

TUESDAY, MAY 5, 2009

REVIEWS

Mumbles Mostly Jazz and Blues Festival National Youth Jazz Orchestra Festival Pavilion, Southend Gardens

WHEN the National Youth Jazz Orchestra last visited Oystermouth, many years ago, they played an open-air concert in the grounds of Oystermouth Castle, which culminated in a grand fireworks display.

On this occasion, their festival debut, they provided enough musical fireworks on their own to please any jazz or big band lover.

They seem to have an even younger personnel than before — and what an impressive ensemble sound they produced. Their first set included a beautiful rendition of Love For Sale, featuring Richard Shepherd, who normally plays tenor saxophone, on alto, and the commissioned arrangement of More Mumbles, with trumpeter Henry Armburg Jennings doing a very passable Clark Terry-style humorous scat vocal.

Vocalists Emma Smith and Kwabena Adjepong, both showed a mature approach, belying their ages of 18 and 19 respectively.

The high point came in the second set, with a storming solo from talented trombonist Kieran McLeod, backed by the walking bass of Laurence Ungless.

The Nyjo personnel included three South Wales musicians — Olly Nezhati, from Llandeilo, and Rhys Owen and Louis Dowdeswell, both from Cardiff — a nice touch by the band's director Bill Ashton.

Three members of the rhythm section deserve special mention —

14-year-old percussionist James Larter, propulsive drummer Scott Chapman, and guitarist Jon Russell.

David Griffiths

**Hamilton Loomis Band
and Snake Davis Band,
Admiral Mumbles Mostly
Jazz & Blues Festival,
Festival Pavilion,
Southend Gardens.**

IF there is a blindingly better gig in Swansea Bay this year then there will be a lot of lucky lads and lasses in the audience.

It is a fair bet that those leaving the festival opener at the seafront marquee realised they had witnessed something just a little bit special.

It's mostly jazz, as the name suggests, but Texas Blues outfit Hamilton Loomis Band played a staggering set, which left many shaking their heads in awe.

The man himself is a disciple of Bo Diddley and all the good things have rubbed off. He was into his confident stride from the off and reeled off winners like *Legendary*, *Slow Lover*, *Get My Blues On* and *Voodoo Doll*.

A highlight — and there were many — came when he went head to head with Stratton Doyle on sax, the pair sparring away like two boxers going to the end.

Then Loomis took it to the next level by playing his guitar with drum sticks and even topped that by using the sax as a plectrum.

On an extended *Bow Wow* Loomis went walkabout around the marquee. The tent boys were really putting it in during the gig which will go down in the festival's history.

Proceedings were opened

earlier by sax maestro Snake Davis and his band, making a return to the event after three years.

The jazz funk groove ensured a feel good factor, with numbers like *Loverman*, *The Tickle* and *Talking Bird* doing the business.

He's a regular performer in Japan and the Oriental influence brought him *Fuja Sighting*, played on a local horn. Some of the numbers were so smooth that you could almost hear the water outside lapping onto the shore.

Presley's *Suspicious Minds* and Lennon's *Imagine* kept the bar raised.

It all ends at the same venue tonight with the Brian Breeze Rhythm & Blues Band with Taff Williams and Cubanita.

Chris Peregrine

REVIEW

Admiral Mumbles Mostly Jazz and Blues Festival, Brain Breeze Rhythm and Blues Band and Cubanita, Festival Pavilion, Southend Gardens

IT was a tale of two cities in the seaside village for the festival finale.

First up was Cubanita, the 11-piece Latin rhythm outfit based in Cardiff, but with a bit of help from Swansea.

With songs like Water Melon and Rio de Janeiro, the appreciative audience, was transported to foreign climes.

And when that atmospheric set had wafted into the night it was time for the Brian Breeze Rhythm and Blues Band to give this magnificent festival the rousing send-off it deserved.

He and his cohorts didn't disappoint and everyone knew they wouldn't. There is a lot of affection in Swansea music circles for the hometown practitioners and further evidence was again provided by Breeze on guitar, bass player Alan Vaughan, Martin Webber on drums, Richard Cottle on keyboards and on piano Dave Cottle, whose efforts in organising four days of top quality music requires recognition.

Then for the second set Breeze was joined in a twin guitar onslaught by Ray 'Taff' Williams. They hadn't played together for a good while and vowed on stage to put that right more often. That will be music to many ears.

The Letter and Black Magic Woman, two of Breeze's regular numbers, got the first set moving and an acoustic version of The Shadow of Your Smile was simply special.

Part two saw Williams enter the fray with gusto and bounce off his fellow guitar frontman to great effect. Stevie Wonder's Jammin' went down a storm and with the Cottle brothers chipping in on trumpet and sax when keyboard duties allowed, the festival eventually came to a shuddering halt. All good things . . .

Chris Peregrine