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JIM DOUGLAS (back, right) relaxing with the Alex Welsh Band. Tributes are paid to Jim by JOHN PETERS and VAL WISEMAN on pages 12 and 13.

Photo by
Jim Simpson

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UPFRONT

Jazz thrives on anniversaries and one of the greatest came along in November 2025. This was the centenary of the first recording by Louis Armstrong's Hot Five. Louis, Kid Ory, Johnny Dodds, Lil Hardin and Johnny St. Cyr assembled in the Okeh Studios to record *Yes, I'm in the Barrel, My Heart and Gut Bucket Blues* – and, on that day, aided by improved recording techniques, they changed the history of jazz.

We always hear about how Louis took a music of collective improvisation and became the first great jazz soloist, but that's a pretty meagre account of the magic of Armstrong. On pages 16 and 17 four current trumpeters attempt to define what it is that takes the music of the Hot Five (and, indeed, everything else Louis Armstrong did) to a different plane from other jazzers.

As for the personality of the man, look at the photograph on page 17 of Louis with a young Enrico Tomasso. Astonished by Rico's playing of *Basin Street Blues*, Louis took the seven-year-old under his wing for the whole of his residency at Batley Variety Club. No wonder Rico presented a centenary tribute to the Hot Five at the Mike Durham International Jazz Party this year!

BUXTON SHOCK

The resignation of Neil Hughes from the administration of Buxton International Festival came as such a surprise that three months later his photograph is still there, beaming from the Festival website. If it came as a shock to Buxtonites, it registered still more acutely with the jazz-going public. He had rapidly set up a system that worked from the word go: a weekend (Jazz Weekender – the first weekend of the Festival) with something like a dozen events, mainly in the Palace Hotel, followed by maybe another eight or so, mainly in the Pavilion Arts Centre, scattered through the Festival. In these he was increasingly trying to stretch the concept of jazz, as for instance this year Clare Teal and Denny Ilett performing arrangements by Ian Bateman of the songs of Doris Day and Frank Sinatra with a contingent of the Opera North Orchestra. It

may not be strictly jazz, but it made for an excellent evening.

Don't run away with the idea that his programming was populist as such. It covered a range from populist to challenging, with a fair amount settled happily in the middle. This year the Dean Stockdale tribute to Oscar Peterson's 100th included Alan Barnes and Mark Armstrong, plus a string quartet – innovative rather than populist. However, his biggest coup came in 2023 when he booked Wynton Marsalis with a group of outstanding young British players under the watchful eye of Alan Barnes.

He had only four festivals to work on it, but Neil displayed the same awareness of what brings people in while maintaining standards that he had shown at the Cinnamon Club in Altrincham

(from 2003) and in a brief spell, ended by Covid and unavailability of venues, at Southport, building on Geoff Matthews' foundations, but tweaking it to bring in, for instance, a dinner cabaret. (There was still the regular concert for those outfaced by the thought!)

What does he do now? Rumours suggest that he is doing a spot of promoting already, but his main intention is to write: his novel, *The Old Familiar Places*, written under the pseudonym Sam Emony, was a considerable success and hints at more to come.

However, the big mystery remains: how did such a square peg, firmly at home in a square hole, come to fall out after a mere four years? Relations with Festival Director Michael Williams appeared good and Neil had increased the status of jazz at the Festival to

a remarkable degree. There has been no comment from Neil or the Festival, but there is one very important final question. What form will jazz take at Buxton in the future? We know that Wesley Stephenson has been appointed to take charge of jazz, but not what changes he will introduce.



Wynton Marsalis

LIVERPOOL JAZZ FESTIVAL

Liverpool Jazz Festival, well established since 2013, takes place from February 26 to March 1 at the Capstone Theatre on Liverpool Hope University's City Centre campus. There are fringe events in various parts of the city, but the main focus is on six high quality events at the Capstone. Tim Garland and Geoffrey Keezer kick things off on Thursday evening, followed by David Helbrook and Julia Hofer the following night. Saturday and Sunday feature two concerts a day: Zoe Rahman and Arun Ghosh and Robert Mitchell's

Little Black Book (Saturday) and an exciting finale on Sunday, with Martin Taylor at lunch-time and the highly individual saxophonist Marius Neset with his quartet in the evening.

www.capstone.hope.ac.uk/jazzfestival

NEW YEAR AT WATERMILL

Dorking's Watermill Jazz at Betchworth Park Golf Club suspends business in December, but resumes in January with a pair of appetising concerts: the Scott Hamilton Quartet (January 13) and Elaine Delmar (20). Following on from these are Bryan Corbett's Instrumental Groove Unit (Jan. 27), Emma



Martin Taylor

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Smith (February 3) and Gwilym Simcock and Emma Rawicz (10). www.watermilljazz.co.uk

RONNIE SCOTT'S

Ronnie Scott's has many two-night appearances in December: Giacomo Smith's Big Band with Ellington's Nutcracker Suite (4 and 6), Joe Stilgoe and the Entertainers (8-9), Georgia Cecile's Kinda Christmas (10-11), Lawrence Cottle Big Band with the music of Tower of Power. Then the run up to Christmas (19-23) is in the hands of Ray Gelato and the Giants. After a brief closure the club serves up Liane Carroll's Cold Turkey on Dec. 26. (Feb. 3-8) January brings Ruby Turner for the first two of three two-nighters on 12-13 and 19-20 and a visit from Gilad Atzmon with Organology (7), then February sees Curtis Stigers in a week's residency. www.ronniescotts.co.uk

CHRIS POTTER AT THE CONSERVATOIRE

Royal Birmingham Conservatoire has two events before Christmas: Paul Dunmall Invites Nikki Yeoh (December 4) and a Jazz

Gala with students of RBC. On February 12 and 13 the conservatoire is organising the Eastside Jazz Festival, a three-venue event, with Chris Potter (appearing with the Pablo Held Trio) the main attraction. Others booked in include Banda Brasileira, Rebecca Nash Trio with Hendrick Jensen and Dave Smith and Ollie Brice Quartet with Rachel Musson. www.bcu.ac.uk/conservatoire

JAZZ IN THE SPA

Boston Spa Village Hall stages fortnightly jazz across a range of styles: Alligator Gumbo (December 6), Swing Commanders (20), Anchormen Jazz Orchestra (January 17) and Jon Taylor Collective (31). www.jazzinthespa.co.uk

CHRISTMAS AT ROYAL ALBERT HALL

Amid the carols and *The Nutcracker* on the Royal Albert Hall programme is a very healthy jazz presence for Christmas. Guy Barker's Big Band Christmas is an established fixture just before Christmas and this year's mix of 'jazz classics, unearthed treasures and Christmas oddities' falls on

Need something to swing you into the holidays? Then The Jive Aces 'Not Quite Christmas' Show is for you! Join the UK's top jive and swing band on Sunday 21 December at 3:00pm at the Shaw Theatre in London with special guests including Laurie London (*He's Got The Whole World In His Hands*), champion lindy hop dancers JiveSwing and more! Tickets from £25 from jiveaces.com/xmas

The Big Jive All-Dayer is back in 2026. The Jive Aces host another 11 hours, 5 bands, 3 DJs and 1 huge dance of pure jive and rhythm & blues. Lineup includes The Jive Aces, The Jets, The Hi-Stakes featuring Sam Ghezzi, King Joe & The Atlantics and Miss Charlotte Porter & The Hi-Rollers. Tickets from jiveaces.com/bigjive or 01903 206 206.

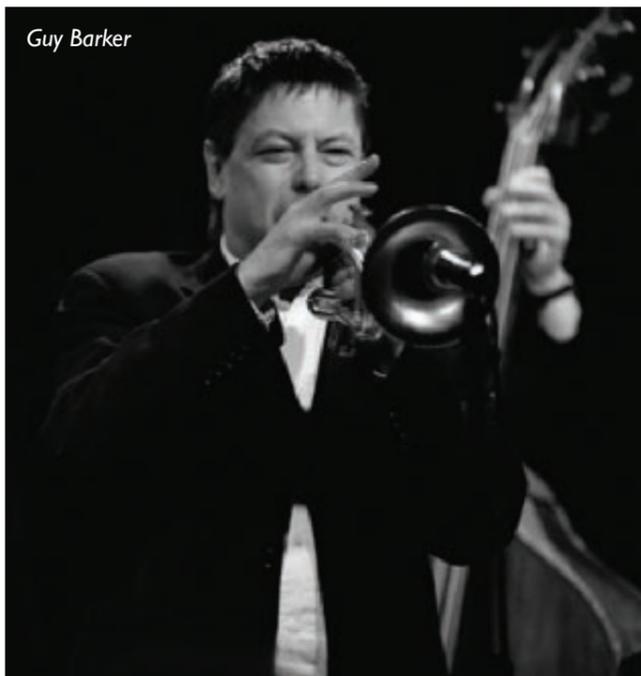


Joe Stilgoe

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Guy Barker

December 17. With Guy and his all-star big band is an impressive line-up of guests: Clare Teal, Vanessa Haynes, Giacomo Smith, Joe Stilgoe, Naomi Banks and Tommy Blaize. Before this on Dec. 12 Jamie Cullum also brings an array of guests to the main auditorium

while Late Night Jazz in the Elgar Room has two appealing concerts: Billy Marrows' Grande Familia Sextet (4) and Jazz at the Movies (10). Also in the Elgar Room Jazz FM's *A Jazzy Christmas* (18) features contributions from Jo Harrop, Paul Edis and Friends. www.royalalberthall.com

SCARBOROUGH SPA

Scarborough Jazz Club is now well settled in its new home, the Spa, and has a lively December programme: Nik Svark and Pat McCarthy in a guitar duo (3), Rod Mason with Mark Gordon's Trio (10) and a Christmas Party with Stony Jazz (17). www.scarboroughjazz.co.uk

JAZZ IN THE EAST MIDLANDS

The Mjazz website is a useful resource for a myriad selection of venues in the East Midlands. It publicises among others Jazz Steps' library initiative at Beeston, West Bridgford and Worksop Libraries which features the Belper Jazz Co. with Dennis Rollins (December 8-10) and the Nicola Farnon Quartet (February 9-11). The Jed Levy/Phil Robson International Quartet are playing the Dubrek Studios, Derby (December 5) and the Y Theatre, Leicester (11). Also in Leicester the Phoenix Arts Centre hosts the Nigel Price Organ Trio on January 29. Other gigs in the area include, among others, Sharp Little Bones (Blue Room, Lincoln – Dec. 6) and Alan Barnes' *A Christmas Carol* (Underground

at the Royal and Derngate, Northampton – Dec. 20). www.mjazz.co.uk

SOUTHPORT IN JANUARY

Southport Jazz Festival keeps up the tradition of heating up the depth of winter by playing for three days on the cusp of January and February (30-1). Regular favourites such as Liane Carroll (appearing with the Swingtime Big Band and Emma Holcroft and conducting a vocal workshop) and the Wigan Youth Jazz Orchestra are lined up, with other big names such as the Clare Teal 5, O'Higgins and Smith Play Coltrane and Dolphy, and iG4 with Claire Martin, Nikki Iles, Karen Sharp and Ewan Hastie. The Festival consists of three concerts a day in the Grand on Lord Street. www.southportjazz.co.uk

AMERSHAM IN HIGH WYCOMBE

Amersham Jazz Club in fact operates weekly at Wycombe Marsh Royal British Legion, with John Maddocks' Down Home Jazzmen (December 3), Excelsior Vintage Jazz Band (10



Claire Martin

and the Golden Eagle Jazz Band (17) taking us through to the Christmas break. Things resume on January 7 with the New Orleans Jazz Bandits. www.amershamjazzclub.org.uk

LEEDS AT CHRISTMAS

JazzLeeds enliven the Christmas season with a Twixmas Jazz Jam on December 30. Also at Seven Arts in December/January Rush Hour Jazz features Nicki Allan (Dec. 3) and Jon Taylor (17) before resuming with Al Morrison and Athol Rathbone (Jan. 14) and Stuart McDonald (21). Evening sessions include the Kate Peters Big Band (Dec. 11), Ubunye (23) and the Pete Roth

Trio with Bill Bruford (Jan. 29). www.jazzleeds.org

PIZZA EXPRESS LIVE

December at the Pizza Express in Soho is full of lunch-time, as well as evening, concerts. Liane Carroll plays December 3-5, Geoff Gascoyne's Christmas Big Band Dec. 6 and 11, Jazz at the Movies Dec. 7 and the Clare Teal 5 Dec. 10-12. Evening gigs include Pocket Ellington (9) and Clare Martin with iG4 (14). New Year gets off to a superb start with a whole week of the Scott Hamilton Quartet (January 1-7). Meanwhile a sample of the other Pizza Express venues comes up with Antonio Forcione (Holborn



Dennis Rollins

– Dec. 7-8), Dom Pipkin (Piano Lounge, Covent Garden – Dec. 19) and Earl Okin (Chelsea – Dec. 14). www.pizzaexpresslive.com

GRAHAM BROOK AT WILMSLOW

Graham Brook's monthly sessions at Morley Green Club, Wilmslow, wind up the pre-Christmas run with Lucy Lockwood's Early Christmas Show (December 9). 2026 begins with a solo performance by a pianist who frequently appears in various bands at the club, Andrej Baranek (January 13), followed by the Magic Beans (February 10) and the Jake Leg Jug Band (March 10). www.grahambrookjazz.co.uk

PARTY AT WAKEFIELD

While the regular Friday nights take a break, Wakefield Jazz mounts a Christmas Party on December 14. The normal programme resumes on January 30 with Ubunye and the February schedule includes Dominic Ingham (6), Rob Luft with the Dan Whieldon Trio (13), Ritmo Caliente (20) and Five-Way Split (27). www.wakefieldjazz.org

BAY JAZZ CLUB

The Bay Jazz Club in Enfield provides fortnightly traditional jazz with Pete Rudeforth's Jazz Band (December 2) followed by a tickets-only Christmas Extravaganza (16). In the New Year the club hosts Rico's Hot Shots (January 6), Fenny Stompers (20), Bronxville Babies (February 3) and Graham Hughes and the Sunshine Kings (17). www.bayjazzclub.co.uk

PEGGY'S SKYLIGHT

Upcoming at Peggy's Skylight in Nottingham, among others, are the Chris Bowden Quartet with *Somethin' Else*, the music of Cannonball Adderley (December 3), Gilad Atzmon's Organology (6). Djanco featuring Andy Aitchison (11), the Pat McCarthy Trio with Shannon Reilly (14), Sharp Little Bones with Tony Kofi (23) and, taking their part in the Christmas celebrations, Mr. and Mrs. Jones (27). January highlights include the Jive Aces (9), Essence of Django (11), the Derek Nash Quartet (24), Dom Pipkin (25), the James Taylor Quartet (28/29) and Tony Kofi celebrating Lou Donaldson (30). www.peggysskylight.co.uk



Gilad Atzmon



Ubunye

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WINTER JAZZ PARTY RE-NAMED

The Winter Jazz Party organised by Pete and Heather Lay at Sand Bay Holiday Village near Weston-super-Mare (January 30-February 2) has been appropriately renamed the Pete Lay Memorial Winter Jazz Party in view of Pete's recent death. The line-up still contains Pete Lay's Festival Band in addition to the Sunset Café Stompers, New Orleans Jazz Bandits, Mississippi Dreamboats and Jools and the Jazzaholics.

The next in the Warner's series of jazz weekends is at Sinah Warren Coastal Hotel in Hampshire on February 27 to March 2.

