

# THE JAZZ RAG

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YANAGISAWA SAX ARTIST  
ALEXANDER BONE

ISSUE 143 AUTUMN 2016

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ALEXANDER BONE

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## UPFRONT CDS OR VINYL?

The competition between resurgent vinyl and CDs takes another turn with Gearbox's decision to produce a series of Mini LP Replica CDs. Gearbox Records have a formidable catalogue of vinyl albums, so is this a major blow on behalf of CDs? Gearbox's comment is interesting: 'We want to bring greater exposure to help the career development of artists like the award-winning saxophone and drums duo Binker and Moses... (and) increase awareness of best-selling archive releases... Although properly mastered and manufactured vinyl may well be the superior product, the CD has its virtues too... A great many people still like it and that's what matters.'

So vinyl is better, but CDs are more popular? Quite possibly. Gearbox's first five LP replica CDs are Binker and Moses' *Dem Ones* and Mark Murphy's *A Beautiful Friendship*, plus archive recordings by the Michael Garrick Sextet with Don Rendell and Ian Carr, the Jazz Couriers and Nucleus with Leon Thomas.

[www.gearboxrecords.com](http://www.gearboxrecords.com)

Regrettably, owing to increased mail charges, *Jazz Rag* has no choice but to increase the rates for overseas subscribers to £24 for the EU and £27 for Canada, USA and Australia. Many thanks to our loyal subscribers.



Harry Allen

**JAZZ AT THE SAGE**

Big name jazz events at the Sage Gateshead this Autumn include the Bad Plus supported by Binker and Moses (November 8), American supergroup the Cookers (14), the Robert Glasper Trio (17), Australian multi-instrumentalist James Morrison with the Black Dyke Band (19) and the Big Chris Barber Band (December 8). Meanwhile Jambone, the Sage's youth jazz ensemble, visits Berwick Maltings on December 3 for a lunch-time gig. Tel.: 0191 443 4661 www.sagegateshead.com



Martin Taylor

**MARTIN TAYLOR AT 60**

Martin Taylor celebrates his 60th birthday and 45 years as a touring musician with a series of solo UK concerts. The award-winning guitarist kicks off his tour at the Ashcroft Arts Centre, Fareham (October 14) before moving on to the Forest Arts Centre, New Milton (15), Colchester Arts Centre (18), G Live, Guildford (19), Musicport Festival, Whitby (21), the Stables, Wavendon (25), Band on the Wall, Manchester (27), Indigo O2, London (28), Uppingham School (31), Brindley Theatre, Runcorn (November 1), University Arts,



**BLUE PLAQUE FOR TUBBY**

The recent revival of awareness of Tubby Hayes' great significance in the jazz world continued with the unveiling of a blue Heritage Foundation plaque at 34 Kenwyn Road, SW 20, Tubby's home from 1936 to 1951. On August 31 a small crowd gathered to witness the unveiling by Tubby's son Richard. Prime mover in getting the plaque approved was Mark Baxter, mastermind behind the recent documentary film, *Tubby Hayes: A Man in a Hurry*, and others present included Lee Cogswell, director of the film, and Simon Spillett, tenor saxist, acknowledged Hayes expert and author of *The Long Shadow of the Little Giant*.

Loughborough (2), Gardyne Theatre, Dundee (4) and Spectrum Centre, Inverness (5).

**JAZZ IN PINNER**

Pinner Jazz is staging an excellent series of eight concerts in the Parish Church, one a month from September to May excluding February. On October 22 the Christian Brewer-Damon Brown Quintet takes the stand, followed by the Harry Allen Quartet with Andrea Pozza (November 19) and the Magnificent Seven Jazz Band (December 10) paying tribute to Acker Bilk and Kenny Ball with such stalwarts as Mike Henry and Ian Bateman under the leadership of Amy Roberts

and Richard Exall. On January 14 Pinner Jazz has a one-off change of venue to Pinner United Synagogue for the appearance of Peter Cater's Ministry of Jazz. Tel.: 0333 666 3366 (for tickets) www.pinnerjazz.org.uk

**CANTERBURY FESTIVAL**

The Canterbury Festival (October 15-November 5) is a large-scale wide-ranging affair. Not all the events are musical performances by any means and jazz has to slot in alongside many other musical forms, but there's a healthy quota of good jazz events. The Festival Spiegelent hosts, among other things, Jazz at



Ivo Neame

the Movies with Joanna Eden (23), the KD Jazz and Dance Orchestra (1) and the Jive Aces (4). St. Gregory's Centre is the venue for the Ivo Neame Quintet (22) and a free lunch-time concert with Trio Manor Manouche (28). The Two of Us (29) teams Claire Martin and Joe Stilgoe in Shirley Hall. www.canterburyfestival.co.uk

**WATERMILL AT BETCHWORTH PARK**

Dorking's Watermill Jazz, now operating on Tuesdays at Betchworth Park Golf Club, has a particularly characterful October programme. *Buster Plays Buster* (11) sees drummer Buster Birch leading a quintet featuring Jo Fooks in his score for Buster Keaton's great silent comedy, *Steamboat Bill Jr.* which will be shown with Buster's accompaniment. Next Sue Richardson presents *Too Cool* dedicated to the life of music of Chet Baker (18) before American vibes star Joe Locke and principal percussionist of the London Symphony Orchestra Neil Percy duet on vibes, marimba, piano and assorted percussion (25). Further duo performances follow at the end of November: Claire Martin and Gareth Williams (22) and John Abercrombie and Marc Copland on a rare UK appearance on their European tour (29). Also arranged for November are the Nigel Price Organ Trio with Vasilis Xenopoulos (1) and the Andrew Bain Group (8). December is a month of rest for Watermill Jazz and concerts re-start on January 10. Tel.: 07415 815784 www.watermilljazz.co.uk



Buster as Buster

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**Trombones:** Jlin Fryer - Alistair Allan - Graham Hughes  
**Piano:** Keith Nichols - Morten Sanner Larsen - David Boeddinghaus - Martin Litton  
**Banjo/guitar:** Spats Langham - Martin Wheatley - Jacob Ulberger  
**String bass/brass bass:** Henry Lemaire - Phil Rutherford - Malcolm Sked  
**Drums:** Richard Pite - Nick Ball - Josh Duffie  
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**Vocals:** Janice Day - Mellow Baku - Spats Langham

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 Clarence Williams - Hoagy Carmichael - Henry Red Allen - Don Redman - Annette Hanshaw - Louis Armstrong - Johnny Odolis - Fletcher Henderson - Jelly Roll Morton...

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All bookings fully refundable in case of cancellation due to serious illness, bereavement or other compelling reasons. All queries to [wjazzfest@btinternet.com](mailto:wjazzfest@btinternet.com)

Guest accommodation at the 4 star Village Hotel can be booked online at [www.villageurbanresorts.com](http://www.villageurbanresorts.com) using promo code JAZZ, or telephone to book on 0191 338 5245 (Option 1, then Option 2) also using promo code JAZZ

For more info (including other accommodation etc) see our website [www.whitleybayjazzfest.org](http://www.whitleybayjazzfest.org) or call us on 0191 281 2935

**Ticket price frozen from last year £150**

## NEW LOOK, OLD STANDARDS AT SOUTHPORT

After 12 years of the boldly benign stewardship of Geoff Matthews, Southport's Jazz on a Winter's Weekend 2017 will be under the direction of Neil Hughes of Altrincham's Cinnamon Club. Regulars will notice one or two changes (mostly in the form of additional attractions), but Neil is emphatic that he has taken on board the guiding principles that have made the event so successful.

The first change is simply a matter of re-branding. There has been in the past a council-run Southport Jazz Festival, but that is history and, 'Are you going to Southport this year?' always refers to the Winter Weekend, so why not give the festival a new and simple strapline, 'Southport Jazz Festival'? Jazz on a Winter's Weekend remains as a sort of sub-title.

The first innovation sees the festival begin earlier. Traditionally the weekend starts on Friday afternoon, but Southport's patrons come from a very wide area and many choose to arrive on Thursday evening, so Neil is providing them with a Thursday evening session with Liverpool-based sextet, the Weave. A further development is offering a choice on Saturday evening. At the same time as Derek Nash's Acoustic Quartet, Liane Carroll is performing at a Gala Dinner.

Apart from this Neil is happy to point out the similarities to previous years. There are still eleven main concerts between Friday lunch-time and late on Sunday with a strong international flavour. New York saxist Seamus Blake appears with Ross Stanley and James Maddren; acclaimed Australian piano trio Trichotomy make Southport the North of England date in their UK tour; French guitarist Fabien Mary brings his trio. Other familiar features are an Alan Barnes jazz suite – actually a sampling of many under the name *Such Suite Thunder* – and appearances by young British groups such as Jam Experiment.

The appearance of Clare Teal's image on the brochure cover may suggest a more mainstream approach than usual, but, as Neil points out, she is singing with festival regulars the Swingshift Big Band – and there aren't many better at the art of big band singing.

Southport Jazz Festival runs from February 2 to 5, 2017, at the Royal Clifton Hotel.  
[www.southportjazzfestival.com](http://www.southportjazzfestival.com)



Jam  
Experiment

## WANDERING TO SUCCESS

The Jazz North Introduces scheme, which enables talented young bands (musicians up to the age of 25) to perform at major festivals and clubs in the North, has selected Wandering Monster from Leeds as the winner of its 2016 award. Wandering Monster, formed two years ago and led by bassist Sam Quintana, also comprises Calvin Travers (guitar), Ben Powling (saxophones), Aleks Podraza (piano) and Tom Higham (drums). As a result of the scheme Wandering Monster have already played Lancaster Jazz Festival and are about to play Marsden Jazz Festival, with 2017 dates lined up for Liverpool, Scarborough and Manchester Jazz Festivals and Southport Melodic Jazz. The band also receives a help package with the scheme, everything from financial assistance with expenses to aid with publicity. A junior award was made to Muskrat Ramble, an ensemble of 12 to 16 year olds from Lancaster who receive mentoring and a performance at a Northern jazz club.  
[www.jazznorth.org](http://www.jazznorth.org)

## MARSDEN AT 25

Marsden Jazz Festival is one that, like all the best jazz festivals, has very much a character of its own: a village in the hills above Huddersfield taken over pretty thoroughly by jazz for a weekend. This year's event (October 7-9) celebrates 25 years of Marsden Jazz with 100 gigs in 10 pubs, bars and cafes, six clubs, two churches, a church hall and a converted mill. Named the Outstanding Established Festival at the Yorkshire Gig Guide Grassroots Awards 2015, Marsden Jazz this year headlines with the likes of Jazz Jamaica, The Impossible Gentlemen and Nerija. The continuity of the festival is best shown by Digby Fairweather. Headlining in 2016 with Paul Jones in the *Rocking in Rhythm* show, Digby appeared in the first Marsden festival in 1992.  
[www.marsdenjazzfestival.com](http://www.marsdenjazzfestival.com)

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Wednesday Jazz at Eastleigh's Concorde Club in October features the Swing Unlimited Big Band (12), the Basin Street Brawlers (19) and Stacey Kent and her Musicians (26). Sunday Jazz hosts Sarah Spencer's Transatlantic Jazz Band (9), New Orleans Heat (16), Savannah Jazz Band (23) and the Old Hat Jazz Band (30), plus a Jazz Lunch with GOJO (Girls Only Jazz Orchestra – 16), a 20-piece big band playing definitive swing charts,  
Tel.: 023 8061 3989  
[www.theconcordeclub.com](http://www.theconcordeclub.com)

Newcastle's Jazz Café has a full winter programme with the pre-Christmas gigs including American vocalist Coco Rouzier with the Peter Gilligan Trio (November 4), Tommaso Starace (29), Ayanna Witter-Johnson (December 9) and the Strictly Smokin' Big Band (16/17).

Venture Away's Jazz @ the Royal Hotel, Scarborough (November 4-7) features Baby Jools' Jazzaholics, Dave Stradwick's Sussex Jazz Kings, Tom Kincaid's 3 Bears, New Orleans Heat and the Chicago Teddy Bears Society Jazz Band. Venture Away also has jazz weekends scheduled for Bournemouth and Torquay this year before returning to the Royal in March 2017.  
Tel.: 01305 750797  
[www.ventureawaymusicweekends.co.uk](http://www.ventureawaymusicweekends.co.uk)

The 60th BFI London Film Festival (October 5-16) is showing a number of jazz-related films, notably *I Called Him Morgan*, directed by Kasper Collin and dealing with the life and violent death of the great trumpeter Lee Morgan, and *King of Jazz*, the famed 1930 musical starring the Paul Whiteman Orchestra (*Rhapsody in Blue* and all) and Bing Crosby.  
[www.bfi.org.uk/lff](http://www.bfi.org.uk/lff)

The Folkestone Jazz Club at the Tower Theatre, Shorncliffe, kicks off an excellent October programme with the Nigel Price Quartet featuring Vasilis Xenopoulos (6), followed by the Matt Wates Sextet (13), Elaine Delmar with the Brian Dee Trio (20) and the Matt Skelton All Stars (27).

## SERIOUS MUSIC AT LONDON FESTIVAL

Describing the scale of the EFG London Jazz Festival (November 11-20) is not easy. To start with the simple numbers, there are 2000+ musicians playing 300+ gigs in 50+ venues, but that is only part of the story. The venues include great concert halls such as the South Bank, the Barbican and Cadogan Hall, world-famous jazz venues such as Ronnie Scott's, the Vortex and the Pizza Express Jazz Club and any number of restaurants, bars, arts centres and even the National Portrait Gallery.

As for the musicians, making a random choice of the list of international stars throws up any number of great names: Tord Gustavsen, Joshua Redman/Brad Mehldau, Chris Potter/Lionel Loueke/Dave Holland/Eric Harland, David Murray/Terri Lyne Carrington/Geri Allen, Mike Westbrook, the Jan Garbarek Group featuring Trilok Gurtu, Michael Wolny Trio....

Opening the Festival is a gala night at the Royal Festival Hall, Jazz Voice (11), with Guy Barker's 42-piece orchestra, and half a dozen top singers hosted by Jay Rayner. Jacob Collier has been termed 'jazz music's new messiah' by the *Guardian*, Polly Gibbons is fresh from supporting George Benson and Gladys Knight, and the list also includes Brooklyn-born, Harlem-based Allan Harris, the witty and urbane John Pizzarelli, new Blue Note talent Kandace Springs and gospel and folk-rooted Lizz Wright.

At the challenging end of the jazz spectrum, Bugge Wesseltoft celebrates 20 years since his first recording for the Jazzland label by playing two nights and a matinee (18-19) at Kings Place. The work includes the latest version of his *New Conception of Jazz* and a new solo piano project with special devised visuals. In contrast LSO St Luke's hosts a celebration of Gene Kelly (17), led by Joe Stilgoe, with words from Kelly's biographer Clive Hirschhorn.

A special event at Cadogan Hall on November 16 sees the festival celebrating Norma Winstone's 75th birthday. This really is a concert of two halves, the first with her trio, the second with big band and symphony orchestra.

The BBC and Jazz FM are getting in on the act with 96 hours (November 10-14) of solid broadcasting on a digital pop-up station BBC Music Jazz. Live concerts from the EFG London Jazz Festival are broadcast in association with BBC Radio 3 and the new pop up station boasts a list of presenters including Gregory Porter, Laura Mvula, Moira Stewart, Jamie Cullum, Soweto Kinch, Claire Martin, Jools Holland and Julian Joseph.

With Serious in overall charge of booking the London festival, many of the overseas bands and artists combine their appearances in the capital with short UK tours. Madeleine Peyroux showcases her eagerly awaited album, *Secular Hymns*, at the Royal Festival Hall (20) before moving on to Birmingham Town Hall (21) and Saffron Hall, Saffron Walden (30). The Grammy-winning Robert Glasper Experience follows two performances at Koko, London (14/15) with appearances at Manchester's Band on the Wall (16), the Sage Gateshead (17), Hull Truck Theatre (18), the Lantern, Bristol (19) and Birmingham Town Hall (20). The Bad Plus, with Binker and Moses in support, finish their tour at the Scala, London (13) after playing Bristol's Colston Hall (7), the Sage Gateshead (8) and the Howard Assembly Room (12). As for the all-star seven-piece hardboppers, the Cookers (Billy Harper, Donald Harrison, Eddie Henderson and the rest), they, too, play the Sage (14) and the Band on the Wall (15) before appearing at Cadogan Hall (17) in the London festival.

