



Photos: Mark Allan

Live Reviews

The Trojan Story – Jazz Jamaica Allstars

Royal Festival Hall, Southbank Centre

Not so much the story of Trojan Records – there was tacit understanding of the significance of the iconic British ska/rocksteady/reggae label – as a sense of a baton being passed. For just like Trojan, Jazz Jamaica All-stars and the Tomorrow's Warriors alumni involved in this upbeat tribute are part of the fabric of black Britain. Anthem after anthem ("Can I hear you say TUNE", yelled guest vocalist Brinsley 'Aswad' Forde) came loaded with import, musing on notions of home and heartbreak, sending messages including, on organ-tastic instrumental 'The Liquidator', a football match staple, in what felt like a wry F-you.

Gary Crosby's hosting skills might have done with a polish, but his good-natured banter set a tone reflected by the clever, sometimes quirky arrangements of Jason Yarde and Ben Kwasi Burrell (the latter on

piano and keys), and the relaxed virtuosity of inter-generational players from saxophonist Camilla George to upright bassist Lance Rose to DC-born drummer, Rod Youngs. Under the baton of conductor Kevin Robinson, the All-Stars and their accompanying ensembles – String Ting, the Reggae Choir (directed by Zara McFarlane) and Dem 3 (the triple-barrels of Cherise Adams-Burnett, Kianja Harvey-Elliott and Cara Crosby-Irons), magicked a glorious tangle of loping, skittering beats.

"We're 30 this year," said Crosby, without elaborating. And again, there was no need: alumni from Tomorrow's Warriors, the jazz training organisation founded by Crosby and Janine Irons three decades ago were hiding in plain sight (and besides, they made the July cover of *Jazzwise*).

Highlights were many. Space was given to the cool, ringing chords of guitarist Shirley 'Nardeydey' Tetteh. Percussionist Satin Singh, wiggling out on congas, reinforced the music's African roots. Horns blew righteous fire, and called-and-responded, and allowed

soloists including Denys Baptiste to stake their claims. There were dub effects, and blasts from a dancehall air horn. There was skanking, of course: by guest vocalist Noel McKoy on 'You Can Get It If You Really Want'; by Cherise on a medley-ised 'Young, Gifted and Black'; and by McKoy and Forde, duetting on 'Police and Thieves', the former a fetching octave higher than the latter.

If the crowd didn't holler back like it might have for Forde's rallying cry 'I am The Magnificent' – that opening line from Dave and Ansell Collins' ever-awesome 'Double Barrel' – it was because it was sparser than usual, socially distanced but still rude boys and girls at heart. 'Israelites' felt epic, nonetheless; by the final number 'Red Red Wine', with its choir-sung 'blue, blue heart' refrain, people were moving in coiled delight.

"Don't dance in the aisles or we'll get in trouble," said Crosby – even if encore 'Lively Up Yourself' was an invitation, surely, to do precisely that. **Jane Cornwell**

Lauren Kinsella Trio

NQ Jazz, The Yard, Manchester

Tucked away behind Cheetham Hill's builders' merchants and clothing wholesalers is The Yard, a newly-refurbished hub for Manchester's creative types. At its heart is a mid-sized concert space, decked out with patterned rugs, pot plant 'feature walls', and floor-to-ceiling textile drapes. On a summer's evening, audiences are bathed in natural light for an entire set. It's a thoroughly pleasant place to be.

The Yard is one of NQ Jazz's new homes, hosting Ant Law, Norma Winstone and Soweto Kinch to date. Here, Irish vocalist Lauren Kinsella and her trio (saxophonist Tom Challenger and drummer Dave Smith) took to the stage for a single hour-and-

a-half set in front of a select, socially-distanced crowd.

This is jazz for those who prefer their Monks of the Meredith variety. Kinsella's vocal delivery ranges from crystal-clear clarity through to almost total concealment, and there are nods to a whole history of experimental vocal music in her improvisations, from Cathy Berberian and Laurie Anderson to the additive textures of Georges Aperghis. Smith's drumming was strikingly melodic; there was even enough hush to make out the individual drum

itches in 'Radicle (a plant's first root)'. 'Mac Tíré (Irish for 'wolf') began in delicate parallel, Challenger contributing quivering multiphonics before unleashing a streaming solo, egged on by Smith. Overall though, it's music of subtle touches – a music box creeps in, gentle almost-words fly overhead, grooves build slowly and depart even more nonchalantly. There's also a heavy introspective element to the sound, inviting reflection.

That pensive state eventually caved, and Smith's trap-ish grooves summoned some of the urgency with which the ensuing crisis should be tackled. Kinsella's ability to unlock some of those thoughts enhances the power of an already sparking trio.

Hugh Morris