CONCORDE CELEBRATES

A packed December at the Concorde Club, Eastleigh, features copious tributes and the occasional pantomime, but jazz gets a look-in with the Pocket Ellington (Joe Webb leading an all-star line-up including Tony Kofi and Alan Barnes) with guest Marvin Muenke on December 8. The New Year starts with a Sunday lunch-time session with the John Maddocks Jazzmen (January 11), but soon returns to the Wednesday night routine, with the Scott Hamilton Quartet (14), Oh La La! (28) and Brandon Allen and Alex Garnett paying tribute to the Tough Tenors (February 4). www.theconcordeclub.com

LOVE SUPREME FESTIVAL

It is not due until July 3-5, but already Love Supreme Festival has announced some of its headliners. Loyle Carner, Ezra Collective, Samara Joy, Esperanza Spalding, Moses Boyd and the Temptations and the Four Tops are among those making their way to Glynde Place in July. www.lovesupremefestival.com



Clark Tracey

COLCHESTER JAZZ CLUB

Based at Marks Tey Parish Hall, Colchester Jazz Club operates weekly, with Pete Rudeforth's Jazz Band (December 7), the San Jacinto Stompers (14) and the New Orleans Jazz Bandits (21). On December 28 there will be no jazz.

www.colchesterjazzclub.co.uk

STABLES PROGRAMME

Christmas at the Stables, Wavendon, mainly consists of a children's play, but jazz figures in two excellent Sunday morning programmes in the Mancini Forum: Clark Tracey's Jazz Champions (December 14) and Sam Braysher with a tribute to Kurt Weill (January 18). Events in the main auditorium include the Mike Lindup Trio (Dec. 9), the BBC Big Band with the music of Cole Porter (January 16) and the Jive Aces (25).

www.stables.org



Alex Garnett

HUGH AND MARION'S PARTY

Hugh and Marion's Club at Eltham are celebrating Christmas a week early with a Christmas party at which Liane Carroll and Roger Carey join hosts Georgia Mancio and Dave Ohm.

www.elthamjazzclub.com

LEYTONSTONE JAZZ

The Eastside Jazz Club in Leytonstone take two weeks off for Christmas. Before that the club features Same Moon in the Same World with Ant Law and Alex Hitchcock (December 2), Wild Flower Quintet with a celebration of Wayne Shorter at Blue Note (9) and the Ed Jones Quintet (16). The club resumes on January 6 with John Law's Re-creations.

www.eastsidejazzclub.co.uk

SWANSEA JAZZ CLUB IN DECEMBER AND JANUARY

Swansea Jazz Club is unusual in using various different locations. For instance, in December a

Louis and Ella celebration takes place in St. Peter's (5) while the Grand Theatre is in use for Dave Cottle's new jazz suite, *A Christmas Story* (10) and the splendidly named Power of Gower Big Band (17). Finally the Observatory hosts a New Year's Eve Party (31). Coming into the New Year, the Observatory is the venue for Eddie Gripper/Elijah Jeffrey Quartet (21) and Dave O'Higgins plays Swigg (28).

www.swanseajazzland.co.uk

JOHN SHILLITO R.I.P.

The recent announcement of the death of John Shillito at the age of 86 deprives jazz of a trumpeter who played, in his own phrase, 'serious jazz with a smile on its face.' In later years he was best known as leader of the Riviera Ramblers, based in the West Country, and was a frequent participant in Pete Lay's Jazz Weekends.

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BIRMINGHAM JAZZ & BLUES FESTIVAL

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Last year's festival brought the region to life with 179 performances across Birmingham, Sandwell, Solihull, Wolverhampton and Sutton Coldfield, with most events completely free to attend.

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If you're looking for the city's most entertaining, energetic and accessible music experience, don't miss the Birmingham Jazz & Blues Festival!

For more information about the festival, or to get involved, call Jim Simpson at 0121 454 7020 or email jim@bigbearmusic.com

SO WHEN DID IT BEGIN TO GO WRONG?

SIMON SPILLETT, renowned tenor saxophonist, bandleader, prolific note writer and noted expert on (and biographer of) Tubby Hayes, answers the questions.



Where were you born/brought up?

I was born in 1974 in Chesham, a town in the Chiltern Hills, about thirty-five miles from London. I sometimes think how lucky I was to have been born there – there were a few local jazz gigs and being on the end of the Metropolitan Line it meant you'd get to see London-based players regularly at these. We had a great theatre in the town called the Elgiva; that used to put on things like the BBC Big Band. Plus, in nearby Hemel Hempstead there was the Pavilion Theatre – I saw a fair few big band gigs there too. I guess I was just born in a good place.

What was your first encounter with jazz? And when?

My father was a semi-pro trombonist who loved jazz so there were records around the house from day one – instruments too, as he'd run a student big band at one point and ended up with several saxophones when it folded, alongside the various trombones he owned. We had a piano too. I never had to 'get into' jazz, it was just there. We were a very musical family and listened to all sorts of things. The story my Mum tells is that as a very tiny baby, probably only a few weeks old, the first musical thing I visibly responded to was a

record of Stan Getz – not a bad place to start if you're going to be a tenor sax player. Growing up I loved big band things – Glenn Miller, Benny Goodman, Tommy Dorsey, Gene Krupa, Buddy Rich – but as far as realising what jazz improvisation entailed I guess it was Louis Armstrong. Even as a kid I loved how fun he made everything sound. He's the source of it all, really.

What was the first band you heard?

Heard live? The Count Basie Orchestra led by Frank Foster at the Hemel Hempstead Pavilion. I was about fourteen and had been playing the trombone for about a year. My Dad took me along as a surprise and I'll never forget it. The sheer sound of it all was just stunning. I knew things like *April In Paris* but to hear them live was so thrilling. We only stayed for the first set – it was a school night you see – but the next day I was absolutely buzzing. Trouble was, when I got to school there wasn't anyone to really tell; I had no mates who liked jazz. But what a memory it is. I remember some of the Basie veterans were there – Bill Hughes the trombonist didn't read a thing all night, he must have played the arrangements for years. And I loved Sonny Cohn's playing. Even then I knew I was hearing something special.

What was the first record that you bought/had bought for you?

My Dad had a great record collection covering all sorts of jazz, from Big Bill Broonzy to Weather Report, so I was very, very, fortunate. People sometimes ask if I've exaggerated this, but in our loft room there were hundreds of albums. I'd just go through them, listening to all sorts of things and working out which bits I liked. Even then I loved a wide-range of things. But as far as my own 'collecting' went, I remember going to Windsor in the school holidays and buying

two cassette tapes, one of Stan Getz the other Dizzy Gillespie, from a series called 'Compact Jazz'. We went for a picnic in the Great Park that afternoon that was the first time I heard Dizzy's big band play *Manteca*. You never really recapture the thrill of hearing stuff for the first time. After that, my pocket money went on records, cassettes to begin with. All sorts of things. It's all new then, isn't it?

Who/what inspired you to take up your first instrument? And what was it?

I suppose the big moment for me was seeing Louis Armstrong in *The Glenn Miller Story*. That made me want to play an instrument, so I struggled with a cornet for a bit, not very successfully. That would have been for a few months when I was about eight. Dad being a musician helped. Eventually, aged twelve, I took up the trombone with Dad showing me stuff. The very first time I played he got me jamming along with a record, trying to show me that you can make music by ear. That stuck with me. After that I played the trombone for about two and half years. My heroes were people like J.J. Johnson and Kai Winding. Then I heard Bob Brookmeyer with Gerry Mulligan (who I wrote to and who sent me an autographed photo!) and dabbled with my Dad's valve trombone for a bit. But it was the saxophone that got to me. We had three of them in the loft and in the summer holidays I'd get them out and try to play them, alto at first, then aged seventeen tenor. Again, I started to teach myself by ear, by playing along with records and playing in school bands. I was pretty dreadful but I was keen and totally in love with jazz. It really helped me find myself as a teenager, when your head and heart can be all over the place.

Who were your early influences? Do you still feel the same about them as you did back then?

I suppose, in order of hearing

Photo by
Merlin Daleman



them, my initial heroes were Gerry Mulligan, Bob Brookmeyer, Charlie Parker, Paul Desmond and then, once I took up the tenor, the obvious ones – Getz, Rollins, Coltrane. And of course, Tubby Hayes, although when I first started out he was just one of many people I listened to. I tried to hear all the great tenor players on record – from Coleman Hawkins on. I love them all, I really do. I was also listening to the current players too – Branford Marsalis and Courtney Pine mainly.

Hearing so many things in such a short space of time was great but confusing; I couldn't work out if I wanted to be Ben Webster or Joe Henderson! But it was all going in somehow and I don't regret spending my teens drinking it all in. Sometimes, as you learn and grow up musically, you might hear things you loved as a youngster and find them less satisfying but in all honesty, I've not really found much of that. I still love all my first influences.

At what point did you begin to consider that you might become a professional musician?

Even before I played an instrument I knew I wasn't going to ever be a conventional adult! By my mid-teens I knew

I wanted to be a jazz musician and that was that. But as far as realising what it took to be one is concerned, that came from going to my local jazz pub and watching visiting players – Art Themen, Dick Morrissey, Bobby Wellins, Don Weller, Peter King – up close. That's when I began to see it was a craft as well as an art. Then, aged eighteen, I started studying with Vic Ash. He made me realise lots of things – mostly, that I was getting by on my ears alone. After that, I took it more seriously and got down to actually learning my instrument, but it was a long, long process as I didn't go to college and sort of found my own way through playing with all sorts of people. Even when I turned pro, aged twenty-one, there was almost a decade before I 'got anywhere'. Funnily enough, thinking back my first lesson with Vic came on the day I finished my 'A' levels. It felt like I was going in the right direction. And I've never looked forward since!

What were the earliest bands you played with? What subsequent bands stand out for you?

I tried putting together jazz bands at my school, although they were usually raggle taggle assemblies of wannabe rock players, the

odd blues enthusiast and anyone who wanted to mess about in the music room at lunchtime. Just awful! I played everything in sight – trombone, piano, sax, clarinet, drums – all badly. I was sitting in at my local jazz pub too – with disastrous results – but the first gig I ever did was with a blues band led by my art teacher. I didn't play a right note all night as everything was played in keys I didn't know existed. It was a very humbling experience, let's say.

Since then, well, I'm bound to say my quartet and big band stand out. I'm so fortunate to be around so many incredible musicians. But apart from my own things, I've enjoyed being in Pete Long's various bands. It's nice to be called on to be more than 'the Tubby Hayes bloke' and Pete gives me that chance in his Echoes of Ellington band, which I love doing.

What was the most unusual gig you ever played and why?

Gosh! It's a toss up between a party held by a would-be film director to launch his latest project which was utterly surreal – everything that could go wrong went wrong, from nobody knowing how to work a projector to the caterers

failing to turn up (requiring a mass send out for one hundred and fifty take aways) – or the sixty saxophone version of *St. Thomas* I was part of at the Royal Albert Hall to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the opening of Ronnie Scott's. That was pretty surreal too. At one point I found myself on stage next to Courtney Pine, the man whose records I used to listen to every morning before I went to school. It definitely felt like 'how did I get here?' moment.

If you could invite three musicians, preferably from before your time, for dinner, who would you be sitting down with?

That's hard. Everyone is going to expect me to say Tubby Hayes, aren't they? Well, he had a big appetite, so I don't know. I'd like to invite Duke Ellington but I'm not sure I'd get past the famous Ducal veneer. John Coltrane would only excuse himself and go off upstairs to practise. Oh, I don't know. I find Ronnie Scott fascinating so maybe him? Yep, Ronnie. Roland Kirk? I suppose I couldn't leave Tubby out. I mean, there are so many things I'd ask him. No! Got it. Coleman Hawkins, Ben Webster and Lester Young.

JIM DOUGLAS 1942-2025

JOHN PETTERS' biography of JIM DOUGLAS is followed by VAL WISEMAN's reminiscences of the guitarist in *Lady Sings the Blues*.

The Grim Reaper has certainly had a bumper year in 2025 and the loss of hot guitarist, Jim Douglas, on 7th October is a bitter blow for fans of swinging pre-bebop jazz.

Born in Gifford, near Edinburgh, on 13th May 1942, Robert James Elliott Douglas dabbled with violin and drums before acquiring a guitar in 1957, in order to become part of the exploding Skiffle craze. He was inspired by the traditional jazz bands of the revival, but the New Orleans-influenced path was not to be Jim's chosen direction. The free-wheeling Chicago style, defined by Eddie Condon and which manifested itself in the bands of Freddy Randall and later Alex Welsh was a perfect fit for the young guitarist.

Following a stint with the Clyde Valley Stompers, Jim found himself in London, unemployed and attending a gig at the Fishmonger's Arms in Wood Green, North London, where the Welsh band was playing. Jim had met Alex and the wonder drummer, Lennie Hastings whilst playing with the Clydes.

Jim recalls in, *Tunes, Tours and Travelitis*, the first of three volumes of his autobiography, 'I was not prepared, one halcyon evening, for the words, "Have you got your guitar, laddie?" coming from the direction of the bandleader.'

Thus began a roller-coaster existence of life on the road with one of the most musically accomplished bands, though not the most commercially popular, on the UK jazz circuit. The Welsh band was the number one choice to accompany visiting American soloists and Jim soon found himself on stage and in the recording studios with a host of well-known Chicago Swing era veterans. Pee Wee Russell, Earl 'Fatha' Hines, Dicky Wells, Bud Freeman, Rex Stewart, Eddie Miller, Ruby Braff and Peanuts Hucko were all graced with Jim and the Welsh band. Two Americans stood out for Jim, New Orleans trumpeter and vocalist, Henry 'Red' Allen and cornetist, Wild Bill Davison.

Jim can be seen on a BBC 625 video with Red Allen from 5th May 1964. The complete show is on YouTube. The band sparkles



and swings, with Jim's driving rhythm guitar blending perfectly with Fred Hunt's piano, Lennie's drums and Ron Mathewson's bass. Look out for young Jim's first-class solo on *Rosetta* and his fine blues playing on *St James Infirmary*.

Jim's relationship with William Edward Davison became more personal. Bill and his wife, Anne became good friends and Jim was delighted when Anne referred to him as to him as 'our Scottish grandson'.

Besides the gruelling grind of travelling and accompanying American guests, The Welsh Band played a series of concerts entitled *Salute to Satchmo*. Humphrey Lyttelton, George Chisholm OBE and Beryl Bryden were guests.

Jim Douglas' tenure with the Welsh band came to a close in 1982. They'd played a gig the 100 Club. Jim recalled that Alex was painfully thin and frail. His passing at the age of just 53 in July 1982, closed a chapter on Jim's life and opened another one. Jim later married Maggie, Alex's widow.

It was round this time that I got to work with Jim. We did some gigs with Cy Laurie and Eggie Ley at the Esplanade at Southend-on-Sea. I was always struck by the generation of heat created by Jim with his playing. His rhythm was impeccable and

he phrased, as a soloist, like the best of the hot horn players. All those years and all those tours with the Americans had left an indelible mark on the man. He had the wildness of Wild Bill, but on the guitar!

One unusual occasion was a Ken Colyer gig I organised at the Eastgate Shopping Precinct in Basildon, Essex. I'd booked Jim to play banjo – but on seeing who his chord man was, Colyer asked if Jim had brought his guitar. Ken asked him to play guitar for the whole gig. It was a delight. He also did gigs with Humphrey Lyttelton and George Chisholm OBE as part of that series.

The 1990s found Jim freelancing and part of a highly successful show, *Lady Sings the Blues*, featuring Val Wiseman, with Digby Fairweather, and old Welsh colleagues, Roy Williams and Al Gay.

In recent years, Jim became a mainstay in my jazz festival breaks, as well as being in my Swing Band for various gigs. A pairing with the extraordinarily talented violinist, Ben Holder at a session in Harlow, led to Jim's final CD recording session in 2018 for, *Swing That Music*, a quartet session with Keith Donald on bass. We completed the album in about three hours.

During 2019, trombonist Roy Williams became ill and Jim's warm-hearted nature spurred him on to organise a series of 'Jim's Jam for Roy', benefit concerts. I did the gig at Enfield, at which Roy was present and was able to play.

Covid was a disaster for Jim as it was with most of us.

During Lockdown, we had our final musical collaboration. It was another manifestation of Jim's kindness towards a fellow musician. Trumpeter Wil Robinson was gravely ill and we organised an online benefit recording for him. Pete Rudeforth composed and arranged *Charlie's Place Shuffle*, with Graham Hughes trombone. Richard Exall, reeds, Dave Browning, piano, Keith Donald, bass.

Soon after, Jim and Maggie sold up and moved to Cebu, in the

Philippines, to be with their son, Will and his family. Sadly, within a short time Maggie passed away. Jim continued to make solo performances for his YouTube channel and he was able to enjoy his new grandchildren.

Earlier this year, Jim suffered a fall which left him with a broken hip. He lost the ability to keep in touch with his friends on Facebook.

Jim leaves a huge gap on the jazz scene and he was an important part of the post trad boom jazz scene.

JOHN PETTERS

Planning a winning team for our Billie Holiday tribute *Lady Sings The Blues*, Jim Douglas was the obvious choice for the guitar chair. This was back in 1987 when the show was launched at the Adrian Boulton Hall as part of the Birmingham Jazz Festival. Mindful of Billie's influences and working relationship with the Basie Band, we were drawn to musicians who defined the verve and style of the Basie sidemen and for many years, Jim remained an integral and much valued member of the rhythm section. He was our Freddie Green!

