

Kurt Elling - Live In Chicago (1999)

Written by bluesever

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01. *Downtown* [3:51] 02. *My Foolish Heart* [12:17] 03. *Smoke Gets In Your Eyes* [8:29] 04. *Oh My God* [3:51] 05. *Night Dream* [8:59] 06. *(I Love You) For Sentimental Reasons* [5:21] 07. *Intro: (Esperanto)* [1:44] 08. *Esperanto* [5:17] 09. *Don't Get Scared* [3:38] 10. *Intro: (Goin' To Chicago)* [0:45] 11. *Goin' To Chicago* [5:40] 12. *Intro: (The Rent Party)* [0:44] 13. *The Rent Party* [8:18] 14. *Blues Cleaner* [1:30] Kurt Elling - vocals Jon Hendricks - vocals Kahil El'Zabar - hand drums Michael Raynor - percussion, drums Laurence Hobgood - piano Von Freeman - tenor saxophone Eddie Johnson - tenor saxophone Ed Petersen - tenor saxophone Rob Amster - strings, acoustic bass

Fans of Kurt Elling have long known that his recordings, as clever and well-orchestrated as they might be, don't quite match up to the power and charm of his live performances. Years of holding court at the Green Mill and other Chicago clubs are what really have brought Elling his most devoted followers, so it is exciting to see that Blue Note's new Elling album is a document of three special nights spent recording at the legendary Uptown jazz club. And indeed, with a few small exceptions, the album shows off Elling at his best -- loose, uninhibited, creative, and solid. His standard backing trio has never been tighter and more balanced, and the performance of pianist (and Elling collaborator) Lawrence Hobgood really shines. Three saxophonists -- Von Freeman, Ed Petersen and Eddie Johnson -- manage to blend together in perfectly balanced harmonies, as well as command attention in solos of their own. Chicago's own Khalil El'Zabar makes a fine appearance, and a rare contribution by legendary jazz vocalist Jon Hendricks shows that he can still steal a show. The enthusiasm of the highly appreciative audience is captured, as well as more than a little evidence of the noise in the surrounding bar. The three nights of recording produced some fine versions of new and classic songs, including "Esperanto," Elling's pairing of the poetry of Pablo Neruda with the music of Vince Mendoza's jazz classic, "Esperança"; and "The Rent Party," which recalls Elling's jazz-poet days at the beginning of his career. --- Stacia Proefrock, Rovi

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