

Twenty Five Years – the South Wold Story.

by John Paddon.

Twenty five years ago, in 1963, the South Wold Jazz band and its associated club were created in order to carry the banner of Real Jazz.

Just as the Campaign for Real Ale was set up to protect the public from the pervasion of “plastic beer”, the South Wold Band and the Louth Jazz Club came into being as part of a small but growing movement in this country dedicated to combat the menace of “plastic jazz” which was being foisted on to the public by commercial Jazz bands.

For the benefit of the uninitiated reader we would explain that the word jazz was coined to describe a musical art form invented and developed by the black musicians of New Orleans around the turn of the century. Unfortunately when bands in Europe started to play what they called jazz, the resultant music bore practically no resemblance to the real thing. The distinctive rolling rhythm of New Orleans, executed by smooth press rolls on the snare drum, accompanied by subtle patterns on a carefully tuned bass drum was replaced by a rat-tat-tat sound on the snare or persistent cymbal bashing, the bass drum could hardly be heard, and even the four equal beat rhythm of real jazz was destroyed by a heavily accented off beat. Tunes were played at breakneck speed and frontline musicians, unable to master the art of placing well chosen notes in well chosen places, overcame their difficulty by cramming as many notes as they could manage into every available space. Tone and expression went out of the window. And so, in a few isolated parts of the country, steps were taken to combat this menace which was destroying the music and giving the public an entirely false impression.

The South Wold Band are proud to have carried the banner for twenty five years in Lincolnshire. An illustration of their effectiveness is the many times that members of the public have come to the musicians at the end of a gig and said that they don't like jazz but they think this music is wonderful. It is with great satisfaction that the band explain to these people that they have probably just heard real jazz for the first time in their lives.

Having formed the band, whose aims we hope we have now made clear, it was necessary to have somewhere to play and someone to play to. And so the Louth Jazz Club came into being. The object was to make sure that the musicians of the band had somewhere to play their music each week and that interested members of the public would have real jazz available. It is the proud boast of the band and the club that this commitment has been fulfilled without a break for twenty five years. The band has occasionally had to play in makeshift premises and in the worst of the bad weather some musicians did not make it but the record is unbroken.

The extreme dedication of the musicians involved will be appreciated when it is realised that the members of the band have never drawn a fee for playing at the club. It was decided at the outset that any money which the club could accumulate would be devoted to obtaining the services of world famous New Orleans musicians in order that the band could gain from the experience of playing with them and to give the supporters of the club a rare chance to see and hear the real thing.

The list of New Orleans musicians who have come from the U.S.A. to play with the South Wold Band is indeed impressive. It includes: trumpet players – Wendell Brunious, Kid Sheik Colar, Teddy Riley and Clive Wilson; Clarinet players – Bill Carter, Herb Hall, Jimmy Noon Jr., Sam Lee and Michael White; Trombonists – Louis Nelson and Freddie Lonzo; Sax players – Teddy Johnson and George Kelly; Pianists – Don Ewell, Dave Paquet, Alton Purnell and Butch Thompson; Drummers – Andrew Hall and Barry Martin; and Vocalist Sylvia Kuumba Williams.

The band has also had a long and happy association with the English based international stars Sammy Rimington and Brian Turnock.

The local personnel of the band has changed over the years, in fact there have been so many comings and goings, including the willing helpfulness of many musicians from other areas who have jumped in to help the band fill vacancies due to holidays, illness etc., that it would be an impossible task to remember all the names of those involved over 25 years. Rather than risk offending those who would inevitably be left out of such a list we will be content to record our appreciation and thanks to every musician who has been associated with the band and without whose help the unbroken records could not have been maintained.

It is pleasing to note that the South Wold Band has introduced real jazz to the public in Lincolnshire to such effect that quite a few have made the trip to New Orleans. Many of the musicians who have joined the band have been inspired to go to New Orleans to see the music at first hand. We would also like to mention three success stories that the band are happy to have initiated. Young Tim Asson came to the band as a school boy with a brand new clarinet and played his first few halting phrases. He later went to New Orleans to study the music and is now recognised as one of the most accomplished New Orleans style clarinettists in the country. Emile Martyn, who started his drumming career as a teenager with the South Wold Band, is now leading his own band in New Orleans. And LULU White, who started singing with the band about ten years ago is now acclaimed in New Orleans as the only European girl to have mastered the New Orleans style.

We have mentioned the dedication of the regular musicians who turn up each week and play for free, but they enjoy their playing and work their way through the week secure in the knowledge that Saturday night will come and they will find a clean

club room, fire lit in the winter, door keeper on duty, bar stocked and manned and an immense amount of work done behind the scenes in order to make the musicians' night of pleasure possible. The unstinting devotion of the members of the committee and other willing helpers never ceases to amaze. While the band make the audience happy with their music, the audience make the band happy with their generous applause, but the unsung heroes behind the scenes just get on with their work. Let us take this opportunity to record the appreciation and gratitude of musicians and audience for the hard work that goes on to make the whole thing possible.

25th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Programme of Events

Thursday 25th August – 8.30 – 11.00 p.m.

New Orleans Louth Club

The South Wold Jazz Band with Guest Musicians

Saturday 27th August

The South Wold Jazz Band

Live music in the Cornmarket Louth at tea time
followed by a street parade to the
New Orleans Louth Club, Queen Street
for an evening of
New Orleans music

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