[www.efglondonjazzfestival.org.uk](http://www.efglondonjazzfestival.org.uk)  
[www.serious.org.uk](http://www.serious.org.uk)



Norma Winstone



Stacey Kent



Laurie Chescoe

Residential weekends of traditional jazz are not exactly uncommon, but the one scheduled for the Yarn Market Hotel with the John Shillito Band sounds a bit unusual. It lasts from 2016 to 2017 (December 30-January 2) and takes place in the medieval village of Dunster on the edge of Exmoor. And, for those jazz buffs who are also steam buffs, there's a station on the West Somerset Railway!  
Tel.: 01643 821425

Farnborough Jazz Club's October programme begins with the splendidly named Mike Barry's Frisco Fanatics (7), then Laurie Chescoe's Reunion Band (14), Doc Houllind's Revival All Stars (21) and Tony Pitt's All Stars (28). The November programme is made up of Barry Palsler's Super Six (4), the Phoenix Dixieland Jazz Band (11), George 'Kid' Tidiman's All Stars (18) and the Golden Eagle Jazz Band (25).

Birmingham's Le Monde restaurant on Brindleyplace has a weekly Friday evening jazz and blues programme, with bands such as the Whiskey Brothers (October 7), the Sheila Waterfield Quartet (14), the Roy Forbes Quartet (28), the David Moore Band (November 4) and the Emma Jonson Quartet (18).  
Tel.: 0121 271 0600  
(for reservations)  
0121 454 7020 (for information)

57 VARIETY

Edition No. 57 of the 'untraditional jazz magazine', *Allegedly Hot News*, is, always, a mix of the familiar and the distinctive. You can always rely on *Hot News* for wisely appreciative CD reviews and entertaining (and, often, extremely silly) cuttings, anecdotes, rhymes and banjo jokes, plus responses to the changing world of Dick Laurie and the Elastix – the Elastic Band, for those unfamiliar with the goings-on at the Half Moon in Putney.

No. 57 features a full-page photograph of, and appreciative tribute to, Carrie Davies who is retiring after 19 years of looking after the Music Room at the Half Moon. The death of Val Tormey in *Majorca* prompts a retrospective of his splendid jazz cartoons – and, incidentally, an upsurge in the abuse of the harmless banjo. Going international, *Hot News* re-prints a feature from the *Manly Daily* (that's the place in Australia, not a description of a peculiarly macho publication) on the 90th birthday of still active pianist David Stevens. Interesting, too, to read that Upbeat Records have acquired Bill Bissonnette's Jazz Crusade Records.  
Tel.: 020 3674 3549



Vasilis Xenopoulos

Graham Brook's Tuesday Jazz and Swing continues at Wilmslow Conservative Club continues with such attractions, among many others, as Greg Abate with the John Patrick Trio (November 8), the Julie Edwards/Kevin Dearden Quartet (22), Steve Waterman with the Mike Hall Quartet (29) and Amy Roberts and John Hallam with the Tom Kincaid Trio (December 6), plus the interestingly named Trefor

Owen presents Wales Meets Brazil (Dec. 13). Rosie's Jazz and Swing features every third Thursday at Cheadle Hulme Conservative Club, with Greg Abate (Nov. 17) and Rosie Harrison and BBQ (Dec. 15).  
Tel.: 01625 528336

Alan Barnes is bringing an all-star quintet (Henry Lowther, Frank Harrison, Simon Thorpe and Matt Fishwick) to a fund-raiser for the



Alan Barnes

Photo by Merlin Daleman

National Jazz Archive, being held in Loughton Methodist Church, close to the Archive, on the afternoon of October 22. Meanwhile the Archive has lent a special exhibition, particularly relating to Billie Holiday, to Surrey Performing Arts Library for Black History Month in Dorking and on October 27 there will be a talk by jazz musician Peter Edwards on *My Life in Jazz*. The Surrey Performing Arts Library is in the grounds of the Denbies Wine Estate, Dorking.

Birmingham's latest luxury hotel the Park Regis is staging Sunday lunch-time sessions with Tipitina (October 16) and Roy Forbes (November 6).  
Tel. 0121 369 5555

A novel concert at the Brook Theatre, Chatham, on October 14 goes under the name *Silver Screen*. Banjo player Richard Elmes' six-piece Steamboat provides the jazz while silent films delight the eye – and, appropriately enough, it's to raise funds to restore the 1924-built *Medway Queen* paddle steamer.



Greg Abate

Photo by Merlin Daleman

King Pleasure and the Biscuit Boys get into the spirit of Christmas by turning on the lights at Acocks Green Village Green on November 26. Other November dates include Huntingdon Hall, Worcester (4),

Dugdale Centre, Enfield (5), Aberystwyth Arts Centre (9) and the Jam House, Birmingham (10). December finds the band at the Shelley Theatre, Bournemouth (7), Keighley Blues Club (9), Lichfield Guildhall (10) and

Greystones, Sheffield (17) before seeing in the New Year at Earlsdon Park Village.  
Tel.: 0121 454 7020  
www.kingpleasureandthebiscuitboys.com

# SOUTHPORT JAZZ FESTIVAL

JAZZ ON A WINTER'S WEEKEND 2017 @ Royal Clifton Hotel, Southport

JOIN US ON 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> February

**Weekender** 12 Gigs **£150.00**

**Friday** all day **£45.00**

**Saturday** all day **£70.00**

**Sunday** all day **£60.00**

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**Clare Teal**  
Friday 3rd February

**Alan Barnes**  
Sunday 5th February

**Mike Walker**  
Sunday 5th February

www.southportjazzfestival.com

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# BIRMINGHAM AND SOLIHULL JAZZ AND BLUES FESTIVAL 2016

For 10 jazz-filled days in July, all roads seemed to lead to Birmingham. Musicians piled into the City from the Czech Republic, France, Holland, Hungary, India, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg Spain and the USA - and so did the audiences, with 4.8% of 77,000 jazzfans coming from overseas.

So to rekindle the memories of those who made the trek and to whet the appetites of those who didn't - with July 14th to 23rd 2017 in mind - here's a snapshot of some of what went down in Birmingham in July 2016.



Laura Budreckyte and The Schwings swung in from Vilnius, Lithuania for a second visit to Brum. It surely won't be their last

Ilenia Appicciafuoco fronted Pepper & The Jellies from Rome in Italy - a real crowd pleaser with her interpretations of 1930s blues and jazz classics



The Sarah Lenka band from Paris were a revelation with their uber-cool takes on the Bessie Smith repertoire

Caleb Chapman's Crescent Superband from Salt Lake City USA were just that. Super. Imagine a 22 piece band playing a modest Broad Street pub. The echoes are yet to die away.



The Hotsy Totsy Five from Velke Losiny in Czech Republic were such a hit that they are rebooked for 2017. Already.

## PHOTOS BY MERLIN DALEMAN

# THE JAZZ RAG TOP 20 UK

## UK JAZZ CD SALES CHART

1	TUBBY HAYES	SPLIT KICK	Savage Solweig
2	STAN GETZ QUARTET	1960: LIVE IN AMSTERDAM, DUSSELDORF & ZURICH	Fresh Sound Records
3	BRANFORD MARSALIS	UPWARD SPIRAL	OKeh Records
4	JOSHUA REDMAN & BRAD MEHLDAU	NEARNESS	Nonesuch Records
5	JIMMY WITHERSPOON	LIVE AT THE RENAISSANCE AND AT MONTEREY	Dark Was the Night Records
6	FRED HERSCH TRIO	SUNDAY NIGHT AT THE VILLAGE VANGUARD	Palmetto Records
7	BOBBY KAPP & MATTHEW SHIPP	CACTUS	Northern Spy Records
8	THE IMPOSSIBLE GENTLEMEN	LETS GET DELUXE	Basho Records
9	JAZZ AT THE PHILHARMONIC	LIVE IN PARIS 1958-1960	Fremaux & Associes
10	MADELEINE PEYROUX	SECULAR HYMNS	Impulse
11	ZOE RAHMAN	DREAMLAND	Manshui Records
12	SONNY ROLLINS TRIO & HORACE SILVER QUINTET	ZURICH 1959	Naxos
13	ROBERT GLASPER EXPERIMENT	ARTSCIENCE	Blue Note Records
14	MEL LEWIS SEPTET	GOT' CHA	Fresh Sound Records
15	MICHEL PETRUCCIANI	BOTH WORLDS LIVE	Dreyfus
16	HORACE SILVER	SIX PIECES OF SILVER	Blue Note Records
17	BRAD MEHLDAU	BLUES AND BALLADS	Nonesuch Records
18	PEANUTS HUCKO AND THE ALL STARS	A TRIBUTE TO BENNY GOODMAN	Sounds of Yesteryear
19	BEN CROSLAND QUINTET	RAY DAVIES SONGBOOK	Jazz Cat Records
20	LOUIS ARMSTRONG	COMPLETE HOT FIVE AND HOT SEVEN	Essential Jazz Classics

This chart is compiled from sales in the following record stores

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# PAYING YOUR DUES AND COVERING THE BASES

## RON SIMPSON investigates the varied career of tenor saxophonist (and much else beside) ROBERT FOWLER.

Placing Robert Fowler in the British jazz scene is not always easy. He's the guy playing superlatively on almost any of the reed instruments in those themed sessions with all-star sextets and octets arranged by the likes of Alan Barnes for festival consumption: Ellington numbers maybe or one of Alan's earlier suites or his recent *Christmas Carol* which Robert has enjoyed playing despite mixed feelings about Alan in night shirt and night cap. Or it might be his own Gerry Mulligan tribute or his very successful collaboration with Karen Sharp on a Zoot Sims-Al Cohn kick. But you're just as likely to catch him in a more traditional role (his longest stint with one band was with the Pasadena Roof Orchestra) or in a classy big band. And what about instruments? Robert sees himself as primarily a tenor saxist, but plays authoritative clarinet and baritone sax, is well at ease on soprano sax, alto sax and bass clarinet and runs the full gamut of flutes. When I met him, he had just been summoned to a BBC Big Band gig with instructions to bring alto flute and piccolo in addition to tenor sax and flute – someone else, he hoped, was looking after baritone sax and bass clarinet!

Adaptability is the key. I chatted to him before a gig at the opulent 16th floor Sky Bar of the brand new Park Regis Hotel at the start of the Birmingham festival. Working with a fine ad hoc quartet and with an audience divided between jazz fans and night-outers who regarded the music as background (by no means a new situation as 1950s live recordings of even the greatest of jazz musicians attest), Robert kept the clarinet in its case and delivered assertive, rich-toned, inventive and melodically rewarding tenor sax versions of standards. Very satisfying and enjoyable, with musical risk-taking not at the forefront.



Photo by Merlin Daleman

When I asked Robert what had guided his career, he answered with an account of his early days as a professional that suggested that happenstance played its part:

'I didn't study music, but just as I was finishing my degree in Graphic Design I got a call to audition for the Pasadena Roof Orchestra in 1986 – that was on the recommendation of Bill Ashton. Though I never played in NYJO, he had my number for some reason and passed it on to them. I just thought it was great to get a job. I'd done several youth orchestras and tours and developed a taste for music and travel. And that's exactly what Pasadena Roof Orchestra is all about – lots of travelling, mostly around Europe, though we did do a tour of the States, Hong Kong, Kuala Lumpur, Dubai....'

Robert spent 10 years playing tenor sax and clarinet with the Pasadena Roof Orchestra which is one third of his professional career so far. My guess is that, like me, the average well-informed jazz fan, asked to name a band Robert played with earlier in his career, would come up with Humphrey Lyttelton, yet he spent no more than two years on

Humph's official roster compared with 10 with PRO:

'I used to dep in Humph's band quite a lot for Kathy Stobart and sometimes for Jimmy Hastings. Kathy was getting less likely to drive any great distance. I was hoping to get the job when Kathy retired, but Humph gave it to Karen Sharp. I think Karen did about four years with him. When I finally got the job with him, Humph used to say it was a wait worthy of Gordon Brown. Sadly I was only with him for two years because it was the last two years of his life.'

Why then do we associate Robert with Humph so much more than with PRO? Fairly obviously Humph's influence lives on way beyond his death. In particular Robert still plays with the Lyttelton Band, Tony Fisher now on trumpet and many of Humph's last line-up still on board, in regular monthly gigs at the Bull's Head in Barnes and other occasional concerts. Also his partnership with Karen Sharp, a decidedly post-Lyttelton sax connection, has brought him many of his best notices in recent years. Interestingly he's back with the Pasadena Roof Orchestra. He

made a pertinent comment to me on the changed situation in the jazz world: in the late 1980s the PRO did something like 200 gigs a year and Robert saw himself as a member of the PRO, working very little outside the orchestra; in 2016, though the PRO works well by current standards, the number of gigs is less than half, giving him plenty of opportunity (and, indeed, the need) for the range of work we've already hinted at.

As *Jazz Rag* has commented in recent issues, a remarkable percentage of quality swinging bands these days are in some way tribute bands – in Robert's case Alyn Shipton's Buck Clayton Legacy Band is yet another. Robert's theory is sensible and convincing, if probably not the whole answer ('If people don't know what they're going to get, they won't turn up. If they know it's the music of Ella Fitzgerald, Duke Ellington or Count Basie, they've got a fair idea of what to expect and are more likely to buy a ticket'). He also made the telling point that 'you don't have to re-create it note for note' before moving on to the origins of his Gerry Mulligan tribute:

'Since I saw Gerry Mulligan play at Cheltenham in the early 80s, I've been a massive fan of his. At that time I didn't know much about his Concert Jazz Band which was a 13-piece. Barry Hatcher who used to work for Sony Music gave me a live album from Santa Monica in 1960 and I thought it was amazing, with Mel Lewis on drums and a fabulous line-up including Conte Candoli and Bob Brookmeyer. So I thought it would be great to put a big band together to do this music. I happened to mention it to Steve Brown in the car going to a gig and the next thing I know he's put me forward to do a big band at Titley Jazz Festival. So I managed to get a set of arrangements – most of them by Iain Dixon and Adrian Fry – and put a big band together and we did a gig at the Watermill, Dorking, then Titley. We did quite a few gigs at festivals, but it's getting harder now because once a festival's had you, they want something different next year.'

Robert's comment, casually delivered, does suggest something of the jazzman's current dilemma. It used to be that festival favourites developed a regular booking (and this is still to some extent true, at Birmingham – with returning Continental bands – and certainly with the more traditional festivals), but much excellent jazz now is programmed (tribute to Ellington, Mingus, Billie Holiday, Gerry Mulligan...) and promoters look on it more like theatre management who wouldn't want productions of *Educating Rita* two years running. But the Mulligan tribute has brought him great success and pleasure:

'We got recorded at Scarborough for *Jazz Line-up* on Radio 3, so that was great. And we got in touch with Franca, Mulligan's widow, who lives in Milan and America, who was thrilled to hear that I was carrying on Gerry's music and even provided a few arrangements. I went over to meet her and she put on a tribute concert to him in the Conservatorio in Milan and I was invited as a guest – not playing! So I got to meet her and the musicians over there who are carrying his music on.'

In conversation Robert seems far

more ambitious musically than professionally. He leads bands of his own, currently a quintet with Robin Aspland and Colin Oxley, and fairly soon he will record a duo album with Colin: the model is Zoot Sims and Joe Pass – clearly worth looking out for! However, he seems to be happy to develop his musical skills in whatever worthwhile setting he finds placed before him. This is what he had to say about working with Keith Nichols and playing the clarinet in a fairly traditional style:

'I've worked on and off for nearly 30 years with Keith Nichols in his various projects. I find the clarinet a fascinating instrument. It's really hard, so I take the opportunity to play the clarinet when I can. It improves your sax playing, too – it makes you think of what you're playing when you're improvising.'

In one sense Robert is easy enough to pin down – he agreed readily that his default position as a saxist is that mainstream territory occupied by Messrs. Cohn and Zims – but his enthusiasm for other styles prevents any of the simple conclusions so beloved of journalists:

'It's difficult to make my style fall into a category because, if you look at someone like Stan Getz, he played through the cool era and the bebop era and he was his own voice – he was just Stan Getz – and a genius. That form of melodic improvising is difficult to do well. You get someone like Scott Hamilton who does it really well and to the layman it doesn't sound as impressive as someone who plays lots of licks and fast phrases – sort of Coltrane school. I'm a big fan of Coltrane, too – I like all jazz really. (Pause and raised eyebrow from interviewer) Well, lots of jazz anyway.'

Robert is clearly a man who is happy working in many different styles (at two different periods of time he had a long stint with Bryan Ferry and he clearly has every respect for his music), but he ventured the opinion that the more he was able to work within jazz festivals and jazz clubs, the happier he would be. On the other hand his enthusiasm for his stint in a 24-piece orchestra on a

Frank Sinatra show at the London Palladium last year was clearly unfeigned.

