

**Charles Mingus
Music Written
for Monterey 1965
Mingus Big Band
Live at the Blue
Note in Tokyo 2005
Sue Mingus Music**

THE 18-MINUTE LIVE PERFORMANCE of "Meditation on Inner Peace," one among many of **Charles Mingus'** outstanding jazz compositions, anchors the awkwardly titled but aptly descriptive *Music Written for Monterey 1965 Not Heard . . . Played Live in Its Entirety at UCLA*. The song is the "instrument" for an inward journey into contemplative, ramy midnight consciousness.

As the title indicates, Mingus wrote the songs and arrangements for an hour long set at the Monterey Jazz Festival. His set was cut to half an hour, so he took the music to UCLA a week later, expanded it to an hour and a half with additional music and comments, and recorded the whole, unedited show.

"Meditation on Inner Peace" is easily the highlight of the two-disc, not always easily accessible set from this genius who died in 1979. The octet was trumpeters **Hobart Dotson**, **Lonnie Hillyer**, and **Jimmy Owens**; alto saxophonist **Charles McPherson**; French horn player **Julius Watkins**; tuba player **Howard Johnson**; drummer **Dannie Richmond**; and Mingus on bass.

The second CD, *Live at the Blue Note in Tokyo 2005*, features the 14-piece Mingus tribute band — that might not be what they call themselves — doing arrangements of Mingus classics including "Meditations," "Ecclusiastics," "Bird Calls," etc. Mingus is missed, not because of any fault in the second CD but because we wonder where his journey would have taken him creatively as he approached his 85th year.

—TOM GEDDIE

Mingus dynasty lives on thanks to work of bassist's wife

SUE MINGUS is a woman on a mission. The widow of Charles Mingus is working tirelessly to make sure her husband's music lives on and his legacy continues to thrive. Admittedly, even without her efforts, there is absolutely no chance of jazz fans forgetting about the exalted bassist-composer-bandleader, who died in 1979. He's one of the genre's true immortals.

But would we remember him as frequently without the work of Mrs. Mingus? That's doubtful.

Her greatest efforts have come with the memorial bands that she's assembled — the Mingus Dynasty, the Mingus Big Band, the Mingus Orchestra and the Epitaph Orchestra. Those acts, as well as the Bay Area's own Mingus Amungus, have helped keep the composer's music alive onstage at festivals and in clubs.

She's also written a fine book on the jazz giant, "Tonight at Noon," and started her own record label, Sue Mingus Music.

Last month, Sue Mingus Music simultaneously released two new live discs that warrant heavy consideration from jazz fans.

The more exciting of the two is the descriptively titled "Music Written for Monterey, 1965 Not Heard . . . Played Live in Its Entirety at UCLA."

The story behind the CD is that Mingus was ready to unveil a whole new batch of difficult material at the 1965 Monterey Jazz Festival. Things, however, did not go as he planned and his set was truncated to barely 30 minutes. He ended up scrapping most of his song list.



Jim Harrington
ON JAZZ

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Last month, Sue Mingus Music simultaneously released two new live discs that warrant heavy consideration from jazz fans.

A few days later, Mingus would head south and premiere the material at UCLA, the result of which can be heard on this new two-disc set.

The bassist often referred to his live shows as "workshops," and one can hear why here. He was very vocal as he directed his accompanying musicians through the unfamiliar material, shouting reprimands and, in general, looking for the same type of excellence from his side players as he demanded from himself.

Without a doubt, this disc is a necessary purchase for those who consider themselves big Mingus fans. Not only does it give a rare inside look at the musician's creative process, it also features Mingus performing songs you simply won't find anywhere else. We're

talking about "They Trespass the Land of the Sacred Sioux," "Don't Let It Happen Here" and "The Arts of Tatum and Freddy Webster."

Don't know those songs? You will after you get this disc. I know that I've had a hard time getting it off my turntable — oops, I mean, CD player — since I got my copy.

I feel compelled to add, before I get e-mails from the really big jazz geeks, a disclaimer that this CD isn't really, totally, new. It was originally released by Mingus' own label 40 years ago. But I truly doubt that you have an original copy — and if you do, you're one lucky jazz collector.

