

52nd Annual International Manawatu Jazz Festival 2019

This was a very exciting Festival, with a Swing Dance, 5 concerts, an outstanding High School Competition with 11 Schools from lower North Island (results on website and Facebook), and two Café Scenes.... 9 days of music and over 320 musicians. We had capacity audiences and rave reviews for all the concerts right from the start, with **Kevin Downing's Lab Band** and the first ear glimpse of **Chis Cain's** high powered Blues quartet, featuring a phenomenal US based rhythm section, bassist **Steve Evans**, drummer/vocalist **Ron E. Beck** ...and Wellington's keyboardist, **Ben Wilcock** playing a real Steinway, a Yamaha mini keyboard and a virtual Hammond B3! The only disappointment was hearing, on the day before the concert, that US based guitarist, **Daniel Castro** was prevented from travelling to NZ because his Green Card would have expired during the trip risking his re- entry, as a Mexican citizen, back into the USA. In spite of this, Chris and the guys more than filled the gap and blew us away again at the full concert the following evening.

Christchurch's **All Girl Big Band**, the surprise sensation of the 2017 Festival, did it again this year for those who missed them last time, and delighted all those who jostled to get tickets this year. Led by alto player, **Lana Laws**, with their great ensembles, sectionals and solos, this is one of NZ's great big bands of any gender, and their vocalist, **Kate Taylor**, one of NZ's premier vocalists. Check out: www.allgirlbigband.co.nz, if you miss(ed) them, or want to buy their CD.

The Jazz Gala opened with **The Rodger Fox Big Band** and the rich warm voice of US guest, **Glenn Walters**. This relaxed atmosphere was interrupted by the astonishing altissimo trumpet playing of UK guest **Louis Dowdeswell**, and then by the drumming dynamo aka **Gregg Bissonette**. The general opinion was that this was one of the best Jazz Galas.... and at the end of it, everyone left the Regent delighted, excited ..and exhausted!

. The was something for every Jazz taste over the five days of the two Café Scene weekends from Gypsy Jazz, Trad, Swing to Bebop and beyond, with 23 groups playing 33 gigs involving 130 musicians! The gigs went very well, with venues and their patrons very pleased with the variety and quality of the groups performing. We were very grateful to **The Broadway Radiology Trust** who sponsored three groups from the Wellington Jazz Scene, covering a range of styles from Trad Jazz of **The New Valley Stompers**, the cabaret style **High Society** to the cool Jazz of **Geoff Culverwell's VSOP** and his captivating **Miles and Chet Show** in the City Library.

The Festival owes its success to the inspiration and programme organising skills of its Artistic Director, **Rodger Fox**, to whom we owe a huge debt of gratitude (which we can never repay!)...and to all the musicians, international and local, who entertained us. Special mention and huge thanks should go to the Sound Techs: **Simon Grant** for his set up and superb delivery of the demanding and complicated mix at the Globe, **Malcolm McKinnon** and **Neville Lauridsen** in equally demanding the High Schools' Competition and **Doug Jane** meeting the high profile requirements of the Jazz Gala in **The Regent**.

The Festival can only operate with the valuable major financial support of **Palmerston North City Council** and sponsorship and support from **The Central Energy Trust, The Pub Charity Ltd, The Mainland Foundation, The Broadway Radiology Trust, The Regent Theatre Trust, Globe Theatre, Coachman Hotel, Screen Vistas, Victoria University, Yamaha Instruments, The Breeze** and all the **Café and Bar venues**...plus of course all the audiences, for which we are very grateful.

We are also very grateful for the support and effort of **Ticket Direct** staff and all the staff at the **Regent** and **Globe Theatres**, and the design skills and patience of **Jemma Cheer**.

In addition we have to acknowledge the support of the **Jazz Club Committee** and a dedicated group of Club members, whose generosity in time, website and Facebook updates, distribution of flyers, catering, and shifting equipment, made the day to day running Festival possible.

The size and nature of the concerts also involves borrowing valuable, fragile equipment, from drum kits to sound gear, so we are very grateful to **Ted Frickeleton, Dean Parkinson, and Neville Lauridsen**.... and putting that in perspective, just remember your reluctance to lend your solidly robust old lawnmower to a neighbour!

David Edge

President MJC and Chair of Festival Committee