

THE INDEPENDENT



Acoustic Ladyland

Last Chance Disco

BABEL

★★★★☆

This jazz-rock quartet garner the kind of plaudits that may reflect the critics' desire to reinvigorate a British jazz scene hijacked by the retro-swing of Jamie Cullum more than the band's intrinsic qualities. Led by hornman Peter Wareham, their *Last Chance Disco* presents a kind of punk-jazz fusion, with his baritone sax scrawling lead melody lines and counter-riffs over what are in effect the band's speed-metal thrashes (minus guitar). It's technically adept, with lots of tricky tempo changes, but it's hardly Weather Report. On tracks like "Iggy", the sound is akin to Ted Milton's Eighties combo Blurt mainlining adrenochrome: rigid, propulsive, more pummelling than persuasive. And, though dedicated to Messiaen and the Yeah Yeah Yeahs, "Om Konz" comes across as like a more formal Pop Group – behind all the furious industry, there's scant chance of any real chaos intruding into their tight riffs. But there's a welcome urgency in the band's arrangements, and Wareham's playing exhibits a breadth of approaches, switching easily between florid romanticism in "Ludwig Van Ramone", the astringency of Gato Barbieri in "Trial & Error", even displaying hints of klezmer in "Deckchair". But rock is the most obvious spice in their sonic recipe, with the thrash and punk influences augmented by little melodic nods to Hendrix and Oasis.