

Cole takes his place as a true master

JAZZ

RITCHIE COLE

Hyde Park Hotel

Reviewed by STEVE ROBERTSON

PERTH jazz audiences have now seen three Ritchie Coles in just under seven years.

In 1981, the American was an awestruck protégé of the venerable bebop master Sonny Stitt.

Last year he was the gifted and exuberant clown, racing madly through one bebop classic after another. Monday night a big crowd at the Perth Jazz Society saw a relaxed and mature master of the alto sax exploring a superbly chosen range of standards, Latin gems, bop flag-wavers and even a bit of 1920s kitsch.

Cole, clearly a bit weary at the start, had his engine running at top revs by the second set. Highlights included *Perth Bossa Nova* (really *Satin Doll* with fruit on her hat), a loving, plaintive *Here's That Rainy Day* (he was off by 48 hours), a sensual *Desafinado* and a blazing white-hot romp through that old Charlie Barnet warhorse *Cherokee*.

All the prodigious technique and flowing melodic lines were on display in the solos, especially on *Lady is a Tramp* and the lovely *Polkadots and Moonbeams*. His impish humour came forth on a gospel reading of *Waltzing Matilda* (backed with some sanctified chords from pianist Mike Nelson) and an a capella oddity from the 20s called *Sax-O-Fun*.

The local backing was first-rate. Nelson at the piano always blends well with Cole, and Mark Dengate offered fine, understated contributions on bass. Swinging, tasteful drumming was supplied by Gary France who, when the music took an especially pleasing turn, assumed the visage of a grinning gargoyle.

Cole has been termed "Keeper of the Flame" and once again he helped pass it to a younger generation, this time spotlighting a talented 16-year-old altoist from Churchlands High School, Carl Mackie.

Displaying a pretty tone and a knack for crowd-pleasing, Carl sailed through *C-Jam Blues* and *Now's The Time*, all the while cheered on by the American star who surely must have been seeing himself as he was 20 years ago.