

La Bottine Souriante

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Barrowland, Glasgow



FIRST up on stage was a man playing spoons and singing "I'll hug you like a mountain". The other support act, the Alison Brown Band, made a fine racket, setting Deliverance-style banjos to a rhythm section straight out of the Ren and Stimpy Show.

So far, so strange, on the last night of the Celtic Connections festival. The headliners' name translates as the Smiling Boot, a jaunty moniker for a band that never seemed to take itself too seriously. The ten-strong troupe sang in French and included fiddle, accordion, guitar, double bass and a four-piece brass section.

La Bottine Souriante specialise in fusion, a four-letter word in most music fans' vocabulary, bringing to mind the kind of sonic masturbation usually found mid-afternoon on Glastonbury's Jazz/World stage. By keeping songs short and punchy, however, the band avoided most of the pitfalls usually associated with fusion, as they blended traditional music from their homeland, Quebec, with Cajun, Latin, pop, jazz, and even a bit of cha-cha. Only occasionally did they veer off into tuneless meanderings.

Considering the number of different styles on show, the set was quite laborious. A lively beat remained throughout, but it became difficult to notice where one song ended and another began. Still, there was a lot there to like.

Graeme Green

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