

Le Trio Joubran

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Limitless Love for Le Trio Joubran

by Laila Boulous with photos by Roger Humbert As Le Trio Joubran arrived on stage, there was an unexplainable heaviness in the air that lasted throughout the first part of the concert. Samir's solo, which opened the evening, was dark and brooding which further accentuated the overall heaviness.

Le Trio Joubran, composed of brothers Samir, Wissam and Adnan, are all players of the oud or ud which is an Arabic lute. On their latest album, *Majâz* (Metaphor), they are accompanied by percussionist Yousef Hbeisch, who also joins them on this *Limitless Love for the Oud* tour.

Although the mood between songs seemed dark, the mesmerizing performance of this trio was dripping with passion, not only in the actual playing, but in the sway of their bodies and intense expressions as they transfixed their audience.

Later, Samir offhandedly announced to the audience that they would not be playing any love songs and that "...if you [the audience] feel like clapping, clap and if you don't feel, don't feel". An ominous statement from a people who ooze passion and a trio who exudes it in performance.



Adnan Joubran, Wissam Joubran and Samir Joubran Arab pioneers on many levels, they are the first known oud trio; they own the first Palestinian record label, Randana; and, Wissam (who built the brothers' ouds) was the first Arabic luthier to graduate from the Stradivarius Institute in Cremona, Italy.

The smoky mystery evident in their music can be attributed to Middle Eastern maqâms. Maqâms, or scales, are different from Western or European in their use of quarter tones. There exist at least 40 of these maqâms. The hypnotic tones of this scale combined with the brothers' skill in taqasim (improvisation) creates a spellbinding experience resulting in audiences gasping-for-air as they forget to breathe in sheer amazement.

The speed of sound was given new meaning in the hands of these brothers as the "lead" transferred madly across the stage defying the ears as their fingers became flames licking at the strings. This virtuosity was evident throughout the evening on pieces such as "Safar (Travel)", and "Shagaf".

Hbeisch, on percussion, was like a soldier in battle as he transferred his primal rhythmic energies from the darbuka to the riqq/riq/rik or daff. Later in the evening, his feather-like touch on cymbals and

windchimes contrasted with his famished attack on the darbouka/doumbek as his hands devoured the instrument.

Becoming childlike in their enthusiasm, Wissam and Adnan lept up suddenly to join Yousef on percussion as they played the riq and tabl with abandon for one song.

The last time Le Trio Joubran was in Toronto, (Lula Lounge on September 25, 2005) their performance was similarly exquisite and at the same time more playful as, for one piece, two of the brothers played one oud — without looking — to audience amazement.

Finally, the mystery of Le Trio's mood was revealed by Samir. With exhaustion and pain evident in his voice, he divulged that, just before their performance, they had heard that over 100 people had just been killed in the Gaza Strip — many of them children. Continuing, quite vehemently, that, as musicians, they are not normal. Their country is in battle and they use their own instruments as weapons. Their music is part of their arsenal. As he tossed, "We don't want peace," the room went silent. Continuing with, "We want justice!", the room filled with cheers and applause.

This Palestinian trio, born in Nazareth, possess Israeli passports and, because of peace treaties signed by that country with Egypt and Jordan, are only permitted to travel to those two countries in the Arab world. Unable to perform for their own people in most of the Middle East is heartbreaking.

Inspiration for many of their songs can be attributed to the impassioned works of Palestinian poet, Mahmoud Darwish, of which all three are fans.

As heads were still spinning, the next piece began sounding familiar, yet not quite, as Le Trio Joubran toyed with their audience. Then, pressing on the pedal and shifting to fifth gear as yes, "Concierto de Aranjuez" took off with horse (camel?) power so fierce we may have been witnessing the three oud's final performance! As the crowd lept to their feet with an audible roar, the piece ended with dart-like precision, astonishingly with the ouds intact!

Finally, the encore of, "Ahwak", a folkloric love song by Mohamed Abdel Wahab filled the theatre with such love and bird-like vocals and harmony — it was difficult to believe that the crashing waves of the previous piece could dissipate so quickly.

As the theatre now filled with feelings of peace and brotherhood, Samir announced, "We are obliged to love". And love Le Trio Joubran, we did!

The world-renowned Le Trio Joubran has performed at many festivals, including Langon's Atypical Nights (Nuits Atypiques), Womex in 2004 and Strictly Mundial in 2005. Majâz, their current album (Randana/Freeplay/Sheer), is holding steadfastly at Number 1 on France's World Music Charts. They were also nominated for the 2004 Django d'Or awards.

Le Trio Joubran

Adnan Joubran – Oud

Samir Joubran – Oud

Wissam Joubran – Oud

Yousef Hbeisch – Percussion



Wissam Joubran