

Trio of Oz, Jazz Bar, Edinburgh

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The old gag about a drummer being someone who hangs around with musicians was unceremoniously crushed here.

Omar Hakim is an extraordinarily fluent musician; he just happens to have chosen to demonstrate this on the drums.



Rachel Z was a creative presence on her piano, but the star of her trio was the extraordinary Omar Hakim on drums.

Without dominating or adopting the leader's mantle, the man whose drumming credits include Miles Davis, Sting and Madonna infused this gig with percussive musicality, lending crisp, beautifully weighted direction and easing back in support when appropriate and rendering the often dreaded drum solo as an exhilarating composition.

If he gets top billing in this review and tended to be the focal point on the night, that's as much to do with the Jazz Bar's stage set-up, which has the piano in the back corner, as the music. From her embedded position Rachel Z projected a similarly creative presence, building piano solos of depth, purpose and knife-edge excitement that showed why she's long been one of the luminaries of the New York jazz scene.

The repertoire had little to do with jazz but therein lies a tale. The trio, with bassist Maeve Royce contributing powerful lines, follows the fashion for realising pop and rock songs as jazz "standards." But there's none of the cuteness that can often result. Alice in Chains' Angry Chair, Morrissey's There Is a Light That Never Goes Out and The Police's King of Pain all transferred naturally into swinging vehicles in the jazz tradition, although the swingiest of all was the bona fide jazz number, Wayne Shorter's E.S.P., which here merited another set of initials: TNT.

Star rating: * * * *