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JAZZ

POLAR BEAR*Held on the Tips of Fingers* (Babel)

In the music business there is “hype” and there is “buzz”. The former is generated by record companies and PR folk, the latter comes from the punters themselves. Jazz labels generally have to rely on buzz because there is little or no money for hype.

Happily, Polar Bear have generated a good deal of genuine excitement playing a boisterous “post-jazz” – music performed by musicians who have heard a lot of indie rock. There’s a punkish energy and wit to this quartet, as the drummer and leader Seb Rochford propels his two-saxophone front line with a mix of rock rhythms and breakbeats. One minute the saxmen – Pete Wareham and Mark Lockheart – are honking and squealing like 1950s rock’n’rollers, the next they are trading elegant melodies.

Held on the Tips of Fingers is full of smart, quirky and original playing, but whether Polar Bear can translate cult London fame into international success remains to be seen. Audiences will have fun finding out. ★★★★★

JOHN BUNGEY