The current state of the jazz scene had been a recurrent theme of the conversation and, before we finished, I persuaded Robert to give his views on the perennial question, 'What's happening with the young musicians/audience?' – typically he was optimistic, but clear-sighted about the problems:

'There seems to be a resurgence of younger players playing vintage swing. They look like hipsters living in Hackney or Hoxton, but playing *What is this Thing Called Love?* or *Blue Skies* – and doing it very well. But it's difficult to sell jazz to a younger audience. I think it's not only the music, it's the venues. We're sitting in a great venue – lovely views of Birmingham, a pretty cool place to come out for an evening – but sometimes an ex-servicemen's club or a marquee is not the most appealing place for the young. I went to see a guy called Nicola Conte who put together a band of Italian musicians playing essentially Horace Silver/Blue Note jazz, with lots of bossa

novas, very 50s jazz, to an incredibly young and responsive audience in the Jazz Cafe in Camden. So the young audience can respond to older jazz, but sometimes it's the venue.

'People have been saying audiences have been getting older for all the 30 years I've been a professional. Maybe, after a certain age, people don't want the loud discos or rock bands, so they go to a jazz club. Of course, audiences have declined to the extent that it's not usually possible to join a single band as a full-time job. My dad kept a lot of old copies of the *NME* from the 1950s and on nearly every front page it was, "So-and-so moves from Alex Welsh..." or "Tommy Whittle moves from Ted Heath..." – headline news! Times have changed – and you have to be flexible!'

And with that Robert set about proving how effective he is – muscular and melodic – in what he had defined as his default position, that straightforward mainstream tenor we all associate with the likes of Zoot and Al and find it impossible not to like.

# STARTING A CAREER

**In 2014 at the age of 17 ALEXANDER BONE became the first winner of the BBC Young Jazz Musician of the Year award. RON SIMPSON found out how his career is progressing as he puts his teenage years behind him.**

In the past few months I have had the chance to hear one of the bright young stars of jazz, Alexander Bone, in two very different settings. In the Tap and Barrel pub in Pontefract, Jam Experiment, the talented quintet he co-leads, played a powerful and challenging set that was sometimes a bit over-powering for the size of the room. At the Georgian Theatre Royal in Richmond, Yorkshire, he opened the Richmond Jazz Festival with his trio, joined by two of his colleagues from Jam Experiment, pianist Toby Comeau and bassist Joe Lee, in an excellent concert that brought out the range of his (or, rather, their) talents, from funk to wispily melodic ballad performances.

The Richmond concert was on the day following Alexander's 20th birthday, so not a bad time at all to review progress so far, starting with that award:

'I'd been at Chetham's School in Manchester since 2009, so I'd had five years at music school. I was doing bits and bobs, doing what gigs I could get, but most of my time was studying. The classical Young Musician competition is very well established and, being a music school, everyone at Chetham's entered. So, when they brought in the jazz award, it seemed too good a chance to miss. A few of us entered and sent in a DVD; most of us did a mixture of our arrangements and standards. If they liked you, they called you to a second round in the Millennium Centre in Cardiff – and that's where you got the first glimpse of it being a BBC competition, with TV cameras. When you got there and found yourself in TV Land, it was exciting and nerve-wracking at the same time. Then they narrowed it from 25 in the second round to 5 for the final.'

In making the initial DVD Alexander worked with a mixture of tutors from Chetham's and Manchester-based professionals which he says

helped a lot – 'playing with really good musicians helps you sound better.' So that was a good start, but Alexander is prepared to admit, though with an embarrassed laugh, that he felt happy with his performance in the final:

'I think on the run-up to the final I managed to get into a mind-set where I wasn't overly panicked or stressed out, despite the pressure. I focused on how exciting an opportunity this was and how I was going to be playing with the Gwilym Simcock trio, and, when it came to the performance, I put all my attention into listening to the band and reacting to them, just playing music as if I was in a room with no audience or cameras or microphones. Gwilym's trio are seriously inspiring to play with.'

Alexander was no doubt helped in this by the fact that he was already a seasoned performer. His parents are both music teachers and his father was his first saxophone teacher, from the age of six. Now he plays both alto and tenor, but then his size forced him to learn on 'a little curved soprano that looked like a proper saxophone that had been through the wash and shrunk.'

At the age of 10 he passed Grade 8 saxophone, but at the same age he was facing the public, busking with his dad at the Edinburgh Fringe – 'which got me used to dealing with people, speaking to people, dealing with nice feedback and occasionally not so nice feedback from members of the public.'

Just over two years on from the award Alexander is about to start his second year at the Royal Academy in Music, but becoming the first BBC Young Jazz Musician has certainly helped kickstart his career in impressive fashion:

'It helped to make people aware of me which meant I got the opportunity with various bands

to play jazz clubs across the country and jazz festivals and also work with pop artists, musicians that I never dreamt I'd be able to work with, people like Liane Carroll, Dave Holland, Kylie Minogue and Nile Rodgers. I do a lot of music production and mixed some tracks for Kylie Minogue – though that's separate from my jazz music, the BBC competition helped because it made more people aware of me. There was even a question on *Eggheads* about what instrument I play which was a bizarre surprise, though they got the answer wrong!'

Making the BBC aware of your talent at the age of 17 has to be a pretty good career move and Alexander says the BBC has been very good to him, notably with his appearance on television in Proms in the Park in 2015.

Furthermore, just after the BBC award, Jam Experiment as a group, all at the time at Chetham's, received an award under the Jazz North Introduces scheme which provided a bunch of gigs at UK festivals. Alexander would admit to having had ideal opportunities at the start of his career, from his family background to the quality of teaching at Chetham's – how many young jazz saxophonists have the opportunity to work with Iain Dixon? But his ability to seize opportunities impresses.

For instance, thanks to Jazz North, Jam Experiment played at the 2016 Southport Jazz on a Winter's Weekend, made their mark, then are back re-booked for 2017.

A constant theme with jazz musicians is the need to diversify, to teach or play in orchestra pits or work in recording studios to supplement jazz gigs. Alexander seems well equipped for that side of a musician's life:

'I've always had an open mind. I've never said, "I'm going to do exactly this." At music school,

you meet some people that say, "I'm going to join this orchestra and I'm going to hold this particular chair." I personally never thought this mindset was right for me. Maybe because I have so many different musical interests, but also because the music world is so competitive. Although it's incredibly important to have goals, you've got to balance them with a plan B at some point. I try to work on everything I'm passionate about. I'm passionate about teaching as well. I'd love to be touring the world – that's my ultimate dream I think. My music production and saxophone playing go hand in hand – I write my own music and have full control of it because there are no other musicians, just myself and sax or keyboards. It opens opportunities for producing for other artists or doing re-mixes for them.'

For now he has no trouble reconciling being a student with being a musician headlining jazz festivals or working with big names in popular music:

'There is no better way to study than to actually perform. You can sit in a classroom being taught by amazing musicians, but nothing beats experiencing it for yourself. Performing and playing are different things. There are challenges to performing that you might not realise, even such things as how to talk to an audience.

'My teachers are incredible musicians, so, when I go back to music college, it feels great. I'm learning again, I'm being pushed, I'm figuring out new things. Being in that environment reminds you that you have never learnt music, it never finishes, it's an ongoing journey.'

[www.alexanderbone.com](http://www.alexanderbone.com)

# SORRY, MR MARGOLICK



In *Jazz Rag 142* I wrote a piece about Billie Holiday's *Strange Fruit* that made reference to the book *Strange Fruit: The Biography of a Song* by (as I said) David Margolick and Hilton Als. When later I got hold of a second-hand copy, I had two surprises. The more pleasant was that Wikipedia and my ageing memory are both more reliable than rumour has it. I found nothing major to retract

except – the second surprise – the identity of the author. David Margolick wrote a short, well-researched, sober and always interesting book, Billie's career and her attitude to the song mixed in with reactions of listeners and singers. Hilton Als contributed only a self-regarding and sometimes over-written foreword.

On a question of authorship Billie Holiday was clearly more complicit than I implied in claiming that she was responsible for turning Abel Meeropol's poem into a song, spinning a yarn about her father being gassed in World War One and having just died of pneumonia having been refused entry to Southern hospitals. (This was 1937, the

year of Bessie Smith's death having been reported as due to a motor accident – coincidence?). She stated that this helped to make Meeropol more interested in her as the artist to develop his poem. Margolick demonstrates that this claim has no foundation.

The more I read of Abel Meeropol, the more I admire him. He had recourse to a lawyer to ensure that he got his royalties, but always refused to blame Billie, understanding her need to appropriate the song and make it part of her. Nice, also, to find the likes of Ira Gershwin and Kurt Weill had enough respect for his work to recommend him for a Guggenheim Fellowship in the 1940s. Sad, though, to read that his last years were blurred by Alzheimer's, though, apparently, he still recognised and reacted to *Strange Fruit* when other things had slipped away.

RON SIMPSON

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## ST. JAMES, CRAZY COQS AND THE REST

RON SIMPSON reviews the musical career of promoter JOHN BILLETT of JBGB EVENTS.



John Billett

When you open the JBGB Events website, two elements seem contradictory. The company was founded as recently as 2013, but the list of artists and venues booked is remarkably lengthy and extremely impressive. A quick glance at the main page comes up with a Thursday Night Jazz Divas series at the St. James Studio, an October 3 concert at the main theatre with Claire Martin and Joe Stilgoe, concerts in successive weeks (October 17/25) at the Crazy Coqs with Tina May's Edith Piaf tribute and Clare Teal, Elaine Delmar at the Lansdowne Club (October 6) and much more, including out-of-town ventures at the Stables and the Hoste in Burnham Market, followed by a hefty commitment to the EFG London Jazz Festival in November.

How have John and Glynis Billett achieved so much so soon? There is a tiny element of, 'How do you make a million promoting jazz?' 'Start with two million' in that John had the resources from the sale of a flourishing business, but this is not a rich man's whim – he had his money behind him at the start, but has always looked for promotions that are profitable as well as musically excellent. Clearly his expertise in creating attractive packages and programmes is important, especially with the series that he puts together so successfully. A life steeped in music has helped, including the fact that he had always promoted on an occasional basis. This is a man who says, 'There is no bad music' and boldly affirms, 'Music has to be live!'

From his early days John had an active involvement as a

performer of jazz and assorted music. He claims to have been inspired by the sound of the Crescent City Stompers rehearsing next door and experienced 'the thrill of syncopation and the surprise of improvisation.' Having taught himself piano, banjo and guitar, he formed his 'boy band', the Rivermen Skiffle Group, and played traditional jazz with the Jazz Cavaliers. Later more sophisticated endeavours included playing modern jazz piano in venues around the South East and performing his own one-man cabaret show at the Dorchester Hotel.

For all this it's interesting that his own musical achievements that he is most proud of are rather different in style! He cites being Head Boy of Exeter Cathedral Choir and Royal School of Music Chorister of the Year twice in successive years. Then he sang in three very distinguished choirs – London Symphony Orchestra Choir, London Philharmonic Choir and the John Alldis Choir – making numerous recordings and performing at the Proms. Not many jazz promoters can say that!

Jumping on several decades from his days as Head Chorister, we find John seizing the opportunity for full-time music promotion:

'Over many years in the advertising media business I had presented the odd few music events for charity: classical, popular and jazz concerts. This included the re-opening of the Blackheath Concert Halls where Peter Conway and I presented Antonio Forcione with Neil Stacey, Jason Rebello with his

Wayne Shorter-inspired album and Humphrey Lyttelton with his band and Martin Taylor.

'After I sold my businesses, I had the resources and the opportunity to put into practice my long-held fascination with jazz. The first major excursion into larger scale events was a Jazz in the Meadow charity event for the Lady Taverners in Norfolk, encouraged by my wife Glynis who was Chairman. I involved three brilliant Norfolk musicians I had heard: Chris Ingham, Simon Brown and Simon Nelson – a very successful afternoon, both musically and financially.'

Though a success, this seemed to be a dead end in terms of future promotion. In fact John goes so far as to call the fixed costs of a larger event, plus the weather risk, 'a nightmare'. Then came an unexpected opportunity which John seized on. Friends of his at the 5-star hotel The Hoste in Burnham Market were building a new function room; John decided to take the jazz indoors and created The Hoste of Jazz as a commercial venture. It was also his first opportunity to build a series of concerts:

'The Hoste of Jazz was the first planned series of events with Chris Ingham, Simon Brown and Simon Nelson leading the way and we brought up some top musicians from London for a five-event series. This was a dinner and music listening idea, based on bringing to Norfolk the concept delivered in London by Ronnie Scott's and the Pizza Express Jazz Club.'

It was that success that took JBGB's promoting back to London where John found the St. James Studio, an intimate 120-seater attached to the larger St. James Theatre. He describes the studio as 'made for jazz' and reckons its full potential was being neglected. The St. James Studio – together with the initial Hoste of Jazz – has been JBGB's biggest success:

'In 2013 I persuaded them to allow me to present two

evenings. I dialled in to Chris Ingham and we presented two nights, first with his Jazz at the Movies band featuring Mark Crooks and Joanna Eden and then with his new feature on the life and music of Hoagy Carmichael.

'The music was great. The audience loved it. I covered my costs and the St. James Artistic Director James Albrecht was sufficiently impressed to invite me to present more events later that year.'

And that was only three years ago! The Jazz Divas series is now firmly established, with the roster of singers including Jacqui Dankworth, Elaine Delmar, Gabrielle Ducombe, Joanna Eden, Polly Gibbons, Sarah Gillespie, Georgia Mancio, Claire Martin, Tina May, Clare Teal and Norma Winstone. More important still is that it is confirmed that there will be a fourth year in 2017, as yet unannounced, but including Liane Carroll, Salena Jones, Barb Jungr and – extending the concept of Divas a little – Claire Martin with Ian Shaw.

JBGB Events have promoted one-off concerts at the Studio (and now at the main theatre), but John Billett's liking for themed series is the most interesting feature of his policy. The Divas series, together with his Crazy Coqs programme, suggests a certain inclination towards the female voice, but this is far from exclusive. This year he launched a Festival of World Music at the studio, with artists from Jamaica, Russia, Portugal and Brazil and there is also The Wonderful Music of the Jazz Greats series, a cumbersome name for some fine music, paying tribute to an eclectic group of jazz greats, from Jelly Roll Morton to Herbie Hancock. Keith Nichols' The Wonderful Music of Fats Waller and Jelly Roll Morton at the Pizza Express (October 30) is in a similar vein.

As well as themed series, there are the time-specific series such as at the St. James Studio for the EFG London Jazz Festival, a short

Claire Martin



residency for guitarist Laurence Juber at the Pizza Express (to be repeated in 2017) and the week-long February Festival of Music at the Pizza Express's partner The Pheasantry on London's Kings Road. There a look at the musicians involved makes it clear that, while always prepared to be adventurous and take risks, John Billett is happy to fall back on the same trusted performers (and why not?): Elaine Delmar, Tina May, Georgia Mancio, Sue Richardson, Chris Ingham.

A new venture for JBGB is promoting at the Crazy Coqs, the cabaret venue at Brasserie Zedel off Shaftesbury Avenue, now re-branded as Live at Zedel. John's comments about this show his appreciation of the needs of a particular series or venue and also his awareness of the financial issues:

'It's a most attractive venue, but only able to pack in 80 paying customers per concert. We have great hopes of success for a variety of events, all of a more intimate cabaret style of music, but performed by superb jazz musicians including Tina May, Clare Teal, Luiz Morais, Tammy Weiss and Jeff Hooper.'

John is meticulous in spelling out the sorts of financial

arrangements he makes with the venues, though of course not giving any information about any specific deals, and will happily talk about the merits and problems of the venue net revenue sharing model. The JBGB website contains testimonials to the company's excellence from various promoters. An unhelpful streak of modesty, one suspects, is not part of John's make-up and he is in no doubt of his ability to (at the very least) keep the customer satisfied, but there is no empty self-praise: his feet are firmly on the ground as he explains how it works:

'We put forward imaginative creative propositions, always grounded in solid commercial reality. We appreciate the need for opportunities for experiment and innovation, but we prefer to work with established venues, presenting known and proven artists, sometimes in new and different roles. We were once described as music for "a Radio 2 audience that can swing, prepared to have fun with a guarantee of going home with a smile." We are happy with that.

