

Farewell Antique - Its Been So Nice To Know Ya!

Review of the Farewell Performance of the Antique Six gig on 17th April

On 17th April, the Bude Jazz Club unfortunately bade farewell to one of the most greatest and enjoyable bands to have ever appeared before us, as members and guests came out in droves to give them a wonderful send-off. They first appeared before us back in 1997 and played at our Christmas Ball in 2003 when they were led by clarinettist Dick Chapman with Chris Mercer on cornet, Keith Hockin on trombone, Jackie Chapman on bass, Clinton Sedgley on banjo and Graham Smith on drums. After Dick's untimely passing, Jackie and Keith left and the band's leadership passed to Graham who installed Chris Pearce on reeds, Richard Leach on trombone and Andy Robins on bass. The end result was the band just got better and better and when they finally call it a day later this year, they will have finished at their peak unfortunately leaving all of us craving for more.



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To begin this final gig, the band stomped off with Ray Bauduc's 1938 composition *South Rampart Street Parade*, then without letting up tackled the W.C. Handy classic *Ole Miss Rag*. Chris Pearce then laid aside his clarinet in favour of his "curly" soprano sax to play J. Russel Robinson's quirky (for the time) *Singin' the Blues*, very reminiscent of the old Frank Trumbauer / Bix Beiderbecke version from 1927. The first

vocal of the evening came with Chris Mercer singing the Jimmy Dempsey lyrics to George Mitchell's *Ace in the Hole*. With both "Chrisses" vacating the stage, Richard gave us a solo by playing Stan Kenton's celebrated *Harlem Folk Dance*. I have heard Richard play this a few times before, but never better than this and the audience agreed by giving him a tremendous ovation. Next up a Duke Ellington piece, his extremely lively *Stevedore Stomp*. Slowing things up perceptibly and with Richard taking a rest, the remainder of the band then took on Clarence Williams' *Kansas City Man Blues* which featured a lovely mute solo by Chris Mercer on trumpet and also featuring Clinton Sedgley on guitar. A roaring finish to the first set came about with Jelly Roll Morton's acclaimed *Black Bottom Stomp*.

Set two started with a Sandy Brown composition that became the National Anthem of Ghana called *Go Ghana* prior to Richard calling for a broly parade to the strains of Eugene Bartlett's well known *Just a Little While to Stay Here*. This was followed by a splendid rendition of Henry Clifford's *Memphis Shake* (that was composed for his spasm band The Dixieland Jug Blowers in 1926) and featured Chris Pearce on alto. Chris Mercer then took a breather as the remainder of the band played Ernest Seitz's *The World is Waiting for the Sunrise*, then the whole band joined in the vaudeville exhortations on Jelly Roll Morton's catchy *Dead Man Blues*. Chris Pearce then picked up his tenor sax as they tackled James Monaco's *You Made Me Love You* that was made popular by Louis Armstrong's All-Stars in 1926. The second set wrapped up with the ever popular 1924 Hoagy Carmichael composition *Riverboat Shuffle* (originally titled *Free Wheeling*, but was changed after he presented it to Bix Beiderbecke's Wolverines to record that same year).

Isn't it a shame that all the great gigs seem to go by so rapidly? It hardly seemed possible that we were about to witness the final set. As soon as had I finished calling the raffle and presenting a little gift to the members of the band in thanks for their great entertainment provided over the years, the band was

up on stage raring to go once more. It began with both Richard and Chris Mercer standing aside to allow a special guest Amy Roberts to perform a soprano-alto sax duet with Chris Pearce. I knew Amy was in the audience and was hoping she would perform. She is about to embark on a European tour with the Chris Barber band. She really has come a long way in the last few years and well deserved too. The first of two numbers she played with Chris was Will Tyers' acclaimed *Panama Rag*. Then slowing things down they took hold of Hoagy Carmichael's immortal *Georgia on my Mind*. Amy's appearance was brief, but she got a long ovation on completion of her stint. With Richard and Chris Mercer returning, the band then played Charlie McCarron's *Down in Honky Tonk Town* before they took to the old King Oliver composition from 1923, *Chimes Blues*. Most bands play the chimes break either on piano or alternative notes on trumpet, clarinet & trombone, but the Antique used Clinton's banjo and it worked wonderfully well. This was followed by the Benny Davis composed *Copenhagen* (not named after the Capital City but after a brand of snuff one of his bandsmen used!), then an extended number, Sholem Secunda's *Bei Mir Bist Du Schoen* during which each member of the band played long solo breaks (during which a few chords of Big Noise from Winnetka somehow got in there as well!). The final solo of the number came from Graham playing Andy Robins bass with his drumsticks! Unfortunately it was then time for the final number, their usual sign off piece, Ken Colyer's *Goin' Home*. The band received a standing ovation from the 100 strong audience who realised they were witnessing the end of an era. The Antique Six have entertained us here at the Bude Jazz Club for 14 years during which time they have gained so many fans and they, like me, are going to miss them terribly.

See you around the gigs...

Paul