I first encountered Jim back in the early 1960s on my very first broadcast, having been invited by trumpeter Alex Welsh to appear with his band on BBC *Jazz Club*. This was the real deal for me! I was singing at the time at Birmingham's Midland Jazz Club with the venue's resident band, the Second City Jazzmen. The club also played host to visiting bands and the Alex Welsh Band were regular guests. This was the era of 'Trad Jazz,' with many British bands embracing the renaissance of traditional jazz, whereas the Welsh band had a punchier Chicago approach, with the addition of saxophone, greater emphasis on solos and a more prominent role for the rhythm section. Less tuba and banjo and more string bass and guitar, much to Jim's delight – and did this band swing!

Some of the eminent British musicians who had worked with Alex Welsh became regular team members in *Lady Sings The Blues*. Alongside Jim were Al Gay, Roy Williams and Brian Lemon and fronting the band, Digby Fairweather actually recorded his first album with the Welsh band in 1975, as deputy trumpeter. Bassist Len Skeat and Eddie Taylor on drums completed the line-up and our first album was recorded in 1990.

Changes over the decades were inevitable. Alan Barnes, Brian Dee and Bobby Worth later joined the team and subsequent replacements and depts have included Bruce Adams, Julian Stringle, Ian Bateman, Dave Newton, Dave Green and Eric Ford; all generating the high standards the show originally set itself. However, when Jim left we never replaced him. There just wasn't another Freddie Green! Our paths crossed many times, working in duo or in one of John Petters' brilliant swing bands and more recently, based in the Philippines, he serenaded his friends on Facebook, reminding us that he still had the licks. Sadly, his music ends there, but the memory lingers on and we will miss him.

Footnote: There is old footage on YouTube of the Alex Welsh Legacy bands. Google Alex Welsh Legacy I and II & you will recognise some familiar faces in the line-ups; Campbell Burnap, Julian Stringle, Bobby Worth and of course Jim Douglas and John Barnes, whose rendition of *You're a Sweetheart* on Legacy II is delightful! The video quality is not good but still worth checking out.

VAL WISEMAN



Lady Sings The Blues: Al Gay, Jim Douglas, Val Wiseman, Len Skeat, Eddie Taylor, Digby Fairweather, Roy Williams and Brian Lemon.

Photo
Jim Simpson



Alex Welsh Band Back: Unknown, Roy Crimmins, Jim Douglas.
Front: Lennie Hastings, Alex Welsh, John Barnes

Photo
Jim Simpson

PETE LAY 1947-2025



It was with great sadness that we at *Jazz Rag* learned of the death of Pete Lay, drummer, bandleader, promoter, festival organiser and the friendliest and most co-operative editor of a rival magazine. The October issue of *Just Jazz* – number 330 – will now, sadly, be the last.

Pete inherited his first drum kit from his elder brother who had emigrated to Australia and went on to work with such bands as Ken Colyer and Bill Brunskill, but is now best known for 43 years of leading the Gambit Jazzmen. Incidentally, his skills as a drummer were still in demand from any number of other bands, including John Maddocks' Jazzmen.

Thirty years ago Pete and his first wife, Jill, started their own jazz festivals, weekend jazz breaks (with five or six different bands!) which they ran at many Warner venues in addition to taking over the Ken Colyer Trust weekends at such places as Sand Bay Holiday Camp. Next

year's Winter Jazz Break at Sand Bay has been retitled the Pete Lay Memorial Winter Jazz Party (January 30-February 2). With the usual mix of six bands, plus brollies, it will no doubt be an emotional occasion.

Pete's association with New Orleans (the city as well as the music) was enormous: as a member of Chris Tyle's Band he often played the city and also regularly organised, in association with Southern Sounds, trips to the French Quarter Festival in New Orleans. In *Just Jazz* Jim McIntosh writes of his connection with the city:

'Pete was a great authority on the French Quarter area of New Orleans, knowing most of the venues, bars, eateries and such like. He also had many friends (including musicians) who live in New Orleans, thus making him the perfect host.'

It was in New Orleans that he met his second wife, Heather.

In 2012 Jill had died after a ten year battle with dementia during which time Pete was her primary carer. The following year he took her ashes to New Orleans to find a final resting place in the Mississippi. There he met Heather and in 2015 they were married. She has since enlarged his huge range of activities by joining in running sessions at Sylvie's Place and The Winning Post.

Just Jazz ran for some 28 years and in its final issue Heather Balon Lay recalls Pete putting hours into 'editing, sending out music and books for review, curating photos, transcribing handwritten articles sent in, setting up formats, posting the magazines, etc., etc....all of this accompanied by hours on the phone, gallons of tea being drunk and a few swear words coming from the upstairs office!'

Pete's influence on the traditional jazz world was incalculable. As Jim McIntosh put it, 'All that he has done for our music, whether playing, promoting or writing about it, was immeasurable. I can't imagine the jazz scene without him.'

R.S.



ANDREW LIDDLE wrote for *Just Jazz* for many years. Here he adds his personal reminiscence of Pete Lay:

Pete Lay, one of Trad's giants
Pete Lay's passing and the consequent closing of *Just Jazz*, the much loved magazine which he edited, marks the sad ending of an era. Pete was a legendary figure on the traditional jazz scene, a direct link to some of the great figures in the British revivalist movement, not least Ken Colyer, with whose band he played often in the 1970s and about whom he had warmly affectionate stories to relate.

Pete, the drummer's drummer, could light a fire under any band and was co-founder and leader of Gambit Jazz, a great favourite on the southern circuit and at the Warner jazz breaks which he promoted. When in New Orleans, frequently leading jazz pilgrimages to the home of Jazz, he played with Chris Tyle's Silver Leaf Jazz Band, one of the remaining authentically traditional outfits.

It's not long since he emailed me in great spirits (although I learned he was ill at the time and about to face an operation)

to thank me for my review of John Petters' latest cd and to heartily endorse my praise of the fellow drummer. No writer could ever wish for a more dedicated, enthusiastic or ultra efficient editor.

I found him a pleasure to work with, over the last couple of decades, a real gentleman, always straight to the point in the most tactful way, hugely knowledgeable about Jazz and all kinds of related music, and someone who possessed that priceless (and all-too-rare) quality, the drive to organise and get things done.

We corresponded frequently and over the years exchanged many cds. He introduced me to several major talents and I would like to think I was able to reciprocate a little. I knew, of course, about his incomparable collection of photographs of jazz figures - but was surprised to learn he also had a library of Essex county cricket images when he sent me a sheaf of them taken in the early 1960s, to identify members of the Yorkshire opposition.

We ribbed each other something rotten about our respective football teams whenever they happened to be in the same division. Gillingham AFC - 'the Gills', as he always called them - was dear to his heart. He once rang me to ask specifically how one of their players had performed at Valley Parade.

His passing came as a great shock to me and, I suspect, all who knew him - and the tributes that flooded in from players and pundits alike testify to the esteem in which he is held. Although totally dedicated to the music he had an open mind and no one championed new talent more than he did. 'They are the future,' he would say. 'Jazz must live on through them!'

ANDREW LIDDLE

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LOUIS ARMSTRONG HOT FIVE

To celebrate the centenary of the first recordings of Louis Armstrong's Hot 5, *Jazz Rag* asked four notable British trumpeters – BRUCE ADAMS, ENRICO TOMASSO, DIGBY FAIRWEATHER and ALAN BATEMAN – to assess the impact these recordings had on their playing and to explain the continuing supremacy of Louis.



Bruce Adams

BRUCE ADAMS

I can only guess at the effect that Louis' Hot Five recordings had on budding jazz trumpet players one hundred years ago. They still amaze me a century later.

A young Nat Gonella, Britain's trumpet star of the thirties told me when I was a twelve year old hopeful, how as a very young cornet player hearing *Wild Man Blues* changed his life forever.

Two years later, while getting a trumpet lesson from the great Tommy McQuater, Tom told me how much Louis had driven him on. Tom had an old wind up gramophone in his garden shed where he used play along to Hot Five solos and try and memorise them. No jazz colleges then. When Tom came down from Scotland in 1933 as an eighteen year old replacement with Lew Stone for Nat Gonella, his two biggest influences were Louis and Bix.

Where Louis differed from most of the other fine players of that period was his ability to pull time about. It's so difficult to do that and still project so much energy. Also his stamina was unbelievable. Bix, Bud Freeman and Frank Trumbauer used to go and listen to Louis in Chicago to try and figure out Louis' time. Of course, Pops didn't have to think about it. To him it just came naturally. In

the 1920's recording techniques were extremely primitive, which meant that these stamina-sapping solos had to be played in their entirety. Recordings couldn't be edited or repaired by a sound engineer. Nowadays if someone isn't hacking it on a recording, they just get someone more competent to come and repair it. The pop industry is littered with examples of this.

This flexibility with time of course came from the old blues singers, Louis just transferred it into the modern world. Of course, people like Bing Crosby, The Mills Brothers, The Boswell Sisters, Billie Holiday and Frank Sinatra all were heavily influenced by this shift. I do think that if it hadn't been for Louis, we'd have been forced to listen to Rudy Vallee. Louis' phrasing and attack helped influence how trumpet developed. Arrangers like Don Redman and Fletcher Henderson I'm sure got so many ideas from Louis.

I played in a band forty years ago at the Edinburgh Jazz Festival organised by that wonderful pianist and jazz historian, Dick Hyman. In the trumpet section we had Spanky Davis, Henryk Majewski, Bent Person and myself. In the rhythm section, apart from Dick Hyman and Gus Johnson on drums, we had Milt Hinton on bass. This was a huge thrill



Alan Bateman

for me, as I'd been playing in Butlins in Ayr the previous weekend and had to go back the following week. We played Dick's arrangements for the New York Jazz Repertory Company which included a selection of Louis Hot Five Recordings written out for a four piece trumpet section. The audience went wild. A few years later, I was asked to do a three trumpet section feature at a festival in Germany. I took *Weatherbird*, which Dick Hyman had very kindly gifted me. Again the audience went wild. The Magic of Louis. The gift that keeps on giving.

Dizzy Gillespie once commented that Louis gave Jazz such a push and held open the gates for everyone.

ALAN BATEMAN

I first really started to take an interest in Louis when I first took up the trumpet in 1989 at the grand old age of 26. It was

Louis' soulful solo trumpet intro into the song *Samantha* that appeared in the film *High Society* that stopped me in my tracks and made me reach for the trumpet.

I wrote down the valve positions that Louis used on screen and set about trying to play that intro, sadly only the first couple of notes made any sense as Louis was miming to a sound stage recording.

That sound! That phrasing! That command! That innovation! All of these have inspired me ever since. What an incredible way to play the trumpet! No conservatoire trained perfection here! What Louis had to say and express can't be taught in the classroom! Where did this genius and raw ability come from? Leading to a staggering body of work that has, should, and will continue to intrigue every budding jazz musician and trumpet player that dares to even



Digby Fairweather

pick the instrument up, let alone presume that they have something more to say than Louis did.

For my own endeavours, all I ever wanted to do was try and emulate one facet of Louis' genius, his wonderful trumpet playing. I would listen to his recordings just as many trumpet players before me had, trying to pick up some technique and phrasing, busting my chops every day and wondering how on earth does he get 'up there' with such energy and great sound?

So many of his tunes and recordings have become absolute test pieces for every jazz trumpeter the world over. Tunes like *West End Blues*, *Weatherbird Rag*, *Cornet Chop Suey*, *Potato Head Blues*, *Hotter Than That*, and the absolute winner, Louis' rendition of *When You're Smiling*. Louis' bands became a blueprint for everything that followed.

Louis must have never been far from his trumpet to achieve the greatness that he did. We all know he struggled with his chops from time to time as his wonderful exuberance always got the better of any attempt to 'save his chops'. The man just had too much to say and to give to a captivated audience that loved him and showed it at every performance.

The *Live in 59* concert/performance is an absolute masterclass and the culmination of a great career which sadly a few months later saw Louis have his first heart attack. He continued to play with some of the fire, but also developed a wonderfully minimalistic style still with that phrasing that could spontaneously bring you to tears. There was something desperately sad inside Louis, a lifetime of struggles and suppression? Who knows, but he found an outlet for it in playing jazz and playing the trumpet, and by God he made up for it didn't he just! Ambassador Satch? Absolutely right he was and always will be.

DIGBY FAIRWEATHER

Well, time and experience have taught me that superlatives can be dangerous things in jazz, but having re-considered Allan (and Joe's) claims a day or two later I could find absolutely nothing to argue about. So it was time, after rather too long, to go back to my treasured 12 CD set called *The Chronological Louis Armstrong 1925-1940* and 'quite naturally' (as Pops would have said) to CD1, track 1, and Louis and his Hot 5's first-ever recording called *My Heart*, recorded on November 12th 1925 in Chicago, Illinois. When I first heard it years ago – and having grown up in my salad days listening to Louis' seminal 1950s recordings including *W.C. Handy and Satch plays Fats* – the musical surroundings (and recording quality) of Pops' young band sounded primitive at the time. But experience would teach me otherwise and my ears have long accepted that the thirty-three recordings of Louis Armstrong's Hot Five were – and are – the first to define the art of the jazz solo at its greatest.

Up until then (with a respectful nod to Sidney Bechet) jazz had to all intents and purposes remained an ensemble art form. But Louis, amid his Hot Five re-defined what was possible in the vocabulary of the new music called jazz, producing solos of kingly symphonic magnitude in a perfect definition not only of what Gil Evans called 'sound innovation' but also in an atmosphere of genuinely joyful creativity which Louis cherished and celebrated in the phrase 'playing from the heart'. For me the 'influence' of these recordings lies with exactly that phrase. In playing jazz (especially night by night) there's a creative risk of falling back on devices that you know (or hope) will impress; trading honest creativity for familiar and safe options and - in the worst scenario - just getting through the job. Somehow Louis could overcome that problem too as his years flew by. But that was simply because he was both a genius and – as Allan Whyte says – the greatest musician of the twentieth century. And by the way; seeing where jazz is in 2025 I'd go along with Joe Bushkin too.



Enrico Tomasso

ENRICO TOMASSO

Louis Armstrong's influence on my own development first came from the All Stars records from an early age and actually hearing and meeting the man in person. This sustained me in my preadolescent learning albeit interspersed with forays into *The Hot Breaks* and *Hot Chorus* publications committing to memory pieces such as *Hotter Than That*. Next when my teens arrived, came the revelation of Louis' Big Band period which just blew me away with the *tour de force* of trumpet playing and perfect climactical solos

It wasn't until my audition for Leeds Music College during the aural test, which required us to write down a section of a musical piece with just three plays, that I was awakened to this early period of Louis. The piece was the iconic breaks section of *Potato Head Blues*. A little nod of appreciation here for those early pioneers of Jazz education at Leeds to have had that foresight when Armstrong was generally considered 'old hat'.

So my Armstrong discovery journey was in reverse discographical order and it

seems to me now so natural. The *Potato Head* event opened the door to real appreciation of the Hot 5's when I was mature enough as a musician to take on board what an astounding innovation was taking place. Louis' creativity and natural musicianship makes the surrounding musicians of the time sound primitive yet this disrespects them as they were at the forefront of this still very new music genre. As a modern day listener one must seek to place oneself within that early environment as much as possible to really understand how much of a one off genius Louis really was. The 4 bar intro on *Drop That Sack* also cements this belief. By erring he reminds us that he is human and not perfect which only emphasises the complete artist on the rest of the recordings. The following epitomises what these recordings mean to me; when ever I've felt that my playing is not saying something worthwhile I've gone straight to these fundamental masterpieces which have never failed to put me right. In fact now days I just switch on my inner Louis and have instant and bountiful creativity channeling any emotion I desire.



Louis Armstrong and Enrico Tomasso (see story on page 3)

THE 2025 MONTEREY JAZZ FESTIVAL

By SCOTT YANOW



Gerald Clayton

The Monterey Jazz Festival is one of the great annual American events. Unlike at too many other so-called jazz festivals, some of whom use the word 'jazz' in their names so as to save money on insurance, 95% of the groups at Monterey actually play jazz rather than r&b, funk, World music, or hip hop. Founded in 1958 and always held at the same venue (the Monterey Fairgrounds), the 68th edition (if one counts a year that was cancelled due to COVID) featured high-quality music simultaneously at five stages. This was my 36th time at the festival and, while I did my best to catch nearly everyone, one could have put together a fine festival comprised solely of those who I missed!

