

# In Heaven with the Seven

Review of the Richard Leach Seven Stars of Jazz gig of 5th July

Richard Leach's Seven Stars of Jazz were given a rousing reception by the large audience on their return to the Bude Jazz Club after an absence of almost a year. It seems much longer though! They are certainly one of the best bands around and they proved that with their repertoire based on the style of Alex Welsh.



Spot on time they swung out with a up tempo arrangement of Harold Arlen's *As Long As I Live* which was followed by a number forever associated with Louis Armstrong's Hot Five, Paul Barbarin's *Come Back Sweet Papa*. A change of style with the next number when the band played a Latin version of Fred Fisher's *Dardanella*, unusual for this piece but it worked well. The first vocal of the evening followed with a very

amusing version of Hoagy Carmichael's *Rocking Chair*. The main vocal was sung by banjo/guitarist Brian Mellor in smooth Hoagy style with Richard interjecting with growling Louis Armstrong style comments so reminiscent of the pair's performance on the Louis Armstrong Orchestra recording of 1930. Next up was swinging version of Charlie McCarron's *Blues (My Naughty Sweetie Gives To Me)* before things slowed up a bit on Isham Jones 1924 composition *It Had To Be You*. Next up was the well known piece by prolific composer J.C. Johnson called *Louisiana* before the set closed out with Harry Ruby's *I'll Always Be In Love With You* with Richard supplying the vocal.

The band turned to a ragtime piece to open the second set with Scott Joplin's classic 1899 composition *Maple Leaf Rag* before Richard returned with the vocal singing the Billy Moll lyrics to the Murray Melcher penned *I Want a Little Girl*. Most of the band then departed the stage to leave just Gordon Whitworth on trumpet and pianist Mike Graver to perform a terrific rendition of Bix Beiderbecke's immortal *Davenport Blues* that he dedicated to his home town in Iowa. It was then time for the obligatory Brolly Parade to the strains of Francis Meyer's *Bugle Boy March*. It was somewhat amusing where it seemed that two "brolliers" seemed to be having a bit of a duel on the dance floor, but it was just that two brollies became entangled and took a bit of effort to separate them without damage! Next up was a version of the oft played Phil Boutelje and Dick Winfree classic *China Boy* before everything slowed up with Harry Warren's *Serenade in Blue*. Next up was a number where both pianist and drummer vacated the stage as the band played Louis Armstrong's 1942 piece *Swing That Music* with Richard supplying the vocal. Finally for the second set came a stomping version of the Walter Donaldson and Buddy De Sylva number *Oh Baby!*

The first number for the final set featured just Mike in piano, Roger Davis on bass and Graham Smith on drums on saxophonist Sunny Clapp's 1927 composition *Girl of my Dreams*. Also published in 1927 was the next piece, another Walter Donaldson composition *At Sundown*. Next up was Ralph Rainger's *I Wished on the Moon* before Richard took a rest leaving the remainder of the band to perform a piece called *Montmartre*. With Richard still absent from the stage, he was joined by Gordon at the bar leaving the front line duties to Chris Pearce on clarinet to play George Gershwin's

immortal *Summertime*. The penultimate number for the evening was a French named piece but unfortunately I cannot read my writing and my mastery of the French language is non-existent! But if I remember correctly it was attributed to soprano genius Sidney Bechet. The final number was a stomping rendition of the eastern flavoured *Hindustan*.

The band as usual was superb. Richard, Gordon and Chris were on top form and are simply the best on their chosen instruments. Brian Mellor was wonderful especially on his electric guitar. Graham drove the band along with his superb timekeeping on drums and helping keep the rhythm bouncing along was an excellent Roger Davis on bass. To me a band with a piano is the icing on the cake and Mike's playing almost made me diabetic it was so good! I do believe Jim had pencilled in another date with the band so I will be certainly looking forward to that one! Great entertainment from a great band.

*See you around the gigs...*