

Written by Poppy Beresford, Freelance Critic and Reporter

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# “ ‘This is yours’ - singing with a passion for true art”

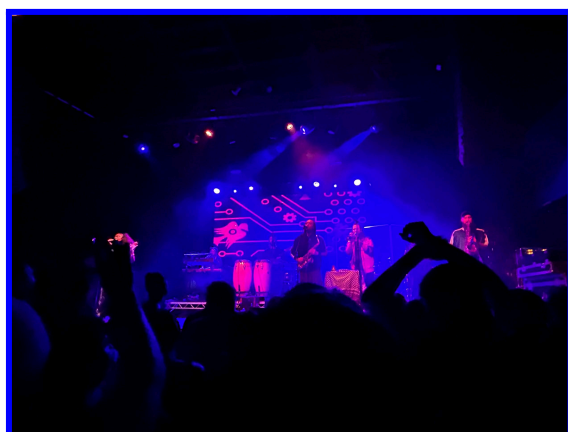
Nubiyian Twist supported by O. , The Electric

07.05.26

‘This is yours’ - a gift to our ears, the grace of Nubiyian Twist. An absolutely staggering show, this 9 piece genre-bending band lit the Electric with chaos, rebellion and utter joy. This performance was a masterclass of how live music will never lose its power.



First up to the stage was duo O. Formed within the midst of 2020 lockdown, this is a band unafraid to push boundaries. With simply a baritone saxophone played by Joseph Henwood and Tash Keary on drums, they seem to stretch their sound from a screaming underbelly of club tracks to soulful jazz improvisation within seconds, fusing elements of post-punk within electrically charged saxophone distortion. They hold the dexterity of iconic bands such as Geese or tracks like ‘paranoid android’ yet with the simplicity of only 2 instruments - a truly staggering show to watch. You can hear piccolos, panpipes, keyboard melodies and electric overdubs all done live, through a simple loop machine, distortion pedals and a single saxophone. Keary’s tight, ticking drumbeats push their sound to unbelievable heights with tense builds and beat drops, an urgency for noise and release within the wall of sound O. creates. Henwood casually opens saying ‘we’re gonna play a bunch of different styles of music for you’, an understatement of the ages in comparison to their showcase of genres, tempos and styles in which they casually flick through in such a short set. They held their audience with comforting hands from the get-go, so entranced that you could hear the hi-hat rattle with anticipation as Henwood indulges in a soulful solo, before they burst with such extravagance its hard to realise how they create the sound they do with such ease and perfection.



You can certainly never underestimate the power of live music again after watching the power of Nubiyian Twist. A band heralding from Leeds, formed in 2011, are credited for their belief in the ‘art form of a Big Band’ and confidence in fusing inspiration from afro beats, garage, carnival, traditional jazz and many more. But what is truly magical is their presence on stage, effortlessly cool in their individuality yet come together to create a sound which celebrates individual talent, community, culture and joins us together in the necessity to dance!

Unexpected to begin their set was an ominous, digitalised voice of frontman Tom Excell, posing as the voice of AI looming over all at this current time of uncertainty, surveillance and artistic insecurity. He implores to ‘not take it personally’ as technology takes over the livelihood of the crowd who are ‘potentially slightly stoned, depressed’ and ultimately powerless. But, in no doubt, Nubiyian Twist reclaimed this space.

Chasing Shadows is their newest album with a purpose - for noise, for chaos, and for the people. The result is an electric mix of feel good rhythms, high energy tracks and soulful instrumentation which screams of personality. They effortlessly blend soul and dance



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sections, with the entire crowd following like moths to flame; i was surprised that only a single song passed and new addition to the band, vocalist Eniola Idowu, leads the eager crowd into a 2 step to *Lights Out*. Her fabulous, smooth vocalisation blends perfectly with their iconic sound, especially within choral sections as other members focus calmly yet intently on their track to create breathtaking harmonies. Credits must also be given to the fabulous 4 on brass, pushing that joyous 'big band' sound to dizzying heights, so infectious that it can't help but shake your soul into moving to the beat.

Yet, the most incredible spectacle that Nubiyah Twist produced within their hour and a half set, was community. They instinctively form the room from a tightly-packed crowd of strangers to a dance floor of friends. No matter where i looked i could see smiles, laughter and singing; groups of friends holding hands and shuffling to the beat, or strangers stepping together casually to a trumpet solo, or mother and daughter embracing as the band talked of the meaning behind the song *Carry Me*. They welcome all kinds of dancers, imploring all to be authentically themselves and move to the music however your body wants to. It was the most joyous experience to watch the crowd as true colours were set free to the music, and realising that it is an instinct to dance when music is beautiful - forged from centuries of history, culture, struggle and rejoice.

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Nubiyah Twist is a beacon of hope against our ever-evolving world where live music is slowly falling to the sidelines in the shadow of Artificial Intelligence. They sing with a passion for true art: to empower, to empathise, and to rise above into a place of freedom and joy.