Here are some of the highlights. The festival was filled with superb pianists including Gerald Clayton. He performed duets with his father bassist John Clayton that were full of inventive ideas and affectionate interplay. They came up with fresh ideas to play on Dizzy Gillespie's *Con Alma* and Paul Chambers' *I Got Rhythm-based Tale Of The Fingers*.

Cuban-born pianist Alfredo Rodriguez, who left his homeland in 2009, has grown in depth, power and creativity each year since. At Monterey, where his playful version of *Mama Inez* was a highpoint, his performance with his trio was full of excitement, high energy, and rhythmically stirring ideas.

Benny Green, who has had a significant career after periods with

Betty Carter and Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, helps keep the legacy of hard bop piano alive. During a set of unaccompanied solos, he paid tribute to such inspirations as Cedar Walton, Gerry Wiggins, and Oscar Peterson in his revival of some of their songs and in his own originals.

Sullivan Fortner may be best known these days for his work with singer Cecile McLorin Salvant but he should definitely be caught whenever he performs with his trio. Fortner is a dazzling player whose music looks both forwards and backwards in time simultaneously (a rare skill that Jaki Byard had), mixing together different styles to form his own. He played some Tatumesque runs during a tender version of *Everything Happens To Me*, ripped into a fast Oscar Peterson number, and performed dramatic originals that sometimes included some stride piano.

While Monterey is mostly a modern jazz festival, there were bits of New Orleans jazz that popped up. Davina and the Vagabonds, a quintet led by pianist-singer Davina Sowers, featured blues but also such vintage songs as *Four Or Five Times, Is You Is Or Is You Ain't My Baby* and *St. James Infirmary* with trumpeter Becca Lozier and trombonist Matthew Hanzelka taking spirited solos in the 1920s/30s tradition.

Delfeayo Marsalis' Uptown Jazz Orchestra performed New Orleans Mardi Gras versions of *I'm Walking* and the Dirty Dozen

Brass Band's *Let Your Mind Be Free* that had the crowd dancing and waving white handkerchiefs. Their set then went in other directions including a fine version of Joe Henderson's *Inner Urge* and the leader-trombonist being featured on a wistful rendition of *It's A Wonderful World* before finishing with a rousing rendition of the New Orleans favorite *Lil' Liza Jane*.

And then there was Gunhild Carling. A unique performer who puts on quite a show, Carling is not only a hot trumpeter inspired by Louis Armstrong and Henry 'Red' Allen and a boisterous trombonist, but she sings in several styles (showing the influences of both Cab Calloway and Billie Holiday), dances a bit, and plays the recorder, bagpipes (!), harmonica, harp, and apparently nearly every other instrument. Her septet (which included her husband on banjo and her daughter Idun Carling on trombone and vocals) started off with a riotous New Orleans number based on *Bourbon Street Parade*. After that her singing was showcased on *Dream A Little Dream*



Gunhild Carling

Of Me, the two trombonists and stride pianist Neil Fontano were featured on her uptempo *Swedish Cider*, and Carling's daughter sang *Just A Closer Walk With Thee*. As if that were not enough, Carling featured her virtuosic recorder playing on a Brazilian song, was on harmonica during a medium-tempo blues, played three trumpets at once for two choruses of *The Hucklebuck*, accompanied herself on bass while she played trumpet like a bugle (balancing it on her head since both of her hands were on the bass), jammed on bagpipes, and sang *Mack The Knife* in German. Throughout the hour, the entertaining Gunhild Carling gave one the impression that musically she could do anything.

There were a few departures from jazz but most were welcome. Bluesman Mr. Sipp is well worth discovering. He solos on guitar in a style reminiscent of B.B. King and is a personable and spirited singer. During his set he played continuously for the first 25 minutes, taking blazing solos and immediately creating a

party atmosphere while regularly switching grooves and patterns. He ended this high-powered medley by saying to the audience, 'Let me hear you scream!' They did. That was followed by a 15-minute slow blues during which he went out into the audience. He concluded by singing an emotional *A Change Is Gonna Come*. One can only hope!

There were occasional references to the horrendous political situation in the United States. Most memorable were the dynamic music and politically charged statements by pianist-composer Arturo O'Farrill and his Afro-Latin Jazz Ensemble. The group, an octet with two percussionists, performed some of the most intriguing and adventurous music of the festival including *Action/Reaction* and a tribute to Eddie Palmieri.

Several big bands performed during the weekend. Bassist-composer Marcus Shelby's orchestra played a suite (*Black Ball*) that paid tribute to the Negro Baseball League of the 1920s and '30s; all of the musicians wore vintage baseball uniforms. Some of their music was influenced by the early Duke Ellington Orchestra with its use of plunger mutes although, especially rhythmically, there were more modern elements included too.

American military jazz bands, in the tradition of Glenn Miller's Army Air Force Band of 1943-45, are among the best in the world. They have a limitless pool of talent to choose from, and the bandleaders love the fact that their sidemen cannot ask for a raise! The U.S. Navy Band Commodores, a mighty orchestra comprised of 13 horns and 4 rhythm, was as impressive as one would expect. Michaela Swan's singing was excellent on *After You've Gone* (both in a slow opening chorus and when the music became swinging) as was trombonist David Kapral's playing. The orchestra also played Ernie Wilkins' *Slats* (originally written for Harry James), a boisterous Afro-Cuban piece which had some impressive alto playing from Amanda Ballatine, and an uptempo *What A Little Moonlight Can Do*.

The Next Generation Jazz Orchestra is a special group assembled each year that is comprised of some of the top college musicians. Under the direction of Gerald Clayton, this year's edition performed

particularly challenging music and sounded quite professional. Highlights of their set included Bill Holman's arrangement of *I've Got You Under My Skin*, Frank Lacy's *Requiem* (which had some outstanding alto playing from Khalil Childs with interval jumps worthy of Eric Dolphy), young singer Declan Cashman sounding confident and a bit like Chet Baker on *A Beautiful Friendship*, and pianist Sullivan Fortner guesting on *Blues For Big Scotia*.

It is a tradition at Monterey that a jazz artist premieres a commissioned piece at the festival. This time around pianist Christine Sands composed *Reflections From The Shore: A Monterey Suite*. He performed the lengthy work with his trio plus three young talents from the Next Generation Jazz Orchestra: altoist Khali Childs (remember that name), trumpeter Allie Molin, and tenor-saxophonist Ryan Kaplan. While the movements were not groundbreaking, they gave Sands an opportunity to stretch out on a boppish blues (*Spark*) and to pay homage to the future (*Dream Boys*), Monterey's beautiful scenery (*Cypress Nocturne*), the diversity of jazz (*Up Voices Of The People*), and the joy of making music (*Speak Honest*).

There was so much vital music played at the festival that seeing Echoes Of An Era, an all-star group that featured tenor-saxophonist Javon Jackson, the ageless trumpeter Eddie Henderson, singer Lisa Fischer, pianist Orrin Evans, bassist John Patitucci and drummer Lenny White playing standards was almost an after-thought. At many festivals they would be the headliners, but they were almost lost in the shuffle playing on a Sunday afternoon.

Among the lesser-known artists who made strong impressions were Cuban violinist and singer Yilian Canizares whose high-powered fusion was met with so much applause that she looked happily shocked, and trumpeter Noah Halpern who starred with the pianoless trio New Jazz Underground. One of the few minuses was the exhibitionistic and very loud performance of Trombone Shorty and his group who apparently thought that they were at a mindless rock festival, not bothering with subtlety, taste or original ideas.



Dianne Reeves

Four masterful jazz singers were among the weekend's main stars. Gregory Porter has achieved plenty of fame during the past decade for his warm baritone voice and his talents as a songwriter. While he stuck to his more familiar songs at Monterey, his singing was so passionate, sincere and full of joyful and positive messages that the results were quite exhilarating. Whether it was *On My Way To Harlem*, the touching *Be Good*, an infectious *Clap Your Hands, How Did We Ever Lose Our Way, Take Me To The Alley*, or *I Do Not Agree*, Porter proved again to be a class act, a true storyteller with a charming personality. He does need to eventually introduce some new songs so his sets do not end up just being a series of his greatest hits, but one has no complaints about his rousing Monterey performance.

Dianne Reeves seemed to have been booked at nearly every American festival in 2025 but she was clearly in inspired form at Monterey. With guitarist Romero Lubambo and keyboardist John Beasley featured in her quintet, she performed a very touching version of Horace Silver's *Peace, Lazy Afternoon* and an adventurous rendition of Pat Metheny's *Minuano*.

A new discovery for many (although she is well known in her native Canada) was Caity Gyorgy. A superb scat-singer who has a beautiful voice and is not afraid to creatively use space and silence, she dug into an uptempo *It Might As Well Be Spring, Once In Love With Amy* (taken in a 1930s style), *Baubles, Bangles & Beads*, and a baroque rendition of *All The Things You Are* filled with plenty of interplay with pianist Mark Limacher that was reminiscent of what Mel Tormé and George Shearing would do with the song.

Although she was not booked on the main stage, for this writer

Nnenna Freelon was the surprise hit of the festival. While she has performed worthy music in the past, this performance was something very special. She was joined by a quartet that included pianist Alan Pasqua, guitarist Keith Ganz, bassist Jonathan Richards, and drummer Steve Hass. Like a superb actress, every facial expression, hand movement, and sound that she made (whether singing or speaking between songs), while seeming spontaneous, perfectly fit the mood and lyrics of the songs. Beginning with her optimistic *Changed*, Ms. Freelon performed such numbers as *Beneath The Skin, Dark And Lovely* which sounded as if it could have been a standard from the 1930s (drummer Hass proved to be perfect in the Gene Krupa style), a soulful and modernized *Lover Man* recast as a jazz waltz, her response to *Lover Man* called *What's Your Hurry* (a witty piece about happily dumping her man), *Black Iris*, an ironic *I Feel Pretty, Skylark* (a slow duet with Pasqua), *Widow Song* (about losing her late husband), and a version of *Oh Susannah* that turned the Stephen Foster song from 1846 into a heartbreaking ballad.

This article could have been twice as long, but readers will certainly get the idea. Any jazz fan who happens to be near California in late-September is strongly advised to head straight without hesitation to Monterey. The weekend will leave one very optimistic about the future of jazz.

Scott Yanow, who has written 12 books and over 21,000 recording reviews, recently penned his 1000th set of liner notes. He can be reached for liner notes, bios, press releases, reviews, and other interesting assignments at scottyanowjazz@yahoo.com.

KING PLEASURE AT 40

Next year is the 40th anniversary of King Pleasure and the Biscuit Boys' formation – time to reminisce.



A well remembered line-up

The rocking band were formed in a milk bar in the Black Country town of Darlaston in 1986 and, coming up to their 40th anniversary, still features original members King Pleasure (vocals and baritone saxophone) and Bullmoose 'K' Shirley (guitar).

Jim Simpson of Big Bear, their manager for all those 40 years, recalls that milk bar in Darlaston:

'As kids they had been won over by local wild men of rock, Slade and Roy Wood's Wizzard in particular, but they had also delved back in time to discover Bill Haley and the Comets before becoming captivated by the black musicians who were responsible for rhythm and blues as we know it today.

'So first things first – the band needed a name. Their choice was not an inspired one, probably just the name they disliked the least – the Satellites. The following year, having name-changed to Some Like It Hot, they triumphed in a Birmingham talent contest and were taken into the Big Bear stable.

'When I insisted on changing their name again, the leader, Mark Skirving, didn't disagree,

but asked what name I would suggest. "Why not come up with something like King Pleasure..." I suggested, borrowing the working name of the singer Clarence Beeks, '... and The Biscuit Boys?', loosely referring to the blues radio programme broadcast on Radio KFFA out of Helena, Arkansas.

"That's brilliant," he said. "We'll use that. King Pleasure and the Biscuit Boys."

Thus it was that, many years later, when the band was performing at the Brown Derby in Los Angeles, an indignant middle-aged man came over and asked when King Pleasure was due to come on before storming out having received a negative answer. As Jim says,

'As Clarence Beeks had died a dozen or so years previously booking him that night would have been a real coup for The Brown Derby.'

Over the years the band has notched up more than 7,000 performances in 21 countries, every European country, North Africa, the Middle East, the U.S.A. – even Russia. They have opened shows for the likes of B.B. King, Cab Calloway and Ray Charles. A particularly productive relationship was

with the real Blues Brothers Band – Steve 'The Colonel' Cropper, Donald 'Duck' Dunn, Mr. Fabulous, Blue Lou Marini and the gang – whom King Pleasure and the Biscuit Boys opened for on six shows at three successive Birmingham Jazz Festivals.

'They've recorded 14 albums, 11 with Big Bear Records, plus they've performed for 75 radio broadcasts and appeared on more than 70 television shows, including, somewhat bizarrely, five episodes of Teletubbies!

'They really are the Kings of Swing and the 40th anniversary merits an exciting year of celebrations throughout next year.'

Gigs for next year are already scheduled at clubs, concert halls and festivals for Germany, Denmark and Italy – and, of course, the U.K – and there are plenty more in the pipeline.

That first USA tour included, besides the Brown Derby, a run down the West Coast, down through Arizona, finishing with five nights at the House of Blues in Cambridge, Massachusetts, owned by *Blues Brothers'* Dan Aykroyd and Hard Rock Café's Isaac Tigrett. New York's *Atomic* magazine opined, 'To those who say that swing is a musical form best left to Americans, prepare to be proven wrong.



The first King Pleasure and the Biscuit Boys



The Blues Brothers Band with King Pleasure & The Biscuit Boys

This British combo is bullet-proof!' – a comment that stands comparison with Paul Jones' description of the band on his Radio 2 *The Blues Show* as 'the hardest act to follow since the parting of The Red Sea.'

One memorable night occurred in Lugano in Switzerland when the seven-piece Biscuit Boys became a big band with the addition of top tenor sax men Willie Garnett and Mike Burney, Birmingham trumpet star John Burnett and master of the Harlem stride piano, Duncan Swift on trombone, all four of them, sadly, no longer with us. Mike Burney, incidentally, was a key member of Wizzard and had a spell as a Biscuit Boy, so the wheel came full circle in that respect. The Lugano performance on an outside stage in the city's square was captured for a live television show – and delving through Youtube will pay dividends!

The band's visit to Russia was hardly to the fleshpots of Moscow and St. Petersburg (if they were fleshpots in 1990), but to Nikel, a town devoted to the mining of that ore, described by Jim as 'people living in garage courts, no shops, no apparent leisure facilities, but a fine display of statuary of Russian heroes from Papa Joe onwards.' Originally this was planned as part of a touring Arctic Blues Festival, starting at Kirkenes in North Norway, moving into Russia and finishing

at Murmansk, but owing to the chaotic nature of the Russian leg the Festival got no further than Nikel. The adventures of this trip (from people smuggling to an international incident with Russian border guards and American entertainers to the pianist nearly left behind in (generally) comic detail in Jim Simpson's book, *Don't Worry 'Bout the Bear*.

A series of special gigs (not including Russia!) is planned for next year, with the present line-up joined from time to

time by members from time past. Apart from King Pleasure and Bullmoose 'K' Shirley the current band consists of Boysey Battrum (alto and tenor sax), Mighty Matt Foundling (piano and organ), Shark Van Schtoop (double bass) and Gary 'The Enforcer' Barber (drums). This line-up has been constant for some time, but fondly remembered long-serving Biscuit Boys include Lisa Sugar Lee, Dean Bam Bam Beresford, Slap Happy Al Gare, P Pops Martin, Big Al Nicholls, Martin Winning, Ivory Dan McCormack and Cootie Alexander.

One certain commemoration of the 40th anniversary will be the reissue of a very special album. Big Bear Records are planning to reissue *Blues and Rhythm Volume 1* on which King Pleasure and the Biscuit Boys perform a dozen songs with a series of big name star guests. Prominent among these is the great Charles Brown, with two other Americans, Gene 'The Mighty Flea' Connors and Howard McCrary, and British singing star Val Wiseman. The album features King Pleasure and the Biscuit Boys at their startling best as well as dynamic performances from their guests – watch out for Val Wiseman's stunning take on Buddy and Ella Johnson's *Since I Fell For You*.

Next year's Birmingham Jazz and Blues Festival can lay claim to two years more than the band, being its 42nd incarnation, and topping the bill, of course, for the fifteenth time will be King Pleasure and the Biscuit Boys.

www.bigbearmusic.com



Still rocking after 40 years, the current line-up.

