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Live Music Review:

Asaf Sirkis Trio Album Launch At The Pizza Express Jazz Club Soho, London W1, Wednesday 17th July 2013

Asaf Sirkis Trio Album Launch For 'Shepherd's Stories'

Pizza Express Jazz Club Soho

10 Dean St., London W1D 3RW
Wednesday 17th July 2013, 8.30pm

Feat.

Asaf Sirkis Trio :

Asaf Sirkis - drums
Tassos Spiliotopoulos - guitar
Kevin Glasgow - bass guitar

Date of Review: 2013/07/18

All illustrations by and © Alban Low

Asaf Sirkis Trio Album Launch At The Pizza Express Jazz Club Soho, London W1, Wednesday 17th July 2013

With an album as special as Shepherd's Stories, you somehow always knew that the Asaf Sirkis Trio Album Launch At The Pizza Express Jazz Club Soho was



going to be something extra special. You could almost sense it in the boiling hot air outside, and in the pleasant chill of The Pizza's air conditioning.

In spite of the overwhelming heat outside, a fair crowd had assembled in The Pizza and there was great anticipation.

Yaron Stavi, the trio's regular bassist, is currently tied up elsewhere (with Nigel Kennedy's Bach To The Future band) so for the rest of this launch tour, Kevin Glasgow has stepped into his shoes as it were, Asaf Sirkis mentioned before the start of the show. Did the shoes fit? Find out shortly!

At last, the show got under way, with Sirkis at his extended trap set, Tassos Spiliotopoulos at his guitar with his unique sound, and Glasgow at his monster six-string bass guitar, a rarity in jazz.

Premier drummer/percussionist Sirkis and his trio delivered right from the opening number of the first set and only kept on turning up the heat! Sirkis was of course his usual brilliant self, making his drums and cymbals sing in between Spiliotopoulos' guitar and Glasgow's bass, almost like a third voice. And again, Spiliotopoulos singing with his usual, unique guitar sound, melodic and with big chordal spaces. Fabulous. But the big surprise came with Glasgow. Sitting there, looking quite unassuming, but then he starts playing his monster six-string bass. And he clean blows everyone away! His extraordinary solos are in the mould of Jeff Berlin, treating his bass like an ordinary guitar. And he's only seen the music for the first time this morning and had one short practice session! So, do the shoes fit?

You bet they do! Glasgow fits into the Asaf Sirkis Trio like he's played with them all along, although his style is obviously different from Stavi's, his own. But take note. Glasgow is nothing short of sensational, phenomenal.

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Asaf Sirkis



Tassos Spiliotopoulos



Spiliotopoulos and Sirkis of course were as exquisite, sheer incredible and breath-taking as ever. The former's sensitivity, subtlety as well as virtuosity is the perfect counterfoil to that of the latter. It is a pity that Spiliotopoulos is not heard more frequently in this country, either as Sirkis' sideman or as leader. He is a guitarist of uncommon sensitivity and finesse.

Sirkis hardly needs commenting upon. His virtuosity, subtlety, sensitivity, finesse and sheer class, not to mention his incredible time-keeping and timing, are almost legend already. And last night, as usual, Sirkis delivered the kind of solos other drummers dream of! Listening to Sirkis often is like watching him at his



The material at the *Asaf Sirkis Trio Album Launch At The Pizza Express Jazz Club Soho* of course consisted of that of the album *Shepherd's Stories*, plus a few older pieces. This album is phenomenal, and clearly Sirkis' finest yet. This music is just exquisite, and makes extensive use of the South Indian or Carnatic art of vocalisation of rhythm, konakol, both in the compositions and playing. Sirkis has become a master of the art and is indeed also a sought after teacher.

Superlative melodies and complex rhythms were matched by exquisite ensemble playing and breathtaking soloing all round. The latter sent the relatively small but immensely appreciative, enthusiastic and attentive audience into raptures of raucous applause, with the temperature steadily rising to boiling point and beyond.

We have already discussed Glasgow and his extraordinary solos to an extent. They were as imaginative and inventive as you could ask for, not to mention his amazing virtuosity.

traps. There is something serene, sage-like about his appearance a lot of the time, as if in deep meditation, a trance perhaps. And every now and then, Sirkis smiles benignly, serenely at his audience, passing on some piece of profound drum wisdom to his disciples. And enjoying himself. Immensely and intensely.

The Asaf Sirkis Trio had you constantly on the very edge of your seat with excitement and sheer electricity. This is the kind of innovative fusion that leads right up front, that took off where fusion and prog-rock came into a kind of nowhere land.

The *Asaf Sirkis Trio Album Launch At The Pizza Express Jazz Club Soho* last night was a kind of mother of all jazz fusion gigs. You might kick yourself till all eternity if you missed this extraordinary event. To have been there was a privilege indeed, and it is a pity we don't see more gigs of this caliber at The Pizza! This was simply glorious.

In closing, as always a big thank you to Rainlore's World's Artist in Residence Alban Low for the use of his brilliant illustrations of the gig and all his hard work in preparing them. His sketching hand was sheer flying over his pad like a daemon! To find out more about Alban Low's work and to see more examples of his exquisite art and to get a catalogue of posters and prints, please visit his [web site](#) and his blogs, [Art Of Jazz](#) and [Art Of Folk](#).

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