'Our approach to venues is one of knowledge, good marketing skills, delivery of great music and an audience and above all 100%

professional reliability. We try to pay our musicians a fair market rate with funds in their bank account before the event.'

Ask John Billett if he is a hands-on promoter and you get a whole list of activities he is involved with, from PR campaigns to emceeing on the night. I was particularly taken with the condition that artists on a JBGB promotion have to agree to make media appearances that JBGB set up and to play an active part in attracting audiences. Even the grumpiest of jazz musicians, I don't doubt, respond when there's money in their bank account in advance – the phrase *quid pro quo* could not be more appropriate!

So you have a pretty good mix: business acumen, imaginative programming, artists of proven quality, co-operation with venues, intensive publicity strategies and – by no means the least important – paying the musicians properly. Asked about plans and intentions, John is self-confident and well-organised, but surprisingly modest about what he has achieved, 'We are trying to create JBGB Events as a brand known for putting on great concerts' – only trying? Similarly he reckons 2017 is a key year which will show whether 'we are just a well-intentioned small-scale operator.' Small-scale? JBGB is not Serious, that's true, but it seems to me to be a successful well-run medium-sized operation.

But the plan is for further development and John sets out a plan that is ambitious, but realistic. For instance, the St. James Studio has been at the heart of much of JBGB's London success, but expansion there is difficult, maybe impossible. It's a venue that stages many different events (as I write this, weeknights are taken up with a play based on *Waiting for Godot*) and so maintaining the current number of series is probably the limit of his ambition. Not so the Pizza Express and The Pheasantry or the Crazy Coqs/Live at Zedel, both 365-day music venues.

Most of JBGB's promotions fit into small intimate venues, so stage 2 of the 2017 business plan is to add some larger halls to the company's list. Claire Martin and Joe Stilgoe at the St. James

Theatre is a start and JBGB is moving out of town for a celebration of Ella Fitzgerald's centenary at the Apex Theatre, Bury St. Edmunds. In London John will be moving into one of the great halls for classical music, St. John's Smith Square, for two concerts in the 2017 EFG London Jazz Festival.

And, on a quite different tack – going back to its origins in a sense – JBGB hopes to expand in the field of one-off events for private clubs and charities.

Interestingly, John claims, 'Live music is so exciting, you never know what's going to happen.' Maybe so, but it seems to me that one of the secrets of his success is working out what's going to happen pretty accurately. A convincing tribute, free of fulsome exaggeration, comes from Brendan Hopkins of The Hoste: 'John has delivered on his original proposal in every respect.'

And what do the musicians think? A brief conversation with Claire Martin leaves me in no doubt of her delight in working with a man she describes as 'a breath of fresh air' on the jazz scene. Echoing Brendan Hopkins, she describes him as completely trustworthy and totally honest, as well as being generous to musicians, and beyond polite in his manner!

She enthuses over his 'incredibly professional operation', with John's business background coming to the fore in an efficient PR and marketing strategy, involving media coverage, setting up interviews and organising everything meticulously. Always, says Claire, 'he has his eye on the bigger picture – and he doesn't fuss; things just happen, things just arrive that he's been working on.' Helped by this impressive marketing, John is prepared to take risks – Claire points to his booking of her and Joe Stilgoe into a Monday night at the St. James Theatre.

No wonder Claire says, 'We could do with a dozen like him.' Well, maybe, Claire – I'm not sure there are enough venues to go round....

[www.jbgbevents.com](http://www.jbgbevents.com)

# THE 2016 MONTEREY JAZZ FESTIVAL (SEPTEMBER 16-18)

By Scott Yanow

The Monterey Jazz Festival has been held annually at the Monterey Fairgrounds since 1958. Founded and run by Jimmy Lyons during its first 34 years, it was a major festival from the start, featuring top artists who ranged from New Orleans jazz to the avant-garde. Several musicians, most notably Charles Mingus (1964), John Handy (1965), Charles Lloyd (1966) and Don Ellis (also 1966), recorded albums that are considered among the highpoints of their careers.

During the late 1970s and '80s, Monterey was running out of gas and had become predictable. But after Lyons retired and Tim Jackson took over as the festival's artistic director in 1992, Monterey made a major comeback. The number of stages increased from two to five, the lineup began to feature all aspects of modern jazz, and attendance surged. This year's festival, the 59th edition, was one of the best of the past decade. With five stages operating simultaneously (plus another one that featured high school and college bands), one could create their own jazz festival out of the many choices. While I unavoidably missed a few groups, I certainly saw more than my share of memorable moments during the September weekend.

The festival started with an unexpected highpoint. MIXCLA +



Kurt Elling

I is a quartet of students from Berklee. While the trumpeter, bassist and percussionist were fine, it was obvious that pianist-singer Zahili Gonzalez Zamora is going to be a major force in jazz. Born in Cuba and currently in her thirties, Zahili has superior technique on piano, is a major improviser, and has a very appealing and flexible voice. She not only has the ability to sing fast unisons with her piano but can switch to singing perfect harmonies at the same tempo, something I had never seen before. It seems apparent that 'a star was born' that day.

Monterey's Showcase Artist this year was tenor-saxophonist Joshua Redman who performed with a different group each of the three nights. On Friday he led Still Dreaming, a quartet with cornetist Ron Miles, bassist Scott Colley and drummer Brian Blade. The group paid tribute to Old And New Dreams, a 1970s get-together of Ornette Coleman alumni that consisted of Joshua's father Dewey Redman, trumpeter Don Cherry, bassist Charlie Harden and drummer Ed Blackwell. The new unit captured the individual sounds of the earlier players perfectly. Their brand of melodic free jazz was a delight to hear, giving one the rare opportunity to hear Redman play Redman.

The next night, Joshua Redman performed a stirring set with the

groundbreaking trio The Bad Plus, a unit that he has toured with in the past. And on Sunday, he led his own quartet which featured pianist Aaron Goldberg, bassist Reuben Rogers and drummer Gregory Hutchinson. Redman, who always displays a relatively mellow tone even when he is on an adventurous flight, never coasts or rests on his laurels, consistently playing unpredictable ideas. A special highlight of his third performance was one of the most beautiful versions of *Stardust* that I have heard in years.

Bria Skonberg brought some New Orleans jazz and swing to the festival. Her trumpet playing, with its shakes and vibrato, made her sound like a veteran from the 1930s while her light-toned singing hinted at Peggy Lee at times. Leading a quintet that featured Evan Arntzen on tenor and clarinet, she performed such numbers as *Swing That Music*, *Egyptian Fantasy*, a Latin-flavored *Don't Be That Way*, *Malaguena*, her own catchy *Wear And Tear* and a one-chord piece that showed that she is capable of playing in a more modern style. As Bria Skonberg accurately stated, she makes old songs sound new and writes new songs that sound old!

One of the most memorable sets of the weekend was a tribute to what could be considered Quincy Jones' last jazz albums, his A&M recordings of 1969-71. An all-star 21-piece group conducted by John Clayton performed some of the numbers from Jones' *Walking In Space*, *Gula Matari* and *Smackwater Jack* albums. Quincy, who was introduced by Clint Eastwood, enjoyed the show while watching from the right side of the stage. With bassist Christian McBride being both the musical director and the announcer, Jones' arrangements featured such individualists as flutist Hubert Laws (who soloed on nearly every song), trumpeter Sean Jones, Bob Sheppard on soprano, trombonist Andy Martin, guitarist Paul Jackson, Jr, Dave

Grusin on electric piano, James Carter (very underutilized although he had one rip-roaring solo apiece on baritone and soprano), vocalist Valerie Simpson and three background singers. There were also guest appearances on *Gula Matari* by electric bassist Richard Bona and pianist Alfredo Rodriguez. *Walking In Space* was given an extended treatment that topped the original recording. Other numbers included *Walkin'*, *What's Going On* and *Killer Joe*. But it was the beautiful and haunting playing of harmonica great Gregoire Maret on *Brown Ballad* that stole the show.

Bassist John Patitucci's Electric Guitar Quartet played inventive post bop jazz while paying tribute to the music that Patitucci heard while growing up in Brooklyn. With expressive and inventive playing from guitarists Adam Rogers and Steve Cardenas and fine support from drummer Brian Blade, the repertoire ranged from the soul jazz of *Band Of Brothers* to a Thelonious Monk medley and adventurous originals.

Tenor-saxophonist and flutist Lew Tabackin teamed up with trumpeter Randy Brecker in a quartet with bassist Boris Kozlov and drummer Mark Taylor. The spontaneous interplay between the two horns was always a highpoint, whether on an original blues-with-a-bridge or *Delilah*. Another matchup featured the Branford Marsalis Quartet (with the leader on tenor and soprano) welcoming singer Kurt Elling. While they had recorded a relatively laidback ballad-oriented CD, their live performance was a stark contrast as the co-leaders constantly challenged each other to perform at their most passionate. Highlights included an enthusiastic *There's A Boat That's Leaving Soon For New York*, *Blue Gardenia*, and a celebratory *With Every Breath You Take*. For their finale, a surprising instrumental version of *St. James Infirmary*, they were augmented by altoist Tia Fuller (as intense as ever) and

trumpeter Ingrid Jensen (who used a coffee cup as a mute), both of whom had played earlier with Terri Lyne Carrington's Mosaic Project. Elling joined in, using his own coffee cup over his mouth to make some unusual sounds.

Kamasi Washington, whose tenor playing reminds me a bit of Pharoah Sanders, has been gaining a lot of attention lately. At Monterey he led a quintet with two drummers and singer Patrice Quinn, performing a collage of music that constantly changed styles, moods and grooves. None of it sounded as if it could not have been performed 40 years ago and it never really gelled or built to a climax. Washington has potential but the acclaim he has been receiving might be a little premature.

In contrast, Gregory Porter currently ranks with Elling as jazz's top male vocalist. On originals such as *Take Me To The Alley*, *On My Way To Harlem* and *There Will Be No Love Dying Here*, he charmed the crowd with his voice, friendly personality and musicianship. While Porter should add a few more cookers to his repertoire, he is a joy to see.

Drummer Tommy Igoe's big band, Groove Conspiracy, played a spirited and exuberant set of the music of Steely Dan. They successfully turned the poppish vocal songs into instrumental jazz, featuring hot solos from altoist Marc Russo (an early member of the Yellowjackets), tenor-saxophonist Tom Politzer, guitarist Drew Zingg and the great trumpeter Randy Brecker. Singer Tony Lindsey sat in successfully on a couple of numbers.

A bright name from Blue Note of the 1970s, organist Ronnie Foster has been in obscurity for some time. However he showed during a trio set that he still very much has it, performing a classic soul jazz version of Stevie Wonder's *Isn't She Lovely*. I caught a little bit of tenor-saxophonist Donny McCaslin's quartet performance. The playing was so unremittingly intense that it seemed a little humorous and one felt that they were waiting for the roof to cave in; I wish I had had time to see more!



Cecile McLorin Salvant

Guitarist Dave Stryker's quartet with the masterful tenor-saxophonist Eric Alexander and organist Jared Gold paid tribute to Stanley Turrentine and had many bright moments on *Don't Mess With Mister T*, *Impressions* and *The Island*. Less interesting were the two fairly free improvisations by the Wayne Shorter Quartet (with pianist Danilo Perez, John Patitucci and Brian Blade) and Shorter's lengthy commissioned piece for the Monterey Jazz Festival Wind Ensemble. As significant as Shorter is, this set came across as dull and meandering.

I saw many other artists in briefer segments. The great singer Cecile McLorin Salvant performed inventive versions of *The Trolley Song* and *I Didn't Know What Time It Was* that kept one guessing; pianist Aaron Diehl emulated a ticking clock on the latter. Young Cuban pianist Alfredo Rodriguez performed his energetic brand of modern Afro-Cuban Jazz including *Invasion Parade*. Veteran pianist Toshiko Akiyoshi (who mentioned being at Monterey back in 1972) was in fine form with her trio on *Long Yellow Road* and a three-song medley from *Porgy and Bess*. The Cameroon-born bassist-singer Richard Bona performed exuberant Cuban music with his septet. Davina & The Vagabonds, a band featuring singer-pianist Davina Sowers in a quintet that included trumpeter Zack Lozier and trombonist Stephen David Rogness, performed bluesy music

ranging from New Orleans jazz to jump music of the 1940s. Davina was a delight and Rogness' percussive playing sometimes recalled Kid Ory. The Guitarsonists matched together guitarists Chris Cain, Daniel Castro and 'Mighty' Mike Schermer in a blues shootout. Veteran pianist Larry Vuckovich paid tribute to Vince Guaraldi in the music and the leader's storytelling. A sextet called Bop Of The Bay featured excellent playing from trumpeter Brian Stock on *Ceora* and Freddie Hubbard's *Byrdlike*. Pianist Joey Alexander, who is 13, sounded like he was a superb 30-year old with his trio. He may not be an innovator yet but wait until he gets into high school! The masterful 75-year old pianist Stanley Cowell, who had the opportunity to play three sets with his trio, performed originals plus Richie Powell's *Time* and a fascinating version of *'Round Midnight* in which he purposely avoided directly stating the melody. Guitarist Pat Metheny led a new acoustic-oriented quartet with pianist Gwilym Simcock, bassist Linda Oh, drummer Antonio Sanchez, performing songs from the Pat Metheny Group days in the new context which made them sound fresh and new.

The Monterey Jazz Festival ended with organist Dr. Lonnie Smith who performed a typically rousing set with guitarist Jonathan Kreisberg and drummer Jonathan Blake. After they took

their final bows, Smith spontaneously picked up his electrified cane and played it percussively as if it were a drum set or an electric bass. When a malfunction caused the cane's electricity to cut off, Smith looked sad for a moment. But a quick-thinking Kreisberg rushed back to his guitar, created a funky riff, and the trio romped through an unexpected final jam. The audience was inspired to dance wildly, knowing that when they stopped, Monterey would be over for this year. They extended the festival for an extra 15 minutes.

If this review sounds a bit breathless, suffice it to say that it would take a few days for me to recover from the excitement. Anyone who happens to be on the West Coast of the U.S. in September owes it to themselves to attend the Monterey Jazz Festival.

**Scott Yanow has recently created CHOPS, a series of 50 Jazz Trivia Quizzes (20 questions apiece) totalling 1,000 multiple-choice and true/false questions. It covers jazz's entire history from King Oliver to 21st Century Jazz and includes a healthy dose of humour. CHOPS is available as a PDF file by sending \$25 via Pay Pal to scottyanowjazz@yahoo.com. It makes a great gift for your jazz-loving friends and especially yourself!**

# OUT AND ABOUT: ASCONA & SWANAGE

June/July 2016 by Peter Vacher

This is about two long-established festivals in two markedly different locations, each utterly distinctive, both presenting jazz in bucolic surroundings and attracting enthusiastic audiences, largely comprising what the late Sir Terry Wogan called those 'well stricken in years'. One is set to continue; the other programmed to cease.

Ascona is in Ticino, Switzerland's southern-most canton, quite near to Locarno, and is largely Italian-speaking. It is perched at the top end of Lake Maggiore, fringed by verdant mountains, the festival's various sound stages, each backing on to the water, situated along this pretty resort town's lake-front. In contrast, Swanage's pair of mighty marquees are placed on the grassy banks that overlook the sweep of its bay, this wide Dorset beach still a must for family bucket-and-spade holidays. It's entirely possible in both cases, if the weather permits, to just sit and contemplate the abiding joys of nature, with the music echoing in the background. In short, both locations are a delight.

Jazz Ascona, now in its 33rd year, is largely the creation of its long-time Artistic Director Nicolas Gilliet and has always had an affiliation with New Orleans, regularly attracting an array of artists from the Crescent City. Indeed, this year's eleven-day festival was subtitled The New Orleans Experience and had added a culinary element native to that city. Ours was a return visit following a nine-year hiatus and initially, at least, everything seemed to be the same. The town, something of a playground for the German Swiss and undeniably prosperous not to say expensive, was largely unchanged. The Press Office was still set up in an old college building and its team were, as ever, the epitome of benign care. But it was when we turned to the talent roster on offer that it was clear that Ascona had regressed.

On our last visit in 2007 the programme had included the Alvin Queen Quintet with Jesse Davis and Terrell Stafford, an all-star group from New York led by Joe Ascione, stride pianist Judy Carmichael, tenorman Red Holloway, British bassist Andy Cleyndert, trumpeter Byron

Stripling and an Italian big band that included one Rossano Sportiello on piano, plus a New Orleans contingent featuring star trumpeter Leroy Jones.

