

Top Score for the Darts

Review of the Dart Valley Stompers gig of 4th March 2007

On a wet and windy night, I battled along sodden pathways to the Falcon determined not to miss this performance by the Dart Valley Stompers. Due to me being a wee bit crook when they first appeared at our club last July, I missed seeing them and have been regretting it ever since as all those who did attend gave the band great wraps. So rather damp I sat down to hopefully witness a superb performance.

I did not have to wait long to realise this band was going to live up to its reputation as the opening number, the ODJB's *At The Jass Band Ball*, was played full pelt with all of them in total sync. Right throughout the evening the band's rhythm section consisting of the excellent banjoist John Whitlock, the ever dependable drummer Ron Berry and the fine bassist Tony Mann on both string bass and tuba, drove the band along with a wonderful tempo which had the front line bouncing to the beat. It made you want to get up and bounce also, it was that contagious. It seemed to bring out the best in them as I have seldom heard Graham Trevarton play better on his trusty cornet, just occasionally changing to trumpet. Ron Milford's trombone was a delight especially when growling the blues and leader Jeremy Huggett on clarinet and tenor played some superb solos throughout the performance, which was full of punch 'n' bounce!

After that first number which set the tone for the evening, they continued with the old number *Going To New Orleans* followed by the Fats Waller masterpiece *Ain't Misbehavin'* with the vocal supplied by leader Jeremy. A rarely heard piece from 1919 followed in *Blues (My Naughty Sweetie Gave To Me)* with the vocal duties this time taken on by Ron Milford. The old *Redwing* followed this which in turn was followed by the old Walter Donaldson classic from 1927 *My Blue Heaven*. Tony took up the tuba on this one and included was a great solo break on tenor sax by Jeremy. The set closed out with *Minnie the Mermaid* (no, not the Mocher!) where Graham gave his vocal chords an airing. A great first bracket and the band then took a well deserved drinks break.

There are some bands that tend to ease off after the first interval, but not this one as they soon got back into the groove with Sidney Bechet's *I Found a New Baby*. They then announced a broolly parade number to the old 1925 piece *Collegiate*. Not a number associated with New Orleans Parade marches, but the band converted this one to the correct tempo quite well. Haven Gillespie's *Whose Honey Are You?* followed on then came Ada Rubin's composition *Fair and Square* (originally made popular by Fats Waller). Next up was a rarely played piece from 1926 called *Candy Lips* before the band closed out the second set with Fred Fisher's *When You're Smiling*.

The calling of the dreaded raffle numbers took place as usual during the second interval when the band (minus Ron Berry) fronted the bar. I thought Ron was just keen to get on with it but he had bought tickets and was too busy checking them to bother doing that! Well Ron, you're just like me, out of luck. Stick to playing drums I say.

So onto the final set which began with another broolly parade number, the old American Civil War martial *piece Marching Through Georgia*. The band slowed down for the next one and in real sombre style played the old Fred Meinken/Dave Ringle classic *Wabash Blues*. Many bands play this number medium or even fast paced, but this was real slow. Irving Berlin's 1928 smoothie *Marie* was played in fine form with a vocal by Ron Milford then we had Hoagy Carmichael's popular number *Lazy Bones* in which Graham supplied the vocal and also which had an excellent tenor solo by Jeremy. Would you believe it, a third broolly number then appeared with the Paul

Barbarin 1949 *composition Bourbon Street Parade*. Jelly Roll Morton's *Wolverine Blues* (played a bit faster than the norm) preceded the final number of the evening which Sam Stept's *Please Don't Talk About Me When I'm Gone*. I'm afraid that is what people will be doing though, talking about this fine band who gave us so much entertainment and enjoyment. Don't be strangers now!

See you around the gigs...

Paul