

PLENTY TO TALK ABOUT

Things are off to a very positive start this year. Unprecedented ticket sales for our Croydon concert next month means that we're nearly sold out in record time. If you are planning on coming to this one, get your booking in now! Warner's have already put dates in for 2020 (see below); this is earlier than they've ever done this before which, once again, goes to show how strong our sales figures are for them. Thanks as always for your continued support - we really couldn't do it without you.

I received a number of emails regarding my previous article on "The Problem with Jazz", mostly in agreement but with some really great points raised. If you did email me, my apologies in not getting back to everyone. I will try to deal with some of what was said in another newsletter as I think that the debate is very healthy.

I also had a chat on the subject with members of the Folkestone Big Band Appreciation Society when I visited back in December. Tony Pettitt (no relation!) runs an excellent society down on the Kent Coast so if you're down that way, do pay them a visit at the Wards Hotel. Their next meetings are at 2pm on 20th March and 17th April - just turn up, they're very friendly! There are similar societies all over the country but I hear that many of them are struggling for members and a couple have recently closed. It's worth having a look online to see if there are any near you. If you're struggling to find one locally, let me know and I'll try to help.

ELEANOR BIDS US FAREWELL

After 15 years, Eleanor Keenan has decided it's time for her to cut down on her busy schedule and to leave the band. I remember Eleanor first singing with us when Emer McParland left all that time ago; Ellie was clearly a lady who knew how to sing a song with the best of them. Since then she has helped the band to grow into the top class orchestra that it is today. You'll all have been blown away by her performances over the years but what you might not be aware of, is how much of a huge support she has been to me. I will miss her on our gigs tremendously; nobody sings a ballad like Ellie. I'll also miss her guidance and her encouragement.

Eleanor's last shows with us will be at Gunton Hall in March and at Sinah Warren in May. She will also be our singer at the United Services Club, Sidcup on 28th April.

ATILA RETURNS TO SIDCUP

Last year, singer Atila came to our rescue when another vocalist wasn't well enough to perform at the Club. He gave us beautiful renditions of classics from the Nat "King" Cole songbook. I thought it was about time we invited him back but with his own choices of repertoire. Atila always wows audiences with his style and swing. Buddy Greco said, "I was knocked out by Atila. He has the voice and class to show the world what great music is about"; praise indeed! He'll be singing favourites such as "Luck Be A Lady", "Around the World", "Day In, Day Out" and "The Best is Yet To Come".

Doors open at 7pm (please don't arrive earlier as the room will still be being set), the concert starts at 8pm and tickets, priced at £12, are available on the door. There is free evening parking behind the club. United Services Club, 108 Main Road, Sidcup, DA14 6NE - call 01342 523 003 for more details.

A 20:20 VIEW OF WARNER'S

The dates for Warner's in 2020 have started to come through. Confirmed so far, we have the following:

2 - 6 March 2020 - Gunton Hall, Lowestoft

17 March 2020 - Bembridge, Isle of Wight - ONE NIGHT SPECIAL with Clare Teal

4 - 8 May 2020 - Sinah Warren, Hayling Island

19 - 23 October 2020 - Sinah Warren, Hayling Island

I'm hoping that we'll once again be adding Bodelwyddan and maybe one or two other nights in due course. You will of course be first to know as soon as anything is confirmed.

Sinah Warren this May is already sold out (do keep checking for cancellations) but there are still a handful of rooms left for March at Gunton Hall. Our guests there will be Georgina Jackson, Pete Long and Enrico Tomasso.

EASTBOURNE NOW CONFIRMED

I'm pleased to confirm that we now have a date for our matinee at the newly refurbished Congress Theatre in Eastbourne. The title of the show is "100 Years of the Big Bands". The date for your diaries is Sunday 25th August 2019. Tickets should be on sale in the next week or so. Call 01323 412 000 or visit eastbournetheatres.co.uk.

MOONLIGHTING

8th March - Brendan Cole UK Tour - The Hawth, Crawley - me on bass

10th March - Albert's Big Band - Royal Albert Hall, London - 3pm Tea Dance & 7pm Swing Dance - Jon Stokes bandleading, Gemma Moore, Jon Shenoy & me in the band

10th March - Ronnie Scott's Big Band - Ronnie Scott's - Tony Fisher on Trumpet

17th March - The Definitive Rat Pack - The Mill at Sonning, near Reading - me on bass

19th March - Humphrey Lyttleton Band - Bulls Head, Barnes - Tony Fisher on Trumpet

20th March (afternoon) - Jazz at the Philharmonic - Spice of Life, Soho - me on bass

22nd March - A Tribute to Nat "King" Cole - Guy Barker conducts Gary Williams with the CBSO - Symphony Hall, Birmingham - me on bass

24th March - Pete Long's Jazz Planets - Bristol Jazz Festival - me on bass, Chris Traves on trombone and many other familiar faces

UPCOMING DATES

Sunday 24th February	8pm	United Services Club Main Road, Sidcup, Kent	£12	Tickets: 01322 521 515	Concert with Atila
Monday 4th - Friday 8th March		Warner's Gunton Hall Coastal Resort Lowestoft, Suffolk		Bookings: 0330 100 9774	Big Band Break
Friday 29th March	7.30	Trinity School Concert Hall Shirley Park, Croydon		Tickets: 01342 523 003	Concert with Matt Ford & Joanna Eden
Wednesday 3rd April		Warner's Sinah Warren Hotel Hayling Island		Bookings: 0330 100 9774	ONE NIGHT SPECIAL with Clare Teal
Sunday 28th April	8pm	United Services Club Main Road, Sidcup, Kent	£12	Tickets: 01322 521 515	Concert with Eleanor Keenan
Monday 6th - Friday 10th May		Warner's Sinah Warren Hotel Hayling Island		Bookings: 0330 100 9774	Big Band Break
Sunday 9th June	8pm	The Mill at Sonning Sonning Eye, nr. Reading		Tickets: 0118 969 8000	Concert: The Great American Swingbook
Sunday 30th June	8pm	United Services Club Main Road, Sidcup, Kent	£12	Tickets: 01322 521 515	Concert
Monday 8th - Friday 12th July		Warner's Bodelwyddan Castle Hotel North Wales		Bookings: 0330 100 9774	Big Band Break