

First knight of the guitar sweeps all before him

■ JAZZ

LULO REINHARDT

The Basement, December 2
Reviewed by John Shand

UNICORN-RARE are concerts that are like hearing music for the first time. They are all the more remarkable when the revelation comes from an instrument as ubiquitous and often humdrum as the acoustic guitar. But of

course it's not the instrument, it's the heart, head and hands behind it: in this case, German Lulo Reinhardt. Put simply, this was the finest concert of acoustic guitar playing I've ever heard.

The surname will be familiar to most, Lulo's great-uncle being the fabled Django, the first non-American to steer jazz in a new direction, and the renowned tip of a musical family stretching back centuries. Music courses through Lulo's veins, and, like his great forbear, he has found something unique to do with it.

The concert began with an instrumentation approximating that of Django with Stephane Grappelli: Lulo's steel-string guitar joined by American Doug Martin's similar instrument, German bassist Harald Becher and Sydney violinist Daniel Weltlinger. In a program of Lulo's originals, sizzling swing was juxtaposed with the slow, seductive *Daniel's Balcony*, brimming with the glory of Lulo's finesse, his deft construction of phrases – each leading you deeper into the enthralling

musical narrative – his brilliant melodic invention and mesmerising, ringing sound.

However much filigree he detailed his solos with, it was stamped like a tattoo on the solid flesh of the song. His rhythmic ingenuity and energy on the more vigorous pieces was just as exhilarating.

Joined by keyboards player Sean Mackenzie, drummer Fabian Hevia and percussionist Peter Kennard, the music moved from gypsy swing towards pulsing Latin grooves and melodies

flushed with excitement, and Reinhardt moved to nylon-string guitar. As exceptional as this septet proved, a duet between Reinhardt and Weltlinger said just as much, their rapport instinctive and joyous. Weltlinger has lustrous tone, created soaring solos and brought something of the same total commitment to the music that oozed from Reinhardt's every pore.

Lulo Reinhardt plays at the Southern Cross Club, Canberra, tonight, and Hotel Gearin, Katoomba, tomorrow.

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