



She's the best of British

CLAIRE MARTIN is the best female jazz singer to emerge from Britain since Annie Ross, more than four decades ago. Dogmatic statement? Damn right!

In fact this tall, slim, golden-tressed Wimbledonian sounds not unlike the legendary Ross, especially on up-tempos. She has a similar, pure-jazz feel for phrasing and time, while her pitch is equally flawless.

On ballads, however, there's more of the sensual huskiness of Julie London in the stunning voice of THIS London lass.

Martin brings to mind the top white jazz singers of the 50s and 60s, her smoky contralto imbuing lyrics with remarkable authority for one who is only in her middle 20s.

Her Perth appearance at the Hyde Park Hotel in October was a celebration of standards, not-so-standards and original material — all bearing the hallmark of taste.

Her preferred accompaniment is guitar, piano, bass and drums, and the PJS provided Freddy Grigson, Mike Nelson, Brian Bursey and Gary France for the occasion. All acquitted themselves admirably with the exception of the guitarist, whose harmonic conception differed from that of the composers, especially during his too contemporary solos.

Martin opened with the tried and true *Get Out Of Town* by Cole Porter. The alluring contralto voice then glided through Jonie Mitchell's *Be Cool*, an estimable composition by a singer whose jazz leanings have been overshadowed by her folk/pop successes. This latter was notable for excellent, individualised scatting.

Her own *Cartoon Life*, a sardonic samba, gave way to *You're Blasé*, a great ballad delivery in the classic tradition, with a hint of Sheila Jordan-like adventurousness.



Claire Martin... stunning voice.

one of the superior songs of recent years, with oh-so-cool lyrics, was high-lit by Vaughan-like scatting; then followed the fine blues-ballad, *Save Your Love For Me*, lambent and ballsy.

Out Of My Continental Mind, a song associated with Lena Horne, was performed at supersonic tempo; Golson's jazz standard, *Whisper Not*, cooled things down a while; *I Got Lost In His Arms*, a less-well-known Berlin ditty in 3/4 was given a splendid reading with superb phrasing and believability.

Among other bijoux were Dave Frishberg's *Wheeler's And Dealers*, *Here's To Life* (by Shirley Horn), the evergreens *By Myself* and *I Didn't Know What Time It Was*. This latter was very improvisational and O'Day-like, sharing its implacable swing with the closing Bob Dorough wailer, *Devil May Care*.

Claire Martin has arrived, make no mistake. I can't imagine how she can possibly get better!

Avant-garde icon displays mellow side

■ NOVEMBER began for the PJS with a visit from American saxophonist Sam Rivers, a man noted for his respect for the jazz tradition coupled with a bent for free improvisation.

Local backing trio of Graham Wood, Murray Wilkins and Frank Gibson had their work cut out during this demanding gig, but performed manfully and with aplomb.

unaccompanied tenor intro to an up-tempo theme of his own (the entire evening was devoted to his originals, as it happened). He covered the gamut of the instrument's range, with masterly use of dynamics, his flight now angular, now sinuous. The changes were similar to *Secret Love*, but Rivers assured us it was his own *Swing Song*.

His next effort, *Ripple*, featured soprano sax. It was a medium lope for plaintive horn, with technique in abundance, but always secondary to the tune's architecture.

Next from the arsenal came *Flute For Joy*, an uppish latin piece, alternately limpid or spritely. Again there

was no shortage of chops, but subservient to Rivers' cornucopia of ideas. I found this perky but lyrical piece more moving than the preceding number — more "accessible", as a fellow quinquagenarian put it.

Back to tenor for a tune dedicated to Rivers' wife. Medium, melodic, with no rough edges, it certainly said something for 45 years of marital harmony.

Tonally, Rivers is somewhat akin to Joe Henderson. They've absorbed the Coltrane message and synthesised it into something quite personal, generally eschewing its more anguished aspects. And, like Henderson, this one-time minor icon of the avant-garde has mellowed.

The fast *Jack-In-The-Box* had a tricky head and flowing blowing section interspersed with quirky breaks. Tenor was again the chosen horn.

From what I heard of the second half it seemed like more of the same — all originals, some based on standard chord changes, some not. Rivers' soprano became increasingly ululant, sounding like a "demented oboe", as a fellow scribe put it.

That was my signal for an early departure. There had been much of interest, to be sure, but I wasn't totally rivetted. Angularity, obliquity and dissonance are spices that should be employed with the greatest discretion.

Tasmanian combo in tribute to Desmond

■ THE FOLLOWING week's offering at the Hyde Park was a very different