

Mike Collins

The Impossible Gentlemen, Colston Hall Bristol, Wednesday 15th June



The the flurry of excited anticipation about this gig, evident from a quiet buzz on my corner of Facebook world and the healthy size of the audience in Hall 2 on Wednesday, was vindicated almost with the first gently stroked chords of Mike Walker's 'Clockmaker'. His unaccompanied musing evolved into a flowing, simple melody as the band joined in, full of pauses and little rhythmic statements underpinned by sonorous chords. Part way through Gwilym Simcock's piano solo, full of singing, joyful phrases and soaring runs, Adam Nussbaum cracked a delighted smile and exchanged a nod with Mike Walker; exactly how I was feeling at that moment – 'this is perfect, beautiful music'. Walker's writing has a powerful emotional force with moments of great delicacy reflected in a number of other pieces. But this was no whispering gentle gig. There were plenty of rocky and bluesy howling guitar solos and full on, blazing post-bop moments from the band. Simcock's composition Play the Game was one such, a intricate theme doubled with the guitar full of rhythmic twists and turns. Stylistically, then there was plenty of variation but that starting point was a marker and the delight, exuberance and passion were there all through. That these players are individually fabulous musicians is a given, just check out their CVs, but the collective definitely creates something here that is more than their sum. There are plenty of other reviews about of the gigs and CD ([Fordham](#), [Jazz Mann](#), [Jazz Breakfast fellow Bristol blogger](#)), acclaim seems universal. A mini whinge about the sound in Hall 2 at Closton is in order, the piano disappeared in the mix at times and generally it was pretty muddy, but it would have taken a lot undermine this fabulous band. A great evening rounded off by a blistering version of Steve Swallow's Ladies in Mercedes to get us dancing out the doors.