This time round the festival's artistic roster fell some way short of those dizzy heights. The only high-profile international performer on view during our six-day stay was German organist Barbara Dennerlein, who sits at her custom-built Hammond-style organ, legs flashing over the bass pedals as she builds the most compelling of blues excursions, backed by drummer Pius Baschnagel. Reverting to Crescent City familiars, the Queen of Ascona Lillian Boutté, now quite frail, also appeared but sang little, her niece Tanya, scarcely a match for her vocally, given the main responsibility, the band overseen by faithful reedman Thomas L'Étienne, Shannon Powell irresistible on drums. Guesting throughout the festival and appearing in any number of ad hoc situations there were three impressive trumpet soloists, all from New Orleans, the star among them Shamarr Allen, who uses a custom-made pocket trumpet, marching with the Tremé Brass Band, resident throughout the festival, while popping up boppishly with Lillian and trombonist Glenn David Andrews. GDA is one of the Trombone Shorty family and a one-time NO bad boy, whose instrumental style embraced gospel, funk and brassy shouts, as he vocalised in a kind of strangulated rasp that defied analysis but compelled attention. John Michael Bradford, presently studying at Berklee, but a stirring player who fronted the SMUM big band's fine Jay McShann tribute, also took on a variety of challenges, whether with Andrews, Boutté or the various Swiss bands. The last in this peripatetic brass threesome was Leon Brown, professionally known as Kid Chocolate, a slightly disconcerting moniker in this day and age. He'd always been called 'Chocolate' he told me, bandleader Bob French adding Kid in the New Orleans manner. He's an accomplished

player, fluent and composed, who knows how to present a song. He should tour here.

As is to be expected in a New Orleans context, it was drummers who excelled too, with Herlin Riley, the greatest of them all, working with flashy pianist Davell Crawford and a series of other keyboard artists in a special Teatro del Gallo concert, while Jason Marsalis enlivened Lars Edegran's rather tame Palm Court All Stars, and veteran bass-drummer Benny Jones Sr., the son of one-time Oscar Celestin drummer Chester Jones, kept his Tremé men in step, alluring dancer Trixie catching the eye. Interestingly, it was a drummer-less group, the New Orleans Jazz Vipers, with the accomplished Kevin Louis on cornet that also impressed, reprising all sort of obscure songs. Among the local bands, of which there were a number, mostly swing-oriented and pleasingly accomplished, it was Patrick Bianco's Cannonsoul, a tough hard-bop quintet that stood out, the leader fervent on alto, while pianist Luca Filastro accompanied Brown pleasingly.

Revisiting old haunts may be inadvisable, so they say. Maybe, but Ascona's location is peerless, the backdrop is beautiful, the welcome was wonderful, even if the quality of the musical fare was less compelling than that of earlier years. That said, enough punters paid their way to enable the festival to turn a profit but my impression is that the talent budget is now no longer what it once was. Next year's dates: 22 June to 1 July.

The situation with the Swanage festival is rather more dramatic. Artistic Director Fred Lindop, its mainstay from the outset, has declared next year's festival to be the last, citing an ageing organising committee and a desire to call a halt. What with the partial implosion of Brecon, the abandonment of Cleethorpes, with Appleby and Titley long gone, the removal of Swanage is a body blow. Lindop has made this relaxed, convivial event the supreme showcase for

[almost] all of British jazz. Traditional or modern, mainstream or edgy, vocal or instrumental, emerging or established, all had their place. With Marquee One resolutely grounded in trad, and Marquee Two linked to mainstream-modern with the spacious Methodist church catering to those somewhere in between, Swanage really did have something for everyone.

With simultaneous performances in several locations at once, it's never easy to know which way to go at Swanage. Choices, choices! Decision made, we opted for the Kofi-Barnes Aggregation on the opening Friday night, sensing something special. These two, Festival President Alan Barnes on alto and baritone, Tony Kofi on alto only, worked together brilliantly, typically on Kenny Barron's *Voyage*, fierce and never letting up, pianist John Turville, bassist Adam King and Clark Tracey on drums the best possible supporters. Two hours later, it was Ian Shaw at the piano, solo, surpassing himself as he riffed on life, love and creativity,

hilarious at one moment, vocalising soulfully at the other. He made me a convert.

A day later and rather early, it was the Mark Nightingale-Alistair White Quintet, with the invariably inventive John Horler on piano and Tracey again on drums. As Mark quipped, 'First time I've seen Clark this early in the morning.' Well, maybe so, but these fabulous trombonists made no concessions to the hour, hitting hard straight away with *It's Alright With Me*, combining wonderfully and clearly determined to swing their socks off. Best gig of the weekend. Thereafter it was good to observe Cleyndert as a bandleader, fronting a drumless quartet, reinventing Bach and Fauré, with Mark Edwards thoughtful on piano and quicksilver trumpeter Martin Shaw agile throughout. Pigfoot had fun with Puccini and Elvis, Tim Garland's soprano conveyed lyricism coupled with intensity and the Buck Clayton Legacy Band pleased the people with their well-wrought readings of lesser-known Ducal pieces.



Amy Roberts

Sunday felt cool, the sun absent, as Art Themen's quintet pitched up, on-form trumpeter Steve Fishwick alongside the tenor master, pianist Gareth Williams and the peerless Winston Clifford on drums the other standouts. This ahead of the rather cheery Amy Roberts-Richard Exall quintet, with pianist Craig Milverton, having fun with *Bernie's Tune* and Bostic numbers, their double-saxophone voicings momentarily reminiscent of the late-lamented Soprano Summit, although neither was playing the soprano. Oh well. They preceded the Skelton-Skinner Septet,

endurable and positive, Barnes on tenor, pianist Dave Newton guesting and Gordon Campbell erudite on trombone. Far less calm was Pete Long's climactic JATP Tribute, trumpets blazing, saxophones wailing, like cage fighters without the blood. And that was the 26th Swanage Jazz Festival done and dusted. The last-ever festival is due to run from 14-16 July 2017. A bumper send-off is promised. If you don't make it, you'll regret it. That's for sure.

Photographs by Peter Vacher

## SCARBOROUGH JAZZ FESTIVAL September 23-25

It is a regular source of irritation to me that, for various reasons, I so often have to miss the Scarborough Jazz Festival, one of my favourite events a mere 80 miles from my home. This year I managed to catch the last day and apparently the two earlier days were equally varied and excellent.

The reasons for Scarborough's success are many. For instance, the Spa is a superb venue and offers one of the English seaside's great vistas: Scarborough South Bay and Castle. Mainly, of course, it's Mike Gordon's shrewd programming, a canny mix of mainstream favourites, cutting edge and unknown or esoteric groups, all sensibly scheduled in 75 minute chunks.

Vula Viel was a revelation, a five-piece band from London led by a Yorkshire-born percussionist playing the music of Upper West Ghana. Bex Burch apparently studied the music for three years in West Ghana and plays the gyil which has something of the

sound of the marimba. With sax, keyboards and two drummers, Vula Viel produced an infectious rhythmic music that bounced the audience happily into a sunny English afternoon.

Returning, we were still in Africa, but the township music of Adam Glasser's South Africa and Beyond. An accomplished set combining South African influences with compositions by the likes of Cedar Walton featured a quartet with Glasser on piano and keyboards as well as harmonica. Things really took off with Glasser's tribute to the late Toots Thielemans, beginning with a delicate duo version of *Bluesette* for harmonica and the fine guitar of Rob Luft. The final two numbers then plugged in excitingly to the great traditions of township jazz: Kippie Moeketsi's *Scullery Department* and a thrilling version of a Dudu Pukwana number, possibly *Mra*. After the rather cerebral, intricately arranged ARQ, the Alison Rayner Quintet with Diane McLoughlin's incisive

soprano sax especially impressive, the evening session began with a solo set from Liane Carroll. An exuberant *It's Almost Like Being in Love*, high-tempo with ebullient scatting, put the audience in the palm of her hand as she chatted informally between numbers – she's one of those performers who can treat the Spa Grand Hall as her own fireside. She dropped the tempo briefly for a moving version of Tom Waits' *Take Me Home Silly Boy* and Joe Stilgoe's whimsical *Seaside* and filled the middle of the set with an 'Irish' medley, not very Irish on the whole, but starting with an attractive original about an Irish train journey.

The final set of the festival brought out the Brandon Allen Sextet with Nigel Hitchcock and Mark Nightingale, playing Allen's cleverly voiced arrangements of standards and jazz classics. Unlike most all-star groups, this wasn't a matter of passing round the solos through the whole band in every number. Ensemble passages were often extended, as were any

solos. Allen himself shone in a treatment of Stanley Turrentine's *Don't Mess with Mr T* which he shared with Ross Stanley on piano and Hammond organ. Round about the fourth number I was fretting that the superb Nigel Hitchcock had only had one solo, but the policy ultimately justified itself, not least in an exhilarating take on Charles Mingus' *Boogie Stop Shuffle*.

RON SIMPSON



Brandon Allen



Barbara Dennerlein

## USHAW DURHAM JAZZ FESTIVAL

## RUSSELL CORBETT reports on a new jazz festival in the North East.

The north east of England has a long history of hosting jazz festivals. Throughout the 1970s and into the eighties the Newcastle International Jazz Festival, funded by Arts Council grants and commercial sponsors, attracted world class performers. Gateshead Council promoted a small scale festival featuring British musicians and annual events were in the diary at Hexham in Northumberland and on Lindisfarne (known locally as Holy Island) off the coast of north Northumberland. For a short, glorious period a jazz fan's dream came true: the Newport Jazz Festival visited Middlesbrough. The biggest names in the history of the music took to the stage at Ayresome Park, Middlesbrough Football Club's long-since demolished stadium. Art Blakey, Ella Fitzgerald and Oscar Peterson were on a cast list that read like a who's who of the music.

Times change and in this new century other festivals dominate the landscape. Whitley Bay Jazz Festival continues well into its third decade, now renamed the Mike Durham Classic Jazz Party after its founder and the Gateshead International Jazz Festival has a growing reputation for programming contemporary artists from around the globe. The local aspect prospers in Darlington and Sunderland: the former proudly presenting the best of home grown talent working alongside established performers at the Darlington Jazz Festival, the latter focusing on the big band scene with something like thirty bands converging on

Wearside to compete for a coveted National Glass Centre commissioned trophy at the annual Great North Big Band Jazz Festival.

This is the background, the context, to the emergence of a new jazz festival in the region. The Ushaw Durham Jazz Festival made its bow over the August bank holiday weekend, staged amidst the splendour of Ushaw College. A former Catholic seminary situated two miles from Durham, the imposing buildings on a vast country estate made for a stunning location. Pianist, educator and promoter Paul Edis proposed to establish a jazz festival in Durham. A small group of jazz enthusiasts offered to help Edis make the event a reality, and after months of planning, the inaugural festival opened its doors to the jazz public.

The Northern Monkey Brass Band opened proceedings in true New Orleans' style. Band members marched into the magnificent Exhibition Hall playing the part of second liners, horns wailing, bass and snare drums moderating the beat. Trumpeter Graham Hardy led his eight piece band through a typically upbeat selection of popular tunes appreciated by the early evening audience. Ushaw's buildings – halls, dining rooms, refectory, imposing chapels – amazed first time visitors. The site afforded the opportunity to explore. People wandered the long, stone floor corridors. Artist in residence Dave Barden exhibited some of his work, much admired by visitors, in

corridors and rooms. One thoroughfare became 'Jazz Alley' for the duration; walls adorned by collectable, prized jazz album covers and an information point offering flyers, programmes and all manner of printed material.

Friday evening, the first of three days, welcomed Zoë Gilby. Tyneside resident, vocalist Gilby travels the world performing original songs and standards. Recent excursions have taken the singer across Europe to China in addition to a busy itinerary in Britain. This Ushaw date saw Gilby perform to a full house with her regular band; Mark Williams, guitar; Andy Champion, double bass and drummer Richard Brown. One left field tune chimed with artist Dave Barden. Tom Waits is a favourite with Gilby, so too the festival artist in residence - a painting of Mr Waits hung on the wall. Singer and painter engaged in animated interval conversation about their shared interest.

Early Saturday morning the Early Bird Band performed under the watchful eye of Paul Edis. The Early Birds are young emerging musicians, mentored over the last couple of years by Edis and have gained confidence from performance opportunities such as this festival slot. Alongside standards, band members are now composing their own material. A bright future seems assured. The Durham Alumni Big Band is comprised of first class, established musicians. The band's afternoon concert featured multi instrumentalist Al Wood, renowned musician and educator. To the delight of the audience, there was a treat in store with a surprise appearance by festival headliners Bruce Adams and Alan Barnes. They parked their cars, walked into the hall and joined the band. Jazz at its best!

For some reason jazz guitar somehow works at a festival. Two Irishmen – Mark Williams and Joel McCullough – met at Newcastle College at the turn of the century. The guitarists graduated, went their separate ways and only recently reunited. Their set proved to be one of

many highlights during the weekend. The recent loss of Louis Stewart was marked by the duo with a sensitive reading of *A Weaver of Dreams*. The event's showpiece occasion featured the aforementioned Bruce Adams and Alan Barnes. Playing to a near full house, the duo gave a brilliant display working in the company of the Paul Edis Trio. Barnes, on alto, baritone and clarinet, spoke warmly of Paul Edis, suggesting we, the audience are so lucky to have him based in the region. Similar praise was heaped upon Andy Champion, bass and Russ Morgan, drums. A late night jam session followed and, sure enough, Alan Barnes and Bruce Adams were ready to play some more.

Sunday's programme presented the contrasting sounds of Square One, the New Century Ragtime Orchestra and the Nigel Price Trio. A young quartet from Glasgow, Square One featured guitarist Joe Williamson returning to home ground. Recently making his bow in the Scottish National Jazz Orchestra, Williamson, from Darlington, opened a few ears at Ushaw with an accomplished performance together with his band mates. To describe the New Century Ragtime Orchestra as 'unique' is about right. Exponents of ragtime to early swing era developments, Dave Kerr's band never fails to impress. To close the inaugural Ushaw Durham Jazz Festival the jazz lounge was at capacity for an incendiary set by the Nigel Price Trio. Guitarist Price is midway through a mammoth British tour and this gig with regular partners Ross Stanley, Hammond and Matt Home, drums, almost literally set alight Ushaw College. First tune, the trio smoking, the fire alarm activated. Audience and band, initially oblivious, evacuated the building. A false alarm, the trio picked up where they left off at bar 32, or wherever they were, at breakneck pace!

Ushaw College proved to be a most successful festival venue. Audience numbers held up well and the indications are that the Ushaw Durham Jazz Festival will return next year.

Bruce Adams and Alan Barnes



Photo by John Marlor

## LADY SINGS THE BLUES - ON CD AND LIVE

SCOTT YANOW reviews *Laughing at Life* (Big Bear BEAR CD 55), the 2015 recording of the *Lady Sings the Blues* stage show, before RON SIMPSON re-visits it on stage at Buxton.

Back in 1990, *Lady Sings The Blues*, a show that pays tribute to Billie Holiday, was organized. At the time it starred singer Val Wiseman. 25 years later the production, which still stars Ms. Wiseman, was recorded live at the Birmingham Jazz & Blues Festival for *Laughing At Life*.

Tributes to jazz greats can be quite tricky, particularly when they utilize similar instrumentation as the original recordings. Should the artists do their best to copy the historic figures, or should they completely reinvent the music? Both of those extreme approaches have been utilized on other projects, but *Lady Sings The Blues* falls somewhere in between.

The 13 performances on *Laughing At Life* hint at Billie Holiday and her sidemen, but sometimes just barely. Val Wiseman often utilizes Lady Day's phrasing but her tone is different and lighter, and her own personality shines through. Trumpeter Digby Fairweather, the group's most spectacular soloist, does not try to play like Buck Clayton or Jonah Jones although

one can hear a bit of Roy Eldridge on *Fine And Mellow*. Trombonist Roy Williams and Julian Marc Stringle (tenor and clarinet) sound like themselves and pianist Brian Dee never copies Teddy Wilson. Bassist Len Skeat and drummer Eric Ford are fine in support. So while the instrumentalists often sound like a swing combo circa 1940, their playing is creative within the style rather than a duplication of the past. A search for Lester Young on this set would be completely in vain.

The CD begins with a rousing version of the title cut. Val Wiseman sounds exuberant, as do Fairweather and Williams. *That's Life I Guess*, a real obscurity from 1936, has some nice dixieish backing while the singer does a good job of emulating Holiday's placement of notes. Her rendition of *God Bless The Child*, a duet with Dee, is warm, restrained and quiet. *Miss Brown To You* is a fine showcase for Stringle's clarinet while *Good Morning Heartache* is tightly arranged like many of Holiday's 1940s recordings.

