

## Back in the saddle again

The audience at the spacious café in Folsom, Louisiana, was treated to an exceptional musical treat as Barry Martyn, John Previti, and John Royen joined Dr. Ben Redwine in a tribute concert to Barney Bigard, the renowned New Orleans clarinetist from the early days of jazz. This sleepy suburb of New Orleans is home to the Giddyup Café; where open beamed ceilings and hardwood floors house art throughout, comfortable leather couches, and café tables and chairs for an intimate ambiance. The café welcomes music enthusiasts to listen in a warm, comfortable setting. The audience was wowed, as the quartet swung their way through the evening of Traditional jazz. It had been a long year missing out on musical events as the world struggled through the pandemic and the crowd was ready.

While limiting his exposure to other people, drummer Barry Martyn had been waiting for the opportunity to get back into the music scene in New Orleans to play his drums as he's done since 1955. Meanwhile, Dr. Ben Redwine was preparing for his planned presentation about Bigard to the Potomac River Jazz Club in Washington DC. During his research, Redwine was able to find and read several of Martyn's books and then learned that Barry resides in New Orleans. Mr. Martyn, a renowned author and jazz historian, who played with Barney Bigard in the 1970s, and Ben met to interview Martyn about his experiences with Bigard as well as all things Traditional jazz. A friendship was struck, and they began to plan a way to parlay the presentation into a musical tribute.

Born in London in 1941, Martyn, a jazz fanatic, came to New Orleans when he was just 18-years-old and has been a fixture in the Traditional jazz scene in the Crescent City to this day. He was the first white musician in the United States to join a black

musicians union. Touring the world with his band, the Legends of Jazz, he exposed the rest of the world to the unique sounds of New Orleans Jazz. Barry brought his well-honed drumming experience to the crowd at the Giddyup; he entertained us providing rhythmic support, singing, and interjecting humorous stories of his life. While playing, he finessed his performance with nuanced dynamics, frequently using brushes to soften his sound. His playing and performance harkened back to a time when the band was more than just the music – it was entertainment. Nodding to each musician and calling the audience's attention to the soloists, Martyn gave the concert the feel of hearing jazz in a New Orleans speakeasy.

Ben Redwine, a clarinetist equally accomplished in classical and jazz, led the band with introductions that were filled with little known facts about the writers and performers of the historic pieces they performed. His playing feels like a throwback to another time, yet with a polished and rich sound not often heard. Masterful in his renditions of classic tunes, Redwine drew the audience in, enticing them in the intimate setting of this group's performance.

Dr. Ben had an illustrious career in the US Navy premier band in Annapolis, Maryland until his retirement in 2014. Free to move to the heart of jazz, he and his wife, Leslie, moved back to Louisiana and the music scene that continued to pull him closer. He earned a doctorate from the Catholic University of America and has since distinguished himself as an authentic New Orleans jazz musician. He has been featured at the famous Dew Drop Jazz and Social Hall on the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain, where many New Orleans musicians jammed after long nights performing in New Orleans.

While in the Washington DC area, Dr. Ben played and recorded with the Redwine Jazz Trio, featuring John Previti on bass. Notably, John has the distinction of receiving the Washington DC Area Musicians Award in 2002 for best musician in the Metro area. From Southern Maryland, Previti is considered the guitarist's bass player; he has performed with Charlie Byrd, Doc Cheatham, Paul Simon, Buddy Emmons, Les Paul, Arlen Roth, John Allred, Bill Allred, Ed Polcer, among numerous others.

Staying in close touch, Previti connected with Redwine on his trip south, and Ben invited him to join him in playing in the jazz clubs and on the Bigard tribute concert. Thus, the band and the audience were gifted with Previti's musical prowess. John Previti was equally impressive in his rhythmic support and in his musical interpretations. The audience was enraptured as he soloed and the other musicians showed equal apprecia-



Both by courtesy of Anna Hoover


tion of his contribution to this performance. Clearly enjoying his participation in the concert, he was rewarded with great appreciation from the audience.

