

The Best from the West

Review of the Great Western Jazz Company gig of 19th June

A disappointingly small audience attended the debut at the Bude Jazz Club of the highly entertaining Great Western Jazz Company. They were slightly different to what we expected with more of a leaning towards swing than traditional or New Orleans jazz. It pleased the dancers though as they swung from the first number to the last.



They began with a jaunty rendition of Jelly Roll Morton's celebrated *Milenburg Joys* (named after the New Orleans suburb of Milneburg on the shores of Lake Pontchartrain founded by Scot Alexander Milne who died a millionaire in 1838 leaving all his money to New Orleans charities). This was followed by Kid Ory's *Savoy Blues* with the tailgate trombone work of Paul Hawkins excellent. Then Trumpeter Bob McTeare gave us a vocal on Artie Johnson's easily recognisable *Pennies from Heaven* before the band turned to Duke Ellington for the hauntingly beautiful *Creole Love Call*. Bob returned with the vocal on the next piece, Maceo Pinkard's immortal composition from 1925, *Sweet Georgia Brown*.

Then back to the ragtime era for Neil Moret's *Hiawatha Rag* before the first (but by no means last) piece of swing from the pen of Count Basie, *Jumpin' at the Woodside*. A great first set from the band.

Set two began with a Duke Ellington composition, *Shout 'em Aunt Tillie* before another Kid Ory classic, one of his earliest compositions, *Muskrat Ramble*. Both Bob and Paul supplied the vocal on the old hymn *Down by the Riverside*. This was followed by the oft played Jelly Roll Morton composition first published in 1923, *Wolverine Blues*. (Morton originally titled it *The Wolverines* but, much to his annoyance, the publishers changed the name without his permission just because the word "blues" happened to be in fashion at the time!) A proper "blues" followed with the acclaimed Joe "King" Oliver composition that he recorded with his Creole Jazz Band in 1923, *Chimes Blues*. The chime effect was played expertly by the front line of trumpet, clarinet and trombone. A real swing number followed that had the jivers up and dancing with trumpeter Sy Oliver's composition *Opus No 1* before the second set closed out with a splendid rendition of one of the most popular numbers in jazz, W.C. Handy's immortal *St Louis Blues*.

Set three began with a brolly parade to the strains of the frequently played Paul Barbarin march *Bourbon Street Parade*. Once the brollies had been furled away the band strode out with Sidney Bechet's time honoured composition *Marchand de Poissons*, more commonly known in English as *The Fish Seller*. It turned out that it was our Social Secretary Hilary's birthday, so the band celebrated it by playing Billy Strayhorn's *Take the 'A' Train*. The title came from an addition to the New York underground system where a branch line was added to the Harlem line to take people to the Bronx, so those who wanted to go to jazz playing Harlem after the line was opened were advised to "Take the "A" Train. Not that it was a hint for Hils to go there though! Our Duke Ellington author Derek Miller got Hils up to dance to celebrate. Bob then sang the Raymond Klages lyrics to Jesse Greer's *Just You, Just Me* before another vocal by Bob followed on the immortal Joe Primrose blues composition *St James Infirmary*. Back to the ragtime era for the 1899 Kerry Mills composition, *Whistling Rufus* before the band tackled the Latin tinged Carls Sigman penned *Buona Sera*. The final number played for the evening's

entertainment, a classic blues from the hand of prolific composer Spencer Williams, the legendary *Basin Street Blues*.

A thoroughly enjoyable evening was had by all with great dancing and great music from the front line of Bob, Paul and the always excellent clarinetist known to us all here in Bude, John Lancaster. Some superb solo breaks by guitarist Jerry Tilley were a delight and with the rhythm section being driven along by bassist John Chapman and drummer Bobby Stephens, it all made for a great evening. No doubt we will be seeing them again.

See you around the gigs...

Paul