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Manu Chao

Description: The musician plays his tuneful world fusion songs.

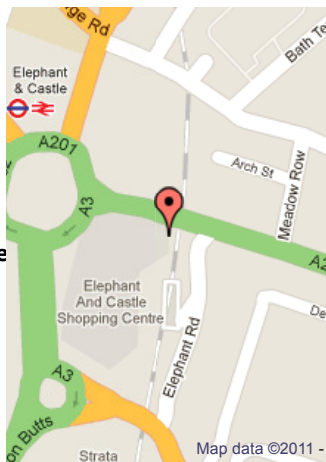
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By Jane Cornwell

25 Oct 2010

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A live show by Manu Chao is usually an all-out sensory assault. This one — which saw the Franco-Spanish star with a stripped-down version of his band Radio Bemba — promised subtlety and nuance but instead we got a power trio on the same explosive path, their protest songs as sonically mashed as ever but revitalised by improvisational flurries and the sense that this was all one big impromptu busk.



Keeping it real: Chao has long lent his name to a host of worthy causes

Aided by guitarist sidekick Madjid Fahern and drummer Philippe Teboul, 49-year-old Chao threw everything from salsa and reggae to chanson and ska into his melting pot. The rowdy shout-a-longs to his mainly Spanish lyrics only added to the vibe that was part fiesta, part riot; a fist-pump or a nod from the bare-chested frontman was all it took to elicit a mass "hey!" or "woy yo yo!" from the feverish crowd.

An antiglobalist icon, Chao has long lent his name to a host of worthy causes. This concert for Colombiage, London's festival of Colombian culture, was staged for the country he once travelled through by train, playing to peasants and drug dealers. No matter that songs such as Bongo Bong and La Primavera seemed to merge into each another and very often did, or that Chao can sound a bit like he's holding his nose when he sings. His one-love message is so heartfelt that he even thumped his breast — boom boom, over and over — with the microphone.

colombiage.com

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