

Jazz, world, folk

CD reviews

The Impossible Gentlemen

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(Basho)

Last year, this world-class Anglo-US quartet (touring the UK until 23 June) first unveiled the breadth of its appeal - from byzantine contemporary bebop to raw, Hendrix-like guitar blues by way of Pat Metheny's lyricism and Gwilym Simcock's mercurial compositions and piano virtuosity. Simcock, Salford guitar master Mike Walker, bass guitarist Steve Swallow and drummer Adam Nussbaum sidestep every supergroup pitfall by sounding as integrated and mutually responsive as if they'd been together for a decade. Graceful, Metheny-esque groovers such as Walker's *Laugh Lines* buzz with call-and-response swaps between piano and guitar, and the same composer's *When You Hold Her* begins as a piano ballad, develops through soft chords and harmonics, and turns slowly into a punchy guitar solo full of vocal-like tone changes. Simcock's uptempo *You Won't Be Around to See It* is a slew of flying motifs, passing references to Charlie Parker and Monk, choppy backbeats, some brilliant soul-blues guitar, and a dazzling passage of countermelodic piano improv in Brad Mehldau's league. *Play the Game* is another Simcock sprint full of unclichéd solos over Swallow's relaxed bass-walk, and Walker is at his soul-guitar best on Nussbaum's fiercely bluesy *Sure Would Baby* as the finale. **JF**