IMPRESSIONS OF WHITLEY BAY

RON SIMPSON on Mike Durham's International Classic Jazz Party (October 31-November 2, 2025)

The International Classic Jazz Party, organised with unobtrusive efficiency by Patti Durham and her team consisted of over 30 sessions (half hour or hour), three late-night jam sessions and three showings of jazz films. My energy levels didn't stretch to jam sessions or film shows, but I attended the vast majority of the main-room sessions. Completing a session-by-session review would be a mighty task, so instead I'll confine myself to *Impressions of Whitley Bay*.

A few generalisations before I start: the programme consists of short concerts suggested by the 30-plus musicians featuring jazz bands/styles from the 1920s and 1930s arranged/transcribed by the proposer and introduced by him. It was interesting to note how many of the leaders of different sessions stressed what they had learned in preparing the music. The introductions were, in some cases, nearly as compelling as the music. Some, it is true, meandered amiably, but you really learned something from the likes of Michael McQuaid, Colin Hancock or Andrew Oliver.

It follows that a hefty percentage of the music should be unknown to the audience: the introductions were full of references to finding/borrowing rare discs and transcribing stuff off Youtube. It struck me that a festival of this nature belongs (oddly) in the electronic age.

An example of rarity value came in pianist Andrew Oliver's compelling tribute to the great songwriter/bandleader Willard Robison. Ask any jazz lover what Robison is famous for and it comes down to a fairly small list of songs: *Old Folks*, *A Cottage for Sale*, *Tain't So*, *Honey*, *Tain't So*, and a couple of others. What was remarkable about Oliver's set was that none of these figured. Instead we had movements from his *American Suite*, inevitably compared to *Rhapsody in Blue*, but with more of a country feel and producing evocative sounds from the 11-piece orchestra, with mellophone and euphonium in evidence together with a clarinet

trio (an unexpectedly common feature over the three days). Away from the suite, Robison's knack for focussing on the unexpected gave us *Truthful Parson Blues*, the easy nonchalance of Colin Hancock's vocal accompanied by piano. Much as I love *A Cottage for Sale*, it was a delight to encounter the range of Robison's genius.

Sometimes the artist in question was completely unknown to me such as Thelma Terry, a propulsive bassist who recorded half a dozen tracks in 1928, then left the music business the next year to marry expensively and put behind her the misogyny of her playing career. Harry Evans stressed that he played the exact notes that Thelma played – and proved that she excelled as a slap bassist – an appealing, if unremarkable, set and a side light on the prejudices of the 1920s jazz scene. Drummer Harry Dial, later with Fats Waller, was another whose total output as leader formed a session. This time the original recording session was from 1930 and an interesting example showed how closely many of the sessions stuck to their originals. Harry led a smart little seven-piece, with trumpet and two reeds, but on one track the trumpeter switched briefly to a third sax. In the interests of authenticity an extra sax was brought off the bench!

Such close adherence to originals is valuable when the audience has never heard the tracks previously, but I must admit to deriving huge pleasure from Natalie Scharf's little set on *Tenors of the 30s*. Starting off with Lester Young, she ran through all the greats, not copying note for note and finishing up with *Body and Soul* – Hawk, of course. I was delighted to hear her version of Bud Freeman's slippery *The Eel*, followed by Bud's trio version of *You Took Advantage of Me*, with Jess Stacy and George Wettling, Josh Duffee having a great time reproducing Wettling's exuberant drumming. Scharf proved a talented and versatile guide to 1930s tenor sax and gave us a welcome reminder of Bud Freeman who seems somewhat neglected these days.



Michael McQuaid

Michael McQuaid was another who strayed from the originals with *The Bechet-Spanier Big Four Reimagined*, a counter-factual set imagined what the great 1940 band (Lewis Taylor as Muggsy) might have done with the songs they didn't record: *At Sundown* (a particularly apposite choice), *Moanin' Low* and the rest.

A particular delight was Colin Hancock's introduction to the music of Jimmy Joy in which, as an alumnus of the University of Texas, he had a vested interest. Jimmy Joy led a campus band in the 1920s, commemorated in Hancock's own group, the Joymakers. Initially based on the music of the New Orleans Rhythm Kings, the Joy band proved a hot little combo, powerfully led by Hancock, with Nick Ward having fun with the wood blocks. They tended to such classics as *Sobbin' Blues*, but Michael McQuaid, king of the gaspipe clarinet, surprised us all with a revamp on *St. Louis Blues* of Joy's *piece de resistance*, playing two clarinets simultaneously! Hancock took us on a fairly detailed view of the Joy band's career: their visit to Kansas City resulting in

more tightly arranged tracks and their association with Texas piano professors, Bill Baxter (composer of *I'm a Ding Dong Daddy from Dumas*) and Peck Kelly.

Hancock had given a similarly exhaustive, if less personal, introduction to Andy Preer's Cotton Club Orchestra (the basis for more famous bands after his death in 1927) and Harry's Happy Four. Not for the last time over the weekend the sound of the tuba (on this session, Phil Rutherford) gave extra bounce to the Preer ensemble, but it was Harry's little group that raised the temperature, with Nicolle Rochelle finding the authentic blues voice for *Some of these Mornings* and hot trumpet/cornet from Mike Davis and Hancock on *Yes, Sir, That's My Baby*.

Two more sizeable groups (or, strictly speaking, three) were The Arcadia Bands and the California Ramblers. The music of the Arcadian Serenaders from St. Louis reflected the style of their trumpet player, Wingy Manone, and, when he left, the more stylish Sterling Bose: *The Co-ed* was

distinctly sophisticated compared to Wingy's assault on *San Sue Strut*. This late night show ended up with a group glorying in the name The Ambassadors Bellhop Orchestra. If nothing else, they knew how to pick names in 1925.

The California Ramblers (from New York State) are one of those groups we've all heard of, but listening to their music is a different matter. McQuaid presented a comprehensive look at them as a bigish band (round about a dozen) rather than the all-star offshoots that get most attention. The one thing we remember, amid a changing population, is the bass sax of Adrian Rollini, a glorious sound which graced the Ramblers before he teamed up with Bix and the rest. David Horniblow gave a masterly reminder of Rollini. Amid some smart charts it was the humour that stood out: McQuaid, following Bobby Davis, using a soprano sax to imitate a Hawaiian steel guitar and then McQuaid joining the fine trumpeter/vocalist Mike Davis in an uproarious re-working of *Clap hands, Here Comes Charlie*.

An unknown (to me) was Nick Lucas, all the more surprising as he had a long career from 1912 to 1981! Best known for *Tiptoe through the Tulips*, he began as a jazz guitarist and Spats Langham played what he claimed to be the first jazz guitar solo – pretty nifty, too! – before joining with Emma Fisk's violin for a couple of numbers. Spats' unique ability to hint at parody while preserving the musical quality saw him through Nick's vaudeville career from 1925, with *The Crooning Troubadours*, a studio band, joining him for a couple of 1932 numbers. Spats' capacity for fun was a boon in an entertaining, if slightly jumbled, set introduced by Martin Wheatley with a variety of string bands. Highlights included some fine mandolin playing from Wheatley, a hilarious vocal from him and Spats on *Darktown Strutters Ball*, *Salty Dog* with Spats' kazoo and *Ramblin' Blues* – one of several bearing that name, this one similar to *Beale Street Blues*. Best of all were two numbers, finishing with an ethereal *High Society*, from a combination of mandolin, guitar, steel guitar and double bass.

Of course there were more familiar names, Louis Armstrong,



Nick Ball

Joe 'King' Oliver and Duke Ellington, to name but a few, but the programmes tended towards the unusual. In 1928 King Oliver was without a band, so his friend Clarence Williams fixed up a series of recording dates with blues singers: Ada Taylor, Lizzie Miles and the rest. The star of this session was Nicolle Rochelle who, throughout the three days, cropped up to sing one number or a whole set as required. I can't vouch for her accuracy in impersonating every singer, but her adoption of the general stylistic features of singers from Ethel Waters to Cleo Brown was remarkable. Here she reflected the blues singers of 1928 perfectly. Texas Alexander was a step too far, however, but fortunately Colin Hancock was on hand!

Nicolle's Ethel Waters set took her from blues singer to vaudeville artist, finally, all-round entertainer with a magical *Am I Blue?* from 1929. Her Cleo Brown was full of infectious *joie de vivre* and dancing energy. It was great to hear again *Lookie, Lookie, Here Comes Cookie*, this after Andrew Oliver had reminded us of Cleo's piano virtuosity with a finger-busting *Pelican Stomp*. Then there was the swingingly soulful Ivie Anderson, Ellington's first singer, represented by such classics as *All God's Chillun Got Rhythm* and *I Got it Bad*, sung with depth and intensity by Nicolle.

As for the main Ellington session, trumpeter Joe Boga put together

a neat little package of the small groups from the Duke's band in the 30s, officially led by the likes of Barney Bigard, Johnny Hodges and Rex Stewart. Lorenzo Baldasso managed a lovely echo of Hodges in numbers such as *Swinging in the Dell* and there were one or two Ellington classics among the obscure offerings: a fine *Stompy Jones* and *Caravan*, Graham Hughes excelling on trombone. Above all the Ellington feel came from the voicing.

Enrico Tomasso nearly managed the impossible, playing a set to commemorate the centenary of the first Hot 5 recordings without *Cornet Chop Suey*, but, as the clock ticked towards 4 o'clock, the finishing time for the set, Rico finally gave us the magnificent set piece, sailing through its difficulties with apparent ease. Before that the best known piece had been *Gut Bucket Blues*, with verbal interplay between Rico and Michael McQuaid – apparently, I learnt on a later session, this was the inspiration of producer Richard M. Jones.

One conspicuous feature was the comparative absence of British and European bands, but Nicholas D. Ball did give us a hugely entertaining set of pre-war Joe Daniels numbers, inevitably titled *Drumnastics*. Joe's Hot Shots (a studio band culled from the best musicians of the day) were a smart little Dixieland outfit with a wildly extrovert drummer, delivering peppy versions of such

songs as *Bugle Call Rag* while Joe merrily deployed cowbells and other novelty devices. It worked, the band swung and Joe had a lot to do with that, even using 'skulls' to huge effect on *Star Dust*. The finale presented an extract from Joe's vaudeville show, with all the tricks and sticks flying everywhere. I guess it wasn't jazz, but it was entertaining. Nick Ball had another fun session, taking us through the washboard bands of Chicago's South Side, from Jasper Taylor to Jimmy Bertrand.

A sign of the range of the Classic Jazz Party comes from the contrast between drumnastics and washboards on the one hand and the Piano Professor set which began each evening. Here you might encounter Andy Schumm (also an accomplished cornet player much featured over the weekend) deciding to regale us with contemporary classical pieces Bix knew and loved before finishing off with one of Bix's own piano gems. It all made sense – and reminded the organisers that there was no Bix on the programme this year – maybe 2026!

A final observation: none of the sessions I attended was less than good, many a great deal better than that, and these are no more than impressions.

CD REVIEWS



KENNY DORHAM

BLUE BOSSA IN THE BRONX

Resonance HCD 2072: 72.35

We must take our hats off to the remarkable California-based Resonance, the non-profit record company 'created to discover the next jazz stars', which is now releasing new material from one of the brightest of the past. It's been decades since we last had anything new from the lyrical trumpet of Kenny Dorham so this is indeed a cause for celebration - even if a year too late to mark his centenary.

These 7 sublime tracks, featuring digressive meditations from Dorham, Sonny Red (alto), Cedar Walton (piano), Paul Chambers (bass) and Denis Charles (drums), were recorded live in 1967 at the Blue Morocco, famous jazz club at the heart of the Bronx, sadly long gone. It was here that John Coltrane made his last live recording, according to the sumptuous 32-page sleeve notes, by Bob Blumenthal, worth the price alone if you take an historical interest.

The Bronx scene, as a whole, was known for its fondness for the fusion of Black and Latino art forms and this record smacks of its time and place. By the late-1960s, the once-underrated Dorham was at the height of his powers, revered as one of the original beboppers, a Blue Note star and the composer of *Blue Bossa*, that compelling yoking of hard bop and Latin pulse and flow, which first appeared on Joe Henderson's *Page One* debut album.

It provides the title track on this, opens the set and lays down the peppy groove, maintained

in expansive jazz classics like Charlie Parker's *Confirmation*, Milt Jackson's *Bag's Groove* and, not least, Miles Davis's *The Theme*. There's an epic journey, subtly different in minor key melody from earlier versions, through Dorham's own *Blue Friday*, an amazing track full of mood swings. *My One And Only Love*, essayed by everyone from Sinatra to John Coltrane (not excluding Bob Dylan) and about ten minutes shorter than the others, really is a haunting tune, especially when infused with the lyrically blue of the leader's instantly recognisable trumpet.

Big shout out to Zev Feldman and his Resonance team for unearthing, remastering and releasing this treasure!

ANDREW LIDDLE



WARREN JAMES' LONESOME TRAVELLERS

LIVE IN LONDON PART 1

Self produced: 32.15

Warren James describes his Lonesome Travellers as his old-time blues band, but the strongest influence is Lonnie Donegan, not that we get any novelty songs, but Warren James' vocal style is unmistakable, high-pitched, thriving on excitement. And the repertoire is drawn from the sources that inspired Donegan in his earlier years: folk songs and hymns of the great American tradition, above all relying on Woody Guthrie. The set runs from *The Wabash Cannonball* to *The Grand Coulee Dam*.

As the title suggests, this is a live set, with occasional spoken introductions, from the Green Note, Camden, with James on guitar and banjo, Jim Swinnerton on double bass and Baby Jools on drums. The opener sets the

tone, with James whipping up the excitement on *The Wabash Cannonball*. Trains seem to suit the Lonesome Travellers: a later highlight is a rousing version of *The Wreck of the Old 97*, with James' banjo prominent, powered by Swinnerton and Jools. *Ramblin' Blues* finds James in more soulful mood, but generally slow introductions are no more than that, soon broken as the tempo builds: *St. Louis Blues*, a rare case of the orthodox jazz repertoire, or *Take My Hand, Precious Lord* where James sings the hymn with due solemnity before bursting into an uptempo instrumental.

Warren James is a fine banjo/guitarist who solos on most of the tracks and the overall effect is hugely enjoyable, rather old-fashioned, but none the worse for that.

RON SIMPSON



IRA B. LISS BIG BAND JAZZ MACHINE WITH COMPOSER/ARRANGER DAN RADLAUER

UNEXPECTED GUESTS

Tall Man Productions, no issue number 47:29

This eighteen-piece big band out of San Diego, California does indeed focus on their unexpected guests on this impressive release. Band guitarist Dan Radlauer's compositions and arrangements allow both the band to play to its strengths and the guests to showcase their own specialities.

The big band itself can range across brassy swinging jazz, riffing behind Wade Culbreath's fluid marimba on *Knock On Wood* (an original of course) or help Ghanaian roots and reggae singer Rocky Dawuni to achieve a big ballad sound on *Extraordinary Woman*. But then, by now we

are already ready to expect the unexpected – the opener, *Renaissance Woman*, is a virtuoso performance by Tali Rubenstein, whose jazz recorder playing is stunning, different and extremely effective; the same kind of comment can be applied to *Reeds Between The Lines* with its funk inflected accompaniment behind Paul Hanson's bassoon lead.

Similarly, *San Joaquin* presents the accomplished mandolin playing of Eva Scow, though violinist Nora Germain's *Violinspiration* may be rather more mainstream but is not the kind of thing heard too often these days. Nor is *Tapped Out* with Leo Manzari providing both the tap dance breaks and the raps...

More world influences come courtesy of the beautiful *Pineapple Mango* with Daniel Ho's ukulele playing and a seven-piece Hawaiian vocal ensemble – and some fiery tenor sax by Greg Armstrong. Tina Guo plays soaring cello on *Strings In The Wind* with the band a little akin to Gil Evans', and this lovely set of unexpected twists and turns draws to a close with *French Fries*, featuring French horn by Chris Castellanos.

NORMAN DARWEN



JOHN COLTRANE WITH RED GARLAND

FOUR CLASSIC ALBUMS

Avid Jazz AMSC 1481: 2 CDs, 81.30/77.19

This Avid Jazz budget-priced double CD offers newcomer listeners an economical way to experience classic jazz at its finest. This collection is no exception- a compilation of four LPs of Coltrane and Garland together in 1957-58, all recorded at Rudy Van Gelder's iconic studio in Hackensack, New Jersey.

While including a wide array of players, most of the tracks have Paul Chambers and Art Taylor aboard along with the two co-leaders, giving the disc a distinctive and well-knit wholesomeness to it.

