

Live and Local: The Bad Plus at The Aztec

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By [Matthew Stieb](#)



Reid Anderson, Dave King and Ethan Iverson of The Bad Plus

The boring [adage](#) about the Bad Plus is true: they really are the best of jazz and rock forms. Accenting each other's riffs and rhythmic shifts, the trio incorporates the tight songwriting of rock, telling highly constructed short stories of chord changes and grooves. It's also pure jazz, a live demonstration of creativity and improvisation, stretching out on ideas like a novel being written in real time.

Take a potential awkward moment from last night's [ARTS SA](#) gig, their first San Antonio show in the band's 14-year career. In a pause before the final tune, bassist Reid Anderson, playing emcee for the evening, listed off the songs in the set. An audience member yelled out "Iron Man!" hoping for an impromptu composition, which Anderson ignored. But as pianist Ethan Iverson busted into a slow-drawl blues, Anderson took the moment to faux-croon an off-the-cuff invention about an iron man, not necessarily Sabbath's or Stark's, backed by the soft shuffle of drummer Dave King.

The band returned to the intended set, jumping into the displaced strut of "Seven Minute Mind," from their 2012 release *Made Possible*. Ethan Iverson dropped a jagged, walking rhythm in the bass clef, halfway between the styles of [Hudson Mohawke](#) and [Randy Weston](#). On bass, Anderson cut his bass lines like samples, chopped abruptly like a tape loop or edited slow and groovy, the stuff of [J Dilla](#). Behind the kit, a friend said that Dave King looked to be in fast-forward, navigating thorny rhythms at a breakneck pace.

After wrapping up that number and a short break to milk the applause, the band returned to shred out to "Iron Man," putting Sabbath through the angular, non-swing filter of The Bad Plus.