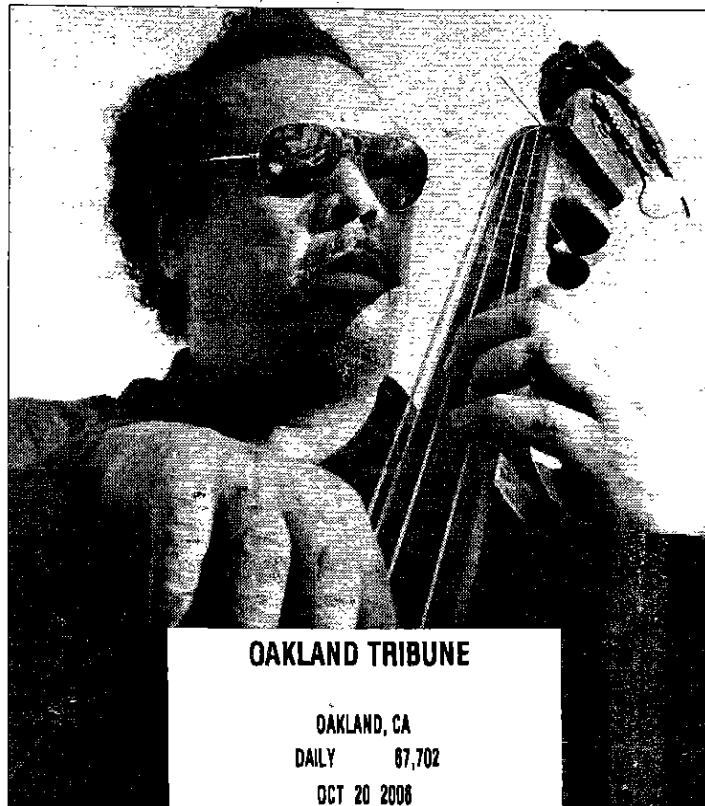
Only 200 copies were originally pressed before Mingus, like so many jazz musicians do, ran into money troubles. The masters were later destroyed by some morons when Capitol Records cleaned out its vaults in the early '70s.

I can just imagine the conversation:

Moron 1: "Hey, Bob, this box contains some Charles Mingus masters. What should we do with it?"

Moron 2: "Gee, Ted, I don't know. I guess we should toss it in the trash and go grab a burger. Have you heard the new Jethro Tull record? Those guys have talent!"

With the masters gone, Sue Mingus and crew had to recapture the bassist's performance at UCLA by remastering from the original vinyl. Given the difficulty of that process, I'm happy to report that "Music Written for Monterey, 1965 Not Heard . . . Played Live in Its Entirety at UCLA" sounds pretty darn good.



MINGUS AMONG US: Jazz great Charles Mingus died in 1979. Yet his music lives on due in part to the work of his widow, Sue Mingus.

The other new disc from Sue Mingus Music sounds even better — but that's because it was recorded just last year.

"Live in Tokyo at the Blue Note, 2005" captures the Mingus Big Band in a raucous run through the great composer's songbook during a New Year's Eve concert. Included in the mix are classics such as "Meditations," "Ecclesiastics," "Opus 4," "Bird Calls" and "Wham Bam."

I've always enjoyed this

group's work, especially its sensational rendition of "Haitian Fight Song," and the 14-piece ensemble doesn't let me down on "Live in Tokyo."

It will be interesting to see what else Sue Mingus has in store for us down the road. I bet it will be both bountiful and worthy. She remains a woman on a mission.

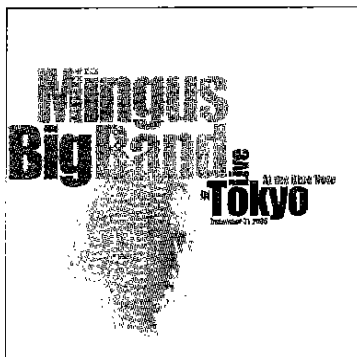
Write jazz critic Jim Harrington at jharrington@angnewspapers.com. For more jazz coverage, visit www.insidebayarea.com/jimharrington.

