



## Avishai Cohen Quartet

★★★★★ Crucible, Sheffield

**James Griffiths**  
**Friday December 3, 2004**  
[The Guardian](#)

You don't get to become Chick Corea's bass man without knowing a trick or two, and Avishai Cohen knows considerably more than two. He is equally at home with sensitive conservatory jazz and rumbustious African township music, sleek Larry Graham-style funk and European folk. In Sheffield, his quartet revealed their colours very gradually; initially, this didn't seem the sort of gig that would end with the audience stamping and cheering.

If anything, the first tune was reminiscent of Dave Brubeck, with refined pastel shades from Cuban reeds man Yosvany Terry and gently sizzling, Latin cymbal rhythms from drummer Mark Guiliana. Sam Bar-Sheshet's piano was cool and mathematically precise, and the whole piece hinged around a reoccurring single-string glissando from Cohen. The stately atmosphere pervaded several of the following tracks, although a tendency to folk-derived melodies and bluesy improvisatory flashes offered a glimpse of the road ahead.

A spiky, Cuban-flavoured piano ostinato ushered in a hard-grooving number that found Terry's clarinet hammering a staccato riff while the rhythm section managed to suggest both Afrobeat and 1970s disco. Cohen clearly favours a hook-based approach to composition; a tune called Remembering managed to echo passages of No Doubt's Don't Speak, while Toledo's purring ensemble sections barely concealed the fact that this was another pop tune in disguise. By the time a Beatles song appeared (Come Together, arranged spectacularly for bowed double bass and funk drums), the audience had rumbled Cohen's game.

The extended finale hurtled along zestfully, amid much whooping and cheering. Bar-Sheshet switched from piano to melodica and went walkabout in the auditorium, while Terry shook and beat a chekere - a beaded African gourd-drum. Cohen let loose with some storming funk electric-bass before ending with a bit of lusty African-style vocal chanting. Short of producing bagpipes and launching into a version of Bohemian Rhapsody, it's hard to see how the band could have milked us for another drop of surprise.

## **The Risk-Taking Bassist**

XXV International Jazz Festival, Granada, Spain  
La Opinion de Granada, Nov 14th, 2004

Two hours of concert and the public wanted more. Bassist Avishai Cohen visited for the second time the Isabel the Catolica (he accompanied Chick Corea on his last visit) and this time to present his own music, his new disc "At Home", which was released in Spain only three days ago. "I'm not afraid to play songs that people do not know", he affirmed in his hotel. "Jazz is like that, you know you are taking risks".

He had very delicate moments (Remembering) and others revolutionary, in which drummer Mark Guiliana spilled himself over the drum set as one who throws all the dishes off the table, a mix of rage and rhythm. Sam Bar-Sheshet, on the piano, was Brad Mehldau's antagonist, the previous day's musician, and he put the audience in his pocket with his dances playing the melodic flute; he is the most self-assured musician that has passed through the festival, who had a hard time staying seated on the piano stool, for which he had more than enough fingers.

Yosvany Terry, on reeds, was the least on stage but would come up to fly around Cohen's riffs and Bar-Sheshet's harmonies. And finally, Cohen, the ship's captain, hugging his bass as one hugging his first girlfriend and taking advantage of every edge to give a percussion spank.

At the end of the concert, the Israeli sheathed the electric bass to bring out the most entertaining improvisations, peeking at funk, reaching dance and winking at rock. In the first encore (forced by the public's vehemence), ethnic chants were made in Leh - Lah. And on the second, Madrid, a piece he wrote ten years ago.

In his pocket he had a piece of paper reading "Eshavira". That's where he went in search of the Flamenco he loves so much. "Paco de Lucia is one of my favorite living artists," he said.

By LUIS ARRONTE YGARTUA. Granada.

