

REVIEW - VENUES - **The Sound Lounge** – Seymour Theatre Centre. Chippendale

<http://www.seymour.usyd.edu.au/boxoffice/soundlounge.shtml>

As the music editor for the Australian Record Label **Red Ears Music** I recently organised a CD launch for the contemporary Flamenco group **ARREBATO** at the **Sound Lounge** of the Seymour Centre. The group have just signed to our label and as part of the service we were able to get them in to the Sound Lounge for a one off live performance to promote their newly released self-titled CD. Fiona Cameron reviewed Arrebato's performance in the Drum Media (14 November edition) and in this article I review the venue, the Sound Lounge as one of Sydney's newest live music venues.

The Sound Lounge is a relatively new addition to the University of Sydney's Seymour Theatre Centre and was established by **Moira Blumenthal** the Programming Consultant of the Centre in late 2003. It's a perfect venue for all sorts of events, including live music and sound performance, electronica, small cabaret style shows, open Mic nights and CD or magazine launches. The stage is nicely tucked away in the far left hand corner as you walk in and adjacent to the stage, on the far side of the room is a small bar. It seats about 110 people with plenty of room around the bar for mingling, drinking and just hanging out listening. Because of its size the Sound Lounge has an intimate club like atmosphere, which means that whatever size crowd attends a performance it always seems enough. It has a similar vibe to the old Soup Plus, which served up good food and Jazz for many years on George St in the Sydney CBD. The Sound Lounge however conjures up a much wider culture of diverse musical and sound performance possibilities without strictly adhering to any one particular style.

Regular events at the moment are provided by **SIMA** (The Sydney Improvised Music Association, www.sima.org.au) who has the run of the place on Friday and Saturday nights where they present a diverse mix of local, interstate and international contemporary jazz/improvising artists. **Café Carnivale** (www.cafecarnivale.com.au) has Thursday nights where they present authentic performances of music from around the globe including South American, Balkan, Greek, Indian, African, Asian, Italian, Egyptian, Spanish and Chinese. Two great institutions that add considerably to the collective sound culture of this city and the Seymour Theatre Centre should be applauded for supporting them. The Sound Lounge also has the occasional one off season and at the moment on the first Wednesday of every month there is the **John Rowe's Lounge** and **Open Mic Idle** on every Tuesday from the 10th of October to the 12th of December.

As I've said, the Sound Lounge is one of those venues that invite a multitude of performance possibilities and I hope it stays around for a long time. The general lack of good venues in Sydney is distressing at the moment and finding/providing new solutions for either experimental or established music and sound cultures starved of decent venues is vital. The unique and very successful **Pelt Gallery** set up by Caleb K (of Impermanent Audio fame) sadly closed its doors this year, the Newtown RSL is said to be shutting theirs early next year, the new Performance Space is under reconstruction and apart from advertising for residency applications I don't know what's going on there. Let's hope the Sound Lounge kicks in for many years to come and continues to support both the independent performing arts and the diverse range of music cultures currently heard drifting through its doors.

Written by Damian Castaldi