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MINGUS BIG BAND

Live in Tokyo at the Blue Note

(Sue Mingus Music/Sunnyside)

The 15-year-old tribute band takes on eight arrangements of material by the bassist/composer Charles Mingus (1922-1979). Half of the 14 players on *Live in Tokyo* were with the big band when it played the Lensic last year. Also here are trumpeter Jack Walrath, who worked with Mingus' quintet in Tokyo in

1976, and recent additions including bassist Kenny Davis. Most of the material here is awesomely brassy — the band includes three trumpets, five saxophones, and three trombones — and hard-swinging. The CD opens with the powerful “Wham Bam,” featuring heady piano work by Dave Kikoski, a bouncy baritone-sax solo by Ronnie Cuber, and a great drum part by Jonathan Blake. Craig Handy blows beauty on his alto-sax arrangement of “Celia,” then takes up the flute for “Meditations” after Davis opens with a Jimi Hendrix-like trill on arco bass. The band meditates both calmly and frenetically. “Bird Calls” recalls bebopper Charlie “Bird” Parker with rotating, high-energy solos by four saxmen and Kikoski. Tenor player Wayne Escoffery is brilliant on “Prayer for Passive Resistance,” a song that was arranged by longtime band member John Soublefield shortly before his death in 2005. Trombonist Kuumba Frank Lacy introduces the episodic closer “Ecclasiastics” with wild, gospel vocals. Great music here. — Paul Weideman

Charles Mingus' enormous legacy lives on



**JAMES
LAMPERETTA**

Charles Mingus died in 1979 at the age of 56 from Lou Gehrig's disease. In the years since his death, the legacy of the bassist/composer has

become one of the most revered and celebrated in the jazz community, worthy of mention in the same breath as other giants in the genre's pantheon, such as Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Duke Ellington, Thelonious Monk and Louis Armstrong.

The ongoing reassessment of his vast body of work has brought into sharper focus the fact that Mingus, both the musician and personality, was an astoundingly unique figure, the likes of which we will not see again.

Two recent releases highlight the ongoing Mingus renaissance. "Charles Mingus: Music Written for Monterey 1965 Not Heard... Played in Its Entirety at UCLA" provides a provocative look back at the bandleader/musician/composer, while "Mingus Big Band: Live in Tokyo at the Blue Note, 2005" provides a present-day snapshot into his timeless body of work.

The "UCLA" date has long held a special place in Mingus lore. Originally released on his own label 40 years ago, the bassist was only able to press 200 copies before he ran out of money. Furthermore, the master tapes were subsequently destroyed when Capitol records cleaned out its vaults in 1971.

Remastered with surprising

clarity and sonic breadth from the original vinyl, this CD set "warts 'n all" captures one of Mingus' legendary "workshop" performances in its entirety. These workshops amounted to public rehearsals of a sort and, in the process, they provided the audience with an intimate glimpse of the creative process at work, while also accentuating jazz as a music which flourishes "in the moment."

Along the way, we hear the bassist address the audience as well as conduct and cajole the seven musicians who round out his octet. At one point, he dismisses most of them from the bandstand for what he deems "mental tardiness."

Sue Mingus, his wife and tireless champion of his music, sums up the essence of this project in the liner notes: "Mingus opted for the truth of the performance, and we witness not only the flaws and failures but the sheer joy as he shrieks his approval, encourages his drummer, exhorts his trumpet player and jumps from the piano chair to the bass and back in order to conduct his compositions."

Among the tunes performed are "Don't Be Afraid, the Clown's Afraid Too" and "Once Upon A Time There Was A Holding Corporation Called Old America," a later version of which would be released with the slightly more interesting title "The Shoes of the Fisherman's Wife Are Some Jive-ass Slippers."

Perhaps the most important aspect of this set is the inclusion of three otherwise unavailable compositions, "They Tresspass the Land of the Sacred Sioux," "Don't Let it Happen

Here" and "The Arts of Tatum and Freddy Webster."

While this document will prove to be indispensable for Mingus enthusiasts, jazz fans in a more general sense will also find a great deal to enjoy musically and otherwise as they pull up a front-row seat and eavesdrop on the creative process at work.