*How Could You* is one of only three songs (along with *Miss Brown To You* and *Lover Man*) from this concert that was also recorded in this production's previous 1990 recording. *How Could You* is a long-forgotten song from 1937 that deserved a better fate. *Comes Love*, one of two tunes on this set that Billie Holiday did not record until the 1950s, receives an energetic and joyful treatment.

It is strange to realize (as pointed out in Dave Gelly's excellent liner notes) that *You've Changed* was introduced back in 1941 by Dick Haymes with the Harry James Orchestra, 17 years before Billie Holiday finally recorded it. While Lady Day was performing it live as early as 1956, her recording of *You've Changed* was not only preceded by Haymes but Mary Osborne, Nat King Cole, Beryl Booker, tenor-saxophonist Bobby Dukoff, Buddy Rich, Julie Wilson, altoist Dick Johnson, trumpeter Mel Davis, pianist Al Lerner, and the Jackie Gleason Orchestra! Does anyone remember any of those versions?

Val Wiseman's takes *You've Changed* as a heartfelt duet with the tasteful pianist. *Ain't Nobody's Business*, which also has had famous version through the years by Bessie Smith and Jimmy Witherspoon, features the singer coming the closest on this CD to sounding like Holiday. After some uninhibited clarinet, *Lover Man* features Wiseman at her warmest with fine accompaniment by the rhythm section. *Now Baby Or Never* is taken faster than Holiday's rendition and is full of excitement. It probably would have served well as this CD's closer. *My Man* starts off conventionally before it finishes with a very rambunctious chorus by the ensemble. Then, in what sounds like an encore, the group does a reasonable recreation of the 1957 televised version of *Fine And Mellow*.

*Laughing At Life* does a fine job of mixing together some of Billie Holiday's hits with lesser-known material, featuring colorful and concise solos from the sidemen that work well with Val Wiseman's top-notch singing.

## LADY SINGS THE BLUES

## BUXTON OPERA HOUSE, AUGUST 28.

Some 27 years after the show was first put together and with over half the original participants still in place, *Lady Sings the Blues* with Val Wiseman still delights audiences, as witnessed by the enthusiastic – and pretty substantial – crowd at Buxton's Opera House. Things were much as Scott Yanow describes in the review above, with the exception that Alan Barnes returned on tenor sax and clarinet. Unavailable at Birmingham last summer when Julian Marc Stringle proved an excellent dep, Alan was in splendid form at Buxton, his tenor sax playing fined down to clear melodic lines with the cool authority of his

great predecessor Lester Young who was name-checked more than once in Val's introductions.

The programming is skilful, but never elaborate. Despite Val giving a sort of précis of Billie's life so the narrative inevitably becomes gloomier after the interval, the songs are well balanced throughout. *Good Morning Heartache* coming early, *What a Little Moonlight Can Do* cheering up the later stages, though inevitably *Fine and Mellow* has to be near the end, a recollection of the 1957 television *Sound of Jazz* that is the more moving for its restraint. Around the middle of each half, a double change of pace and mood sees the sextet let their hair down in a boisterous instrumental (Len Skeat and Eric Ford getting rare chances to shine in solos) followed by a soulful duet, Brian Dee

accompanying Val in a beautifully judged *God Bless the Child* and a version of *One for My Baby* refreshingly free of brashness.

Val Wiseman's interpretations – and her voice – retain their freshness, while her familiarity with the material enables her to burrow even more deeply into the emotional content of the songs. As for a couple of jolly 1930s songs of (shall we say?) limited emotional content, Val and the band make the most of the chance for a little light relief. Over the years it seems to me that Val's phrasing and inflections have moved a little closer to Billie's, but this sounds completely natural: there is no sense of a forced reproduction of the original.

Val's introductions constantly pay tribute to the band – and no wonder! Taut ensembles and

complementary solos – adventurous trumpet from Digby Fairweather, the seasoned trombone of Roy Williams – reflect their familiarity with, and enjoyment of, both the material and each other's playing.

R.S.



Val Wiseman



CHARLES  
MCPHERSON

### BEAUTIFUL!

*Xanadu* 906083 50.33

This is another in the newly re-constituted *Xanadu* series, a reissue (with an additional track not included on the original LP) of a 1975 session teaming altoist McPherson with pianist Duke Jordan, with Sam Jones on bass and drummer Leroy Williams. The booklet carries the original notes by Mark Gardner as well as Todd Panken's 2015 update and it's the latter's essay based on a recent conversation with McPherson which reveals that the altoist 'became preoccupied with Parker at age 14'. This is supported in his playing throughout this fine session, made when he was 36, the influence of Parker quite evident although filtered happily through McPherson's own mastery of the idiom, an added signal that Bird was best coming with the presence of one-time Parker pianist Jordan.

It's only fair to McPherson to point that he was no slavish imitator, rather that his tone bears comparison with Bird, although the fact that many of tracks are taken at ballad tempo, rather precludes any need for startling complexities or fireworks, even if *Lover* and *It Had To Be You* do get quite hectic treatment with McPherson's solos a model of fluent thought and execution.

This is just highly palatable boppish jazz, alto at the centre, the fund of ideas always pleasing, with Jordan's improvisations like a glimpse of clarity and logic. I liked *It Could Happen To You* best, Jordan's solo a quiet gem. Good

to have this back in the catalogue.

PETER VACHER

### CARO JOSEE

SUMMER'S EASE

*Skip Records SKP 9129-2 51.20*

Caro Josee goes back a long way. It would, also, be right to say that she goes her own way, too. From being voted the most promising pop singer in Germany at the age of 20 in 1978 she has chosen to take a totally wayward path away from pop music.

She is one of those, regrettably few, singers who have nurtured their own individuality. She is an adventurous lady so it is no surprise to hear her come up with an album of songs based on tango rhythms and very alluring they are.

She seems to have found a positive affinity to this style and she delivers in that slow, behind-the-beat phrasing that reminds me of Cesaria Evora.

She earns her jazz credentials on all the qualities embraced by jazz singers; phrasing, intonation, invention and flexibility but she adds to that a sassy approach which seems to suggest that there is no hurry; she will get there in the end. It is a seductively attractive approach.

Her guitarist, Patrick Pagels has written all twelve songs and these are substantial compositions, completely grasping to drama of the tango but adding an un-mistakenly personal touch. Both he and Martin Scheffler, the other guitarist on the set, contribute immaculate backing and strong

solos in the idiom. All in all, this is an addictive piece of work; an absolute one-off.

Here are the other words to describe this disc: idiosyncratic, refreshing, original, exciting, full blooded and very musical.

But don't take my word for it. Just get it or you will surely regret it.

JOHN MARTIN

### TUBBY HAYES

SPLIT KICK - LIVE IN SWEDEN

*Savage Solweig SS-004CD 60:27*

The release of a new Tubby Hayes' album is a welcome event. The Savage Solweig label is dedicated to issuing recordings yet to see the light of day. *Split Kick - Live in Sweden* is the fourth in a series, thus *Tubby Hayes Archive - Volume 04* is now available to fans, collectors, and it is to be hoped, a new generation which will discover a true great British jazz modernist. The source of the material is radio station tapes, thankfully saved from an all too familiar fate of being wiped and lost for ever. Hayes, not in the best of health, took the opportunity to work in Sweden during 1972, a matter of months before his untimely death. The sessions featured on the CD were recorded in Gothenberg and Stockholm. An authoritative essay written by Simon Spillett comes as a bonus.

The first LP includes an unusually slow version of *Dinah*. The second LP covers such quaint old tunes as *Trail of the Lonesome Pine* (remember Laurel & Hardy?) and *Three O'Clock in the Morning*. The third LP covers music from the film *Around the World in 80 Days*, which was not noted for its melodies, so the title-tune occurs three times! The final LP consists mainly of slowish standards.

The Gothenberg set hears Hayes playing tenor sax and flute with pianist Bengt Hallberg's Trio. Four tunes, including *Split Kick* and *I Thought About You*, reveal the sad truth that Hayes was an out breath young man, yet still playing so well. Two numbers comprise the later Stockholm date: *Someday My Prince Will Come* and *Trenton Place*. Hayes is heard playing flute, perhaps easier physically, but nonetheless, a great flautist, with the Staffan Abeleen Trio. The bassist on the session is Niels-Henning Orsted Pedersen. An example of working in exalted company, from a British or Danish perspective!

RUSSELL CORBETT

### GERALD WIGGINS

FOUR CLASSIC ALBUMS

*Avid AMSC 1191 2 CDs 140.25*

Reissued on Avid's bargain label, these four LPs (*The Gerald Wiggins Trio* and *Relax and Enjoy It* from 1956; *The Loveliness of You* and *Around the World in 80 Days* from 1957) are all by piano trios. They use such bassists as Eugene Wright and Joe Comfort, and drummers Bill Douglass and Jackie Mills. And they show that, although he played with such stars as Louis Armstrong and Benny Carter, Gerry Wiggins doesn't quite reach the category of great pianists. Yet this West Coast American was a skilful and resourceful player. He salts his solos with humour and the occasional cheeky quote. His style bears some resemblances to that of Erroll Garner. Not that he had Erroll's drive and extroversion, but he often employs vamps which resemble the Garner left hand. And he uses Erroll's method of building to a climax with a forcefully repeated riff. His playing also has some of the elegance of a Teddy Wilson.

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TONY AUGARDE

### FRANK BUTLER

THE STEPPER

*Xanadu Master Edition 906084 45.04*

Fans of Butler's work on those West Coast meets Hard-Bop classics with Curtis Counce, Hampton Hawes and others back in the 1950s will find this album something of a curate's egg. This is the drummer after his recovery from long-term drug addiction, and perhaps a little too eager to make up for lost time.

Jo Jones had once famously called

Butler - something of a protégé - 'the greatest drummer in the world', a heavy tag to live up, but if Butler had once learned anything from Jones example by 1977, when this set was taped, he had certainly forgotten the lesson of taste. The opening title track runs for twenty minutes, some seventeen of which are a drum solo. Drumnastics have their place of course, but as an invitation to explore the remainder of an album, Butler's over-long, tedious and, it has to be admitted, not especially inventive improvisation has the opposite effect.

As always, the drummer had surrounded himself with a fine band; tenorist Jack Montrose, another West Coast notable from back in the day, will be either a revelation or a disappointment to those who know his earlier work. Here, he has digested the patterns of the Coltrane era, and, although playing with an attractively vocal and fulsome sound, he leaves little impression. Pianist Dolo Coker is arguably the best thing on the record, contributing several clever themes and solo bop lines that spin straight ahead from Bud Powell's model, maybe a tad anachronistic by the late '70s but enjoyable nonetheless. More of its time is the awful bass sound the period production has given Monte Budwig, whose otherwise immaculate playing is marred by that dreadful DI buzzsaw effect.

So, altogether a rather sad return for Butler. If you have to sample a track, try *Easy Living*, a clear-eyed, no frills ballad solo by Montrose. Otherwise, not a keeper.

SIMON SPILLETT

### JACKIE DAVIS

FIVE CLASSIC ALBUMS

*Avid AMSC 1202 2CDs, 80:40/78:48*

In the area of miscellaneous jazz instruments, the acceptability of vibes can be initially attributed to Lionel Hampton. A virtual one-man ambassador for the harmonica was Toots Thielemans. For my taste, it was certainly Jimmy Smith who did it for electronic organ.

Although five years older, Jackie Davis started to be heard as an organ exponent during the same late 'fifties period as Jimmy Smith. What the five albums made between 1957 and 1962 here display is that to begin with Davis did not have the ingenuity and impact of Smith and his producers.

A '57 trio set is quite lightweight, and would be good as restaurant background music, with the exception of one nicely-building original which runs to 5:20, unlike the other 11 tracks, which are standards. Another dozen from '59, with percussion, has 'cha-cha' in its title, but are varied Latin rhythms. The same year he was ill-advised to record with a battery of nine trombones - the only word for it is tedious.

Some development is clear on a 1960 threesome, but the stand-out ten tracks came out in 1962 as *Big Beat Hammond*. Here, with Irving Ashby on guitar, Joe Comfort on bass and Wee Willie Morris on drums, Davis swings happily all the way, and is as inventive as Smith, who by then had achieved several hit albums.

LES TOMKINS

### TUBBY HAYES & PAUL GONSALVES

CHANGE OF SETTING

*Harkit HRKCD 8561 40.30*

As ever, it's Hayes biographer Simon Spillett's note that adds value here, as he documents the circumstances behind this 1965 recording, originally released on LP and now reissued for the first time on CD. It teams the co-principals with a stellar cast of US and UK 'names', with Ronnie Scott and Tony Coe, baritone-player Jackie Sharpe, pianist Terry Shannon and drummer Ronnie Stephenson in support, augmented by Ellingtonians John Lambe on bass and Ray Nance, who adds his trumpet and/or violin on selected numbers. The presence of the Ellington men arises from their presence here on tour.

That producer Sharpe should have sought eight highly varied originals for the session, each arranged by their respective



Tubby Hayes

### MARIA WELLS

FOR THE LOVE

*Arthur Music AMCD 101. 47.23*

Maria Wells is a comely blonde Swedish singer who, it seems, makes a good living travelling around Europe with her husband and accompanist, Robert and a vocal group named appropriately as The Vocalettes.

This disc marks her debut on record. She is backed by a big orchestra and the material is, almost entirely, written by her husband, so it's a family affair.

Whether this falls into the category of jazz is very debatable and it would be unfair to treat it as such.

The singer falls clearly into a cabaret genre and is one of the many competent and serviceable performers who make an honest living singing music which is superior to contemporary pop.

The music is mainly slow ballads and are a bit 'samey', apart from *I Can't Dance Without You*, an up-tempo number and an original by Robert, on which she seems to be having some fun.

Otherwise, this is an unremarkable effort; no great moments either in the performance or the compositions but nothing annoying. The playing time of just over 47 minutes is a little short especially as it includes two second takes.

PETER VACHER

She sometimes has trouble with her articulation in English and her screeching on the high notes leads me to think that the arrangements may not be in the most comfortable key for her.

With her looks and presence, I am sure that she will continue to make a good living in cabaret for years to come.

JOHN MARTIN

### PEGGY KING & THE ALL-STAR JAZZ TRIO

SONGS A LA KING

*Fresh Sound FSR-CD5503*  
61:58

Bit of a turnaround. I've reviewed various reissues of LPs from the 'fifties by previously-unheard singers. This is a 2015 new release by Peggy King, who, in her twenties, unknown to me, was apparently very active musically in the Hollywood area between 1952 and 1959. So I'm not able to relate what she did then to what she's doing now. All I can say is: she sounds pretty good.

Her return to performing came about in 2013 in Philadelphia when she heard the self-styled All-Star Jazz Trio, who are pianist Andy Khan, bassist Bruce Kaminsky and drummer Bruce Klauber. Most of the 17 top-quality songs I regard as 'overdone', in that they've been sung many times by many people. The one that turns out to have the best groove to it is the one given different treatment to the norm - a Latin take on Alec Wilder's *While We're Young*.

It is the actual arrangements of the material that give me mixed feelings. I have a personal antipathy to 'coming back on the bridge', otherwise termed 'the middle eight'. But Peggy does that in all but three instances. On the other hand, it is very nice when an artist is backed by piano only, and there are six excellent examples of this, giving Andy Khan chances to stretch out impressively. The CD's closing track is interesting by virtue of it supporting my thoughts about the benefit of singing to a live audience.

LES TOMKINS

### STEPS AHEAD

STEPPIN' OUT.

*Jazz line N77033 72:39*

*Steppin' Out* sees the return of one of the classic bands of the fusion era. Formed in 1979 by vibraphonist/composer Mike Mainieri and tenor saxophonist Michael Brecker, they were quickly joined by drummer Steve Gadd, bassist Eddie Gomez and pianist Don Grolnick. This is the first studio recording by a *Steps Ahead* alumni band for several years and features Mike Mainieri (vibraphone), Bill Evans (saxophones), Chuck Loeb (guitar), Tom Kennedy (bass) and Steve Smith (drums).

Joining the group on this album is the renowned WDR Big Band Cologne, led by arranger and conductor Michael Abene who adds a new dimension to the music by enhancing the structure of the original works; consider the subtle but effective changes to *Pools* and *Steppish* for just two examples. The musicianship is superb, Mainieri's vibes work is outstanding and saxophonist Bill Evans plays unbridled tenor throughout, only switching to soprano on *Beirut* to great effect. Also to be commended are the fine drumming of Steve Smith and the bass of Tom Kennedy, Abene's arrangements and the well-drilled musicianship of the WDR Big Band who in turn make this an outstanding big-band recording.

