

Matthew Wright

Arild Andersen Quintet and Reijseger/Fraanje/Sylla, QEH

Distinguished Norwegian double bassist's stellar quintet is joined, in inspired programming, by bold Dutch/Senegalese trio of improvisers

The second set offered an equally satisfying, if less surprising, musical experience. Norwegian double bassist Arild Andersen, a key figure in Nordic jazz, has been recording on the landmark German label ECM for decades. His quintet shows off pan-European expertise, with Scottish saxophonist Tommy Smith, Polish pianist Marcin Wasilewski, French drummer Patrice Heral and Swiss flugelhornist Matthieu Michel.

After an opening of tranquil, amplified bass, they set off post-bopping at breakneck pace, Heral and Andersen (a superb drum and bass partnership throughout) driving the rhythm, with Wasilewski offering intricate harmonic decoration, while Smith and Michel duelled. Their duos were a key sound, the meatiness of both instruments creating a really gutsy, thrusting melodic line.

Andersen, Heral and Wasilewski all gave solos of stellar quality, though the pick, marginally, was Smith, whose tenor sax tone offered effortless variety, roaring, yelping and crying as he soared through the harmonies. Smith also had a solo on shakuhachi (Japanese bamboo flute), bathing the hall momentarily in tranquility.

Towards the end of the set the pace relaxed, and the mood became lyrical and tender, the golden loveliness of Andersen's bass tone coming through more prominently, especially during his duos with Heral, as the drummer struck with his hands. Finally, just as the audience was mellowing, Heral erupted in a volcanic passage of beatboxing, which was sampled, and played back to the accompaniment of his own drumming.

Andersen's group, formally quite traditional, was scintillating in the sheer quality of their playing; Reijseger's trio, gave the whole trio form a visceral and compelling shake. It was inspired programming, highlighting both the quality and diversity of the contemporary European scene.

“ *The overall effect was truly extraordinary, the sound both spiritual and earthy, homely and menacing* ”

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