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Simpson is the Real deal

Martin Simpson at Swadlincote's Sharpe's Pottery Museum Kiln

By ANDY PARKER

Put one of the world's leading guitarists in one of the most acoustically superior and intimate venues in the country and you've got a recipe for a memorable occasion.

And that's just what came together as Martin Simpson became the latest top artist to be presented at Swadlincote's Sharpe's Pottery Museum Kiln by the Willington-based Real-Music Club at the weekend.

Playing and singing blues, traditional folk, his own highly individualistic compositions or any other of a wide range of styles from jigs to gospel and gipsy to Lowell George, the Lincolnshire-born 54-year-old is indisputedly the master of his craft, with passion and feel for the guitar not compromised by a dazzling dexterity that sees notes flow from his keyboard 13 to the dozen at times.

Critics may cite over-elaboration as a flaw – indeed, one did exactly that during an interval break at Saturday's concert –but, for me, Simpson is the bee's knees, coming close to perfection at times. Reference to his mighty back catalogue of recordings, and perhaps most effectively to his 2003 Topic Records collection *Righteousness and Humidity*, is highly recommended.

In such a setting – Swad's Kiln is simply ideal for such performances with its magnificent acoustics and the proximity of the audience to the performer – there simply can't be a better way to enjoy the widely varied styles of "roots" music championed by the Real-Music Club, which also stages "come all ye" music nights every Thursday, alternating between Willington's Rising Sun and Green Man pubs.

With a warmly received support set from club regular Neil Dalton and slick compering from singer and guitarist Terry Wood to add to the entertainment, it seems surreal that tickets for Saturday's performance were only £10 – reflecting the kind of quality it is possible to enjoy on today's hugely underrated so-called "folk" scene. I understand Geordie singer Vin Garbutt also went down a storm at Burton's Brew Town Folk Club on Friday night – and tickets for that were just £8!

The next Real-Music Club concert at the Kiln features former Albion Band singer and guitarist Ken Nicol on Saturday, June 9, priced £8, can be booked through www.real-music-club.com.

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