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REVIEW/ PHOTOS Chico Freeman Plus+tet / The Cookers Cadogan Hall (November 2016 EFG London Jazz Festival)

“First off, a set by Chico Freeman’s brilliant quartet that surpassed expectations and second, a presentation by the Cookers that somehow fell short of their very best. Long one of jazz’s wanderers - Chico Freeman returned to the United States in May 2016 after more than a decade living in Europe - Freeman, as he reminded us, had been an absentee from London for quite a while and seemed genuinely glad to be back. His latest band, the Plus+tet, has been touring the US behind a new album *Spoken Into Existence* and this version brought into focus the experienced Chicago bassist Kenny Davis, plus new find pianist Luke Carlos O’Reilly and the dynamic young drummer Michael Baker.

“An opening number based on bombast, with Freeman channeling Coltrane in a turbulent solo, Baker out-gunning Elvin Jones in the racket he offered, suggested a hard road ahead. Happily, the set took on a more settled feel with Erica’s Reverie. Named for one of Chico’s five daughters as he told us, this lyrical piece took Freeman’s tenor into softer territory, eloquent and poised, O’Reilly’s perfect piano alongside, the quartet’s intensity building. Freeman is very definitely his own man, a view consolidated with his To Hear A Teardrop In The Rain, this prompting a sumptuous tenor solo, its soulful development recalling Freeman’s roots in Chicago blues. A rousing up-tempo piece to finish and he was gone. Far more than just another Coltrane disciple, Freeman remains an exciting contributor as both soloist and composer. He needs to be heard.”
Peter Vacher, [London Jazz News](#)