Based out of New York City and boasting some of the city's finest musicians, the Mingus Big Band is one of four ensembles (the others being the Mingus Dynasty, Mingus Orchestra, and Epitaph Orchestra) dedicated to its namesake's music.

"Live in Tokyo" features new arrangements of eight classic Mingus compositions which span three decades and are delivered with gusto and nuance by the fourteen-members of the MBB.

Half of the tunes are culled from the 1950s. "Bird Calls" is Mingus' tribute to Charlie Parker and the gorgeous ballad "Celia" features Craig Handy as the lone soloist.

"Meditations" and "Ecclesiastics" were both composed in the 1960s, with the latter including trombonist Ku-Umba Frank Lacy fervently preaching from the pulpit of the blues.

The program is rounded out with "Opus Four" and "Free Cell Block F," two gems from the '70s, the latter of which was first performed by Mingus' last great quintet which included saxophonist George Adams and Don Pullen.

Originally appearing on the album "Changes Two" with the expanded moniker of "Free Cell Block F, Tiz Nazi U.S.A.,"

the tunes' breezy theme belies its deadly-serious title and provides an excellent backdrop for inspired solos by Handy on flute, Conrad Herwig and Lacy on trombone, and Ronnie Cuber on baritone sax.



"Braggtown" finds saxophonist Branford Marsalis and his quartet continuing to build upon the strengths of their last four outings going back to "Footsteps of Our Fathers" (2002) through 2004's DVD/CD of Coltrane's "A Love Supreme."

With tunes once again coming from each member of the foursome the individual and collective strengths of the group remain front and center. At times overtly muscular, the opening "Jack Baker" is propelled by Jeff "Tain" Watts' powerful drumming and Marsalis' searing tenor. The group also showcases its affinity for beauty and understatement, witness pianist Joey Calderazzo's "Hope" and an eloquent reading of 17th century composer Henry Purcell's "O Solitude."

Younger brother Wynton may garner more in the way of headlines, however, with each successive disc Branford continues to make the case that he is the Marsalis to be reckoned with.

"Braggtown" represents another bold step forward for a saxophonist and ensemble that are emerging as the most important of our generation.

James Lamperetta is The Saratogian's jazz critic. Jazz Beat is published the first Sunday of each month in the Life section.

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Live in Tokyo

Mingus Big Band

(Sue Mingus Music/Sunnyside)

★★★½

Bassist and composer Charles Mingus died 27 years ago, but he seems to have an eternal flame in the form of the Mingus Big Band.

Talented, tight and rollicking, the 14-piece group celebrated its spiritual leader with aplomb in this New Year's Eve 2005 concert, recorded at Tokyo's Blue Note club. The date featured versions of the tunes Mingus' quintet played for Tokyo audiences 30 years earlier.

Drop the needle anywhere on this one and marvel at the bursting creativity. "Celia" is lush and romantic, now swinging, now swaying. The opening statement of "Meditations" is a spiraling fanfare that gives way to a galloping duel of horn micro-solos. "Bird Calls" begins with a cacophony of avian impressions from a band that is loose and fun and refuses to play the part of dry, dutiful curators. Not that they could if they wanted to: Mingus' compositions, with their strange whimsy, their syncopation, their theatrical swells and dips, would seem to render it impossible.

— Steve Garmhausen

■ *The Mingus Big Band plays Tuesdays at the Iridium in New York (212-582-2121; www.iridiumjazzclub.com).*

SUNDAY TRIBUNE-REVIEW

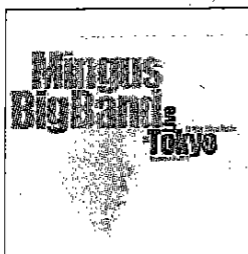
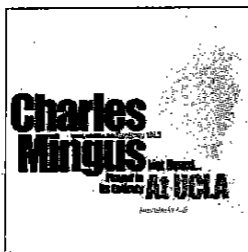
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'Charles Mingus at UCLA 1965'

Charles Mingus (San
Mingus Music) ★★ ★

'Live in Tokyo 2005'

Mingus Big Band (San
Mingus
Music) ★★ ★



The music of Charles Mingus never dies. With good reason, these two albums show.

