

The Guardian

Goldings/Bernstein/Stewart – review

Ronnie Scott's, London

John Fordham

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Hammond-organ jazz trios aren't supposed to sound tasteful – the default adjectives for this popular 1950s-minted lineup are soulful, sermonising, sweaty, maybe sexy. But though Boston organist [Larry Goldings](#)'s trio plays in a more restrained manner than those of such famous predecessors as [Jimmy Smith](#), this widely admired soloist, composer and accompanist (Christina Aguilera, Tracy Chapman and Madeleine Peyroux have hired him) plays a subtler kind of Hammond jazz for a more eclectic musical era.

Goldings is partnered by guitarist Peter Bernstein and drummer Bill Stewart – the latter an implacably focused performer who mixes stretches of steady groove-marking with jostling snare-fills and gunshot offbeats that can make you spill your drink. The trio opened its second night at Ronnie Scott's with Jim Jam (Goldings' lithe, melody-entwining swinger dedicated to guitar legend [Jim Hall](#)) and followed it with Time of the Season by the Zombies' Rod Argent, which began as a glistening, delicate rumination for the organ's treble alone, before a choppy mid-tempo riff brought the rest of the band in, to loud cheers. Goldings' melodic imagination is easy to miss, because he often delivers his most unexpected departures at a murmur, but his left-hand inventions below a quiet upper-register trill complimented Argent's song, and emphasised how personal his style is.

Luisa, by Antônio Carlos Jobim, was tenderly unwrapped by Bernstein on guitar, and the standard Will You Still Be Mine took off over a flying bassline from Goldings. The classic, Wurlitzer-like roar of a Hammond fully unleashed was reserved for the close of a lazily stalking blues that Bernstein dominated with sparing power, and Stewart kept on the boil with venomous inventiveness. Goldings' trio tends to stretch out a welcoming hand, rather than erupt in listeners faces as many organ bands do, but there are plenty of payoffs for those who accept the invitation.