes with his untypical willingness to share the spotlight, and his almost unfailing ability to recognize up-and-coming talent, it's hardly surprising that the fire-filled Jazz Messenger unit has been among the most influential in modern jazz since the early 1950s. Not only influential in terms of its stature as a group, but also in the caliber of musicians it has produced. A partial list of Messenger alumni would include Horace Silver, Kenny Dorham, Donald Byrd, Jackie McLean, Hank Mobley, Benny Golson, Lee Morgan, Bobby Timmons — and the present lineup certainly maintains previous standards.

Which brings us back to this album. Like many others recorded at Birdland, this one opens with the voice of the club's inimitable and ubiquitous master of ceremonies,

Pee Wee Marquette. Up to that point, then, it's nothing unusual. But after those first ten seconds or so there follows a degree of fire-power and cohesiveness that is highly different from what could be considered usual at Birdland or anyplace else.

The opening tune, a Wayne Shorter composition called *One by One*, features an extremely pretty melody that succeeds in being light-and-bright *and* funky at one and the same time. It lopes along at a relaxed tempo, with some very nice work by Freddie Hubbard and some very complementary fills by Blakey. It is followed by the album's title tune, the intriguingly-named *Ugetsu* (as Art explains, that's Japanese for "fantasy", one of two references here to the band's recent tour of that jazz-conscious country). A brilliantly lyrical Hubbard solo is the standout feature of this number for me. And dig composer Cedar Walton's underlying theme pulsating throughout the piece. A Curtis Fuller original, *Time Off*, closes Side 1; it's a happy, up-tempo piece that shows Shorter in his best chord-dissecting form and also offers a fine example of Blakey in a light, yet forceful and driving vein.

Side 2 opens with Shorter's *Ping-Pong*, all dressed up in a new rhythmic setting that I'd describe as a kind of Charleston with a sort of Latin feeling. . . . In any case, I think you'll find it a firm toe-tapper, most rewarding both rhythmically and melodically. Next is a spotlight on Shorter as a ballad soloist on the great standard, *I Didn't Know What Time It Was*. (And dig the really *big* sound whenever the ensemble breaks through to punctuate Wayne's remarks.) Finally, there's another reference to Japan, in yet another Shorter composition, *On the Ginza*, which does seem to build a sound picture of modern Tokyo. (The emphasis on Wayne's

writing here, incidentally, underlines his importance to the group as its "musical director".) In introducing this one, Art trots out one of his happiest clichés: "... on this tune we feature . . . no one in particular."

"... *No one in particular* ..." except the stars of the whole album — five of the swinging-est young men on the jazz scene today, *and* their unfailingly talented "old man", Art Blakey.

—ED SHERMAN

Established in 1950, Birdland is one of the very oldest jazz clubs in the country, and by far the most famous. Having drawn its name from Charlie Parker, the room has stayed close to that original concept; virtually every modern jazz figure of importance has been featured there, and by now Birdland has come to symbolize jazz even for people who have never been near its 52nd Street-and-Broadway location.

While this album marks Riverside's recording debut at this club, it is a continuation of the label's long-standing policy of frequent "live" recordings in a variety of rooms, in the belief that some of the most exciting jazz can be produced by catching top artists ace-to-face with their audiences. Previous "on the spot" LPs, recorded in The Jazz Workshop in San Francisco, New York's Village Vanguard and elsewhere, have featured such as Cannonball Adderley, Bill Evans, Wes Montgomery. Birdland and Blakey, we think, make most fitting additions to this roster.

—O. K.

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CEDAR WALTON—piano
REGGIE WORKMAN—bass

TOTAL TIME 57:16



STEREO

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