

Wynton Marsalis Septet – Live At Village Vanguard – Monday Night (1999)

Written by bluesever

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01. *Welcome* 02. *Cherokee* 03. *The Egyptian Blues* 04. *Embraceable you* 05. *Black Codes From the Underground* 06. *Harriet Tubman* 07. *Monk's Mood* 08. *And The Band Played On* 09. *The Cat In The Hat Is Back* 10. *(Set Break)* Wynton Marsalis - trumpet; Wessell Anderson - alto saxophone; Todd Williams - tenor and soprano saxophones, clarinet; Wycliffe Gordon - trombone; Marcus Roberts - piano; Reginald Veal - bass; Herlin Riley - drums.

As if releasing eight single albums in 1999 weren't enough, Wynton Marsalis capped this deluge of material at the end of the year with a seven-CD mini-box of live recordings, taped over a five-year span at New York City's Village Vanguard club. Greed certainly wasn't the motive, for Sony Music priced the set at an unbelievably low \$39.98, so the issue is whether Marsalis is justified in feeling that his music is worth documenting in such exhaustive detail. Each disc is organized to simulate a different night of the week, with a different, often loosely defined, and not-always-followed theme for each disc. The box reflects the Marsalis septet in a joyous mood as it hit the the Vanguard stage each night, spurred on by a vocal, exuberant throng packed into the small, wedge-shaped joint. The well-drilled septet was capable of assimilating a varied, if selective, spectrum of jazz tradition, from the New Orleans funeral music and handkerchief-waving street sass of "Flee As a Bird to the Mountain/Happy Feet Blues" to the sizzling post-bop of "The Cat in the Hat Is Back." Their indefatigable trumpeter/leader is the most liberated, expressive player of the lot. Along with a selection of standards and originals, there are also full-length and excerpted live treatments of some of Marsalis' extended pieces. A number of the performances, particularly of some of his own material, are a bit too well drilled; the loosest contrapuntal New Orleans jams go over the best for the home listener. In the grand scheme of jazz history, this music won't rank with some other landmark sessions at the Vanguard in terms of influence or transcendence. Yet the music deserves a hearing as an extended souvenir of one of the most talented neo-conservative bands of the '90s. ---Richard S. Ginell, Rovi

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