



FIRST NIGHT

Jazz review: Tin Men and the Telephone at Ronnie Scott's, W1

Jazz is presented as wonderfully mischievous, tech-driven fun by the pianist Tony Roe and his Amsterdam-based band

★★★★★

Whatever were they going to do next? This was one of those nights when the surprises and the ingenious tricks kept coming. Jazz spends an awful lot of time solemnly regurgitating old ideas; this performance was a 21st-century gig in which multimedia gadgetry and a sense of mischief combined to create something fresh and unexpected. Who would have thought that Maria Sharapova's Centre Court screams at Wimbledon would end up in a trio workout?

The pianist Tony Roe and his Amsterdam-based band use technology to draw their audience into the heart of the gig. After downloading a phone app, we had an opportunity to sketch melodies, harmonies and rhythms and watch the musicians instantly juggle fragments of improvisations based on the ideas flashing up on the screen dominating the bandstand.

We were treated to a genial pop quiz too and a sequence in which a motley cast of demagogues, from Donald Trump to Marine Le Pen and Kim Jong-un, lined up to be voted off the planet. Along the way there were echoes of Steve Reich's early experiments with tape loops (Trump's calls for a Mexican wall provided one motif), Neil Cowley's playful power chords and Terry Gilliam's Pythonesque animations.

At the centre of it all, Roe sat at his keyboard, alternately firing off riffs and setting up cues for the hardware. The bassist Pat Cleaver and the drummer Bobby Petrov were equally alert, veering from bebop rhythms to spartan hip-hop beats, much like the Robert Glasper band, but without the smug, "aren't-we-cool" posturing.

Some members of the audience, it should be said, bailed out early. Perhaps they wanted the musicians to get down to playing longer, conventional pieces. The rest of us stayed to cheer. Roe and his friends were reminding us — in captivating style — that jazz can be fun and profound at the same time.