

# London Brew

## Part of the EFG London Jazz Festival

**Start time:** 7.30pm

**Approximate running time:** 120 mins, plus 20 min interval.

Please note all timings are approximate and subject to change.

### **Ahead of British jazz supergroup London Brew's debut concert at the EFG London Jazz Festival, discover the story of a work of epic improvisation.**

Twelve of the best jazz musicians of their time, locked in an intense three-day recording marathon: it sounds like the story of the making of Miles Davis's groundbreaking *Bitches Brew*. But this is 2020, not 1969, and the musicians are the cream of the London jazz scene. This is *London Brew*.

Davis's music publisher, Bruce Lampcov, wanted to celebrate the 50th anniversary of that landmark record. So, he brought together members of the contemporary London jazz scene, including saxophonist Nubya Garcia, multi-instrumentalist Raven Bush, tuba player Theon Cross, guitarist Dave Okumu, and drummer Dan See, to record an improvisatory work inspired by the album.

'*Bitches Brew* was the first music I ever heard from Miles,' says See, who – like on that iconic album – was one of two drummers (Tom Skinner was the other). 'I remember it seemed like it was from another dimension. The freedom and expression I heard was probably too much for me at the time. I came back to it years later and understood it a lot more. It's a very inspiring album.'

'It's a rockstar album,' adds *London Brew* record producer Martin Terefe. 'It shattered all ideas I had about what jazz was or could be. On the album, Miles Davis provided a stage for other musicians to break new ground and shine. He added his edge and flare, and in the end, he was the ultimate inspiration as a fearless musician and bandleader.'

But, this being 2020, the pandemic hit recording plans and left the live performance schedule shattered. So, there was a real sense of something special brewing when the musicians finally got together at North London's Church Studios in December 2020.

'I'd had a baby in August 2020, so had hardly been playing at all,' recalls See. 'I think I hadn't touched the drums in two months. I was super-excited to play with everyone and just be free and forget about everything pandemic-related for three days. It was a lot of fun on a musical and social level.'

'I remember the very first thing we played was a direction from Martin to all play one note of how we felt from "this fucked up year". There were a few other jumping-off points, like a sample that [DJ and broadcaster] Benji B would play, but mainly, it was just whoever would start something. Everyone was happy to be playing music and

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especially to completely improvise. It's rare to have total freedom with this many musicians.'

Garcia told the Guardian: 'We played for three days straight with no notes on the page and no repeats. There were twelve musicians in the room, just listening and responding. It was intense.'

Terefe, who is best known for working on albums by the likes of Ron Sexsmith A-ha and KT Tunstall, says that incredible vibe was down to the fact that most of the musicians involved hadn't been making music with other musicians for the best part of a year. 'I think we all felt a lot of gratitude for just being able to be in a studio together. The vibe was at first searching, then open, and ultimately as we got to know each other - electrifying.'

'As we set out, the approach was to listen, to create space and to allow the musicians to flow with as little direction or interference as possible. I think we all quickly realised something special and quite magical was going on. When I started the mixing process, which included choosing which bits from three days of recording would become the album, I decided to look for great moments that felt like starting points and mix for the duration the music kept my attention. That eventually became eight 'songs' varying in length from three to 24 minutes.'

The record was released in March to excellent reviews – 'a thrilling 90-minute voyage into the outer regions of electric jazz,' is how Uncut described it. But there's never been a chance to hear this work live. Until now.

The jazz supergroup's concert will debut live in the Hall as part of the EFG London Jazz Festival. This is exactly the kind of concert the EFG London Jazz Festival is renowned for. Bringing together cutting-edge ideas, living legends, and the brightest new talent, the ten-day extravaganza is a celebration of jazz in all its breadth and wondrous forms.

Presented by Barbican Associate Producer Serious, the festival also includes performances by American drummer Makaya McCraven with the London Contemporary Orchestra, the boundary-crossing Hiromi, GRAMMY Award-winning Sergio Mendes, singer Samara Joy, and global music pioneer Charles Lloyd. Plus, cellist, singer, and percussionist Abel Selacoe is joined by our Resident Orchestra, the London Symphony Orchestra, for an evening blending South African and European traditions.

## Performers

**Raven Bush** violin

**Theon Cross** tuba

**Eska** vocals

**Nubya Garcia** tenor saxophone

**Tom Herbert** bass

**Nikolaj Topp Larsen** keys

**Dave Okumu** guitar/musical director

**Nick Ramm** piano

**Dan See** drums

**Martin Terefe** guitar

Produced by the Barbican. Part of the EFG London Jazz Festival 2023.



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