

Swinging and Stomping with The Dart

Review of the Dart Valley Stompers gig of 10th October



What a great return from the Dart Valley Stompers after their gig scheduled for earlier this year had to be cancelled after being snowed under in South Devon. This was swinging and stomping jazz at it's best that we all come to expect from this fine band and members and guests came out in force to stomp the night away. Led by reedsman Jeremy Huggett, the band bounced their way from go to whoa that had the dancers out in force.

They opened up with Mark Sheafe's collegiate piece *Washington and Lee Swing* that he wrote in honour of the

Lexington based University of the same name in 1906. The first vocal of the evening came with Ron Milford singing Buddy DeSylva's composition *Travel On to Avalon* followed by Jeremy warbling the Henry Creamer lyrics to Turner Layton's 1918 classic and oft played *After You've Gone*. It was then time for Graham Trevarton to take up the microphone on Fred Coot's *Whose Honey are You?* Next up was Harry Godwin's *My Memphis Baby* followed by the Elmer Schoebel penned *Nobody's Sweetheart Now*, Ron returning with the vocal. Graham then led a vocal accompanied by Ron and Jeremy singing the old hymn *Lily of the Valley* and wrapping up the first set, the band played an old New Orleans parade piece, Roland Seitz's *Salutation March* during which bassist Toby Mann picked up his sousaphone to give the piece real "oomph".

There was a change I noticed during the first set and that was Graham played trumpet on a most of the numbers, whereas it used to be his old trusty cornet that did the majority of the work.. I do like the cornet as it is a bit more "earthy" and suited to the New Orleans style, but I must admit, the trumpet is much more versatile.

Set two began with Neil Moret's 1903 ragtime piece *Hiawatha* before a broolly parade was called for as the band went *Marching Through Georgia*, an old American Civil War Song. Next up was Alex Hill's *I Would Do Anything For You* before Jeremy picked up the soprano sax as the band tackled W.C. Handy's immortal *St Louis Blues*. This was the first time I had seen him on soprano, so at the end of the evening, I asked him about it and it seems it was an old instrument that he had decided to get out of mothballs so to speak and take up playing it again. Ron then took on the vocal duties again on the fast paced Benny Davis / Harry Akst composition *Baby Face* during which Jeremy took up the alto sax and John Whitlock played a superb banjo solo. On the next number, Bert Down's *Bye Bye Blues*, John laid aside his banjo in favour of the guitar which gave the tune a real smooth and mellow feeling. Graham then took up his cornet on Harry Woods' 1935 popular *When Somebody Thinks You're Wonderful* before the band signed off the second set with Joe Darenbourg's *Louisian-i-a*.

Set three began with Ron Milford singing the James Dempsey lyrics to George Mitchell's 1909 piece *Ace in the Hole*, then drummer Ron Berry gave us a fine drum solo (that belied his age!) on Nick LaRocca and Larry Shields *Fidgety Feet*. Next Ron returned with the vocal on Mitchell Parish's *Louisiana Fairytale*. Another broolly parade was called for to the strains of Hans Flath's *Moose March*, but it was only Lois who unfurled her broolly, belatedly joined by just one more halfway through! The old spiritual *Just a Closer Walk with*

Thee came next, performed in the old Bunk Johnson style, beginning as a dirge as if walking to the cemetery and ending swinging out as if returning. Keeping the numbers swinging, the band then played a fine rendition of Maceo Pinkard's classic 1925 composition *Sweet Georgia Brown*. Next up was Scott Sanders *Rolling Around the World* before the band signed off with a roll call of members of the band as they played Sam Stept's jaunty *Please Don't Talk About Me When I'm Gone*.

Another great performance by the Dart Valley Stompers who for me are one of the best jazz bands in the country with their swinging and very danceable music. Long may they continue to do so. They're great mate!

See you around the gigs...

Paul