

ECLECTICA!
Great Hall, Dartington
15/09/07

Musical mixture has found the right blend

Attempts to merge two distinct musical genres often fall short of the mark, because the end-result appears as a watered-down version of one or the other. Eclectica! does seem to have got it right, appealing equally to classical music buffs and seasoned jazzers alike!

Of course, with the inspired blend of superb jazz guitarists, Pete Oxley and Luis D'Agostino, cellist, Bernard Gregor-Smith and violinist, Lizzie Ball, two of the country's leading string-players, the audience knew straightaway it was going to be in for a real treat. Though even with so much talent, it would be easy to assign the bowed strings an accompanying, harmonic role, with the odd lick thrown in just for good measure!

But from the first note it was plain that Eclectica! was cast in a totally different mould. For here each player could effectively function as lead or accompaniment, in tightly-organised classical phrases, or in more freely-improvised jazz passages, seamlessly switching from one to another singly, or combined, and with Lizzie Ball's crucial experience in jazz and Latin-American music adding just the right 'Grappelli' zest to the top line when needed.

Eclectica! is still in its infancy, but as its mainstay repertoire expands, this dazzling and pioneering outfit could soon become the modern counterpart of the traditional string quartet, with just those two extra strings from each guitar making such a decisive contribution!

REVIEW by PHILIP R BUTTALL