GREG MURPHY

### GRANT GREEN

THE LATIN BIT

*Essential Jazz Classics EJC*  
55695 72.50

Despite its title and the presence of some Latin-American percussionists, this early-sixties album does not consist entirely of Latin playing. On most tracks, guitarist Grant Green states the first and last choruses with Latin rhythms but goes into straight 4/4 swing tempo for his solos. In fact there is nothing at all Latinate about *Blues for Juanita*, which is just a straight-ahead blues. Nevertheless this is a very pleasant album, with Grant's clean-lined, bluesy picking easy to



Stan Getz, Oscar Pettiford  
and Jan Johansson

follow and enjoy. There are also some inventive solos from pianist Johnny Acea. Outstanding tracks are *Tico Tico* (taken at an unusually relaxed tempo), and Charlie Parker's *My Little Suede Shoes*, which has a built-in Latin beat.

Four extra tracks from the same era are added to the original seven from the LP. *Granada* and *Hey There* feature gutsy tenorist Ike Quebec and sparkling pianist Sonny Clark. *Senorita Eula* and *San Antonio Rose* bring back Johnny Acea and add soulful tenorman Don Wilkerson.

TONY AUGARDE

### FLORENCE JOELLE

LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL, IF YOU LET IT

*Zoltan Records ZOL009 33:10*

That French connection has produced several talented jazz ladies of late. Here is another would-be winner, but does she fill the bill? This short selection evidences a powerful delivery of seven of her own songs in English and three others in French. I'm not sure whether her vocal performances have enough jazz presence to them to warrant inclusion in this magazine. Also there are irritating elements that permeate much of the pop field - over-repetition and some incomprehensible lyrics.

The jazz content is pretty much supplied by her accompanying musicians. Guitarist Thierry

Courault takes consistently brilliant solos. Ian Marcus adds atmosphere on flutes and heat on clarinet. There is nice organ from Rory More on a couple of tracks, and good trombone by James Lawrence on one. Florence herself contributes some reasonable harmonica here and there. One of her originals particularly appeals to me, reminding me somewhat of a much-played Gillespie theme.

Overall, I think I'll reserve judgment on Ms Joelle until I hear her again, if that happens.

LESTOMKINS

### PETER ERSKINE TRIO

AS IT WAS

*ECM boxset 4 CDs*  
58:41/64:29/57:20/50:46

The sudden death of pianist John Taylor in 2015 had the effect of drawing attention to his work with the trio between 1993 and 1997 under the leadership of drummer Peter Erskine with bassist Palle Danielson, chronicled on four long-unavailable albums, (*You Never Know*, *Time Being*, *As It Is* and *Juni*) which are now reissued as four CDs as part of ECM's worthy Old and New Masters Series.

Integration is perhaps the key word in discussing this trio; whilst Erskine contributes subtle rhythms and Danielson runs heavy but nimble bass lines throughout, Taylor contributes piano lines that are rhapsodic yet

often abstract; an example is *Heart Game* (on *You Never Know*) which also contains a Bill Evans-esque outing on *Everything I Love*. The *Time Being* session contains the propulsive *Terraces* unusual in that all three musicians had a hand in its composition, together with the starkly-beautiful *If Only I Had Known*. The *As It Is* session includes Erskine's haunting *The Lady In The Lake* with some lyrical work from Taylor and the trio's take of William Walton's *Touch Her Soft Lips And Part* where their talent for lyricism comes to the fore. The final album *Juni* shows a subtle shift in approach, with a greater influence for abstraction, although *Twelve* combines freedom with hard swing to result in a track.

Yet the trio is always the sum of its parts, with each musician contributing equally to four outstanding recordings.

GREG MURPHY

### OSCAR PETTIFORD & JAN JOHANSSON FEATURING STAN GETZ

IN DENMARK 1959-1960

*Stunt STUCD 16022 75.31*

Beautifully presented in a fold-over digi-pack, with a detailed booklet packed with photos from this period in Danish jazz history, this is an elegantly compiled collection. It comprises seven different sessions, six of which feature Pettiford on bass and/or cello, these from the period when the ex-Ellington bassist was resident in Copenhagen, alongside Getz (who appears in a single quartet session with Johansson) and ex-Gillespie drummer Joe Harris.

Much of the opening session is devoted to OP's nimble solo playing on both of his instruments, with pianist Bent Axen also noteworthy. The three tracks with Getz again feature Pettiford as a soloist, the tenorist eventually surging in for the final chorus on OP's *La Verne Walk* before he carries *I Remember Clifford* in suitably elegiac fashion, perfect and heartfelt, and then takes Hawk's *Stuff* for a sprightly

turn, the ill-fated Johansson impressing with his boppish style. The pianist is featured extensively in the remaining sessions, usually with OP in tow, the vibist Louis Hjulmand fronting three of them. The curiosity is a one-off version of *Moanin'*, with vocalist Lee Gaines of the Deep River Boys, singing the time-honoured lyric in suitably lugubrious fashion, the 8-piece band nicely assertive. There's much here of real value, the supporting musicians clearly at home with the trends of the day and it must have been good to have giants of the music like Pettiford and Getz on hand to inspire and inform. Mind you, Johansson flying on a quartet version of *Dahoud* is about as good as it gets, Pettiford panting in pursuit.

PETER VACHER

### TRUDY KERR

THE HOUSE

*Jazzziti Records JITCD 1665*  
60:00

*The House* is Trudy Kerr's latest release on Jazzziti Records. A cover photograph shows a house in Brisbane, Australia, circa 1960. The house was Kerr's childhood home. Faded if not sepia tinted, the image is of a modest timber construction, its shuttered windows in defiance of a fierce southern hemisphere heat. It is a personal portrait of a young girl who lived there.

Kerr shares writing credits on six of thirteen tracks, other tunes are a selection of jazz and popular standards. The lyric is to the fore on this recording with instrumental solos taking second billing. Kerr is accompanied by Andrea Vicari on the opening and closing tracks - *The House* and *How Can I Miss You* - with bassist Geoff Gascoyne and reedsman Martin Hathaway contributing sparingly but effectively on other numbers. Pianist Vicari features prominently on Bill Evans' *Waltz for Debby*, to which Kerr adds lyrics. The personal is a constant on this 2016 CD, perhaps a summation of the vocalist's development spanning a back catalogue of a dozen or so recordings.



Trudy Kerr

Township jazz underpins the Vicari/Kerr composition *Pretty Little Dancer*; lilting, joyous and benefitting from the presence of Hathaway's alto saxophone. Township jazz, a waltz (Bill Evans), these are welcome additions to this lyric-centric recording. *Life in a Bubble*, a Gascoyne/Kerr composition, is a bass and voice piece containing the line 'Just you and I are in a bubble of our own'. An album of intimate jazz singing.

RUSSELL CORBETT

### OLD HAT JAZZ BAND

THE SPARROW

*No label or number 53.03*

The Old Hat Jazz Band is a small group of varying personnel, specialising in the jazz of the twenties and thirties. They seem to be based in London and were apparently formed by drummer Elizabeth Exell. The brief sleeve-note is not very informative, but it says that the band plays 'all

kinds of early jazz', including King Oliver and Duke Ellington. However, this album consists entirely of originals composed by band members, so you can't tell how skilled they are at interpreting early classics (unless you resort to YouTube). Two tracks without anything special about them are mysteriously listed as 'bonus tracks'. This is an increasingly unwelcome habit on albums these days, usually without reason or explanation.

Track 11 (*Eternal Sunshine*) wouldn't play on my hi-fi. *Biguine du Vieux Chapeau* uses the 'Spanish tinge' to advantage, while *Boatyard Blues* has some effective counterpoint between trumpet and reeds. *Feverish Blues* owes something to *St James Infirmary*. The music is certainly in an old style, although not so much Dixieland as mainstream. I guess that the musicians are semi-pros, as their playing is serviceable but doesn't always seem inspired.

TONY AUGARDE



Jimmy Witherspoon



Carla Bley, Steve Swallow and Andy Sheppard

### JIMMY WITHERSPOON

LIVE AT THE RENAISSANCE AND AT MONTEREY

Soul Jam Records 600877  
76:03

A problem with CD compilations of blues singers is the almost endless repetition of the twelve-bar blues. Nothing intrinsically wrong with that but, where its simple structure lends itself to seemingly limitless variations in the hands of jazz soloists and arrangers, the lone blues artist usually stays within narrow repetitious melodic limits, relying on nuance and emotional intensity to get his or her point across. The emphasis on unrequited love can also become a bit wearing after several tracks.

This CD goes a long way towards redeeming the situation. Witherspoon can shout with the best of them but he has good vocal control and diction, phrases well and can produce a crooning style, as on *Until The Real Thing Comes Along* – not perhaps Nat Cole but smooth and tender nonetheless. Not every track resorts to the twelve-bar sequence but they all relate to the blues in one form or another, from the emotive *How Long Blues* and *CC Rider* to rhythm and blues, verging on rock and roll: *Kansas City* and *Good Rocking Tonight*.

What I think will really lift this disc above the norm for jazz aficionados is the superb backing and solos from the likes of Gerry Mulligan, Ben Webster, Earl Hines, Jay McShann and many more. This is a true meeting of the two genres. It's polished, it swings and ain't it the blues?

HUGH LEDIGO

### JOHN COLTRANE QUARTET

THE COMPLETE 1963 COPENHAGEN CONCERT

Solar Records 4569964 2 CDs  
43:19/44:41

Previously available on several different imprints, Coltrane's 1963 Copenhagen concert came towards the end of a somewhat transitional year for the saxophonist. Indeed, over the preceding twelve months he'd taped not only the volcanic *Live at Birdland* but also a - to some out-of-character - meeting with vocalist Johnny Hartman. And, if the folklore is to be believed, this was a time of mouthpiece problems, a curse to any wind instrumentalist.

Perhaps some of these issues are apparent in his choosing to play virtually the entire second half on soprano, including – very rare in the Coltrane discography – the opening of *Naima*, which he quickly hands to McCoy Tyner. Some listeners may argue that with *Mr. P.C.*, *Impressions* and *My Favourite Things* in the playlist this set represents 'more of the same' yet, as with all Coltrane's live dates, there are many moments of genuine innovation. He continues to mine fresh ideas from *Things* and on the tenor solo that concludes *Naima*, vocalised, full of leaps between registers and building complexity, you can sense the beginnings of the lyricism-meets-the new thing attitude that was to characterise his work in the next two years, familiar from albums like *Crescent* and *A Love Supreme*.

As such, this concert is a valuable snap-shot of Trane in progress from one point to somewhere over the horizon. It's just a shame that Solar have opted again for

their by-now-trademark of cut-and-paste liner notes. The music matters most, of course, so go buy!

SIMON SPILLETT

### CARLA BLEY/ANDY SHEPPARD/STEVE SWALLOW

ANDANGO EL TIEMPO

ECM2487 47:21

As Carla Bley enters her ninth decade, she continues to come up with quirky, absorbing music and for some time now, she has been concentrating on a trio format with long-time colleagues Andy Sheppard (tenor/soprano saxophones) and Steve Swallow (bass). Bley's laser-like piano, so sharp and clear, is well complemented by Swallow's electric bass (custom built with an extended neck) ranging from meaty deep sounds to guitar-like passages and Sheppard's broody tenor saxophone and gentle soprano.

The programme opens with *Andando el Tiempo*, which Bley describes as representing 'the stages of recovery from addiction'; the three movements relate to different stages of the recovery process. Bley's piano work is particularly intense on *Potacion de Guaya* with some duetting with Swallow-the range of tones the bassist produces is



Steve Lacy

remarkable whilst Sheppard is expressive. *Saints Alive* is intended by Bley to convey the swapping of gossip in the cool of the evening, with down-home piano and Sheppard particularly notable on soprano. *Naked Bridges/Diving Brides* was intended as a wedding present to Sheppard and his new bride, the title referring to a poem written by Paul Haynes; Bley is quick to acknowledge the influence of Felix Mendelssohn during a brief passage mid-way.

It's credit indeed to Bley for continuing compositional abilities, and to long-time associates Swallow and Sheppard for their continuing fresh approach to Bley's still original approach.

GREG MURPHY

### LOUIS ARMSTRONG

THE COMPLETE LOUIS ARMSTRONG RADIO DAYS 1941-1944

Frémeaux & Associés FA1360  
3 CDs 72:42/75:46/76:08

These discs cover a large chunk of The Second World War, coincidentally covering the period when the AFM banned recording. So most of this music is from radio airchecks – especially from the American Armed Forces Radio Service.

Louis fronted a big band throughout this period and there

are only two numbers here that put the great man in a small group setting.

For American fans above a certain age the result must be a happy nostalgia trip and, for the rest of us, it perhaps fills a large hole in the Satchmo saga.

The musicianship is excellent, delivering the 'forties Swing style with precision – biting brass and saxes with their matched vibratos, sounding at times almost Millerish. The arrangements are competent and sometimes exciting but, if you compare them to Ellington's or Herman's output in the same era, Louis' scoring is a bit one-dimensional – as if every number is fitted to the same formula.

Louis' own performance is immaculate, warm rounded tone, majestic trademark phrases, still a force to be reckoned with, even if his truly creative period in the twenties and thirties has passed. His irrepressible vocal renderings are amusing, including his own brand of scat. The material, however, is essentially morale-raising entertainment; not too many jazz standards (though many good songs) and a fair smattering of trivia – *You Can't Get Stuff In Your Cuff* for example, and *Cash For Your Trash*.

It's good but not, I think, classic Louis.

HUGH LEDIGO

### STEVE LACY

FOUR CLASSIC ALBUMS

Avid AMSC 1187 2 CDs  
70.44/70:41

Admittedly, I've been a mite dubious about Avid's reissue policy of late but here is a release that ticks all the boxes, assembling material that isn't currently widely available elsewhere. In fact, as well as making discographical sense, its contents trace Steve Lacy's journey from novelty instrumentalist (Ira Gitler's notes to his debut *Soprano Sax* catch the context superbly) to challenging improviser in his own right. They also call for something of a revision about the saxophonist's place in the grand

### MAYNARD – 10 YEARS ON!

RON SIMPSON enlists BRUCE ADAMS' guidance on the importance of Maynard Ferguson.

Just over 10 years ago, on August 23, 2006, the great Canadian trumpeter Maynard Ferguson died. Almost exactly 10 years to the day later, on August 26 this year, the long awaited third volume of *Maynard Ferguson: The Lost Tapes* was issued on Sleepy Night Records (SNR 004CD). The first two volumes appeared in 2007 and 2008 and these are from the same source and vividly re-create the impression made by the Ferguson big band in the 1970s.

Maynard Ferguson's career followed a somewhat eccentric path. Moving down to the United States in the 1940s, he started with various big bands, notably that of Stan Kenton, then led the Birdland Dream Band at the world-famous club. However, by the late 1960s, after a spell in India, he found himself in England. Somewhat improbably, he formed a big band in Manchester that achieved international fame for playing jazz-rock and striking arrangements of popular songs: an electrifying version of *Living in the Past* is one of the highlights of *The Lost Tapes Volume 3* and there is a mightily impressive and somewhat exhausting medley of numbers from the rock opera *Tommy*. Gradually the original members of Ferguson's British band were replaced and that phase of his career ended. In later years his most acclaimed band, Big Bop Nouveau, was rather smaller and with less pop/rock influence.

So where were the tapes and how were they lost? Ernie Garside helped to put the band together, played in the trumpet section and became Ferguson's manager. Many old tapes, in varying stages of preservation, lay in a chest in his house. The new CD is the result of his third raid on those tapes, more hidden than lost. It consists of rehearsal performances, live recordings and unissued studio tracks, in different places over a number of years, cunningly arranged to replicate a Ferguson concert, from the spectacular opening cadenza to the high-wire operatics of his regular closer, *Pagliacci*. It's good to come across stalwarts of the North West jazz scene such as Brian Smith and Gary Cox, but the main focus is Maynard himself.

Outstanding British trumpeter Bruce Adams is in no doubt about the importance of Maynard Ferguson's outstanding early work with the Kenton orchestra and his continuing influence today:

'When I was young Maynard was a massive influence on me. He shattered the glass ceiling of what people believed was possible on the trumpet. And even today, when I take a trumpet workshop, the trumpeters the young players relate to most are Maynard Ferguson, Arturo Sandoval and Wynton Marsalis.'

