

GOT LIVE



BLUES MATTERS
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CHRIS BARBER

@Shepperton Studios, London.
30/07/2007

"Chris Barber? He must be a hundred and twenty years old at least" was the general reaction to the news that Mr Barber was not only playing a concert to be filmed but also had a new album to celebrate. But they were forgetting the fact that he has never stopped touring and playing the music he loves and that tends to keep a body young (ish). The full eleven-piece band was on display on stage at Shepperton and the audience gave them a warm welcome as they started with the classic 'Bourbon Street Parade'. Chris Barber has an enormous and encyclopaedic knowledge of the music that the band plays and imbued every number with a little story or anecdote; he described the story of his band as "playing music as we like it and getting way with it for all these years!" and therein lies the truth of what was happening on stage. All the musicians appeared to be having a good time playing music that they loved and giving as much of themselves to it as the audience were prepared to ask for. They

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mixed it up throughout, showcasing Duke Ellington from all his incarnations - 'Rent Party Blues', 'Black & Tan Fantasy', 'Jungle Nights in Harlem' - or Sonny Terry & Brownie McGhee to the Dorsey Brothers to Miles Davis, and played it all without ever sounding hackneyed or bored. When the eleven-piece shrank to five the only thing that changed was that the scale reduced - the quality, the equality and the virtuosity was the same - and then when the band opened out again to play 'Petit Fleur' ("A medley of our hit") they simply grew larger rather than better. Andy Fairweather-Low joined them for a swinging version of the 'The Train I Ride', with a nod to the late Lonnie Donegan, and a lovely 'Glory Hallelujah/ Will The Circle Be Unbroken'. They finished on a truly joyous version of 'When The Saints Come Marching In' to generally ecstatic applause - from an audience of critics! - and made their way offstage for a well deserved cup of tea! This was a terrific performance by a team of musicians who thoroughly enjoy what they do and whose quality transcends genre or questions of origin - it's just music.

Andy Snipper