



DooBeeDooBeeDoo is a cross-cultural on-line magazine, based on the view that music and community are indivisible, and that musicians, consumers and record companies are all part of one community. The **basic thrust** of the editorial content is that a social awareness can be fostered through music.

Concert review: META a well-blended confection of jazz and African (both Subsaharan and Northern) musics and sensibilities

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Venue: Le Poisson Rouge

Review by Matt Cole

On Wednesday, June 27; singer, songwriter, and percussionist **META** played before a sparse, but enthusiastic crowd at La Poisson Rouge, backed by [Ari Hoenig](#) on drums, [Francois Moutin](#) on bass, and [Thomas Enhco](#) on piano and violin. Meta's music has been described as "world songs," and tonight's show would feature a well-blended confection of jazz and African (both Subsaharan and Northern) musics and sensibilities.

Meta opened the show playing a tambourine-like instrument (I wasn't close enough to see exactly what) in an odd meter, and singing in a tenor voice. I heard bits of both sides of the Sahara in his vocals. Then the rest of the band came in, playing what basically sounded like good 1960s-modern jazz, but fitting quite nicely with Meta's singing. Presently, Meta stepped back and ceded the sound scape to the instruments, each of whom had a chance to come to the fore before Meta came back in. Whether he was singing conventionally with the band, or more orthogonally, it all came together quite smoothly.

The next song came in with a Latin jazz feel. Meta entered in English with a jazzy delivery in unison with the bass. Here, the vocals were perhaps too low in the mix; I would like to have understood more of the lyrics. When the song proceeded into the instrumental section, the players used space very well—with Enhco alternating tastefully spare piano lines with rapid runs and Hoenig throwing in well-placed odd meter fills. When Meta

came back in, he alternated between Middle Eastern-sounding and jazzy vocals, and did some interesting scatting which was definitely at least a bit different than anything I've heard before. The song ended with a return to the jazzy sounds of the beginning.

While the first two songs really energized me, the third took it down a bit. It opened with a jazz sound that seemed most like something decent but not overly exciting that one would hear on NPR. There was a nice bass solo, very high up on the frets, and more scatting (with a distinct North African/Middle Eastern feel); perhaps if this was the first song, it would have seemed better.

The energy went back up (and remained so for the rest of the show) with the next song, which featured Elhco on violin. Hoenig's drumming on this one reminded me of Tomo (aka J. Thomas Osander) of God Street Wine (and later of Damien Rice and Lisa Hannigan), with deft hi-hat work and a propulsive beat, good for moving to. The vocals were more conventionally 'world beat,'-sounding, though certainly not generic. Elhco played an energetic solo with a very good overall shape, in what was most likely a North African scale. Meta went on to add some scatting and chanting, and Moutin and Hoenig completed the picture with some good fills.

On the next piece, Elhco remained on violin, and showed the same command of space as he had on piano, mixing rapid runs with wide-open passages. There followed a violin-vocal duo, and then Elhco returned to the piano as the rest of the band came in, backing Meta with some dreamy Afro-jazz. The song then got peppy, and I made out the line 'with unity and red wine, dislocating time,' before the band switched back to dreamy sounds. Moutin played a lovely lyrical bass solo just before the end.

Piano and drums started the next song, with the piano having a 9/8 feel and the drums, not so much. Soon, the bass entered, and there was some very subtle interplay between the three instrumentalists; really, the amazing communication between the band members and their constantly complementing each other's parts was one of the highlights of the night. Meta came in with dreamy vocals, before the band returned to the intricate musical meshing of the start of the song.

The next piece began with a watery piano, followed by a cymbal-heavy drum line. The music had a bit of the feel of Glassworks-era Philip Glass,

though jazzier and not so repetitive. There was another fine bass solo by Moutin, which I described in my notes as “poppin’,” and more of that unusual, enjoyable North African-spiced with Subsaharan-feeling scatting from Meta. The song closed with some wonderful soft piano.

The final song of the evening started out sounding like a jazzy police show theme, but in 5 or 10. Meta then introduced the band; this was one of the very few times he spoke to the audience. He then proceeded to scat more, and the song took on an optimistic feel. Moutin played yet another outstanding solo way up on the fretboard (not many are able to make those high notes sound so good), and the drums again sounded like vintage Tomo—bouncy and lots of hi-hat. Elhco played impossibly tasteful piano accompaniment to all this, leaving lots of space, before tearing into a solo of his own. Meta came back in with some not-quite scatting which sounded like it could have come from either the French or Algerian side of the Mediterranean, and joined the band to close with a riff in 10.

Overall, I was very impressed with Meta’s performance, on a number of levels. Music-wise, the band was incredibly tight and imaginative, they interacted and communicated so well, and were able to basically dance with each other with great respect for each other’s space and movement. Meta’s vocals were strong, and I liked that he managed to meld several styles (jazz, North and Subsaharan African, and probably a few more) in such a way that all of them were recognizable, but none dominated the whole. A lot of the music made me want to dance; this is a sure sign of a very good rhythm section. I could easily see this band doing quite well as the opening act at one of the Central Park or Prospect Park summer concerts. Plus, the band was very professional, putting on a fine and energetic show.