

## London Jazz News

### [Review: The Impossible Gentlemen](#)



The Impossible Gentlemen. Left to right: Swallow, Nussbaum, Walker, Simcock

#### **The Impossible Gentlemen**

**(Pizza Express Dean Street, Wednesday, June 27th 2012)**

**Gwilym Simcock** on piano, **Mike Walker** on guitar, **Steve Swallow** on bass and **Adam Nussbaum** on drums came together in early 2010 to form The Impossible Gentlemen, and have been described as a jazz super-group. Not necessarily a good thing, as super-groups have been known to dissolve in a morass of competing egos instead of combining to achieve shared musical goals. It is a partnership across the generations - Simcock is 31, Walker 49, Swallow 71 and Nussbaum 56 -and is working well.

**Steve Swallow** plays a hollow bodied acoustic bass guitar and so good was the sound that I heard every note he played on this gig. That's not always the case with bass. His career goes back to the mid-sixties and he's played with all the greats. Similarly **Adam Nussbaum**, who can name check Abercrombie and Brecker, has worked with Swallow in a trio with John Scofield.

So what attracted such established names to join two relatively lesser known – and British – musicians? Well, Simcock has already been hailed as a genius by no less than Chick Corea, and I humbly second that. But there are probably many, or at least, several jazz pianists who have technique in spades and a tremendous grasp of melody, harmony and counterpoint.

What makes Simcock stand out, head and shoulders for me, is the almost classical tone quality he produces from the instrument. So many jazzers accentuate the percussive qualities of the piano, bringing out, at times, a harshness which cuts through but is not exactly inviting. Simcock has it in his fingers to produce a woody, marimba like quality when playing ostinatos at the start of "*Barber Blues*", a thick warm tone when playing ballads such as an as yet untitled piece by Swallow – and many beautiful and subtle colours in between.

**Mike Walker** was a revelation to me – he too has a long track record, but not always in high-profile situations. He has, nevertheless, played with Kenny Wheeler's big band and with

George Russell, and also covered for Scofield in the Mike Gibbs band. He is a wonderfully fluent soloist. I loved the range of tones that he used – clean on the jaw-dropping unison head of *Laugh Lines*, warm and buzzy on the fast Latin style *Ladies in Mercedes* and rock tones on *You Won't Be Around To See It*.

This was an absorbing night's music performed before a packed and attentive audience. If you haven't already got the album all I can say is – where've you been? The tour continues in Portsmouth tonight and then in Europe in July but they're back for a few dates in the UK in December. I don't think I'll hear a more memorable gig this year so they are worth travelling a long way for.

Album number two - to be produced by Steve Rodby ([interviewed here](#))- is being recorded in the next few weeks – I'm in a state of aural salivation.

On [Friday, June 29, 2012](#)