



Bob Mintzer Big Band

Live At MCG With Special Guest Kurt Elling

MCG JAZZ 1016

★★★½

Since its inception nearly 20 years ago, the Bob Mintzer Big Band has been regarded as the vigilant vanguard of

the modern big band scene. It's hard to believe, however, that *Live At The MCG* represents the ensemble's first foray into capturing their sound in a live setting. Culled from performances at the Manchester Craftsmen's Guild in Pittsburgh during May 2002, the disc offers a thumbnail sketch of Mintzer's arrangements from the last half dozen of the band's past releases as well as a few surprises, including Herbie Hancock's "Eye Of The Hurricane" and the Mintzer/Kurt Elling original "All Is Quiet."

Elling continues to show himself to be the thinking aficionado's alternative to the recent glut of pop songsters spotted parading around the jazz side of town lately. Unafraid to challenge most preconceived notions of today's jazz vocalists, perhaps to the detriment of his own notoriety but certainly not his level of critical acclaim, Elling proves exactly how deserving he is with his explosive vocal pyrotechnics on "Eye Of The Hurricane."

The band swings and sways with an intensity of its own, from the disc's spirited opener "El Caborojéno" to Mintzer's redux arrangement of Count Basie's "One O'Clock Jump." Overall, the ensemble is captured with impeccable purity thanks to the environs of the MCG's auditorium, though a certain amount of the energy and excitement is lost as the audience is conspicuously pushed aside in the mix. The result is a recording that occasionally comes off as a bit sterile, a descriptor that isn't often associated with Elling or Mintzer.

—John Kreibergs

Live At MCG With Special Guest Kurt Elling: El Caborojéno; My Foolish Heart; One O'Clock Jump; Gently; Eye Of The Hurricane; Timeless; All Is Quiet; Who's Walkin' Who; Original People. (70:40)

Personnel: Bob Mintzer, tenor saxophone; Kurt Elling, vocalist; Lawrence Feldman, saxophone; Peter Yellin, alto saxophone; Bob Malach, tenor saxophone; Roger Rosenberg, baritone saxophone; Frank Greene, Bob Millikan, Scott Wendholt, Michael Philip Mossman, trumpet; Michael Davis, Larry Farrell, Keith O'Quinn, trombone; David Taylor, bass trombone; Phil Markowitz, piano; Rufus Reid, bass; John Riley, drums.

Ordering Info: www.mcgjazz.org

