

MOJO

Soul Power!

JAMES HUNTER and ELI 'PAPERBOY' REED AND THE TRUE LOVES storm the MOJO Club! PHIL ALEXANDER reports.

BUILT IN 1927, London's 300-capacity Arts Theatre has, in the past, hosted evenings of high drama based on the works of Harold Pinter, Joe Orton and Tennessee Williams. Tonight's MOJO Club spectacle is just as charged but based on matters of the heart as interpreted by two of modern R&B's most invigorating talents – from Boston there's Eli Reed and from Colchester Britain's very own heavyweight champion of rhythm'n'soul, James Hunter.

Initially, of course, Edgar 'Jones' Jones was meant to have joined the duo, but the Liverpool belter has been involved in an inter-band wrangle and is unable to play, allowing Reed and Hunter to extend their sets.

Following on from a couple of solo excursions earlier in the year, tonight marks the London debut for Reed with his full band. He takes to the boards with evident glee, following his six-piece outfit onto the stage after a crowd-hyping, James Brown-styled intro by tenor sax man Ben Jaffe. Instantaneously, The True Loves sound is rich, fiery and incredibly loud, transforming the recorded versions of tracks that grace the band's *Roll With You* set into frenzied work-outs that make it hard for the audience to stay in their seats. The likes of *Take My Love With You*, *The Satisfier* and *Stake Your Claim* are interspersed with Reed's bonhomie and self-deprecating humour. *The Love Of A Man*, a new heart-stopping, deep soul number – penned by Reed and guitarist Ryan Spraker – also illustrates that, while *Roll With You* is already one of the most thrilling albums you'll hear this year, The True Loves are on the move and developing rapidly as a unit. The Massachusetts seven leave the stage after a 50-minute set

to rapturous applause, confirming that while this may be their first trip to the UK it definitely won't be their last.

In contrast to The True Loves' uproarious delivery, James Hunter and his band are the epitome of control and sophistication, though no less infectious. Theirs is a taut sound born out of 20 years of experience and roadwork, much of it recently in the States. "I'll never be as good a guitar player as James," sighs Reed, watching Hunter from the back of the room. While the 24-year-old may be doing himself down, he has a point when it comes to Hunter's effortless guitar style, which is topped with an irresistible, honeyed vocal style and laddish Essex quips. But make no mistake, Hunter's easy manner in no way disguises the fact that he is Britain's finest blue-eyed soul singer in a generation.

The basis of Hunter's set is drawn from his Grammy-nominated 2006 set *People Gonna Talk* and his latest offering *The Hard Way*. From the latter, Carina and Jacqueline (written about Hunter's wife) are stand-outs, while the current single *Don't Do Me*



Heart-stopping: Eli 'Paperboy' Reed.

No Favours and a cover of The 5 Royales' *Think* sees James and his five-strong band drive the set home in fine style.

For Hunter, tonight's show is a prelude to a string of US dates in the company of Chris Isaak. By the time you read this, he'll be gearing up for a full UK tour in November. Only a fool would miss that.

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TO HEAR AN EXCLUSIVE TRACK BY ELI 'PAPERBOY' REED AND THE TRUE LOVES VISIT WWW.MOJO4MUSIC.COM

AN EVENING OF FIELD MUSIC!

The Week That Was
At The MOJO Club!

Sunderland's sophisticated pop collective Field Music have

been described as indie rock's answer to Steely Dan. Now Field Music's Peter Brewis has given full rein to his progressive tendencies, releasing a remarkable new album as The Week That Was, which he

describes as expansive and ambitious. Celebrated in MOJO last month by Danny Eccleston's lead album review which called it "omnivorous, visionary pop", hear The Week That Was at September's MOJO Club show.

The gig itself is an intimate, 100-capacity affair at The Slaughtered Lamb, 34-35 Great Sutton Street, London EC1 on September 23. Tickets, on sale now, are £7.50 (plus booking fee) and are available exclusively at www.mojo4music.com.



Sunderland sophisticates: The Week That Was.

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Mar Tollerworthy (2)