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January 2009 gig reviews by Chris Parker

Elliott Henshaw Band

Tuesday 6 January 2009



With acknowledged influences including the Yellowjackets and drummer/composer Dave Weckl, the Elliott Henshaw Band might reasonably have been expected to produce tight, rousing, no-nonsense fusion, and this they duly did in front of an enthusiastic crowd of admirers at this SRO gig.

Kicking off proceedings with two anthemic in-band originals, 'Tea and Toast' and 'Ayr to Dundee', the drummer-led quintet were both slick and funky, stating Henshaw's catchy themes with breezy gusto, then passing the soloing baton around the band, Sax Assault saxophonist Rob Buckland proving himself equally adept on both tenor and alto instruments (blusteringly powerful on the former, and addressing the latter with almost Sanborn-like insinuating earnestness), guitarist James Pusey spikily adventurous, keyboard player Matt Steele providing welcome textural variety.

It was Dave Weckl's 'Wet Skin' (which can be heard on his 1999 album *Synergy*), however, that really brought the best out of Henshaw's band, its typically uplifting theme sparking off a series of vigorous solos and providing a platform for a rumbustious but skilful and dexterous drum solo from Henshaw himself.

With the odd crowd-pleasing vocal interlude from Annabel Williams and Noel Sullivan visiting material associated with Stevie Wonder, Ray Charles ('Georgia on My Mind') and Steve Stills ('Love the One You're With'), this was an entertaining, good-natured evening's music from a thoroughly unpretentious but accomplished band.

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