Coltrane's earnest and deeply profound soulful voice which would emerge even more on his later innovatory period during his Atlantic and Impluse recordings is present here. This is nicely complimented by Garland's light fingered and sprightly melodic inventions which provide a welcome contrast to the more sobering intensity and intentions of Coltrane's tenor.

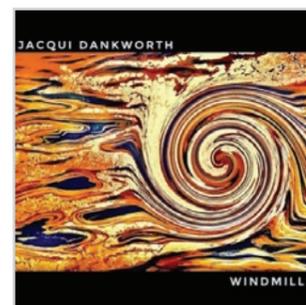
The eighteen tracks herein provide a well balanced blend of hard bop vehicles, lesser known standards along with a few Coltrane originals that would presage the influx of his trail blazing tunes that would become jazz classics up til his early demise at 41 in 1967.

Of particular note is a fourteen minute version of Strayhorn's *Lush Life*- possibly the first instrumental recording of this largely vocalised classic. It also features 25 year old trumpeter, Donald Byrd, to great effect with his lyrical statement of the melody. An interesting contrast to Coltrane's 1963 recording of the same song with Johnny Hartman on Impulse in 1963. Coltrane's role being largely an obligato to Hartman's deeply reverential baritone on what could be considered the greatest and most covered jazz ballad of all time.

Also of interest are Coltrane's takes on two somewhat overlooked standards. Irving Berlin's *Russian Lullaby* and Vincent Youmans' *Rise And Shine*, both of which are taken at breakneck speed which clearly demonstrates Coltrane's fluid mastery of the horn without compromising his melodicism throughout.

A wondrous collective of a rich trove of repertoire of the time, replete with individuality and character with aplomb, all of which portending to what would emerge in future from these two jazz giants.

FRANK GRIFFITH



JACQUI DANKWORTH

WINDMILLS

Perdido Records: 58.00

The poignancy of this release will not be lost upon readers. Here we have a collection of superior songs by eminent songsmiths. The repertoire of twelve songs includes one Irish folk song, *On Raglan Road* from a poem by Patrick Kavanagh and set to the music of the traditional song *The Dawning of the Day* and another written by Dankworth herself, *Will You Wait for Me*. The real beauty of this album is the contrasting musical backgrounds. The core trio, including Charlie Wood on piano and who contributes the arrangements is variously augmented by the Carducci String Quartet on five pieces, the BBC Big Band and the eight-piece string ensemble, Bedazzle! augmenting a couple of the big band selections and accompanying Dankworth on two other pieces.

The album opens with *London by Night*, a song not so often performed these days but first recorded by Frank Sinatra in 1951 and revisited by him in 1958. Another lesser-known song, *Lucky to be Me*, a song with a jubilant, infectious melody and somewhat gushing lyrics and featured in Leonard Bernstein's 1944 Broadway musical *On the Town* is a highlight for me. The album concludes with another offering from the same musical *Some other Time*, the lyrics from Betty Comden and Adolph Green, although referring to a different set of circumstances, seem to have an added layer of pathos in Dankworth's interpretation.

The well-chosen repertoire together with the varied

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instrumental line-ups make for a most memorable and enjoyable listening experience.

ALAN MUSSON



BENNY GOODMAN

THE FAMOUS 1938 CARNEGIE HALL JAZZ CONCERT

AVID Jazz AMSC1459 2 CDs 80:23/ 78:44

The first CD and the initial five tracks of the second of this double CD release in the label's *Classic Concert Series* contain the entirety of the famed 1938 concert. In jazz terms, they don't really come much more classic than this: the first jazz concert in a classical music venue, with the audience – gasp – sitting down and listening instead of dancing, a potted overview of jazz history thus far ('The first twenty years of Jazz!'), a pioneering racially-integrated line-up, and, a dozen years later, a very early double vinyl LP release, and one of the first million-selling albums. It has been reissued more than several times before, so why choose this set?

Well, don't buy this because it is a historical document – well, not solely for that reason anyway. The sound quality is probably as good as we will ever hear – perfectly acceptable. The music is top-notch (as the appreciative applause shows too), even though history has tended to revise Goodman's then *King Of Swing* title down somewhat in later years – listen to *Springtime In The Rockies* or *Sing Sing Sing* to understand why he was granted the title in the first place. But do also lend an ear to, say, the almost fourteen minutes long jam session of *Honeysuckle Rose*, with Count Basie and members of his

Orchestra, or the five Benny Goodman Quartet tracks with Lionel Hampton on swinging vibraphone (not usually my favourite instrument) - try the breakneck *I Got Rhythm*, *Dizzy Spells*, or the more subtle *Stompin' At The Savoy*.

The running time is augmented by the presence of additional material by Benny Goodman's Orchestra, Trio and Quartet from radio broadcasts around the same time, originally issued on a release called *Jazz Concert No. 2*, and which maintains a similar ambience. So yes, consider this release if you don't already have it in one form or other – and this version is, most importantly, probably the most readily available at the moment.

NORMAN DARWEN



NIGEL PRICE ORGAN TRIO

IT'S ON!

NERVYCD 006: 78.02

Though, on his current extended tour Nigel Price is playing some dates with other guitarists, his Organ Trio is a group of fairly long standing. Ross Stanley on Hammond organ and Joel Barford on drums form a tight-knit trio that can ratchet up the tension or savour the melody as the mood takes them.

It's On! is a strangely constructed album, beginning with the standard *Make Someone Happy*, then moving on through six Price originals till it finishes with pieces by Joe Zawinul and Art Pepper. It's only when you hear *Make Someone Happy* that you realise what an excellent choice for opener it is. The trio solo individually and explore the potential complications of the melody until suddenly we're in the clear air with a lovely

melody statement. Price writes about Kenny Burrell who recorded the song, that he loves his combination of 'cool head and big warm inviting sound' and it occurs to me that that's what Price does on this album, with Stanley's stabbed chords interlocking his improvisations and Barford's crisp rhythmic patterns.

Barford apparently thought *Midnight Mood* the track of the album, but to me *76* is the highpoint, Price's reminiscence of the warm summer of that year, moody, melodic and just a touch melancholy. *Chonky* and *Splash the Cash* find the band channelling their funkier side, with Barford particularly effective, and *Red Car* is a fine finale, with its sinuously dancing rhythms. But in truth all nine tracks are good, decently long workouts for a band who know each other's strengths perfectly.

RON SIMPSON



JOHN GOLDSBY WITH THE WDR BIG BAND

BIG BAND BASS

Bass Lion Publishing – BLM022 64.00

Louisville born and raised bassist, John Goldsby's latest release was recorded in 2024 with the WDR Big Band in Cologne, Germany, led by saxophonist/arranger Bob Mintzer, who provided most of the arrangements as well. Goldsby began his 30 year stint in 1994 with the WDR and has just retired from his post in the ensemble. All of the pieces, save one, are Goldsby originals arranged by Mintzer, as well as singular contributions from Vince Mendoza, Dave Horler and Mike Abene. All of these having guested with the WDR band over many years.

This collection boasts a varied array of material including heartfelt lyrical ballads, rollicking Brazilian groves and uptempo flag wavers, all of which spotlight Goldsby's statements of his original and poignant melodies and crafty soloing in equal measure.

Highlights for me include Vince Mendoza's piece- *Sonatinita*, with its airy woodwind textures gently enveloping the woodiness of Goldsby's bass resulting in an engaging simpatico amongst the two forces. Mintzer's driving angle on *The Baron's Dilemma* captures the classic 'full on' big band spurring and stirring dynamic with a triumvirate of blazing tenorists, raising the ante at every turn. Plaudits to Paul Heller, Ben Fitzpatrick and the arranger himself on this 'take no prisoners' saxophone firefest.

Arranger, Mike Abene's use of woodwinds and muted brass on *Sergio* bring this Samba vehicle in 3/2 metre (in honour of a tour guide that he met in Salvador, Bahia) wonderfully. The ensemble treatment is matched with the composer's melodically fleet soloing throughout.

Goldsby's storied stint in NYC (1980-1994) had him working with the bands of Wynton Marsalis, Loren Schoenberg, Lionel Hampton, Gunther Schuller and the Smithsonian Masterworks Orchestra, Benny Goodman as well as Claude Bolling and Hubert Laws (on *The Tonight Show*, no less). All of them benefitted from his empathy and solidarity in an ensemble, coupled with his individuality and creativity as a soloist. Like my good friend, the late Eddie Harvey, a British trombonist/pianist liked to tell his students. 'Learn to be a good accompanist- there's a lot of money in it'.

What's particularly remarkable about *Big Band Bass* is Goldsby's dual role in 'driving the bus' in the band's rhythm section along with being a featured soloist throughout. Not for the faint hearted. An exemplary recording for bassists and big band fans alike.

FRANK GRIFFITH

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LITTLE WILLIE JOHN

FIVE CLASSIC ALBUMS

Avid AMSC 1478: 2CDs, 150.00

Songs are funny things. One person can sing a song and have a hit, and then another person sings it and the original kind of vanishes.

This new double-CD collection from the excellent Avid people contains Little Willie John's versions of *Fever* and *Need Your Love So Bad*, both of which are indelibly associated with other artists: respectively, Peggy Lee and Fleetwood Mac. You might say their story is something of a microcosm of Little Willie's own.

The collection spans the five years from 1955 to 1960, and it's like a potted history of pop from that era. You hear Little Willie maturing as a singer, and you hear the pop paymasters throwing songs and arrangements at him in a bid to claw another hit out of the lucrative new rock'n'roll business.

Fever is the epitome of the way the industry worked (and still works). The fourth album *Sure Things* contains *My Love Is*, complete with finger pops and spooky bass line, and *I'm Shakin'*, which has a format that is equally reminiscent of Peggy Lee's take.

Meanwhile, you get glimpses of what Little Willie was really about. Even as a young man, he had a gutsy, blues-shouter voice, evoking Little Richard and sowing the seeds for people like Robert Plant and Eric Burdon. There's a run of his own songs at the end of the *In Action* album that rock hard; you can't help wondering what might have happened if his life hadn't fallen apart in a mess of booze and drugs.

Little Willie died in prison in 1968, the official cause being a heart attack. He had been convicted of manslaughter in 1966, after stabbing a man in a fight outside a Seattle bar. He was only 30 years old.

Maybe there's a hint of what was to come on the stand-out track, *There's Someone In This World For Me*, written by Little Willie's wife Darlynn, who died in September of this year. It's a howl of longing sung with poignant passion, remarkable for a 20-year-old. You can't help feeling that this was a young man with a lot more to offer than he was ever allowed to express.

STUART MAXWELL



COLIN HANCOCK'S JAZZ HOUNDS FEATURING CATHERINE RUSSELL

CAT AND THE HOUNDS

Turtle Bay Records TBR 25005 CD: 37.33

Colin Hancock is, in many ways, as much a jazz historian as he is a cornetist and bandleader and his notes with Paul Kahn for this CD are as learned as they are informative. *Cat and the Hounds* developed from Catherine Russell hearing Hancock provide the music for a housewarming party in Brooklyn in 2023, but further back one can trace its origins in Hancock's delight in digging out the history of 1920s territory bands.

This particular collection is given an added *frisson* by the fact that Catherine's father, Luis Russell, recorded the opener, *Panama Limited Blues*, with Ada Brown. A typical railroad song, it begins with train noises from Jerron Paxton's harmonica and is a fine example of Hancock's

arranging skills, proving his contention that these early musicians were anything but uneducated musically.

With *Cakewalkin' Babies From Home* we're into more familiar material, Russell in fine 1920s blues singer form. A mighty version of Mamie Smith's *Crazy Blues* is another that finds band and singer digging down deep into the tradition, but some of the less well known pieces are equally impressive. *Elevator Papa*, *Switchboard Mama* channels the spirit of Butterbeans and Susie in Russell and Paxton's saucy vocal. *West Indies Blues* is a real highlight with Russell pointing the words skilfully over the infectious dance tune and guest Vince Giordano raising the temperature with his bass sax. *Carolina Shout* appears in unfamiliar guise, part Jon Thomas' stride piano, but also as a raggy ensemble piece.

Catherine Russell's versatility shines through during the whole of the album, the band supports her splendidly and seizes every opportunity in breaks and brief solos. As for Colin Hancock, his references to the likes of cornetists Thomas Morris and Johnny Dunn show where he's coming from.

RON SIMPSON



VICTOR FELDMAN

AN ENGLISHMAN ABROAD

Acrobat ADDCD3551 74.46 / 73.16

Back in the day, some of Britain's brightest jazz talents, pianists mostly, felt impelled to test themselves in New York, then the hotbed of jazz. George Shearing did it and stayed as did Ronnie Ball, Ralph Sharon and later, Dill Jones. But arguably our greatest jazz export was the prodigious Victor Feldman

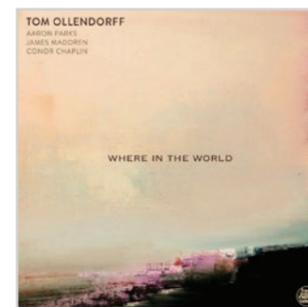
(1934-87), once known as the Kid Krupa and a luminary of our jazz scene who made for New York in 1955 to join Woody Herman's road band. Two years later he settled in Los Angeles, where he flourished as a drummer, pianist, vibist, studio percussionist and composer.

Acrobat's welcome double-CD compilation concentrates on Feldman's early Los Angeles 'name' albums and especially, his prowess on vibes. Much in the manner of Avid and their Classic Albums concept, compiler Paul Watts has opted to run four albums in full, *Mallets A Fore Thought* from Mode, *The Arrival of Victor Feldman* and *Latinville* (both Contemporary) plus Riverside's *Merry Olde Soul*, spanning the years 1957-1961.

Feldman's companions on record seem always to have been top drawer, viz pianist Carl Perkins, bassist Leroy Vinegar and drummer Stan Levey for the Mode album, Victor brightly positive on his own *Fidelius*, his vibes style pianistic not percussive, viz his pleasing exposition of *Sweet and Lovely*, Perkins neatly boppish. Things perk up when trombonist Frank Rosolino and tenorist Harold Land join the trio for three VF originals (their presence omitted unaccountably in the personnel listing), their breezy vigour on *Wilbert's Tune* very pleasing indeed. Much the same goes for the initial Contemporary recording, Levey retained, the young Scott LaFaro on bass, Victor handling vibes and piano, sounding sensational on his *Chasing Shadows*, his fluency on either instrument quite inspirational, the trio of the highest quality, LaFaro stunning in his drive and swing. *Latinville* has a larger cast with trumpeter conte Candoli featured, and takes a less-adventurous path, timbales and congas ever-present. The second Riverside album is also weighted towards the Latinate. Buy this value double for the first two albums: sumptuous talents, wondrously displayed.

What lay ahead for Feldman? Success aplenty with Cannonball Adderley and Miles Davis etc, but that's a whole other story.

PETER VACHER



TOM OLLENDORFF

WHERE IN THE WORLD

Fresh Sound New Talent FSNT 719: 48.40

Having seen guitarist Tom Ollendorff in concert some two weeks before receiving this CD, I am struck by the effect of two Americans. In concert Jeff Ballard was a more extrovert figure than the excellent, but unobtrusive, James Maddren on the CD. The CD features a quartet including Aaron Parks who adds density to Ollendorff's improvisations, picking up the melody from the guitarist, laying down repeated phrases, but not disturbing the basic contours of the music.

The other major change on the CD is to feature entirely Ollendorff compositions. He is beyond doubt a fine composer, but the absence of standards produces a certain sameness, many tracks conveying a dream-like quality with repeated melodic phrases.

Meaningless Mirror is particularly ambitious, Ollendorff and then Parks soloing over bassist Conor Chaplin's steady pulse. *Last Leap* warms up matters, with Maddren finishing things off with a crisp drum solo, but the mood for the album is set with the opening *Past Lives* leading into the mesmeric patterns of the title track. *Tokyo Waltz* plays out again over Chaplin's bass, but the highspot of the album, as it was of the concert, is the lovely *Atlantic Angels*, echoes of the West Coast of Ireland.

This is an excellent album, full of consummate musicianship, but I would have welcomed a broader base in terms of the material.

RON SIMPSON



DUKE ELLINGTON AND HIS ORCHESTRA

COLUMBIA VOCAL RARITIES

Jasmine JASMC2850 78.00

Pundits haven't always been kind to Duke's vocalists, especially the males ones. So it was with some trepidation that I approached the latest in Jasmine's well-presented Ellingtonian compilations. Only to find that much of it, running to 29 well-restored tracks, pleasingly worthwhile, the vocal longeurs relatively few. Reassurance came early with the opening track, *Women, Women, Women* from 1947 with Ray Nance's trumpet intro, followed by his knowing vocal, one of several in the collection, the blissful Johnny Hodges adding his own immaculate commentary.

