

JAZZ

THE IMPOSSIBLE GENTLEMEN

Pizza Express Jazz Club, W1

★★★★★

JACK MASSARIK

CRAZY name, crazy group, but crazy like foxes. An OBE, please, for the anonymous producer who thought to introduce two US veterans, bassist Steve Swallow and drummer Adam Nussbaum, to a couple of Mancunian mavericks who had never worked together before. Guitarist Mike Walker dabbles in rock and pianist Gwilym Simcock is clearly classically trained, so a more disparate quartet would be hard to find. Yet as a unit this group works brilliantly. Sparks flew on their

anonymous debut album and last night, subtly powered by the experienced Americans, they sounded even more exciting live.

In Walker, Simcock has found a soloist-composer who can write originals as imaginative as his own and also match him for individual wizardry. Walker's neboop anthem, *Laugh Lines*, and Simcock's speedy revision of *Softly As In a Morning Sunrise (You Won't Be Around to See It)* were impressive openers but when both players cut loose in the second set, the room was enthralled and Simcock was elated.

"For the first time in my career," he confessed while signing albums and other merchandise for a growing army of female fans, "I'm with a band that's got its own T-shirt."

■ *Ends tonight (08456 027017, pizzaexpresslive.com)*