



**Australian**  
**17/02/2009**  
**Page: 13**  
**Section: Arts & Entertainment**  
**Region: Australia Circulation: 140000**  
**Type: National**  
**Size: 103.00 sq.cms**  
**Frequency: MTWTF**

## More than the stars, stellar performances all round

### MUSIC

#### **Chick Corea and John McLaughlin: Five Peace Band**

Kings Park, Perth, February 15. Her Majesty's Theatre, Adelaide, February 17; Hamer Hall, Melbourne, February 18; Sydney Opera House, February 20 and 21.

**G**IVEN the association between Chick Corea and John McLaughlin goes back 40 years, when they both played with Miles Davis, it's not surprising they appear relaxed and comfortable together on stage. Less expected is the egalitarian nature of the Five Peace Band's performance.

This is not a vehicle designed to showcase its two big stars while the three other members (all acclaimed players in their own right) are relegated to supporting roles. Throughout the evening, the band works as a close-knit team with all players having their time to shine. The rapport between the musicians is palpable and makes for a stunning ensemble performance.

Saxophonist Kenny Garrett, bassist Christian McBride and Brian Blade on drums all impressed with their technical brilliance, especially in the more extrovert solo moments, but also with the subtlety and refinement they brought to the ensemble.

Corea and McLaughlin set the bar high for sheer instrumental mastery. McLaughlin shows breathtaking agility as he cascades up and down the guitar with machine-perfect articulation. Corea's fingers are still among

the best in the business. He draws a rich, vibrant sound from the grand piano; pensive colourist one moment, dazzling virtuoso the next.

The band presented extended versions of its set list, playing for 2½ hours yet only covering six songs. Corea's *The Disguise* was a highlight, not just for his deft piano playing but for the way the band held the musical tension in the more reflective moments.

McLaughlin's *New Blues Old Bruise* was also beautifully played and included a terrific drum solo from Blade, who brought an impressive degree of sophistication to his playing throughout the set. McBride showed his aspirations to McLaughlin-style dexterity in scintillating solos on bass guitar in *Senor CS* and double bass in *Dr Jackle*. McLaughlin's tight, energetic *Raju* was an ideal opener.

Corea's *Hymn to Andromeda* was the most unusual work of the program. From its otherworldly, sci-fi style introduction, where Corea plays electric and acoustic pianos simultaneously, it builds to a raucous climax with an extended, over-the-top sax solo. Despite great moments, it felt overly long and didn't quite hang together convincingly on this occasion.

A beautiful summer's evening in Kings Park was the ideal backdrop for this excellent start to the Perth International Arts Festival's music program.

Supported by an expertly balanced sound mix, this was a deeply satisfying concert, devoid of overt showmanship, just old-school, high-quality music making.

Mark Coughlan