

Starry Starry Night

Review of the Richard Leach's 7 Stars of Jazz gig of 3rd July

The stars shone (literally) as the Richard Leach 7 Stars of Jazz entertained a large audience on a rather warm night at the Falcon Hotel on 3rd July. This extremely popular band pulled out all the stops to entertain us with their take on the musical style of the great Alex Welsh.



After trying to bribe me to say nice things about them, Richard & Co gave us a taste of what was to come with their rendition of Walter Donaldson's *At Sundown* before tackling the old Paul Barbarin composition *Come Back, Sweet Papa*. Next up was the famous Hoagy Carmichael number, *Rockin' Chair* with the vocal by Brian Mellor supported by some vaudeville patter by Richard. Chris then picked up his soprano as the band played Felix Bernard's and Johnny Black's melodic

Dardanella. With soprano still in hand and with Richard and Gordon vacating the stage, Chris played a solo on Clarence Williams' time-honoured piece *Baby Won't You Please Come Home*. Solo breaks by Mike Graver on piano and Brian on guitar were a delight. The band then turned to a number by Jimmy Johnson from 1928, *Louisiana* before a Rodgers and Hart composition *You Took Advantage of Me* with Brian once more taking up the guitar and Chris switching to tenor. A stomping end to the first set came with a rendition of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band breakneck *Fidgety Feet*.

The band began set two as they ended set one with an extremely lively number, the immortal 1898 Scot Joplin composition *Maple Leaf Rag*. This was followed a number from the pen of Murray Mencher that he wrote for McKinney's Cotton Pickers in 1930, *I Want a Little Girl*, with the Billy Moll lyrics sung by Richard. It was then the turn of the excellent Gordon Whitworth to give us a trumpet solo on Bob Haggart's *What's New?* before Richard called for our famous broly parade to the strains of the old spiritual *Take My Hand Precious Lord*. The second set then closed out with the Albert Von Tilzer 1921 composition, *Dapper Dan (The Sheik of Alabam')* which featured a vocal duet by Richard and Gordon singing the Lew Brown lyrics.

The third set began with a vocal from Brian on *Nothing Blues*. The band then announced they were going "Hot Five" with drummer Graham Smith and Mike Graver on piano leaving the stage. (Actually it wasn't Hot Five style at all as the original had piano but not bass). The number they played was Artie Matthews *Weary Blues*, but Louis didn't record that with his Hot Five at all, but with his Hot Seven which confuses things even further! The band then turned to the skills of the renowned composers Jimmy McHugh and Dorothy Fields for their 1930 creation *Exactly Like You* featuring Chris on alto. Then with the entire front line plus Brian vacating the stage, Mike Graver played a lovely solo on Johnny Mercer's *Autumn Leaves* that he co-wrote with Joseph Kosma and Jacques Prevert in 1947. With all personnel now back on stage, they then tackled Artie Johnston's *Mandy, Make up Your Mind* and this was followed by the old New Orleans standard, another Johnny Mercer composition, *While We Danced at the Mardi Gras*, featuring a vocal by Gordon. The penultimate number for the evening's entertainment came with Richard Whiting's 1925 composition *Sleepy Time Gal*, then unfortunately this fine performance from the 7 Stars came to an end with another old jazz standard, Spencer Williams immortal

Everybody Loves My Baby.

All too soon this evening came to an end and unfortunately it all seemed to go by too fast, but isn't that always the case when we have such an excellent band? Now time will drag until they are back on our stage - hopefully next year.

See you around the gigs...

Paul