

d.i.g bring groove back

24th February 2009, 6:00 WST

CONCERT

Directions in Groove
Becks Music Box
Review: Rosalind Appleby

It's a sound defined by the funk-inflected drums: the foot pedal pounds out a dance beat on the bass drum and the cymbals splash double-time over the top. Mix in a wash of synthesizer and saxophone with a rock calm bass line and the scratch of skank guitar on top and you have that iconic sound.

It is the acid jazz group Directions in Groove (d.i.g) reunited again after 10 years and bringing their ambient groove to the Perth Festival. Their performance featured music mainly from Dig Deeper and Curvystrasse, albums made in the 1990s when the Sydney group began to combine dance rhythms with jazz, becoming an international sensation.

The group reunited last year and there seems to be little apparent change to their style. The spacious sound world of opening number All Is Quiet was a mellow re-introduction to the d.i.g sound. Two Way Dreamtime still resonated with its earthy feel and themes of reconciliation, although it suffered from sloppy transitions between sections.

Alex Hewetson on bass and Tim Rollinson on guitar gelled more successfully in Rumour Has It, showcasing the band's more aggressive side. An intense duo between saxophonist Rick Robertson and drummer Terepai Richmond was a highlight. Michelle Martinez was guest vocalist on classics like Upside and Reinvent Yourself, her stylish interjections a welcome addition in the occasional moment where the groove had become monotonous.

Some aspects of the music sounded dated - Scott Saunders' siren-like synthesiser shouted "1980s" too brazenly to be ignored. But much had stood the test of time; the urban grunge beats sounded utterly contemporary and had the crowd on their feet dancing. Richmond lays down some of the most persuasive funk rhythms you're likely to hear and at its best the d.i.g. sound is just as infectious as it ever was.