



Veterans of Gaddafi's training camps rock the real 'Kasbah'

EACH OF them has won acclaim, awards and sell-out shows in their own right. Last night's opening gig of the African Soul Rebels package tour - reminiscent of those soul review shows but featuring one-time residents of Colonel Gaddafi's training camps rather than former gospel singers from the American south - promised to be a memorable night.

The Soul Rebels line-up comprises Touareg stars of the Festival of the Desert, Tinariwen, Senegalese rappers Daara J, and veteran Rai star Rachid Taha.

Tinariwen opened the evening with their heavy bass-rich music flowing like an interior monologue. They don't go in for stage movement much, though singer-percussionist Hassan is liable to break out into Bez-style freaky dancing, hooded tracksuit exchanged for sil-

First Night
African Soul Rebels
The Anvil, Basingstoke
ver-blue robes and black turban. There are deep dark still spaces in their music, where the chords twist and fall away. Their midnight desert blues proves to be as spellbinding as ever, with an intensity in their presence of a band that learnt its craft not on stages but around camp fires of sub-Saharan settlements in Libya and Southern Algeria.

The legacy of those years seems to have blown all extraneous matter away from their music. They closed with one of several new songs, Abballah's acoustic guitar more to the fore, adding new levels to the bands sound. The minimalism of the guitar line possesses an almost threatening strength. The pulse is powerful but restrained, the

chant style of singing as familiar in its way as an American blues refrain. On tonight's performance, they proved more than ever to be one of the most exciting bands around.

Daara J come on like balls of energy reeling their take on rap back to its African sources, their lyrics hot with the street life of Dakar, and sweetened by Senegalese harmonies. With a DJ controlling the boards behind them, they dominate the stage and the audience, who are brought up on their feet for the duration. They rap in a mixture of English and their native Wolof, and there is a kaleidoscopic vividness to the likes of "Exodus" and the sing-along catchiness of "Esperanza".

Rachid Taha's debut album is said to have inspired the Clash to write "Rock the Casbah" and, more than two decades later, it's a song he returns to source



Tinariwen keep stage movement to a minimum but pound out energy *Dave Nelson*

with his own version, a hard rocking Rai shout in the street, "Rock el Kasbah".

Dark glasses, beret, perched on a stool either side of his oub

band creates a thick, sometimes thunderous sound and it's more about raw power than musical subtleties.

TIM CUMMING