

# Marking 25 Years

Review of the Roger Marks' Armada Jazz Band gig of 10th May

A milestone in West-Country jazz occurred at the Falcon Hotel on 10th May when Roger Marks' Armada Jazz Band celebrated their Silver Anniversary with a gig in party mode culminating in a bit of a jam session. Roger, originally from Tenby in Wales (but we won't hold that against him, he's almost Devonian now!) formed his band 25 years ago, decided to commemorate this event in style by inviting former band members to join his current line-up



and let it all swing out and we at the Bude Jazz Club were proud to help him celebrate. The only absentee was banjo player Eddie Edwards who has not been well lately and I am sure you will all join me in wishing him a swift recovery and return to playing. So who did Roger bring with him? Master trumpeter John Shillito, so well known and appreciated by Bude audiences and tenor and soprano saxophone man Ken Rennison made up the front line and the rhythm section being drummer Terry Lidiard, electric bassist Terry Turland and replacing the

unfortunately ill Eddie Edwards on banjo was Pete Sumner. Guest players for the evening were the King of the muted cornet Graham Trevarton, fresh from the Dart Valley Stompers, banjo player John Whitlock and the excellent reedsman Robin Reece. With the chopping and changing of musicians, it was going to be a challenge to keep up with everything, so I hope, with not too many mistakes, that this report on the music is accurate!

It all started off in a stomping style with the traditional *1919 March*, but the band seemed a bit out of step to begin with, but by the time they began the second number *Going Home* (a number normally played at the end of the evening!) featuring a the vocal by John Shillito, they had got it all together and the evening just got better and better as it went on. Next up was Shelton Brooks 1910 composition *Some of These Days* (a number picked up and used as the signature tune for the self styled Last of the Red Hot Mamma's, Sophie Tucker). Once again John supplied the vocal. Pete Sumner then came centre stage as the front line departed for a beer to sing his own composition which I've titled *I've Never Heard of a Song about Sylvia*. I called it that because I don't think he has even thought of a name for it yet! Apart from the amusing vocal he also gave us a good banjo solo. The first change began when Pete gave way to John Whitlock as the band strode out with Roland Reitz's martial piece *Salutation March*, a number well loved by New Orleans parade bands. With a change of pace and style, Roger and co played a Rhumba on Will Grosz's *Red Sails in the Sunset* before the set closed out with another John Shillito vocal with the Al Jolson lyrics on Joe Mayer's composition *California, Here I Come*.

The second set began with Pete Sumner returning on banjo and also Robin Reece joining Ken Rennison on reeds making a four man front line as the band strode out with Clarence Williams' 1927 jaunty ditty, sung well by John once more, *Bucket's Got a Hole In It*. Then it was time for the obligatory broly parade on Paul Barbarin's famous *Bourbon Street Parade*. Once again it was John

with the vocal as the brollies came out in all their glory. For the next number, Ken Rennison left the stage and the banjo players swapped once more as the band played saxophonist Sunny Clapp's 1927 composition *Girl of my Dreams* with the vocal by John Shillito. After this number it was announced that this year saw the 55th anniversary of Robin Reece's professional jazz career, the news of which was applauded by the audience. No wonder he sounded so good, he's been at it long enough! To celebrate this, he supplied a rather amusing vocal on a rendition of Walter Donaldson and Gus Kahn's *My Baby Just Cares For Me*. Robin came to the fore in the next piece too when he played an excellent clarinet solo break on the spiritual *The Old Rugged Cross* during which John changed to flugelhorn. To finish off the second set, the band played Ray Henderson's 1928 composition, *Together* with Robin playing his tenor sax and singing the Buddy DeSylva and Lew Brown lyrics. By this time, three of the jivers of the previous gig had arrived and strutted their stuff (one guy with two gals, I bet his arms were aching!).

So onto the third and final set and appearing on stage for the first time was one of Bude's favourites, cornettist Graham Trevarton whose bouncing style gave added impetus to Billy Hill's *Old Spinning Wheel*. The next number saw Graham vocalise to the Billy Rose lyrics on the Fred Fisher number from 1928, *Happy Days and Lonely Nights*. The evening was unfortunately rapidly drawing to a close, so it was time for Roger to call every musician to the stage to give us a nine piece ear bashing! With Roger on trombone we had a cornet plus trumpet lead and a tenor plus soprano saxophone and also banjo plus guitar and what a sound they produced! I would strongly recommend that Roger seriously consider bringing this whole crew together as a unit occasionally, I'm certain we would book them with the great sound they put out! The first number featured Graham singing the Haven Gillespie lyrics to Fred Coots' 1935 piece *Whose Honey Are You?* Then it was time for John to sing a Billy Hill classic from 1936, *The Glory of Love* and to complete the evening's entertainment, a real storming rendition of ragtime pianist Will Tyers' famous 1911 composition *Panama Rag*. With all musicians playing flat out it was a superb and fitting end to this wonderful evening of celebration of the Armada Jazz Band's 25th year of existence. The capacity audience had danced their feet off and showed their appreciation of the band's efforts right throughout the gig. I just hope it won't be another 25 years before this group of musicians all get together again.

*See you around the gigs...*

***Paul***