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## Avishai Cohen Quartet

(translation)

Venue: Isabel la Catolica, Granada (Spain)

Date: November 13, 2004

BuscaMusica.org, published November 22<sup>nd</sup> 2004

Text and photos: Granada Jazz Festival Press

### **Avishai Cohen: A Fantasy Concert**



The Hebrew bassist Avishai Cohen was the revelation musician of the present edition of the XXV Granada Jazz Festival, at least for the less initiated public. Although Cohen filled again the Isabel La Catolica Theater, he is still a musician in a phase of growing recognition. Having been Chick Corea's confidence man has opened many doors for him, but he himself can open many more: in the Granada festival he was the only artist to be demanded back to stage for a second encore by applause and shouts of "more".

Last year he opened the contest with Corea with already many eyes were on him, his self-assurance and the joy with which he claimed prominence again and again, with the master's complacency, who gave him rope to fascinate the audience. Now he has it all, and a couple more records in which he seems to have no limits, since he demonstrates an overflowing imagination that touches on pure fantasy.

Cohen maintains a band with group spirit, that is a stable band with a mutual understanding that is absolute. A perfect ensemble leading to accuracy in their expositions and a mutual trust that allows them to work in relaxation and an almost festive musical spirit. Cohen is in love with flamenco (seen in the last documentary about Paco de Lucia) and he opened the night approaching some flamenco phrasings as a wink to the public, who entered the ring and responded to the invitation, from then on the concert was won since he was playing at home. Precisely "At Home" was the disk he came to present and he started with it's first piece "Feediop", a remembrance of Corea's hispanic sounds, in another way recognized in him for family reasons.

Formally his music can be recognized as jazz, but from the most imaginative meaning of the term, his pieces appear as melodic watercolors in which the colors attain impossible hues. Being a bass player, an instrument usually relegated to its rhythm duties, Cohen has a strong emotional component in his pieces, an emotivity that he underlines without taking away space from his cohorts, specially the piano and sax players, the former alternating between the acoustic keyboard, the synthesizer and the electric Rhodes, while the soprano, a Cuban musician of contained expressivity, threw his mane to the wind with the chereke at the end of the night.

The first part centered around the presentation of "At Home", a kind of post-jazz loosely anchored on the genre's tradition in which the music flows free with almost liquid properties. With gyrating bubbling melodies, nailing refrains usually with piano and sax and clinched by the bassist. In between, as a unifying signpost in a concert of tunes unreleased until a few weeks ago, again The Beatles came shining out with a "Come Together" completely deconstructed as a dialogue between piano and bassist.

Approaching the end of the concert, and with the electric bass, Cohen accelerated his beat, and funkied demonstrating he is also a slap virtuoso, almost stepping on metal territory. Once the concert was resolved with a caricaturesque, fun and even danceable "Caravan" that would have drawn a smile from Duke Ellington, the author himself, he finished a balanced performance in which the music triumphed over all sorts of technical considerations to the public's rejoicing, which demanded that the group return twice to the stage, with the tribal 'Leh-lah' on the first and finally the sophisticated 'Madrid' dedicated to our capital. His concert was the kind that creates devotees.

For [BuscaMusica.org](http://BuscaMusica.org)

**Guardian  
Unlimited**



Jazz CD

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## Avishai Cohen, At Home

★★★★★ (RazDaz)

**John Fordham**  
**Friday November 5, 2004**  
[The Guardian](#)

In 2000, the Israeli double-bassist and composer Avishai Cohen, a regular Chick Corea accompanist, released the kind of composer's album rarely expected from sidemen, particularly bassists. Cohen's album *Colors* was a remarkably sophisticated start, demonstrating that most elusive of knacks for writing simple tunes that aren't simple. He also showed a highly developed arranger's sense of shading a melody with bold instrumental choices, and revealing it anew with subtle harmonies and textures.

Then Cohen seemed to get worried about not being enough fun (just as his old boss Corea had regularly done) and started pumping out repetitive Cuban and funk hooks instead, with very little of it hinting at the special talents he clearly had. Last year's *Lyla* seemed to represent a partial journey back, and *At Home* completes the trip. Cohen is at Ronnie Scott's until Saturday with this fluently lyrical material, but an expanded band on the disc gets the best out of the leader's delectable folk-themes and slow-build harmonic developments. From the seductive looping theme of *Feediop* - with its sly accelerations where the form suggests rock steadiness, and its occasional tweaks to the anticipated harmony - and the lovely, carol-like melody of *Madrid*, the folk-dance theme and percussive intensity of *Leh-Lah*, and on through furious piano improvisations from *Bar-sheshet* against Mark Guilian's fat-in-a-pan drumming (*Punk*), wistful brass harmonies and airy flute ruminations (*Mediterranean Sun*), the music is consistently riveting, but without eclipsing the ingenuity of the improvisers. Avishai Cohen is back where he should be.

