

## Brotherhood Of Breath

Ronnie Scott's *Sun*

Born out of anti-apartheid anger, Chris McGregor's Brotherhood Of Breath were one of the great modern jazz big bands. They played music that was at once joyous, seething, furious and life-affirming, drawing upon raggedy South African rhythms, post-Ellington swing, Mingus-style chamber jazz and fiery free improv.

The band were formed in 1970 when South Africa's first multi-racial jazz group, the legendary Blue Notes, found themselves exiled in London, where they forged an unlikely alliance with free-jazz heavyweights like Evan Parker, Mike Osbourne, Lol Coxhill and Harry Beckett. Their concerts were rambunctious, anarchic affairs with the band pushing and pulling at the music and creating a joyous tumult. They were also heavily politicised: a multi-racial

band playing anti-apartheid music with a passion and anger that only the similarly exiled Gilad Atzmon expresses today.

Few of the original South African members survive – pianist McGregor passed away in 1980 following the likes of bassist Thomas Dyani, altoist Dudu Pukwana and trumpeter Mongezi Feza – and it falls to drummer Louis Moholo to keep the flame alive. They're still rambunctious but less anarchic and more reverential – sounding more like Loose Tubes playing Abdullah Ibrahim. Still, the music should be remarkable, with trumpeters Harry Beckett and Claude Deppa, trombonist Annie Whitehead, tuba player Oren Marshall and saxophonists Chris Biscoe, Steve Williamson and Julian Arguelles playing the music of Chris McGregor. An exercise in nostalgia? Maybe, but few gigs this year will be as heart warming or as much fun. *Kerstan Mackness*

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