Annotator/compiler Ian Bradley split his selections between a pre-1948 batch, crammed in to beat the AFM's then upcoming recording ban and a 1950s series, many of them alternative takes. In effect this shifts the balance between vocals (Nance, Chester Crumpler, Lloyd Oldham) as incidentals to an orchestral performance, vocal interludes you could say, to later tracks where the singer is front and centre, the band's soloists rather more muted. From the earlier sides, I liked Woody Herman's guest vocal on *I Fell and Broke My Heart*, with Hodges alongside as well as series with regular band singer Dolores Parker. Lil Greenwood is gospel-hot on 1958's *Walkin' and Singing the Blues* and Jimmy Grissom has a ball on the raunchy *Rock City Rock* from a year earlier.

Thereafter it's the vocals of Ozzie Baily whose rather static version of *Duke's Place* makes me thankful for Duke and Louis Armstrong's 1961 collaboration or the measured tones of Milt Grayson. The album's Heinz-like varieties conclude

with a pair of Duke's own solo vocals, recorded informally, which reveal that he was wise to allow others to handle all such vocal assignments and a fun-filled version of *Love You Madly* with Nat King Cole and Sarah Vaughan singing atop the band in a 1951 concert. Great stuff.

PETER VACHER



SCARBOROUGH JAZZ FESTIVAL 2024

71.44/61.30

(N.B. Andrew offers a different viewpoint on a double CD which was referred to in *Jazz Rag* 187)

Here is a spirited compilation of live recordings made at the 2024 Scarborough Jazz Festival issued somewhat tardily, you might think, but welcome nevertheless. The double cd runs selectively and chronologically through the six weekend sessions and highlights both the diversity and excellence of the extended programme.

In the interest of balance and inclusivity there is one item from each major contributor which adds up to a healthy blend of big names like the evergreen Elaine Delmar, Fay Claassen, and Spa veteran performer and compère Alan Barnes, and rising stars, James Hudson, of the beautiful voice, and exciting young saxophonist Emma Rawicz, for example.

Above all, the sheer eclecticism stands out of a festival renowned for ranging over the gamut of jazz genres from early jazz through swing, bop, cool, hard bop, progressive and modern all the way to free style. The Festival Director and moving spirit, Mark Gordon, is once again to be congratulated.

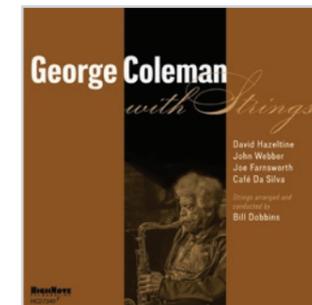
Last year's programme included the immensely popular 11-strong Al Morrison Blues Experience, a piano trio led by Fergus McCreadie with Scottish folk music elements,

and the 7-piece Hejira performing their tribute to Joni Mitchell, which has earned them a tremendous YouTube following. Big Band fans were rewarded by the considerable presence of those of Gareth Lockrane and Tom Smith.

Family Band, a quartet with Kim Macari on trumpet, were there to speak Bebop, and did with a freely improvised *Life's Work*. You've got to hear the Benet McLean Quintet's heart-stopping take on *Round Midnight*, and Big Ben's celebration of Ben Webster, with Tony Kofi and Alex Webb, which brought the weekend to a triumphal close.

It's impossible in the space allowed to mention all 17 collective and individual performers but you will perhaps have caught the joyously libertarian spirit of the Scarborough Jazz Festival.

ANDREW LIDDLE



GEORGE COLEMAN WITH STRINGS

HIGH NOTE- HCD 7349

35.00

Sax and Strings has a time honoured tradition in jazz. Starting with *Bird With Strings* in the late 1940s, followed by Coleman Hawkins, Ben Webster, Johnny Hodges (with Lawrence Welk, no less) Sonny Stitt, Jan Garbarek, Gary Smulyan and countless others to date. One must not forget Stan Getz's epic 1961 LP- *Focus*, with Eddie Sauter which significantly raised the bar for this setting

Renowned Memphis born born saxist, George Coleman, has joined this illustrious legacy with his latest offering with his longtime group aboard - Pianist- Dave Hazeltine, bassist- John Webber and Joe Farnsworth on drums. Recorded in 2022, it includes five classic but lesser played/known vehicles (excepting Victor

Young's *Stella By Starlight*). Like Mandel's *A Time For Love*, Mancini's *Moment To Moment*, Monk's *Ugly Beauty* and *Dedicated To You* from the pen of Sammy Cahn. All of which are resplendent in bringing out the magnificence and eclectic dynamism of the brass saxophone and woody sonority of the chamber sized string ensemble at hand here.

Arranger, Bill Dobbins, rises to the occasion with aplomb, especially with his orchestrally lush and bold string introductions on *Ugly Beauty* and *A Time For Love*. They are followed by Coleman's entry with a lyrical patience- understating the themes giving a welcome contrast to what preceded it.

This career autumnal gem highlights Coleman's reflective side with his deeply resonant tone coupled with a paucity of notes played. Perfectly apt for fully celebrating these superior themes and harmonies. These kind of brilliant but daring choices are principal to Coleman's music, in his now 90th year. Let it continue onward!

FRANK GRIFFITH



HANNAH GILL

SPOOKY JAZZ VOL. 3

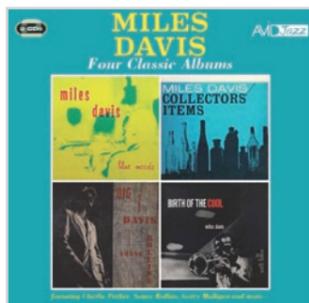
Turtle Bay TBR25007 CD (44:05)

The long winter nights draw on, and although Halloween may have passed, Christmas and the death of the old year bring their own helpings of ghostly goings-on. Hannah's CD is the perfect accompaniment. Something of an internet sensation, this young singer from Bushwick, Brooklyn in New York has a classic jazz woman's vocal style, with shades of Anita O'Day and Ella Fitzgerald and some modern touches, and a wicked sense of humour to judge from the material here.

After a haunting spoken introduction, she tackles tracks such as *Old Devil Moon*, Etta Jones'/Dinah Washington's blues *The Richest Guy In The Graveyard*, and the seductive *Moon Ray*, with its brittle, reverb-laden guitar break by Justin Poindexter, moaning violin solo by Gabe Terraciano, and slinky piano work by Gordon Webster. The closing *Wolves In The Tree Line* is a straight blues performance with Poindexter really sinking his teeth into his guitar break. *I'm Gonna Haunt You* has a swing approach and multi-tracked vocals creating a smooth Andrew Sisters type of sound, whilst Tommy Dorsey's *My Friend The Ghost* has more of an early 50s feel; so too does Betty Hutton's rather bluesier *He's A Demon, He's A Devil, He's A Doll*, with a very vamp-y vocal and wonderful sax break by Ricky Alexander.

Yes, on this set Hannah brings back to life plenty of songs you thought were long dead and buried – some of them prematurely. You may want to turn the lights down to listen to this alluring set... but not too far down.

NORMAN DARWEN



MILES DAVIS

BLUE MOODS, COLLECTORS ITEMS, DIG AND BIRTH OF THE COOL

Avid Jazz AMSC1482 2 CDs, 70.55/79.05

This 2-CD collection brings together sessions from 1950, 1951, 1953, 1955 and 1956. Perhaps the best known of these is the set for *Birth of the Cool* from 1950, the famed collaboration between Davis, Gerry Mulligan and Gil Evans. The sessions are marked by a grand group sound from the nine-man assemblage, the balance of power between ensemble passages and solos and the deceptively simple arrangements

deploying new instrumentation such as tuba and French horn. An additional joy is to hear Lee Konitz deploying his "exotic and imaginative work" on the album. Throughout, we hear the delicate swing of the band, the result of the enthusiastic experimentation of Davis and his colleagues.

The first disk opens with *Blue Moods* from 1955 and some choice standard songs, including 'Easy Living' and 'Alone Together' played by a five piece group with Britt Woodman on trombone, Teddy Charles on vibraphone and Chales Mingus on bass. There was reportedly some tension between the bassist and the trumpeter and also involving the drummer, but the result is a session of interest to listeners.

The interest in *Collectors Items* is in the fact that the six-piece group includes Charlie Parker, playing under the pseudonym of Charlie Chan, on tenor saxophone on some tracks, accompanied by fellow tenor saxophonist Sonny Rollins. The repertoire consists mostly of lesser-known Davis originals plus 'Round About Midnight' and 'In Your Own Sweet Way' both of which have since become jazz staples.

As is usually the case, the liner booklet reproduces the original album notes, which are always of interest and yet continue to prove an optical challenge for this aged reviewer.

FRANK GRIFFITH



LIZZY & THE TRIGGERMEN

LIVE AT JOE'S PUB

www.lizzyandthetriggermen.com 73.74

Making waves across the pond is a sparking ten piece outfit led by Boston born and opera trained vocalist Lizzy Shaps,

now based in Los Angeles. Recorded live at the legendary Joe's Pub in New York in April 2024 and released in August 2025, this highly anticipated album features a team of top jazz musicians from both coasts and the ensemble positively steams throughout. With arrangements largely written by former Benny Goodman lead trombonist, Dan Barrett, the bar is raised from the start.

Promoted as an indie swing band, Shaps presents an eclectic mix of material, opening with a lively, feel-good *When I Get Low I Get High* followed with an equally upbeat *A Lot Of Livin' To Do*. I confess the vocals jarred at times, but on viewing the singer online, she certainly exudes a dynamic stage presence. She enjoys a good rapport with her musicians here and warmly engages with her audience with amusing asides and bold renditions of *Ding-Dong! The Witch Is Dead* and a super *Outta Your League*, accompanied by Gary Wicks on bass and great riffs from the band; who in turn delight everyone with some inspired solos on *Good Queen Bess* and *Struttin' With Some Barbecue*.

Shaps continues to surprise, harmonizing vocally on Sydney Bechet's clarinet duet *Waste No Tears*, delivering Barrett's impressive arrangement of the Britney Spears hit...*Baby One More Time* and performing a stunning *La Vie en rose* in French, accompanied by trombonist, John Allred. Irving Berlin's wartime swipe at Hitler, *When That Man Is Dead And Gone* is a show stopper. The irony and humour is not lost on the audience and for an encore, Shaps weaves her operatic skills into Harold Arlen's lyrics on *I Love To Sing-a* for a jazz inspired finale.

Overall, a programme enriched with diversity and outstanding musicianship.

VAL WISEMAN

SCARBOROUGH JAZZ FESTIVAL

(September 26-28)

The 22nd Scarborough Jazz Festival, Mark Gordon's second in charge, broadly followed the lines established under his father, still a welcome presence at this year's festival. It took full advantage of the facilities at the Spa to set up two places for informal jazz between the main acts in the Grand Hall: Farrer's Bar and the Sun Court – and, lest anyone thinks these were in any way inferior, I caught the excellent Emma Holcroft Quintet in Farrer's and Alan Barnes (splendid on baritone sax) and Mark Gordon guesting with the Al Morrison in the Sun Court. Perhaps, if anything, this off-piste jazz was more fully organised this year; it seemed to fill every moment.

The main programme consisted of 17 sets of an hour and a quarter each arranged in two sessions a day with a quick turn-around within each session. I attended from Saturday evening and caught eight of the sets. I was fortunate in that I had heard most of the artists glowingly reported on over the first day and a half at Buxton Festival in July: Dean Stockdale's *100 Years of Oscar Peterson*, Alan Barnes' *Works of Art*, the Gaz Hughes Trio. My one real regret was missing the Shirley Smart Trio: it's not every day you get the chance to hear a jazz cellist and by all accounts she was exceptional.

On the Saturday evening the most interesting performance came from the Emma Rawicz Jazz Orchestra. Emma, I suspect, suffers from having too much talent in too many different areas and I cannot say I enjoyed her performance at Buxton with a small group: dazzling technical ability, but most numbers deliberately shapeless, without any solid basis. I was gratified to find her treatment of the orchestra more disciplined – and her ability as a composer is beyond doubt! The opening number was more like a suite, 12 minutes of constantly changing rhythmic and dynamic patterns. The most remarkable feature came from the wordless vocals of Aitzi Cofre Real, perfectly accurate pitching absorbed into the overall orchestral sound or, as in the next number, rising out of it. To be honest I would have preferred

more melody, but instead we had gorgeously layered sound – and imaginative use of different instruments, for instance, paring the orchestral sound sound down to Tom Cawley's piano and Freddie Jensen's bass.

It's part of the appeal of Scarborough that we have surprises galore and Sunday was full of them, but Saturday evening disappointed somewhat. I couldn't find much to enjoy in Lucy Randell's rather harsh vocals for Jazz Dynamos which didn't offer much by way of 'artistic re imaginings', though there was plenty of enjoy from Stewart Curtis on a range of reed instruments (was it four or five?) and Mark Adelman's keyboard. James Taylor then gave us a slice of exuberant old-time jazz, bullying the audience into singing along with *Green Onions* and adding trumpet and tenor to his organ quartet for uncompromising hard bop.

Sunday afternoon was full of nice surprises. The Alexia Gardner Quintet is a group from the North East that I had never heard of, but they cooked up a fine set, with swinging solos (Harry Keeble on tenor sax in particular, Alexia herself with wordless vocals) on jazz classics, a fine choice of standards and one or two special treats. Alexia sings with elegant poise, breaking up the rhythm and re-phrasing the words, without compromising the melody of such gems as *Cheek to Cheek*, *The Way You Look Tonight* (nice interplay with Jude Murphy's bass) and *The Lady is a Tramp*. *Gonna Be A Great Day* began a *cappella* before Alan Law's piano came in. Incidentally I see I've mentioned everyone except the drummer, the redoubtable Abbie Finn. My own favourite track was a Bob Marley medley, from *No Woman No Cry* to *Two Little Birds*, Alexia linking the two together in a clever coda. Alexia is a versatile singer with the wisdom to surround herself with excellent musicians and feature them freely.

Billy Marrows' Grande Familia wound up the afternoon set and here, having looked up the band afterwards, I am rather ashamed of hardly having heard of them

before. The Grande Familia in its full form (there are apparently two smaller versions) is a 12-piece with a most unusual line-up. In addition to Billy's guitar, trumpet, trombone, three reeds (including frequent use of bass clarinet), piano, bass and drums, there are French horn, viola and flute. I never thought I would ever hear a guitar and viola duet, very beautiful, too, from a jazz band. Actually the question of whether this is a jazz band (I was surprised to hear that their CD had been nominated for Jazz CD) seems irrelevant in the face of some constantly surprising musicianship. The music, again layered, but more melodic than Emma Rawicz, thrived on contrast, with French horn and flute prominent in ensembles, Angus Bayley providing delicately eloquent piano and Olli Martin going to the opposite extreme with some bruising trombone. As for Billy Marrows, his guitar featured prominently, as did his evident sincerity.

The middle group in the afternoon session was less of a surprise. Five-Way Split is a hard bop group founded on the crisp and precise trumpet of Quentin Collins, the powerful tenor sax of Vasilis Xenopoulos, the all-round piano excellence of Rob Barron and the compositional skills of all three. The expertise in dealing with obscure time signatures was impressive and both Collins and Xenopoulos made their mark with extended solos on every tune, with (rather surprisingly) especially potent work on the only non-original, *All the Way*. A fine set would have benefitted from more evident signs of enthusiasm from the band: Collins and Xenopoulos' habit of disappearing during other solos was rather disconcerting.

Sunday evening was a mixture of the surprising and the foreseeable. Joe Stilgoe and the Entertainers sprang the surprise – and, in truth, some little disappointment. Of seven musicians listed in the programme, only Stilgoe and trumpeter/singer Pete Horsfall appeared; to those who thought the Entertainers was a joint project for Stilgoe and clarinetist Giacomo Smith, his non-appearance, together with those of Emma Smith and Joe Webb, left a

hole. In fairness, Stilgoe did his best to fill it, with bouncily enthusiastic, as well as technically adept, piano to go with his extrovert singing. And Lucy-Anne Daniels and Tom Jarvis proved admirable replacements for the Smiths.

