

MUSIC: Mellowtone/The Alima Centre, Liverpool

THE regular Mellowtone night has a reputation for bringing together some of the finest musicians in Liverpool.

This occasion saw it move from its usual city centre venues to the Alima community arts centre on Sefton Street.

It's a good location for such an event, with an intimate but relaxed atmosphere. Kamal Arafa are a simple folk duo comprising a man who has a way with words and clean, crisp guitar work and lady on backing vocals.

She seems a little overcome with shyness and doesn't contribute much to the show till she gets out a violin. With some more confident vocal support they could be a fine act.

They're followed by Greenwich Resident whose international members got together through LIPA Lead vocalist Tom Grant quietened the audience with some humour then kept them that way with an emotional and passionate performance, some keyboard and lapsteel guitar adding to the musical interest.

They're a powerful act even without electricity. But it is John Smith whose ordinary name and extraordinary reputation who finishes the night. Strolling onto stage with little ceremony, he plays with a quiet confidence and shifts easily from a gentle joke to a touching song.

His tense, affecting licks and rough, tender voice demand attention and his music resonates hard throughout the room, the songs filled with a melancholy greater than his years suggest. Smith leaves just as unceremoniously as he arrives, but a rapturous applause demands an encore.

His reputation is deserved and will grow.

http://icliverpool.icnetwork.co.uk/entertainment/previewsandreviews/tm_headline=music%2D-mellowtone%2Dthe-alima-centre%2D-liverpool%26method=full%26objectid=18478096%26siteid=50061