Rounding out the group was John Royen on piano. Originally from Washington DC, he moved to New Orleans in 1976 to learn from the best jazz musicians in town, including studying with the great Don Ewell. He continues the stride piano tradition playing solo and as a member of many of the best New Orleans bands. He has performed, toured and recorded with many contemporary jazz greats including Pete Fountain, the Dukes of Dixieland, the Louisiana Repertory Jazz Ensemble, Duke Heitger's Steamboat Stompers, Tim Laughlin and Independence Hall Jazz Band. John has been playing for over 20 years with the Preservation Hall Jazz Band and has performed at the Kennedy Center, the US State Department, the National Press Club, the Smithsonian Institution, the New Orleans Historical Jazz Park, as well as touring nationally and internationally.

Royen's keywork was polished and showed off his years of experience as a solo performer. We were all particularly moved by his performances of two of Willie the Lion Smith's pieces, *Here Comes The Band* and *Echoes Of Spring*, dedicating the latter to his wife, who was in the audience.

The entire evening was a magical success – audience members milling about expressing their appreciation for the musicians and wondering aloud when this grouping might have a repeat performance, all while the musicians packed up their things to venture back out into the dark, humid Louisiana night. Royen and Redwine live nearby, Previti was preparing to return to the DC area the following morning, and Martyn packed up his gear for the ride south to his home in New Orleans. At his home in Bywater, the historic neighbourhood in New Orleans, Barry continues to be connected and friends with the many musicians who live nearby. The Redwine/Martyn collaboration did not end after the concert. Barry is re-establishing the Pelican Jazz Trio, this time, featuring Dr. Ben Redwine for new and old jazz lovers, alike. ■


**Anna Hoover**

NATIONAL  
JAZZ  
ARCHIVE

James  
Pearson  
Trio

A Musical Portrait of  
**COLE  
PORTER**

featuring  
SAM BURGESS BASS /   
CHRIS HIGGINBOTTOM DRUMS

**6 November 2021 2.30 pm**  
Loughton Methodist Church  
260 High Road, Loughton  
Essex IG10 1RB

This event will be held in accordance with Government's Covid guidance and regulations that may apply at the time

This is a fundraising event for the National Jazz Archive  
Tickets £20 from: [www.nationaljazzarchive.org.uk/news-events](http://www.nationaljazzarchive.org.uk/news-events)  
020 8502 4701 [events@nationaljazzarchive.org.uk](mailto:events@nationaljazzarchive.org.uk)

*Dear Just Jazz,*

*Re: Page 4 of the August edition. It is definitely Mike Mayer on clarinet, not Keith Box. Mike always played with his right leg and foot wrapped tortuously behind the calf of his left leg. I think the drummer is Guy Fenton, but unsure about the banjo player... maybe John Shillito might know.*

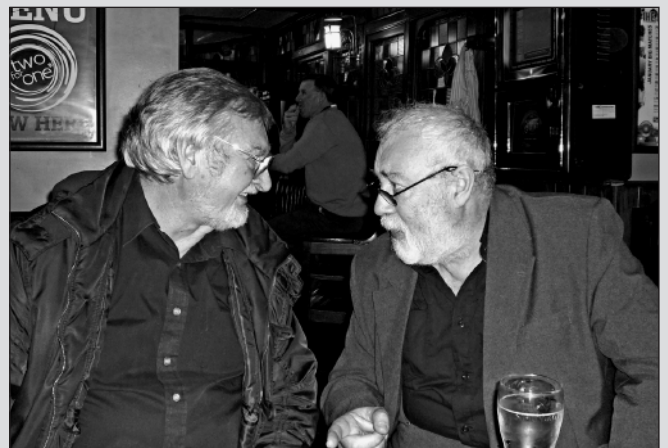
*Regards,*

**Derek Cheesbrough, Plymouth.**

**I wonder what they said...**

This is photograph three in the series submitted by Mick Wilkinson, which started in the July edition. Any captions will be welcome!

**Just Jazz**



*Jim Douglas and Chez Chesterman*