



# Spirit of funk plays on

## REVIEW

(Clockwise from above) Pee Wee Ellis, Tony Allen and Simphiwe Dana

By **Sylvia Arthur**

### **Still Black Still Proud - A James Brown Tribute** **Barbican Hall, 14 June.**

The Barbican was the setting for a thrilling night of funk and frolics as legendary saxophonist Pee Wee Ellis led an all-star tribute to his long time collaborator, James Brown.

Proving that good music never dies, celebrated musicians including Senegalese guitarist Cheikh Lo, Afrobeat pioneer Tony Allen and Vieux Farka Toure joined trombonist Fred Wesley

and others to salute the Godfather of Soul.

And what a night it was! Interspersing traditional African music with Brown's extensive back catalogue, the band — accompanied by singer Fred Ross, vocalist and dancer Wunmi and UK rapper Ty — put in an energetic performance that had the audience dancing in the aisles, bringing the house down with interpretations of classics like I Got You (I Feel Good) and Say It Loud: I'm Black and Proud.

But it was Cheikh Lo's hauntingly beautiful rendition of It's A Man's

World that was the night's highlight, combining awesome musicianship with Brown's signature showmanship. South African songstress Simphiwe Dana's bluesy homage was also a revelation.

With each band member a star in their own right, Still Black, Still Proud was an awe-inspiring evening that's testament not only to Brown's indisputable legacy but also to the rich vein of African musical talent.

It may be nearly two years since he passed away but the spirit of James Brown truly lived on in this wonderfully captivating show.