

Mingus Big Band - Live In Tokyo (2005)

Written by bluesever (Bogdan Marszałkowski)
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1 *Wham Bam* 6:39 2 *Opus Four* 9:21 3 *Celia* 7:01 4 *Bird Calls* 6:42 5 *Meditations* 10:27 6 *Prayer For Passive Resistance* 6:10 7 *Free Cell Block F* 7:15 8 *Ecclusiastics* 10:33
Alto Saxophone – Abraham Burton Alto Saxophone, Flute – Craig Handy Baritone Saxophone – Ronnie Cuber Bass – Kenny Davis Bass Trombone, Tuba – Earl McIntyre
Composed By – Charles Mingus Drums – Johnathan Blake Piano – Dave Kikoski Tenor Saxophone – Seamus Blake, Wayne Escoffery Trombone – Conrad Herwig Trombone, Vocals – Ku-umba Frank Lacy Trumpet – Alex Sipiagin, Eddie Henderson, Jack Walrath

Nearly 15 years after its formation, the Mingus Big Band set up its microphones at Tokyo's Blue Note Club on New Year's Eve 2005-2006 and did what it's been doing so admirably all along: paying homage to its inspiration in a way that would have made him proud. Fourteen members strong, the ensemble for the event, most of them fairly recent additions, included a veteran of Charles Mingus' own Tokyo concerts of 1976, trumpeter Jack Walrath. For the occasion, the band looked back even further though, to the '50s, rolling out and updating the arrangements of a handful of numbers Mingus wrote in his early years: "Bird Calls," the fiery opener "Wham Bam," "Celia" spotlighting alto saxman Craig Handy, and "Prayer for Passive Resistance," which producer Sue Mingus (Charles' widow), notes was arranged by tenor saxist John Stubblefield shortly before his death in 2005. With three trumpets, five saxmen (including tenor, alto, and baritone), and three trombones, the program is naturally heavy on brass-fueled arrangements, with plenty of room given over for solo blowing. "Bird Calls," the tribute to Charlie Parker, features rousing turns from baritonist Ronnie Cuber, tenor Seamus Blake, and altos Craig Handy and Abraham Burton, while the easy-swinging "Free Cell Block F" opens up space for trombonists Conrad Herwig and Ku umba Frank Lacy, Handy moving over to flute, and Cuber returning on baritone. The live set (officially titled "Live in Tokyo at the Blue Note, 2005") avoids Mingus' more difficult material in favor of accessibility, but it's consistent with the other fine work this "ghost" band has done since its inception. ---Jeff Tamarkin, AllMusic Review

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