

-ARTS-

Ensnconced in the eerie environment of the Open Air Arena at the Midlands Art Centre — a cross between a Roman amphitheatre and a concrete Stonehenge — Chris McGregor's mighty 14-piece ensemble looked remarkably at ease, probably because they had the antidote to the bracing climate conditions.

"If you get cold," said McGregor "I don't think there's any law against dancing."

It wasn't the desire to keep warm which prompted a large section of the audience to take him up on this hint; rather it was a band who played an intelligent, engaging and supremely danceable brand of jazz and Latin peppered with the sound of the townships.

Above all, this latest incarnation of the Brotherhood of Breath is a showcase for a formidable

Jazz Festival

Brotherhood of Breath/Tony Williams Quintet.

cast of improvisers. Harry Beckett on trumpet set the pace with a driving solo during the opening number *Atlantic Dreams* and both sets were spiked with fine improvised contributions from, among others, Chris Biscoe on alto, Steve Williamson on tenor, Dave Defries on flugelhorn and Annie Whitehead on trombone.

The following night, the former Miles Davis drummer Tony Williams brought his quintet from the States to the Alexandra Theatre. The contrast between McGregor's band — who gather inspiration from, and form a unity with, a diverse bag of influ-

ences — and that of Williams could not be greater. His is a quintet with a tight knit post-bop feel which never wavered despite changes in pace and mood.

Like all great jazz drummers, Williams knows not only how, but also when, to hit hard. The degree of control he employs is equal to his international reputation, drawing textures and tones from his kit that would startle even those usually averse to the drum solo.

Inevitably the other members of his quintet were of a slightly lower profile, but Mulgrew Miller on piano, Bill Pierce on sax and particularly Wallace Rooney on trumpets showed ease and imagination equal to that of Williams.

These were two festival nights to remember.

NEVILLE HADSLEY