

LONDON CALLING

Nubya Garcia is beating a path towards the new frontier of jazz, writes **Jane Cornwell**

Been living under a rock? Then you probably won't have heard about London's thrilling young jazz scene, with its dancefloor energy and anti-establishment vibe, its new creations, collaborations and genre-leaping crossovers. You'd be unaware of the legion of talented musicians gigging in the capital, some of them conservatoire trained, many of them black British, many of them — particularly the band leaders and instrumentalists — women.

The press has been all over it: "Jazz has its cool back," announced *The Times*. "London's vibrant jazz scene, now reaching a zenith after years of growing in global audience," *Rolling Stone* observed. "A cool underground scene weaving itself back into the cultural tapestry," reckoned *i-D Magazine*.

Not that the musicians care for the hype; this is a community that has grown up independently of mainstream media, major labels and obvious venues. Call it what you will — and there are jazz purists who won't even call it jazz — there's no denying that right now, in London, a new wave of British culture is going off.

At its vanguard is Nubya Garcia, a tenor saxophonist whose lyrical style owes much to jazz figures such as John Coltrane and Sonny Rollins but whose aesthetic, with its nods to funk, hip-hop, garage and the rhythmical power of broken beat, is pure inner-city London. Garcia's knack for balancing slow-building improvisations with catchy hooks and space-hurling dynamism is only part of her appeal; there's also the ease with which she throws herself into a wealth of different projects, underscoring the community spirit that is another hallmark of the scene.

"It feels great to be part of whatever this is," says

Tenor saxophonist Nubya Garcia: 'I'm thankful that people are interested'

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