

# A Powerhouse Performance

Review of the Shades of Armstrong gig of 1st August

The debut of this newly formed band at the BJC resulted in a powerhouse performance, especially from excellent trumpeter Alan Bateman who recreated the style and powerful playing of a young Louis Armstrong perfectly. Some in the audience complained that it was rather too loud, and it was loud, but that was the way Louis played in his heyday. The band was led by the superb clarinet player Jeremy Huggett who Bude audiences know from his other bands, the Dart Valley Stompers and the Band of Gold.



What else would the band start off with than Louis Armstrong's signature tune, the Rene Brothers penned *When it's Sleepy Time Down South* from 1931. This was followed by the James Hanley composition from 1917 called *Indiana* that Louis Armstrong used as his opening number of all of his All-Stars performances. The Ballard MacDonald lyrics were sung in good style by trombonist Ron Milford. Next up was the famous Kid Ory composition *Muskrat Ramble* that was written for and recorded by the Louis Armstrong Hot Five in 1926. This was followed by the Al Neiburg penned *I'm Confessin'* before Jeremy supplied the vocal on the 1928 Louis Armstrong composition *Someday You'll Be Sorry*. Next up was Bert Kalmar's *A Kiss to Build a Dream On* before the band hit out with a number Louis was most famously known for, Jerry Herman's *Hello Dolly!* from the movie of the same name. Then came the famous blues piece written by the members of the New Orleans Rhythm Kings, *Tin Roof Blues*. The set closed out with the old standard that Louis played often, *When You're Smiling*.

Set two began with *Struttin' with Some Barbecue*, a number co-written by Louis and wife Lil during their Hot Five days. Then came the Dorothy Fields/Jimmy McHugh 1928 composition *I Can't Give You Anything But Love Baby* that Louis first recorded with his Savoy Ballroom Five that same year. Next up was another number Louis was famous for, Hoagy Carmichael's *Lazy River* and Ron again supplied the vocal. Then came Walter Donaldson's *My Blue Heaven* before the old standard for the "Brolliers" Paul Barbarin's *Bourbon Street Parade*. The penultimate number of the second set was a number regarded as Louis greatest ever recording written by his mentor King Oliver, the immortal *West End Blues* before Spencer Williams' famous *Basin Street Blues* with the Jack Teagarden lyrics sung by Alan.

Another number made famous by Louis opened the final set, Arthur Johnson's 1936 piece *Pennies from Heaven* from the Bing Crosby movie of the same name. Then an excellent piano solo by Simon Banks featured in Joe Primrose's classic blues *St James Infirmary* which was followed by another McHugh/Fields ageless composition, *On the Sunny Side of the Street* that Louis recorded with his large orchestra in 1934. The jaunty Ford Dabney penned *Shine* came next that Louis recorded with his New Sebastian Cotton Club band in 1931. The oft played and enduring Will Tyers 1911 number *Panama Rag* was next up which was followed by one of Louis final recordings and another that is instantly recognisable, *What a Wonderful World* on which Jeremy supplied the vocal and Simon played "simulated strings" on his electric piano. Next up was Maceo Pinkard's popular piece *Sweet Georgia Brown* before the evening came to an end with the band signing off with Spencer and Clarence Williams' classic *Royal Garden Blues*.

It was a performance that left myself and many others quite breathless. As already mentioned, the powerful trumpet work of Tony assailed the ears a bit, but it was well worth it as the musicianship of the entire band was excellent recreating the music of the Louis Armstrong years between 1925 and 1967. I am quite sure that this will not be the last time we will see this band here at the BJC. Roll on their next appearance!

*See you around the gigs...*

***Paul***