

Grossman and Renbourn at Chapter

Solo artists combine in pleasing guitar duet

By Ifan Payne

REVIEW

GUITARISTS Stefan Grossman and John Renbourn have made careers playing solos and playing with other musicians. But it is as a duo together that they have perhaps given the most pleasure to the most people.

Such was the case on Saturday evening when they came together during the second half of their concert at Chapter.

There was, unfortunately, an ostinato accompaniment by heavy-footed and weak-bladdered members of the audience who kept thumping their way in and out of the theatre throughout the performance.

Grossman proved a master entertainer, keeping up a witty, self-deprecating monologue while playing songs which varied in style from blues and rag time, to stride and folk. This eclecticism led him from Lonnie Johnson sound-alike blues to his own cool, elegant jazz pieces and each was presented with an easy going virtuosity.

John Renbourn also

played music that varied in style and influences from, as he said, "a beatnik pad in Torquay" to "a kind of South Devon African style."

Whatever Renbourn lacked, compared to the extrovert Grossman, he made up for in the elegance of his playing, evinced in his rendition of Randy Weston's *Lovely Niles*.

Playing together, their jazz pieces caught my ear, especially the majestic version of Charlie Mingus's *Goodbye Pork Pie Hat* and the quiet beauty of *Round Midnight*.

Grossman's amplified six-string guitar had a very special quality akin to the 12-string sound of Ralph Towner, who incidentally had a superb recent album on ECM where he played with Gary Burton.

Like Towner and his group, Oregon, Grossman clearly revelled in the varied sound of acoustic string and a music in which, like life, he "will understand all as soon as he can see the wind."