

Tony Monaco, The Jazz Bar, Edinburgh

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It seems fair to say that, before he arrived at The Jazz Bar on Sunday, Tony Monaco wasn't a name readily familiar to the Edinburgh jazz audience. There were certainly no queues around the block in anticipation. Next time the Hammond organist, from Columbus, Ohio, appears, though, there might.



Monaco is the kind of musician who makes things happen straight from the count-in. He met his band for this two-night stopover, guitarist Ross Milligan and drummer Adam Sorensen, only minutes before taking the stage. Yet, within a couple of choruses of the opening number, they were sounding like a seasoned touring unit.

Sitting centre-stage, Monaco encouraged and gave only the briefest of directions as he opened

up the mighty Hammond B3's full range of sounds. That included the slightly schmaltzy tones, too, but these were soon superseded by the filthy, nasty, biting rush associated with his idol, Jimmy Smith, and, on Tenderly, a veritable canyon-wide chordal swell.

Monaco has the fingering techniques to go with the tonal nous and an ability to build solos, layer upon exciting, variety-filled layer. His improvisation on another favourite, Don Patterson's S'bout Time, followed a superbly articulate burst from Milligan in exploring the chord changes with a fierce invention.

He can work an audience as adeptly as the organ's bass pedals, cajoling a chanted refrain to Jimmy Smith's Midnight Special, and he could have a singing career, too, judging from his smooth but earnest reading of The Way You Look Tonight. Mostly, though, he likes to play the blues and he does so with both a massive attack and the subtlest, most bewitching of touches.