“Charles Mingus at UCLA 1965” seems like a reissue, but actually is the first fully recorded version of this concert. It consists of

music written for the Monterey Jazz Festival of that year, but was performed only in part because of a Mingus-ian fit of pique. He then took his band and the music to the university, but the recording that emerged was shortened because of the technology of the day. This new recording has the complete program with comments by the band leader. It is marvelously moody Mingus, with songs such as “Once Upon a Time, There Was a Holding Corporation Called Old America,” and “Don’t Let It Happen Here.” The 2005 recording is a statement of the band that exists to play Mingus’ music. Filled with great players such as trumpeter Jack Walrath, alto sax player Craig Handy and trombonist Ku-umba Frank Lacy, it focuses more on the music than the anger of creator Mingus. Even its “Prayer for Passive Resistance” and “Free Cell Block F” groove a little more than they grind. Both create a wonderful look at this great part of jazz and American music.

— Bob Karlovits

Big Band Keeps Mingus' Spirit, Music Alive

**"LIVE IN TOKYO"
MINGUS BIG BAND
SUE MINGUS MUSIC**

★★★★★
The spirit and music of the late bassist/band leader Charles Mingus is being kept vibrantly alive by the Mingus Big Band in this Tokyo Live recording.

It begins with "Wham Bam," a fierce and fast composition featuring solos by trumpeter Alan Sipiagan, baritone saxophonist Ronnie Cuber, pianist David Kikoski and drummer Jonathan Blake.

"Celia," written by Mingus, as are all eight tracks, is nicely articulated by long-time band member Craig Handy — this time on alto. From his hospital bed, the late tenor player John Stubblefield arranged "Prayer For Passive Resistance," the last piece of music he worked on before his death in July 2005.

"The tenor is the preach-



**Dick's
PICKS**

Dick
Bogle

★★★★★ Excellent
★★★★ Very good
★★★ Good
★★ Fair
★ Poor

er," he told the musicians gathered around his bed. "He's confronting the cops and the barking dogs. He's telling everyone to passively resist and pray."

Wayne Escoffery on tenor is the preacher, and the Mingus Big Band without a doubt is America's finest big band year in and year out!

**"ELLA FITZGERALD
LIVE IN '57 & '63"**

**DVD
JAZZ ICONS**

★★★★★
This Ella Fitzgerald DVD is another in the series of nine European concerts featuring American jazz legends.

Fitzgerald became one of the less than half dozen major female jazz voices, and this double concert



proves the case. The earlier of the two takes place in Belgium in 1957. She casts her magic spell singing such tunes as "Angel Eyes," "Lullaby of Birdland," "Love for Sale," "Tenderly," and "It Don't Mean A Thing, If It Ain't Got That Swing."

She is backed by pianist Don Abney, bassist Ray Brown, drummer Jo Jones and guitarist Herb Ellis. On the last tune, trumpeter Roy Eldridge and pianist Oscar

Peterson join the group.

The second concert in Stockholm, Sweden is the musical equal of the first but photographically falls short. She sings "No Moon At All," "Desifanado," "Mack The Knife" and more. Pianist Tommy Flanagan, bassist Jim Hughart, guitarist Les Spann and drummer Gus Johnson are excellent with their accompaniment.



**"HOT CLUB OF
DETROIT"
MACK AVENUE**
★★★★★

There is some very lovely jazz in this retro-sounding effort by six young musicians, four of whom play stringed instruments.

Using the Hot Club of France (circa 1934) as its role model, this band is more than simply credible. Its take of Gypsy guitarist Django Reinhardt's "Nuages" is pure beauty; its sweet, flowing melody is a nice contrast to the opener, "Belleville," a brisk tune featuring clarinetist Dave Bennett.

Evan Perri is lead guitarist; Colton Witherspoon is on rhythm guitar; Shannon Wale is on acoustic bass; and Julien Labro is on button accordion, rounding out the group. They also turn "The Godfather Theme" on its ear with a furious 12 minute up-tempo version that, however, removes all the menace from the original.

