

Get The Blessing

Portishead jazz side project – but good Cargo, Sunday

Derek Smalls has a lot to answer for. Spinal Tap's magnificently moustachioed bassist's 'Jazz Odyssey' unfairly tarred all rock band side projects with the same comedy brush likely to send listeners to the bar as soon as the words 'Our bass player wrote this one...' are mumbled into a mic. Yet for Portishead bassist Jim Barr and drummer Clive Deamer—one half of lean mean Bristol alt-jazzers Get The Blessing—there's not an ounce of navel gazing self-indulgence about their feisty four-piece. Having scooped a BBC Jazz Award last year for their pungent debut album 'All Is Yes', they unexpectedly gained the approval of the 'proper' (read 'London') jazz community. This was something they never set



out to achieve—having taken their name The Blessing (the 'Get' was added after they found a metal band already nabbed the moniker) from an Ornette Coleman song, they set out simply to play Coleman's music in their own way.

Distinguished by their ultra-sparse sound of trumpet, sax, electric bass and drums—with tenorist Jake McMurchie and ex-NYJO trumpeter Pete Judge adding the legit jazz edge to the rocking Barr/Deamer bass 'n' drum onslaught—GTB return with a new album, 'Bugs in Amber', which they launch at Cargo tonight. Their new Teflon-plated sound is best heard on the record's opener 'Music Style Product' that comes out

spitting bullets with its mix of fuzzed-up 'Jungle

Boogie'/'Whole Lotta Love' riffing spliced between psychedelic Ellingtonesque swirls. Creating the perfect tension between Barr's scything bass work and the melodic twin horn attack, GTB harness rock and jazz with uncompromising power. All without a foil-wrapped cucumber in sight.

Mike Flynn