Bruce points out that some of Maynard's work from the British band onwards divides opinion, but that he also inspires devotion across the generations. With *The Lost Tapes Vol. 3* it's easy to hear what the Ferguson legend is built on. Not only does he play higher than anyone else, but he spends longer up there: it's not just a matter of hitting a high note, he builds his solos in the stratosphere. Then there is the energy of the band. Solowise the saxes have most to say, but the trumpet section is full of mini-Maynards – listen to the high-note trio on *Three More Foxes*. And tracks such as *Take the 'A' Train* show the band to be well at home in the more conventional jazz repertoire.

As well as the quality of the music, a CD of 'lost' recordings from 40-odd years ago is bound to have nostalgic appeal. Producers Ken Masters and Gary Gillies write, 'we hope you'll be transported back to a time of musical magic and power' – and, for Maynard's legions of devotees, that will surely be the case.

Maynard Ferguson





scheme of things. Long thought of as a maverick, and perhaps a shade separate from others of his generational peer group, actually Lacy touched many jazz bases: he helped, for example, to pique John Coltrane's interest in the soprano; he was the first musician to make a serious album length study of Thelonious Monk, as heard in *Reflections*, itself a foretaste of the post-Marsalis fashion for tradition checking 'projects.' And his eclecticism was such that he saw equal value in things old and new: on *The Straight Horn of Steve Lacy* he covers both Monk and former boss Cecil Taylor; on *Evidence*, in a distinctly Ornette-like pianoless partnership with Don Cherry, he digs out Ellington's *The Mystery Song*, an especially recherché choice dating to 1932.

Throughout, Lacy plays superbly, sounding like nobody but himself but giving further clues to those who've taken something from his approach, particularly on *Evidence* which fitfully brings to mind the work of early '90s Branford Marsalis.

This music also prompts an unlikely connection: realising the stylistic thread that connected Ellington and Monk, and how changes-obsessed 'modernism' could take a few lessons from those two melodic masters, Lacy was mirroring exactly Stan Tracey's epiphany here in the UK. Would that those two had recorded together.

A great reissue then, one which may make a new audience sit up and pay attention to a true jazz individual. Very recommended.

SIMON SPILLET

**GEORGIE AULD**

**FOUR CLASSIC ALBUMS**

Avid Jazz AMSC 1192 2CDs  
68:09/76:13

In his early to mid-thirties when these tracks were laid down in 1955/59, Auld had already worked on tenor with Berigan, Shaw and Goodman as well as fronting his own band. His jazz, drawn from that era was essentially a swing style but, like his contemporary Zoot Sims, a full-toned delivery and agility in negotiating complex chord changes allowed him to cross into the flowering bop territory without compromise.

The first half of CD1 has the tenor player fronting a superb big band. There is precision and energy here – a sort of cross between Kenton and Herman – and the constantly shifting tone colours and changing keys plus some clever dovetailing of Auld's contributions keep the listener on his toes.

The remainder of this first disc sets the saxophonist in a mist of sweeping strings. Like the preceding big band set, the tunes all come from the great American song book and the result makes for pleasant listening.

Much the same may be said of the first half of CD2. Surrounded this time by the mellifluous voices of the Mello Larks, Auld poaches the classical repertoire with suitably added lyrics.

Finally, the saxophonist leads a sextet of beboppers, improbably, in a set of Benny Goodman

warhorses. Great solos from Auld, Don Fagerquist on trumpet, pianist Lou Levy, guitarist Howard Roberts and Larry Bunker on vibes fit surprisingly well with the neat Goodman-esque arrangements. I think this is the tenor-man in his natural habitat.

All in all a highly entertaining compilation – even if it's not all jazz.

HUGH LEDIGO

**CATE CODY**

I HEAR MUSIC

JazzCats Records JCR003 58.36

Miss Cody is new to me but she has recruited stellar support in Dave Newton, Dave Green and Steve Brown, with Trevor Whiting on reeds for this 'crowd-funded' recording which I take to be her debut disc. She has also elected to focus on standards exclusively – no originals or obscurities. Her voice is soft, a touch understated, and she carries each piece well, wistful and never strident, lilting on up-tempo things, momentarily

recalling Eartha Kitt on a very swingy version of *Let's Do It*, her brief note praising her 'dream band' and the chance to record with 'the UK's finest jazz pianist'. Whiting is not bad either, a recent hearing in an entirely different context convincing me that his all-round talents, whether on alto, soprano or clarinet, deserve greater recognition. There's a nice exchange between Newton and Whiting on clarinet, on *It Could Happen To You* that typifies the quality of the music throughout the CD, Green pushing hard and Brown on the money. Newton writes of her 'beguiling simplicity' on her website and that's about it. Each of these thirteen songs is distinguished by a pleasing representation of the melody, with limited deviation, and some very classy participation by her accompanists. Nothing startling or ground-breaking vocally: hard to go wrong in this kind of company or with this quality of material.

PETER VACHER



# RON SIMPSON'S ROUND-UP OF RECENT CDS

What's the best way to package a bunch of reissues? On the first CD for his Ena label, **PLAY IT AGAIN, SAM** (ENACD1: 78.08) Gerald Mahlowe hits on a novel approach and carries it through with imagination and meticulous care – and the music, often operating on the borders of Jazzland, is all pretty good. Imagine an evening at Rick's Cafe, with Sam's place at the piano taken by some fine players (Ellis Larkins a particular favourite) and snatches of dialogue from the original film. Though all tracks feature piano, most are vocals, with tracks by Miles Davis and Stan Getz the only ones to spotlight horns. Frank Sinatra's nonchalantly world-weary *Why Can't You Behave?* and Billie Holiday's smoky *These Foolish Things* (Oscar Peterson in Sam's chair) are among highlights, neglected talents Helen Carr and Hugh Shannon do the right thing by two great songs, *Moments Like This* and *True Blue Lou*, and Dooley Wilson gets to round things off with *As Time Goes By*. Mahlowe's detailed notes on each track are a joy to read. Avid, of course, takes the opposite course to Mahlowe: never mind theming or smart liner notes, get as much good music out there as you can with minimal fuss – and in **THREE CLASSIC ALBUMS PLUS** (AMSC 1215: 2 CDs, 61.03/73.37) by **Hank Mobley** the music is more than good. This is 1956-vintage hard bop at its best, four albums recorded by Rudy van Gelder in the same year – one, *The Jazz Message*, had only one side of Mobley. The tenor saxist had a persuasive way with a ballad as well as a powerful edge to his playing on bop numbers and here he is matched with totally compatible musicians on a series of albums all (rather unimaginatively) titled *Message* in some form or other. The superb Donald Byrd is a regular on trumpet (or replaced by Kenny Dorham or Lee Morgan), Art Taylor and Kenny Clarke share drumming duties, and the results are all you would expect. The Avid method is a great way of making a whole lot of good music available at a reasonable price, but not all their CDs are as coherent as the Mobley. For

instance, **FOUR CLASSIC ALBUMS** (AMSC 1214: 2 CDs, 60.43/61.58) by the great Chicago blues singer/guitarist/harmonica player **Jimmy Reed** covers recordings from 1953 to 1962. It's easy to see how Reed came to be such an influence on rock music, perhaps rather more surprising that he had so many hit records in the 1950s. The first two albums show Reed in fine form with his regular band on most tracks (Eddie Taylor, Lefty Bates and Earl Phillips), but production is pretty perfunctory: just past two minutes most tracks simply fade out. Later albums find Reed's voice sounding rougher, but still as powerful, and the producer leaves in studio dialogue on many tracks, showing 'Jimmy Reed compos(ing) original songs at the spur of the moment' – so that's how blues works!

**Joey Alexander** is a true prodigy. When he recorded **COUNTDOWN** (Motema Music 234279: 63.56) in January this year, the Indonesian-born, New York-based pianist was 12 years old and already had one Grammy-nominated album behind him. No wonder the likes of Wynton Marsalis and Herbie Hancock rave over his playing. The virtuosity is there, but it's combined with an astonishing maturity of ideas, Charles Chaplin's *Smile*, for example, subtly melodic. Alexander's playing is often surprisingly muscular and he interacts well with bass and drums. Three of the tracks are pleasing originals and the trio is joined by Chris Potter's soprano sax for a challenging version of Hancock's *Maiden Voyage*. I am familiar with the work of Luxembourg saxophone quartet **Saxitude** from their appearances at the Birmingham festival – they are a great festival band – and wondered how they would come across on CD without their trademark perambulations. In fact **FOUR BROTHERS** (own label – www.saxitude.com: 42.35) does justice to their pleasingly idiosyncratic and unfailingly musicianly style of jazz. Tenor saxist Robi Arend does the smart arrangements for two altos, tenor and baritone, with built-in rhythmic patterns, though

drummer Nicolas Fox joins them here. Arend also supplies two originals, one of them, *Newstime*, being one of the more striking tracks on the album. *I Shot the Sheriff* is a fine start, with wailing alto and chunky underpinning from baritone, the title track sees them operating more as an orthodox sax section, before they move on to tracks from the likes of Stevie Wonder, Michael Jackson and Pharrell Williams. **TELLING JOKES** (ASCCD 165: 43.35) is a difficult album to assess. **Tina May** manages to negotiate some challenging vocal lines and wring out the emotion from some intense songs with aplomb and style, the **Steve Plews Trio** accompanies with unflinching discernment, but it's the concept of the album I find unwelcoming. Steve Plews songs 'chart a bitter sweet romance through the seasons....a panoramic analysis of the psychosis that is love.' The overwhelming mood is of melancholy, but now and again Tina gets a quality standard to savour, all seasonally related except for a swinging O'Day-ish take on *Am I Blue?* which began as a soundcheck for vocal, bass and drums! The most opulent new release is **LIVE AT THE 4 QUEENS** (Resonance HCD 2015: 52.16), a previously unissued live performance from **Shirley Horn** in 1988. The 56-page booklet has reminiscences and assessments from any number of people and it all

amounts to what producer Zev Feldman calls 'the ultimate album package'. And the music doesn't let down the presentation. The sound is excellent for a live recording and Shirley Horn at her peak was a distinctive stylist in complete control of her material. Sheila Jordan says, 'Shirley sings these Brazilian tunes the way they should be sung,' and indeed her light and flexible treatment of *The Boy from Ipanema* is a revelation. But her piano playing impresses just as much as her singing. *Isn't it Romantic?*, for instance, harmonically and melodically inventive – and always swinging.

Rough Guides' comprehensive list of World Music CDs has been going for over 20 years, initially often simply the music of a country, now usually more specifically targeted on a style or even a single artist. Packaging is simple and information limited, but the price is reasonable and the selections enterprising. On the subject of **ETHIOPIAN JAZZ** (RGNET 1350CD: 54.42) I claim no expertise, but it is a fascinating album. Veteran percussionist Mulatu Astatke's 2013 recording, *Gamo*, kicks things off and it is tempting to think that the infectious rhythms – percussion, guitar, horns and voices – are going to be the norm for the album. To an extent this is true, but there are surprises, such as tenor saxist Getatchew Mekoria (who died



Hank Mobley

this year) combining with Dutch punk band The Ex is the exotically compelling *Ambassel*. **BLUES WOMEN** (RGNET 1352CD: 76.19) might seem to cover more familiar ground – and so it does to some extent – but along with Bessie

Smith, Ma Rainey, Ida Cox and the rest there are plenty of obscure singers and the generous allowance of 25 songs covers country blues as well as classic, plus a touch of the medicine show in tracks such as *Cocaine Habit Blues* by Hattie Hart and

the Memphis Jug Band, tidied up years later by Lonnie Donegan as *Have A Drink on Me*. The time span goes from Mamie Smith's ground-breaking *Crazy Blues* in 1920 to Lucille Bogan's infamous *Shave 'em Dry*. Information is limited, the only personnel

listings a few famous names: Louis Armstrong with Chippie Hill, Fats Waller with Sara Martin, Blind Willie McTell with his wife Kate, etc.

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*You When You're Down and Out*, gets a spirited make-over. The material ranges from Willard Robison to Jacques Brel (a wonderfully intense *Ne Me Quitte Pas*) and the accompaniments, from Nina's piano to choirs and string orchestras, are equally varied.

The 85-year-old Horace Parlan is now blind and paralysed, but there is something very life-affirming about *My Scandinavian Blues*. For a start the whole project speaks of the high regard and affection in which he is held in Denmark, his home for 40-odd years; secondly, despite his own problems, he financed and arranged these sessions to raise money for young musicians. A quartet (the excellent tenor saxist Tomas Franck, the fine pianist Thomas Clausen, Parlan's long-time bass partner Jimmi Roger Pedersen and one American, in-demand drummer Adam Nussbaum) plays Parlan compositions dating from 1960 to 1999. To add to this moving and musically satisfying tribute Volker Schowerling has created six short films, each related to one of the numbers of the CD, cleverly cutting between the musicians in the studio and the indomitable Parlan being wheeled by the sea shore or an impression of his arrival in Denmark.

## BOX SETS AND PACKAGES...

### LOUIS ARMSTRONG

#### COMPLETE HOT FIVE AND HOT SEVEN

*Essential Jazz Classics EJC 55690*: 4 CDs, 78.16/77.19/76.23/78.22

#### JAZZ AT THE PHILHARMONIC 1958-1960

#### LIVE IN PARIS

*Fremeaux & Associes FA 5632*: 3 CDs, 71.25/77.21/77.11

#### WHAT HAPPENED, MISS SIMONE?

*Eagle Vision/Universal Music Group EAGDV064*: DVD 116.00/CD 58.37

#### US 4

#### MY SCANDINAVIAN BLUES: A TRIBUTE TO HORACE PARLAN

*Stunt Records STUCD 16012*: 64.57 + DVD

Never has the term 'Essential Jazz Classics' been more appropriate than on the Armstrong box set. The only possible excuse for not buying this is owning at least 80% of the tracks already. Apart from enjoying a profusion of wonderful classic tracks (*Heebie Jeebies*, *Cornet Chop Suey*, *Savoy Blues*, *Potato Head Blues* and the rest) it's possible to listen to jazz history in the making, with the emergence of the virtuoso soloist. Then, as we move to 1928, the presence of Earl Hines brings the innovative duo recording of *Weather Bird* as well as the magnificent *West End Blues* by a now six-strong Hot Five. The box set's title is misleading, but in

a very welcome way. Not only is there a full set of Hot Five and Seven, but many of Louis' other recordings from 1925 to 1929. The singers he accompanies vary in standard, but there is an early showing of the fine big band Luis Russell put together for him: *Mahogany Hall Stomp* and *I Can't Give You Anything but Love*, beautifully relaxed and forward-looking. Add in the remarkable *Knockin' a Jug*, with great work from Jack Teagarden and Eddie Lang, and a fascinating glimpse of Louis with the regular employer Erskine Tate, plus a first-class 24-page booklet with terrific photographs, and this is indeed essential.

Jazz at the Philharmonic in its day also played a considerable part in changing the jazz landscape, putting together star performers in different styles and of different periods in exciting informal settings. Sadly JATP has often been looked down on as the home of screaming trumpets and honking tenors engaged in duels to the death. The Fremeaux boxed set, covering several concerts over a two year period at the Salle Pleyel and Olympia, tells a different story. Only the first CD is anything like the JATP of popular prejudice, with a frantic *Indiana* closer, with Roy Eldridge hitting the high notes, Art Davis doing a tongue-in-cheek bass solo and Jo Jones soloing at length. But there's

some lovely music from two concerts involving the likes of Sonny Stitt, Coleman Hawkins, Benny Carter and Don Byas – and 8 of 12 tracks are solo ballads, beautifully chosen songs, too. As for the remaining CDs, Dizzy Gillespie stirs things up with J.J. Johnson and Stan Getz, but the rest is organised groups: Shelly Manne and his Men, the Stan Getz Quartet and the Dizzy Gillespie Quintet playing Lalo Schiffrin's *Gillespiana* suite.

The Nina Simone package backs up the award-winning documentary film with a CD that fully reveals the range of her talents (except, of course, the classical piano skills of young Eunice Wayman!). Liz Garbus' film, released early in 2015, scooped a whole string of nominations and awards and it's not hard to see why. It's a comprehensive study of Nina Simone, with plenty of attitude, some great concert footage and archive material to go with the usual talking heads. The accompanying CD, compiled by Richard Havers, is frustratingly light on recording information, but makes an imaginative selection of the best of Simone. *My Baby Just Cares for Me* is there, of course, together with the electrifying *I Put a Spell on You*. Her version of *Strange Fruit* has a little too much broken-voiced emotion for my taste, but the other jazz classic, *Nobody Knows*



Louis Armstrong

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