

repute Cristina Vilallonga started with her own composition *Somos Sueños*, an eloquent piece that set the mood for the rest of her performance.

The common misconception is that Tango needs a percussive beat to emphasise its energy, but as Vilallonga proved only too well, rhythm can be just as consistent even without a drumbeat to drive it along. It was in fact down to Horacio Fumero's sturdy acoustic bass and Luis Vidal's nimble work on the piano to provide the music's rhythmic heart, with Victor Villena on the *bandoneon* (similar to the concertina) enhancing the articulation of the songs.

Vilallonga's sublime vocal delivery is an important factor she has become synonymous with even as the singer with international chill-out act Gotan Project. This complemented the music by projecting an air of intimacy, depth and emotion that came across crystal clear even if she hadn't taken the time to offer brief explanations about the songs' themes in between numbers.

This was by all means a magnificent performance that juggled feelings of sadness, optimism, empowerment and nostalgia, its high points emerging during *Desafiando Tristezas*, *Iguazu* and *Naranja en flor*, which could only have been bettered had Vilallonga gone on to perform Piazzola's classic *Libertango* after the rather paced *Ropa Blanca*.

Local jazz guitarist Sandro Zerafa was accompanied by his White Russian Quintet, a name inspired by a Coen Brothers film, and with no political strings attached, as is clearly emphasised in the programme.

After initial spells dabbling locally in rock and alternative music, it was in jazz that Zerafa discovered his true passion. He has been living in



Sandro Zerafa's White Russian Quintet.

France for quite some time, during which he studied music intensively and established himself on the French jazz scene in particular, while also gaining ground on an international level.

It's no secret that jazz isn't quite to everyone's taste, but the set performed blended a few other elements into the mix, giving the music a broader, even if occasionally eclectic, charm. Suffice it to say that despite not being too inclined towards jazz, I found much of this set quite fascinating and at times perhaps even radically challenging in an upbeat way.

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The sax players played an important part in giving the songs their expansive appeal, punctuating the songs in the absence of vocals and offering a familiarity that non-jazz enthusiasts could tune in to.

With drummer David Georgelet shuffling beats in a seemingly renegade style and Zerafa's mea-



The Cristina Vilallonga Tango Quartet.

sured guitar licks, it was in fact bassist Yoni Zelnik and sax players Amy Gamlen and David Prez who collectively conveyed this performance's mediating element to the audience, particularly when *Delightfully Disconnected* got a bit too severe for the average music listener. Elsewhere, *Goose*, *Lullaby*, *White Russian* and especially

*Slowness* represented just why Zerafa and his White Russian Quintet have been so wholeheartedly welcomed into the world of modern jazz.

The genres on offer then may have been quite contrasting, but somehow, the combination oozed a certain intimacy that the audience picked up on, judging by its

response and the various encouraging comments shared as people made their way home. The concept of a varied music weekend is a fine idea, and one that I for one certainly hope will succeed in becoming a regular fixture on our cultural calendar.

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