

Cookin with the Fryer-'Barnhart

Review of the Fryer-Barnhart International All Stars gig of 18th May



The Bude Jazz Club welcomed back the Fryer-Barnhart International All Stars Jazz Band to our wonderful home of Jazz, The Falcon Hotel, following their magnificent stomping debut last year. What a band. Comprising some of the best jazz musicians that can be seen anywhere, they proceeded to give the capacity audience something they craved, a superb performance for both dancers and those who just wanted to sit and listen. The band was led jointly by American trombonist and vocalist Jim Fryer, whose melodic playing with eyes shut tight was a delight and fellow American pianist and vocalist Jeff Barnhart, whose fingers were almost a blur as he strode that piano never missing a beat. Both these fine leaders kept us entertained with their amusing light-hearted comments between numbers. The UK contingent consisted of the always powerful Louis Armstrong inspired Gordon Whitworth on trumpet and throaty vocals; the foremost soprano sax player in the country, also excelling on clarinet and alto, George Huxley; the leading twenties style jazz drummer in the UK whose performance drove the band along, Nick Ward; The excellent Birmingham based banjo player, guitarist and vocalist (who was sadly missing last year) Brian Mellor; and finally, but by no means least, from the shores of the Antipodes, the irrepressible Annie Hawkins, whose energy and glorious slap-style base work kept everyone entertained from go to whoa! This was the band that was to entertain us so wonderfully on this night.

So onto the music. The gang began with a trilogy of numbers "extolling the virtues" of the fourth state of the USA, Georgia. First up was a piece called *Georgia Bo Bo* *** followed by a Jelly Roll Morton number *Georgia Swing* (in reality a reworking of the Santo Pecora composed *She's Crying For Me*). Finally there was Spencer Williams' composition from 1915, *Georgia Grind* with the rather risqué lyrics sung well by Brian Mellor. George, soprano in hand, then took centre stage backed just by Jeff and the rhythm section to perform Sidney Bechet's haunting *Si tous vois ma mere* before both Gordon and Jeff sang the Edward Madden lyrics on the old trad piece from 1915 *Down in Jungle Town*. Jim then gave a tribute to the recently de-parted English jazz great Humphrey Lyttelton with a number often performed by him in his long and distinguished career, the George Webb composed *Trans Blues*. The final number of the set was another Sidney Bechet composition, *Viper Mad* (a viper being a user of the dreaded weed marijuana!).

Graeme and Gill were kept busy during the interval selling raffle tickets to the multitude, their feet must have been killing them after all the dancing they did during the first set and they were still selling by the time the band returned after a very short space of time to continue entertaining us.

The second set began with a number from the Duke Ellington stable, the catchy Freddie Jenkins composition, *Shout 'em Aunt Tillie*, then a number written by the Duke himself, the more commonly recognised and performed *Stevedore Stomp*. Jim and George then alighted from the stage to leave Gordon to give a great solo rendition on *Thanks a Million* (which was a new one on me). The rather amusingly titled *Shake it and Break it* followed then Jim swung straight into a vocal on *At the*

Devil's Ball, with many amusing comments aimed at the scourge of many husbands, the dreaded Mother-in-Law! The final piece for the second set was yet another classic from Sidney Bechet, but rarely heard these days, *Coal Black Shine*.

I found I was back to my old losing ways as I received the list of raffle winners off Gill. I paid her back though for selling me dud ones by having her run around to all corners of the auditorium at a fair old pace handing out prizes to the lucky recipients.

As soon as I had finished, the band returned to the stage for the final set and swung off with a broolly parade. After the dismal failure of their number at the last gig, they were out in force this time around and it was really fantastic to see the return of our lovely Anne Thomas looking fit and well, strutting around with her bright pink creation, a lovely smile on her face. The rendition of the old traditional *Second Line* went on forever and poor Anne was tired out by the end of it! Top tenor man Jeremy Huggett was in the audience to take in the band's offerings and was called up on stage to perform a couple of numbers with the band beginning with Fats Waller's immortal composition Honeysuckle Rose. Jeremy then did a solo on a number called *Young and Foolish* in a bit of a mainstream performance with the vocal sung by Jim Fryer. Next up was Jim Blythe's composition *East Coast Trot* from 1926 before the band returned to the composing talent of Jelly Roll Morton with *Wild Man Blues*, Then came the saddest part of the evening, the final number. It is one of the Fryer-Barnhart band's favourite and oft played pieces, Hoagy Carmichael's classic Jubilee with Jeff Barnhart supplying the jaunty vocal.

Needless to say the band received a long and heartfelt ovation for yet another outstanding performance at The Bude Jazz Club.

Paul