

Bob Mintzer - Bop Boy (2002)

Written by bluesever

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01. *Blue Bossa* 02. *Bop Boy* 03. *Embraceable You* 04. *Francisca* [play](#) 05. *Invitation* 06. *Re-Re* 07. *Runferyerlife*

[play](#)

08. *Speak Low* 09. *St. James Infirmary* 10. *Why Did I Choose You*

Musicians: Bob Mintzer (Tenor saxophone, bass clarinet); Steve Kuhn (Piano); Eddie Gomez (Bass); Steve Gadd (Drums).

Recorded over two days in 2002, *Bop Boy* was previously only available in Japan on the Cheetah label. Thanks to Explore and their excellent catalog of diverse jazz and classical recordings, it is now available in the United States as well. Unlike Bob Mintzer's '80s offerings on Cheetah (*Source* and *Papa Lips*), the band used on this session is a quartet made up of star talent: bassist Eddie Gómez, the elegant pianist Steve Kuhn, and drummer Steve Gadd. On first glance it might appear that Gadd is out of place among these more subtle members of the rhythm section. Being a consummate professional as a studio musician, Gadd is an excellent jazz drummer adding grace, subtlety and tension to a very sophisticated rhythm section. Mintzer a generation younger than Gómez, and Kuhn leads this band through killer arrangements of a fine batch of standards and a trio of top-flight originals. Beginning with Kenny Dorham's and Wynton Kelly's "Blue Bossa," the swing quotient is high here. Kuhn is at his most muscular on this hard bop gem, pushing his minors and thirds right into the rim shots by Gadd. Mintzer's solo is full of deep blues feeling and economy. Mintzer wrote the title track; it is what it claims to be: bebop pure and simple. Beginning with a galloping pace set by Gómez, Gadd's ride cymbal provides fuel and Kuhn plays selectively angular chords, moving right into Mintzer's stating the head and solo. Kuhn's playing around the beat as the tune goes on reveals excellent counterpoint to what's being laid down by the tenor player. The tenderness with which an edgy player like Mintzer approaches "Embraceable You" is remarkable, and here Kuhn's utterly moving pianism is at its best. This is followed by a lovely soft samba called "Francisca" written by Toninho Horta. "Invitation" brings the harder edge of bluesy, post-bop into the area, and the interplay between Gómez and Gadd is nearly symbiotic. Two Mintzer originals follow, and the stroll of "Re-Re" is contrasted in a mirror with the knotty twist and turn sprint of "Runferyerlife." The reading of "St. James Infirmary" brings the tune back to the kind of mournful blues ballad it

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began is. Mintzer's tone on the bass clarinet is startling. He goes underneath the melody for his phrasing and fills as Kuhn offers a constant, slowly evolving wash of minor chord voicings underneath him. The ballad "Why Did I Choose You" is a perfect way to send things off as it puts on shining display the intuitive interaction between Kuhn -- a sublime melodist through his wide array of textured chord shapes and his sense of space and economy with the right hand in his solo. Gómez is wonderful here, flowing into the body of the tune, allowing for Gadd to lay out and enter at will. Mintzer's solo is an emotive one, but never undercuts or overwhelms the tune. Bop Boy is one of the most satisfying dates in his long career as a leader, a composer, and as an arranger. ---Thom Jurek, almusic.com

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