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Avishai Cohen Trio & Ensemble

## **At Home**

Raz Daz SSC4602 \*\*\*\* 4/5

Avishai Cohen (b. el b); Diego Urcola (flg); Yosvany Terry (saxes); Anne Drummond (fl); Barsh (key); Mark Guiliana (d); Tomer Tzur, (hand drum) Jeff Ballard (perc).

Rec. Feb 2004.

Cohen is a formidably gifted bassist who began his career in the ensembles of Danilo Perez and Chick Corea before going on to perform and record with a host of jazz notables while gaining international acclaim for his own ensembles, the International Vamp Band and his Trio and Quartet. According to *Bass Player Magazine*, he numbers among the 100 most influential bassists of the 20th century. ***At Home*** is his sixth album as a leader in his own right and **for my money the most considered and best realised of all.**

The exuberant 'look-ma-no-hands' style of some of his earlier work has been replaced by a sense of introspection and a more overt use of folkloric elements to extend the range of jazz expressionism and this is nowhere more apparent than on 'Madrid' or the Mid-Eastern flavoured 'Leh-Lah'. **Cohen's bass playing is exemplary; his intonation is superb and he has a full, round tone even when articulating the most complex of lines.**

He frequently moves from the background (accompaniment) to the foreground (as a voice within the ensemble) so that he appears to be in two places at once. ***At Home*** is a well conceived album that despite the mix 'n'match nature of the ensembles, **there is a refreshing desire among each soloist to unearth meaning in each of the well conceived compositions.**

Stuart Nicholson Nov 2004

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## Greeks' perfect pitch is no match for the bass virtuoso

**AVISHAI COHEN QUARTET \*\*\*\*\***  
GEORGE SQUARE, GLASGOW

THANKS to train delays en route, the Israeli-born bassist Avishai Cohen had already started his set by the time this Edinburgh-based reviewer arrived. It was instantly clear, however, from the crowd's rapt appreciation - a crowd well up towards capacity, the Euro 2004 final (of which more later) notwithstanding - as well as from the relaxed attunement uniting the four men on stage, that trespassers in the tunnel at Queen Street had cost me much of an excellent show.

A long-time sideman with the legendary pianist Chick Corea, Cohen also has five albums to his credit as a leader. He's established himself as a restlessly freebooting talent, meeting the challenge inherent in his choice of instrument with fearsome technical calibre, allied to a repertoire encompassing Middle-Eastern, Cuban, African-American, eastern European, funk and hip-hop influences - among others.

Accompanied by his regular touring line-up of Yosavny Terry (saxophone), Sam Barsheshet (piano/keyboards/melodica) and Mark Giuliani (drums), Cohen switched between electric and upright bass. On either instrument, he seemed to revel in pushing its sonic possibilities to the limit - plucking below the bridge on the double bass, or slapping its sides in a one-man percussion duet; coaxing intricate, lilting melodies from the electric, his left hand stretched across the very base of the neck.

Another key element of Cohen's sound is his exploration of the interface between the bass's rhythmic and melodic capabilities.

Both solos and ensemble work throughout teemed with intelligence and purpose, while also displaying an assured, nimble responsiveness highlighted by the quartet's fondness for abrupt yet fluid contrasts.

All of which tautly defined virtuosity, you might think, would have made it entirely the wrong moment for the celebrations following Greece's triumph to reach George Square, in a sustained tumult of car-horns followed by continuous cheering. By that point, though, Cohen and his band were on such a roll as to draw instinctively and smilingly on the mood outside to raise their own game yet further.

**SUE WILSON**

Tuesday, 6th July 2004  
*The Scotsman*