

Dave Brubeck Quartet - Jazz Impressions of Japan (1964)

Written by bluesever

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1. *Tokyo Traffic* 2. *Rising Sun* 3. *Toki's Theme* [play](#) 4. *Fujiyama* 5. *Zen Is When* [play](#)
6. *The City Is Crying* 7. *Osaka Blues* 8. *Koto Song Koto Song*

Personnel: Dave Brubeck - piano Paul Desmond - alto saxophone Gene Wright - bass Joe Morello – drums

Like Louis Armstrong, Dizzy Gillespie, and their groups, Dave Brubeck and his first great quartet were among the first jazz musicians after World War II to travel diplomatically in the service of peace throughout the world. Armstrong released *Ambassador Satch* in 1955, and Brubeck released *The Real Ambassadors*, with Armstrong, Carmen McRae, and others, seven years later—helping, maybe, to thaw the Cold War.

From “Tokyo Traffic” to “Koto Song,” the album captures the range of lifestyles and rhythms of modern Japan, both urban and rural. The pastoral seems to appear more, with Paul Desmond’s sweet alto taking on flutelike inflections and coaxing some of Brubeck’s most delicate lyricism, though he does not neglect the piano’s more percussive possibilities. In the latter, Brubeck is kicked along by the masterful Joe Morello on percussion, the shining star of this date. Using virtually all components of the drum set—particularly the tom-tom, floor tom-tom, Chinese and Turkish cymbals, woodblock, and temple blocks—Morello evokes the spectrum of Japanese musical traditions alluded to by Brubeck in his compositions. Check Joe out on “Tokyo Traffic,” especially.

Too long out of print in the LP format and only available on CD as an import from Japan, *Jazz Impressions of Japan* is good to have back in wide circulation in the U.S. Legacy has reissued this recording as part of “The Dave Brubeck Collection,” a noble way to honor a noble musician on his 80th birthday. ---Wayne Zade, allaboutjazz.com

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