

The Excellent Antique Delight

Review of the Antique Six gig of 27th April

Just one word to describe this gig - *Superlative!* People came out in droves to witness one of the best gigs ever to be played at the BJC. No wonder they are so much in demand across the country.

From the first number, a stomped-up version of Lovie Austin's *Trav'lin' Blues* set the tone for the evening and had everyone's feet tapping from the off. Then came Arnett Nelson's popular standard *Buddy's Habit* (named after one Buddy Gross, the tuba player in Jimmy Wade's band who drank copious amounts of alcohol on the bandstand and at the end of each set had a habit of literally running to the toilet!). A rarely heard Jelly Roll Morton number followed this called *Dead Man Blues*. As the opening chant by the Antique's excellent drummer Graham Smith went "*Ashes to ashes, dust to dust, if the women don't getcha, the whiskey must*", the band then mournfully broke into the opening bars of a funeral march before speeding up as the number went on. A classic. Trumpeter Chris Mercer then took up the vocal on Ray Henderson's 1928 piece *Button Up Your Overcoat* before he left the stage along with clarinettist Chris Pearce to allow the always brilliant trombonist Richard Leach to give us an excellent swinging solo with Stan Kenton's 1940s piece *Harlem Folkdance*. The band then went back to 1901 and Neil Moret's up tempo *Hiawatha Rag* before slowing up with one from the pen of Louis Armstrong, *Perdido Street Blues*. To close the first set, they returned to some more Jelly Roll with the rapid fire *Black Bottom Stomp*, and stomp it did, not only tiring themselves out but the hoofers too. The bar took some punishment at the break!

Fifteen minutes later, they were back at it again starting with pianist Elmer Schoebel's composition *I Never Knew What a Girl Could Do*. The boys then paid a tribute to the late great Humphrey Lyttelton who sadly passed away a couple of days prior to this gig by playing a couple of numbers often associated with Humph, Henry Clifford's *Memphis Shake* followed by Ida Cox's *Last Mile Blues* during which Chris Pearce picked up his "curvy" soprano (not often seen these days) and played a lovely solo break. Next up was Sidney Bechet's famous composition *Dans Les Rues d'Antibes*. The bandstand was then left to Chris on clarinet backed by just the rhythm section to give a superb rendition of *Do You Know What It Means To Miss New Orleans?* which also had a fine electric guitar break by Clinton Sedgley and also one on bass by Andy Robins. Then came an occurrence at the BJC which I never thought I'd see in my time, a broilley parade number where, despite an invite from Richard Leach, no broillies were forthcoming! It seems that nobody wanted to be the first up and parading, so the broillies remained furled and unused. Shame on you Broilliers! The number was played anyway, the old Paul Barbarin classic, *Bourbon Street Parade*. The final number for the set caused a bit of a difference of opinion between myself and Richard who announced that the next piece would be an Original Dixieland Jazz Band one from 1917 called *Eccentric*. During the break I mentioned to him insisting it was written by the New Orleans Rhythm Kings in 1922. As it turned out, we were both right and wrong! The number was written in 1912 as *The Eccentric Rag* by J Russel Robinson who joined the ranks of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band in 1919 but not recorded by them. The first recording was by the New Orleans Rhythm Kings in 1922. I should say no fisticuffs were forthcoming in our disagreement!

During the break the raffle was run as usual, with the final prize going to drummer Graham with much amusement as it looked rather erotic and suggestions to what it was were given freely. I still don't know but it caused a great deal of mirth.

So onto the second set which began with the old New Orleans number written by trombonist Joe Avery called simply *Joe Avery's Piece* (very imaginative). Next up

was the oft-played Jimmy McHugh composition *Magnolia's Wedding Day*. *Singin' the Blues* (not the Rock 'n' Roll number) was a tune made famous by Bix Beiderbecke in 1927 whilst with the Frank Trumbauer Orchestra. It was an unusual piece regarded as being way ahead of it's time. The Antique played the number authentically from Frank Trumbauer's C melody sax break played exceptionally well by Chris Pearce on his soprano, Bix's cornet matched by Chris Mercer on trumpet down to Eddie Lang's acoustic guitar work performed well by Clinton on electric guitar. An excellent rendition of a beautiful tune. Next up was Chris Smith's bouncy *Cake Walking Babies From Home* played in a hurried pace with the vocal by Chris Mercer, followed by a number by the tragic pianist of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band, Henry Ragas called *Bluin' the Blues*. Ragas was a victim of the 1918 flu pandemic just prior to the ODJB's visit to England in early 1919. A piece from the band book of King Oliver was next, Ike Smith's composition *Mabel's Dream* before the band reached back once more to the ODJB with Nick LaRocca and Larry Shields' *Ostrich Walk*. The final number for the gig was Harry Warren's rapid paced *Nagasaki* with the amusing Mort Dixon lyrics sung in good style once again by Chris Mercer. (*Down in Nagasaki where the fellas chew tobacco and the women wicky wacky woo!*). The number also produced a great drum solo from Graham. He really does excel on numbers like this. After much applause, the band were persuaded to play an encore with *Go Ghana*.

Yes, a truly wonderful gig that for the most part held the capacity audience spellbound (except for those that were constantly on the dance floor!). For me, they are one of the best bands in the land. Full of energy, not missing a beat, this much sought after band will be back with us next year.

See you around the gigs...

Paul