

a few slide guitar-led numbers, followed by a medley of 'Help Me', 'One Bourbon, One Scotch And One Beer' and 'Boom Boom'. The set ended with Little Walter's 'Just Your Fool'.

A stirring version of 'I'd Rather Go Blind' started set two, in which Bradley demonstrated great vocal technique, switching seamlessly from a quiet delivery to full-on attack, accompanied by some subtle tremolo guitar tones. Other highlights were 'Don't Ever Say Goodbye', Big Mama Thornton's 'Hound Dog', the roots blues 'Meet You Down The Alley' and the haunting 'Levee Town', before which Bradley gave a nice dedication to the recently departed Kent blues man Tony Bowers (Sturry Slim). A swampy slide Ferra song 'I Know What You're Thinking' was followed by a relaxed take on 'Bring It On Home To Me', then Bradley's paean to lost love 'Be Careful With My Baby'. Magic Slim's 'Mama Talk To Your Daughter' preceded the "jazz hands" set closer 'I'm Saved'. A rightfully deserved encore came in the form of 'Honky Tonk Woman'.

Vocals were pretty much shared by Bradley and Ferra on this occasion (Katie was suffering from a throat infection) however the two frontpersons made for a good team, ably supported by their rhythm section.

Image and words Russ Cottee

Ruby Turner

Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club, London

28.1.2020

The perfect intimate setting for this launch of Ruby Turner's 20th solo album *Love Was Here* was sold out: indeed, a residency over two weeks was needed to meet demand, such is her popularity and status.

Turner and her four-piece band opened with the jazz-infused, coolly sensuous 'On The Defence' from *Responsible*, providing an early opportunity for the musicians to show their versatility as harmonious backing vocalists. The jaunty 'Got To Be Done' was the first song from highly acclaimed new release *Love Was Here*, tumultuous applause reflecting the appreciation for this special album. Ruby dedicated the highly-charged, emotional 'Master Plan' to her 85-year-old dad for always being there for her, guitarist Nick Marland providing timely, empathetic interludes. Anger and frustration were evident in Turner's voice on 'A Better Way' as she warned about history repeating itself. Also from the new album, the equally powerful 'Won't Give You My Heart To Break' continued the defiant mood before Ruby introduced the sensational title track (paying tribute to her co-writers Kat Eaton and Nick Atkinson): an absolute masterpiece destined to achieve even greater recognition than Ruby's other many revered songs, its poignant lyrics and outpouring of emotions culminating in a heart-wrenching, a cappella finale which reduced the audience to tears. 'Stay With Me Baby' is a favourite with the Ronnie Scott's audience, a quiet introduction preceding increasingly piercing vocals as Ruby reached full-throttle in a spectacular cadenza of raw despair and exhilaration. Simon Moore's dynamic stick work and Al MacSheen's expressive keys enhanced the vibe.

Al started the second set with a virtuosic piano introduction to a reworking of 'That's My Desire,' nineteen years after Ruby had recorded the song for *A Streetcar Named Desire* (in which she starred); her vocals captured perfectly the retro 1940s feel. 'Blow Top Blues' brought the blues to the forefront although that genre was never too far from the surface tonight especially with a guitarist of Marland's stature, his bluesy licks and nimble fingers reminiscent of Jeff Beck's playing style. Back to the latest album for the compelling harmonies and infectious rhythms of 'Runaway'; the nostalgic yearning for the Caribbean on 'Under Your Sky'; and the hard-driving, rocking 'Time Of Your Life' with its drumming pyrotechnics and David Guest's pulsating bass.

The show would not be complete without the nod to where it all started in 1986 with the tour de force, 'I'd Rather Go Blind'. Only the

muffled sound of audience sobs breaking an eerie silence could be heard by the end of the Etta James classic. It was extraordinary to witness a performer who lives and breathes each song, never loses the pure joy of singing and, above all, serves the music she loves. Just when it seemed that the standing ovation and disappearance of Ruby and her band from the stage had brought the evening to an end, they reappeared for an extended version of 'This Train'. With Al playing fast and furious harmonica, each band member taking a solo and Ruby shredding her vocal chords for the last time, it was a genre-busting finale of blues, soul, gospel and R&B.

Watching Ruby perform with Jools Holland on BBC TV's *Hootenanny* is entertaining, but seeing her perform live is unforgettable: the perfect blend of class and panache with a dash of sass.

Dave Scott



Popa Chubby

100 Club, London

22.1.2020

Guitar-loving blues fans were treated to another night of excellent music down Oxford Street as AGMP's January Blues Festival presented another fine selection of performers. The Blues Against Youth (not sure if this is meant to be ironic, provocative or desperate) kicked off the night while punters were still traipsing in. The one man "ensemble" featuring the Italian Gianni Tbay was pleasant enough with some nice open-tuning acoustic picking, but the songs quickly became repetitive and vocally uninteresting (the recorded versions are probably worth a listen).

The main support was billed as "Sayers and Joyce" but in the event we only got Ron Sayers Jnr and two cohorts on drums and bass, which was more than OK given that he wrung some very tasty licks from his battered Strat (am I the only one who looks at these distressed vintage guitars and thinks "could do with a rub down and a nice paint job" rather than "ooh, it's a 1962 whatever, it must be imbued with historical brilliance"?). Two songs from his 2012 album *A Better Side* epitomised his short, enjoyable set: 'Little White Lies' a rhythmic, funky groove heavy on punchy chords interspersed with his nicely lyrical solo lines and 'I Ain't Leaving' (with its refrain of "...unless you stay") with jazz-tinged