
The Blessing

★★★★

All Is Yes CAKE

**Bristol jazz-rock quartet,
featuring Portishead's
rhythm section**

Among the recent slew of groups with jazz chops and rock teeth (EST, Polar Bear, Acoustic Ladyland), The Blessing are a blast: fat catchy tunes, shaggy, human grooves and real blowing. Built on the belligerent, beefy beats of Clive Deamer (drums) and the clanging bass of Jim Barr, The Blessing's sound is topped by some engaging, theatrical work from trumpeter Pete Judge and saxophonist Jake McMurchie. The Ornette-style absence of piano or guitar results in an appealingly uncluttered soundworld with inviting space for their groovy mischief (Coke Hole) or edgy sensitivity (Loubia) to express itself. Despite their superficially rambunctious attitude, this is careful music in which everything has its place, everything means something. If they're not as ostentatiously brainy or ironic as some of their contemporaries, that is actually a blessing.

Chris Ingham
