

Jazz JOURNAL

Ian Shaw & Toni Kofi: An Adventurous Dream

The singer and saxophonist and joined by Barry Green and Dave Green at the Pizza Express to play music by Strayhorn and Ellington



The London Pizza Expresses have long promoted good jazz gigs, thanks to the enthusiasm of founder Peter Boizot. Which means it makes good sense for them to start releasing some of those gigs on CD to entertain those of us not present that particular night.

Singer Ian Shaw and saxophonist Tony Kofi make a good pairing, Shaw a forceful, expressive singer, Kofi a strong performer well able to hold his own as a soloist and in accompaniment, with pianist Barry Green and

bassist Dave Green in solid support.

The Ellington and Strayhorn songbook affords the quartet lots of scope, its range of swinging melodies and romantic ballads well suited to a night in a jazz club. The faster numbers work well, as one would expect, but it is the ballads that compel, Isfahan in particular getting a particularly effective solo reading by Kofi, its stop-start phrases at the end emphasising the natural breaks in its melody. Likewise, Kofi wrings every emotion out of Day Dream, never hurrying a note or rushing a line, and adds the right touch of passion to Satin Doll.

At times, Shaw strains for effect, but is always a good interpreter of a lyric, notably on the poignant A Flower Is A Lonesome Thing. Best is left to almost last, with a solo Kofi at his impassioned best on Blood Count, and the duo perfect on Lust For Life. Wish I had been there.