

A Broadside from the Armada

The Armada sailed back into town on the 13th with all guns blazing as they gave us a broadside of free-wheeling jazz we have come to expect from them. Reedsman Ken Rennison was missing from the line-up and was replaced by the ever popular Gordon Stafford. I had a feeling that this gig was going to be most enjoyable.

The band was up and firing with an old Creole tinged New Orleans piece *Black Cat on the Fence* and the dancers were soon on their feet hopping to the rhythm. Next up was Billy Hill's *Glory of Love*. The Creole flavour soon returned with a number called *Jumping the Line* before the excellent trumpet player John Shillito gave his voice an airing for the first time singing the Cecil Mack lyrics to James P. Johnson's composition from 1923 *Old Fashioned Love*. The band then turned to the ODJB repertoire with the Nick LaRocca/Larry Shields old standard *Fidgety Feet*. John then picked up the flugelhorn (what a lovely sound it has) as the band played the popular *Do You Know What it Means to Miss New Orleans* before the band signed off the first set with *1919 March*.

Much refreshed at the bar (though not with Pussers Rum), the Armada were straight back into it with Duke Ellington's much played number *Stevedore Stomp*. John then returned vocalising on a 1913 composition *Curse of an Aching Heart*. Banjo player Eddie Edwards took centre stage backed just by Terry Turland's bass as he did a wonderful solo on a piece called *Ashoken Farewell*. As soon as the other crewmen returned on deck, the band swung out in good style with the old king Oliver classic from 1923 *Snake Rag*. A number rarely heard these days from the composing duo of Jimmy McHugh and Dorothy Fields followed on called *Digga Digga Doo* before the band wound the second set up with the popular number forever associated with the late great Ken Colyer, *Going Home*.

The raffle was drawn as usual at this time and the highlight of this part of the evening was a prize won by a member of the crew John Shillito which turned out to be a very loud tie depicting jazz playing cats which was soon donned and worn for the rest of the evening!

So onto the final set which began with a broolly parade to the strains of the tongue-in-cheek funeral march *Just a Little While to Stay Here* where the vocal was supplied once more by John. He certainly has a good voice well suited to the music he plays. A number not normally associated with jazz followed this, Will Grosz's *Red Sails in the Sunset* from 1935. Next up was Frank Melrose's risqué piece *Forty and Tight* where it was Gordon Stafford's turn to shine with a solo backed by the rhythm section while Roger and John went to support the bar. *Mack the Knife* is one of the most well known numbers in jazz and it surprised me to learn that it is a German composition from 1928 and the lyrics translated into English by one Marc Blitzstein. The band gave a most creditable version of it here and John supplied the vocal well. It was then John's turn to steal the spotlight as he did his solo piece with Ray Henderson's *That Old Gang of Mine*. The band's final piece for the evening was another old classic, Will Tyers' magical *Panama Rag*. A fitting end to a terrific performance!

Summing up, Roger's trombone was a delight as usual, as was John on

trumpet and flugelhorn as he constantly bounced to the rhythm. The band's performance was not diminished by the absence of Ken Rennison as Gordon superbly slotted in on clarinet. The rhythm section of Eddie, Terry Turland and Terry Lidiard on banjo, bass and drums respectively, drove the band along and made the evening most pleasurable.

As the band disembarked from the stage in this friendly invasion from an Armada we all hoped that they will sail back to our shores again before too long.

See you around the gigs...

Paul