The programme also surprised, a series of songs about the sort of people you encounter at a jazz club, rounded off with an exuberant *Puttin' on the Ritz*. Songs such as *Mr. Peanut* and, especially, *The Man in the Moon*, could well have a life beyond the rather artificial construct of this set. At times Stilgoe the composer seemed to have been listening to early Randy Newman, than whom there is no better.

The final concert of the Festival was the totally predictable excellence of the outstanding Simon Spillett Big Band in the music of Tubby Hayes, scores from the Hayes band book reconstructed by Mark Nightingale. Simon Spillett was heavily featured on the first number, but thereafter his tenor sax was little more than a prop. He told us that he is often asked why he doesn't play more sax with the big band, but the quality of his musicians is a good enough answer – this band is a gathering of the best in British jazz.

Take Your Partners for the Blues proved the point, with exciting solos from Alan Barnes (on baritone in this band), Ian Bateman, Alex Garnett, Robert Fowler, Steve Fishwick and Tom Dennis in between some fine section work for the trumpets. It's a measure of the solo power on offer that it was late in the set before we heard from Mark Nightingale, though he made up for it with two cracking solos. The only complaint about a wonderful set is that it was too short: maybe an exception to the 75 minute rule could have been made.

Half the acts for 2026 have been booked which is proof of the Festival continuing into its 23rd edition, that and the enthusiastic audience which filled the Spa.

RON SIMPSON

HENRY'S BLUESLETTER

REVEREND GARY DAVIS

From the most humble of beginnings, Reverend Gary Davis, also known as Blind John Davis, was to become a most important guitarist, a prolific recording artist and an influence to generations of guitar men.

He was born on a farm between Clinton and Laurens, South Carolina on April 20th 1896, one of the eight children of John and Evelina. He was later to recall that the farm was "way down in the sticks; so far you couldn't hear a train whistle blow 'less it was on a cloudy day'.

As a child he suffered from ulcerated eyes, and was partially blind at 2 months.

Perhaps his blindness led him to concentrate on music from a very early age, teaching himself to play harmonica at 5, banjo at 6 and guitar at seven years old.

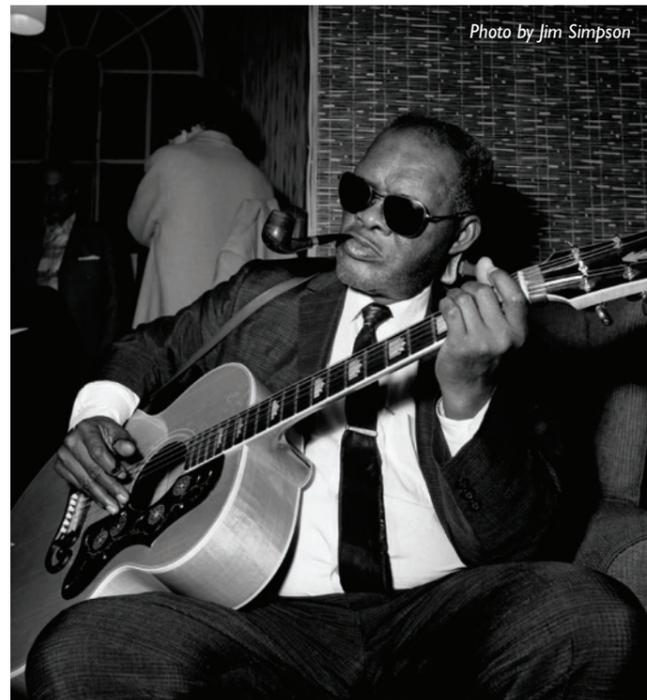
Gary was raised and worked on the farm and as a

youngster he would play at local parties and picnics as well as singing and playing at the Centre Ravn Baptist Church in nearby Gray Court. He attended Silver Springs School for Blind People in Spartanburg from the age of 18.

The following year he moved to Durham, North Carolina to work outside of music as well as getting involved with the Piedmont blues scene, playing and singing at local parties, 'til he moved again, to Asheville to work as a street singer.

He was to say later, that his early influences were Blind Blake and Craig Fowler.

Religion was never far away during Gary's lifetime, and in 1933 he was ordained as a Minister of The Free Baptist Connection Church in Washington. He began touring through the Carolinas as a singing preacher, working camp meetings, revival meets, country churches and the streets before settling back in Durham playing street parties, dances, chittlin'



struts and churches, until 1940 when he moved to New York City.

It was there that he was first recorded, this time for the ARC label, and also went back to preaching at The Missionary Baptist Church. He still worked as a street singer but things were looking up for the never work-shy Gary Davis. He appeared on local radio and found himself booked to appear on folk concerts.

In 1945 he recorded for Asch Records in NYC, taught at Brownie McGhee's 'Home of The Blues' School and was back in the recording studio for the Lenox Record Label.

The American Folk Music Revival was getting under way and they really took to the music of Reverend Gary Davis. He was featured on The Leadbelly Memorial concert, recorded for Stinson Records, Riverside, Folk-Lyric, Bluesville/Prestige and Canada's Kicking Mute Records.

In 1958 he got to play Carnegie Hall and the next

year he featured at the Newport Folk Festival and toured through the USA and Canada.

I have no idea how it happened, but Transatlantic Records, at that time a modest folk label based in London, also got Gary into the recording studio. He also found time to take on the role of assistant producer at The Time Heart Baptist Church in the Bronx, then there was the 1964 short film "Blind Gary Davis" made in New York, and then Europe came a-knockin' at his door.

George Wein, New York jazz pianist and renowned concert organiser put together a most ambitious project, The 1964 American Folk, Blues & Gospel Caravan that toured through UK and Europe, often giving audiences there first experience of seeing some of the great bluesmen of that era. The show was headlined by Muddy Waters and his band - Otis Spann, Ransom Knowling and Willie Smith - along with Sonny Terry & Brownie McGhee, Sister Rosetta Thorpe,

Mississippi John Hurt, Reverend Gary Davis and Cousin Joe Pleasant (better known to UK and European audiences as Cousin Joe from New Orleans). That tour is best-remembered for the Granada TV Special filmed at Chorltonville Station, a disused railway station where the musicians played on one platform facing the audience on the other platform.

It was a really successful project organised by Granada TV's Johnny Hamp. Those who saw it will never forget the entrance by Sister Rosetta Thorpe, on Cousin Joe's arm, singing "Didn't It Rain" - which it certainly did. I was lucky enough to catch the show at Birmingham Town Hall which is where I met Cousin Joe. We later signed him to Big Bear Records and toured him many times as well as recording him for Big Bear. Offstage, reverend Gary Davis would sit in the dressing room, strumming guitar and humming to himself.

Gary was particularly successful on that tour, with both the blues and the folk audiences really taking to him and he was immediately booked back for a solo tour the next year, playing big venues and folk festivals.

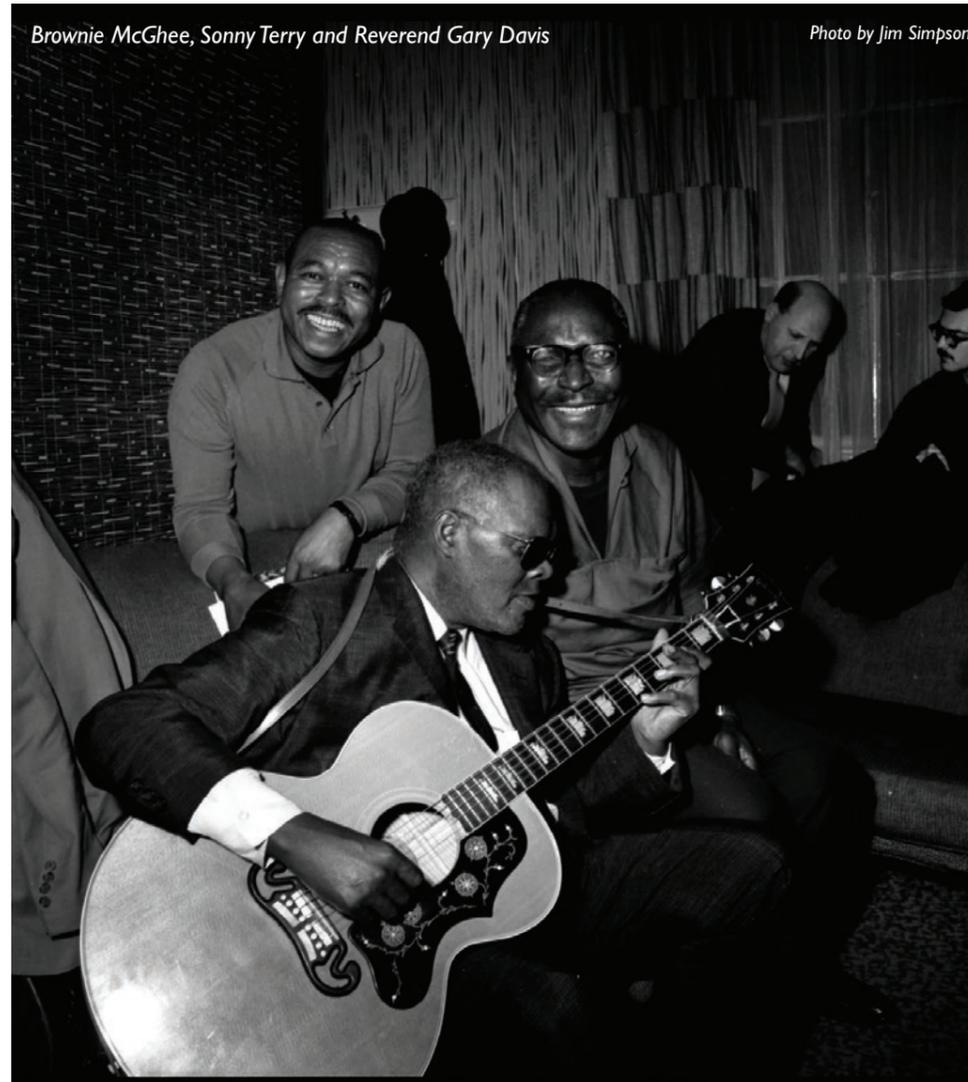
Back in the U.S., Gary was receiving proper recognition appearing on WNDT-TV's "Rainbow Quest" and the short film feature "Reverend Gary Davis" as well as recording for RCA Vanguard, Fontera and Adelphi through 1967 to 1969 - returning for another UK tour 1969.

Peter, Paul and Mary recorded Davis' version of "Samson and Delilah," known as "If I Had My Way", as sung by Blind Willie Johnson which Davis popularised.

Although the song was in the public domain it was copyrighted as by Gary at the time of recording. The royalties allowed Davis to buy a house and live

Brownie McGhee, Sonny Terry and Reverend Gary Davis

Photo by Jim Simpson



contentedly for the rest of his life. He referred to it as The House That Peter, Paul and Mary built.

The indefatigable Gary Davis stayed on the road until the end, as well as appearing in the 1970 ABC TV film "Tell It Like It Is", headlining at England's Cambridge Folk Festival the following year recording in New York for Biograph; working with Sister Davis at Little Mount Moriah Baptist Church, NYC, The Festival of American Folklife in Washington; working through New York State and New Jersey; featuring in the French bio film "Blind Gary Davis" until, on May 5th 1972, on the way to play a concert date in Newtonville, New Jersey he suffered a heart attack and died in the William Kessler Memorial Hospital in Hammonton.

He was buried in Rockville Cemetery in Lynbrook, New Jersey.

Gary Davis first married during the 1920s, but in 1937 married Sister Annie Bell Wright who was as religious and spiritual as he was. In 1944 they moved to Mamaroneck, New York, where Annie took work as a housekeeper. They subsequently moved to 169th Street in the East Bronx and finally to Jamaica in Queens in 1968. His widow, Annie Bell Wright Davis died in 1997.

After his death, record releases and re-releases continued apace, with at least 20 published up to 2022.

His finger-picking guitar work influenced a whole army of musicians, prominent

among them are Ry Cooder, Donovan, Blind Boy Fuller, Larry Johnson, Bob Weir of The Grateful Dead, Brownie McGhee, Ralph McTell, Taj Mahal, Tarheel Slim and Bob Dylan - who referred to Gary as "one of the wizards of modern music."

Gary Davis was posthumously recognised, alongside Blind Boy Fuller, as Main Honourees by the Sesquicentennial Honour Commission at the Closing Ceremony in Durham, North Carolina on November 2nd 2019 in recognition for their contributions to Piedmont Blues.

JIM SIMPSON

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LIVE REVIEWS

CLARE TEAL 5

YORK THEATRE ROYAL,
OCTOBER 2, 2025

Clare Teal occupies a somewhat ambiguous position in British jazz. Enormously popular, as evidenced by the size and enthusiasm of the York audience for her 25th anniversary tour, she is somehow mistrusted by certain jazz-loving purists. It's certainly true that she has contributed to the perception of 'not really a jazz singer' by undertaking tributes to Doris Day (the latest at this year's Buxton Festival) and by clearly enjoying singing songs across a wide spectrum of popular music.

Such has been, to some extent, Clare's fate from her early years in the power of different record companies. She tells of the company she was signed to being taken over, the jazz section done away with and her ending up categorised as 'Adult Pop'! There was precious little adult

pop on offer at York, a brief surge into Tom Jones territory with *It's Not Unusual* notwithstanding. Aside from a few dreamy or melancholy ballads, Claire got stuck into jazz classics, Great American Songbook standards, 1950s Latin favourites and some rather more off-the-wall choices. I think we underappreciate Clare Teal's enthusiasm for (and skill in performing) some of the more *outré* offerings of the past 80 or so years, romping joyously through gems by such unlikely writers as Dory Previn and Joe Mooney. The rhythm and blues classic, *Teardrops from My Eyes*, sung with great intensity, was another that sprang a welcome surprise.

Her current group, the Clare Teal 5, really emphasised her jazz credentials – a change from the section of the Opera North Orchestra that accompanied her at Buxton! – with pianist Jim Watson and guitarist Dave Archer departing from the sympathetic accompanist role wherever possible for dynamic



solos, Simon Little rock solid on bass and drummer Will Cleasby revelling in driving the whole thing along and rocking the whole place with explosive solos on such tunes as *Eso Beso*.

As for Clare herself, she was clearly in her element, suiting the action to the word with uninhibited scatting on *It Don't*

Mean a Thing if It Ain't Got that Swing, changing key for fun on *Get Happy*, swinging merrily on *Nice Work if You Can Get It*. As ever, her link chat was disarmingly witty and audience-friendly, but rather less plentiful than previously – after all she had a lot of music to cram into two hours.

RON SIMPSON

TOM OLLENDORFF
TRIOHOWARD ASSEMBLY
ROOM, LEEDS, OCTOBER
19, 2025

Naming no names, sometimes the latest jazz sensation has limited contact with the great traditions which is why guitarist Tom Ollendorff is such a refreshing change. His rise seems pretty meteoric with his latest CD launched with an international tour that takes in Finland, France, Italy, Germany, China, South Korea and Australia, with only four of 30-plus dates scheduled for the UK. Furthermore, on this particular leg, his trio was enhanced by the presence of drummer Jeff Ballard who is currently a member of the Brad Mehldau Trio after a career that has taken in the likes of Ray Charles and Chick Corea.

Ballard was, indeed, a mighty force in the Howard Room concert, his evening concluding with a dynamic, perfectly judged solo. But throughout his support for Ollendorff

was outstanding, with delicate brushwork contrasted to brief explosions of sound, all the while attending closely to the guitarist. On bass Conor Chaplin, a more regular member of Ollendorff's trio, balanced rock-solid support with the occasional imaginative solo.

Despite his sophisticated use of harmony Ollendorff is something of a traditional figure, with a love of melody and the creativity of his own compositions. The two standards in his programme tell it all. *Darn that Dream* began with an elaborate solo introduction before – simplicity itself! – the melody emerged with minimal decoration, Ballard backing with delicate brush-work. With *My Foolish Heart* Ollendorff, with a glorious melody to work with, improvised close to the original.

Ollendorff's originals – spacy, atmospheric – owe something to his travels as he himself admitted. A visit to China found echoes in a spare, beautifully harmonised piece (apologies for missing the name), but *Atlantic*



Angels made the biggest impact. Inspired by the West Coast of Ireland, it had echoes of Mark Knopfler's theme for *Local Hero* and again emphasised the lonely peace of the place.

Tom Ollendorff repays close attention. He does not go in for the great dramatic gesture, though he was quite happy to swing into a bit of Bud Powell

bebop and he planned the programme cleverly to balance the introspective and the melodic with the extrovertly dynamic.

RON SIMPSON

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