

The Sussex Stomp

Review of the Sussex Jazz Kings gig of 15th July 2007

Twas a wet and miserable night...well it was, until Dave Stradwick and his Sussex Jazz Kings decided to brighten up proceedings. I've never known a summer like it (summer???). Well, we still got jazz ain't we?

It has been almost twelve months since the band last graced our wonderful club, and members and guests alike came out in force to witness a great performance by the band despite being on the road all weekend with this their final performance before heading home. You'd be excused for thinking they would be rather tired and jaded, but not so. This was one of our better evenings of jazz.

They got off to a good start with an up-tempo rendition of The Old Spinning Wheel followed by a popular piece in Girl of my Dreams featuring the vocal by Dave Stradwick followed by W.C. Handy's classic 1915 composition Hesitating Blues, where trombonist John Howlett took up the vocal duties. Next up was King Oliver's ageless composition Snake Rag, a number which brought Bernard Stutt's clarinet to the fore in wonderful Johnny Dodds style. The boys then strode out with Paul Barbarin's Bourbon Street Parade unaware that this was like a red rag to a bull for broolly holders who immediately hit the floor for an impromptu parade. Dave took up the vocal once more for the next number, Elmer Schoebel's Ace in the Hole before the band slowed down considerably to growl out Clarence Williams haunting Texas Moaner Blues. For the final number of the set, Dave and John performed a vocal duet with the old standard Curse of an Aching Heart.

During the interval while the usual raffle tickets were being sold, our friends from the Plymouth Jazz Club Lois and John had some genuine necklaces for sale, straight from the New Orleans Mardi Gras. All proceeds to go to the displaced musicians of that City who are still suffering from the effects of that devastating hurricane and ensuing floods.

Sidney Bechet's *Dans Le Rue Antibes* began the second set followed by a planned broolly parade to the strains of Second Line. There were broollies galore for this one as the band's "WAG's" had plenty of spare ones to lend! The old 1905 piece His Eye is on the Sparrow was played in typical mournful style, a real dirge if there ever was one! Magnolia's Wedding Day followed that before John and Dave left the stage to Bernard to perform a terrific solo backed only by the rhythm section on George Lewis' Burgundy Street Blues. A number which I know absolutely nothing about called Nothing Blues closed out the set. It was a number that featured the special guest of the evening, the much tattooed Andy Craddock on bass! As usual, Andy never fails to entertain.

After the usual raffle draw was conducted (no comment) the band soon returned for the final set and began with a number not normally associated with jazz, I'll be with you in Apple Blossom Time. Oscar "Papa" Celestin wrote Original Tuxedo Rag around 1915, a fast paced number which the band played admirably. A purely instrumental piece, however, John managed to slip in a vocal refrain with the words of Pick a Bale of Cotton! Very Donegan-esque and entertaining, but I think Papa Celestin would be turning in his grave if he knew! Bubber Miley and Duke Ellington wrote Creole Love Call in 1927 and the band played it superbly. My fast deteriorating brain could not remember who sang the vocal on the original, so I had to seek out Roy Stears to gently remind me it was the great Adelaide Hall. Roy then went on to inform me that he met her at a gig in St Ives many years ago. She moved to England at the beginning of World War II and remained here until her death in 1993 at the grand old age of 92. Anyway, enough trivia, back to the music! Edward Madden's 1910 composition Silver Bell was next in the band's repertoire followed by a number called Smiles (not to be confused with Donald Heywood's popular and famous piece

called Smile). The band then signed off with their usual farewell We'll Meet Again. They received a great ovation from all assembled and we all hoped that we would meet again next year.

See you around the gigs...

Paul