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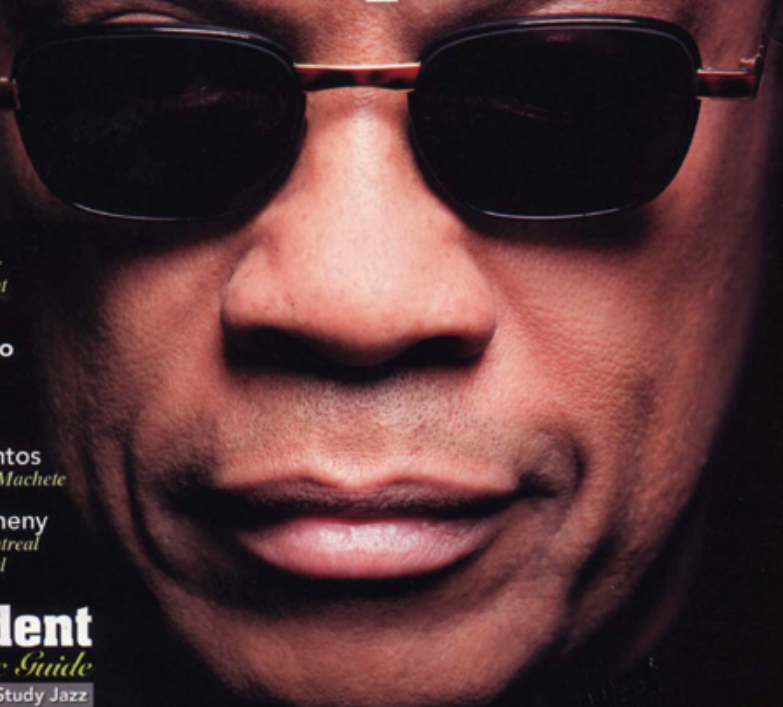
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The Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra

Live At MCG

MCG JAZZ 1017

★★★½

While the words used to describe the era of the jazz orchestra certainly draws more on the past tense, the Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra should serve as a reminder of what is sorely missed about those bygone days. Formed in 1985 by brothers John and Jeff Clayton along with drummer Jeff Hamilton, the L.A.-based ensemble has grown to be recognized as one of the premier big bands in the world. The group's latest release, *Live At MCG*, is clear evidence in support of that deserved distinction.

While the band's roster reads as a virtual who's who of top-notch national talent—including trumpeter and jazz elder statesman Snooky Young—the credit for the band's sound belongs to bassist and arranger John Clayton. From the hard-driving fatback swing of "Georgia" to the ethereal voicings of the Duke Ellington classic "Mood Indigo" to the lushly orchestrated "Nature Boy," Clayton shows distinct flashes of Thad Jones and Gil Evans, while also displaying a unique harmonic vocabulary with each arrangement that could only be his own fingerprint.

When it comes to individual performances, it would be a shame to detract from the sense of family camaraderie that has served the Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra so well for the past 20 years by calling out specific players. The list would be much too long. Instead of keeping a scorecard, listeners would be better served by taking in this disc as a remarkably balanced whole.

—John Kreibergs

Live At MCG: Georgia; Jody Grind; Nature Boy; Lullaby Of The Leaves; Silver Celebration; Captain Bill; Mood Indigo; Evidence; Like A Lover; Eternal Triangle; Squatty Roo. (73:10)

Personnel: John Clayton, conductor, bass; Jeff Clayton, lead alto saxophone, soprano saxophone, alto flute, flute; Jeff Hamilton, drums; Keith Fiddmont, alto saxophone, clarinet; Rickey Woodward, tenor saxophone, clarinet; Charles Owens, tenor saxophone; Lee Callet, baritone saxophone, bass clarinet; Bijon Watson, Sal Craciolo, Eugene "Snooky" Young, Clay Jenkins, Gilbert Castellanos, trumpet; Ira Nepus, George Bohanon, Ryan Porter, trombone; Maurice Spears, bass trombone; Tamir Hendelman, piano; Randy Napoleon, guitar; Christoph Luty, bass.

» Ordering Info: www.mcjazz.com

