

JFC
JAZZ CLUB

BRILLIANT

CORNERS

Jazzwise staggers down memory lane, delves into dark corners, and revisits the shrines that pepper the history of the music. **THIS MONTH JFC JAZZ CLUB/ THE HAT, ST PETERSBURG, RUSSIA // STORY – MICHAEL JACKSON**

When traveling to exotic locales with the good lady (to channel *Jazzwise's* moral watchdog The Colonel), she is pressed to participate in my relentless search for the globe's best jazz haunts. Usually she grins and bears it ('strains up under the bear' as The Colonel would quip), but we had a vodka fuelled jazz blast in St Petersburg.

JFC Jazz Club is a little hard to find. It's been there since 1995 but lurks in an unprepossessing courtyard set back from the street at 33 Shpalernaya, a couple of dusty blocks east of Liteyny pr, just south of the River Neva. The proprietors, Felix Naroditsky and Vitaly Yudenok and artistic director and internationally known pianist Andrei Kondakov, could not have been more welcoming when we arrived to catch the classy duo of local singer Olesya Yalunina and guitarist Alexey Degussarov last October. The peeling exterior of the club is inexplicably festooned with tubas and 'JFC Jazz Club' is messily stenciled on a bright orange background, presumably a punny hue referencing the Joint Fruit Company, which supported the club when it started 18 years ago, but has no association now. Inside, the music room is intimate and chic, despite rather gauche advertising hoardings above the stage (West Call Telecommunications is an ironic sponsor given the photos of US jazz heroes like Dexter Gordon and Harold Mabern on the walls).

Kondakov reels off a list of names of Russian jazz luminaries who have played JFC, including bassist Vladimir Volkov, saxist

Leonid Sendersky and drummers Vladimir Tarasov and Paulo Braga, plus Randy Brecker, David Sánchez and Steve Grossman. He himself records for Igor Butman's label (saxist Butman being the Wynton Marsalis of Russian jazz, and who owns two clubs in Moscow) and Kondakov recently released a vintage session he cut with Butman, Lenny White and Eddie Gomez in New York in 1996. His new album *Fairy Tale in The Rain* is getting some airplay too, he communicated with pride.



Kondakov's largesse and enthusiasm extended past the 11pm closing at JFC and we repaired to the late session at The Hat, a lively cocktail bar at 9 Belinsky St where musicians and pipe smoking bohoss from Mussorgsky College of Music and State University go to jam, or just look hip, until 3am. The Hat is run by local musician Billy Novick and we were greeted with further vodka proffering by genial, cravat and blazer-sporting art director Alexander Butkeev.

A gorgeous blonde singer sat at a table designated "just for musicians" and later took to the retro condenser mic onstage. The Hat also boasts a house drum kit. Everyone knew Kondakov, and the gal at the keys surrendered the piano bench to him. Notwithstanding our copious Stoli libation recklessly mixed with samples of the fine local dark ale, the session sitters-in all sounded excellent, and an early set at St Petersburg's most respected club JFC, followed by a hit at The Hat comes hotly recommended – you can even check with the wife. **For more go to www.jfc-club.spb.ru**

BITCHES BREW

Relief on the faces of **nude and clothed punters** at the annual **Naturist Foundation Jazz & Real Ale Festival**, held over the last weekend of June at the foundation headquarters in Brockenhurst Kent, when the unseasonably cool conditions meant that saxophonist **Frank Griffiths** and guitarist **Charles Alexander** opted to keep their clothes on thus avoiding some **potentially grisly sights** for all concerned... In this mighty **summer of cricket** as England fight to retain the **Ashes** let's never forget the legendary **Ravers Cricket Club** team, founded in 1954, by jazz musicians, jazz journalists and professional drinkers including **Mick Mulligan, Bob Dawbarn, Jim Godbolt, Frank Parr, Campbell Burnap and Ray Smith** among others, all now playing for St Peter's jazz cricket team on the great pitch upstairs... **Tony Hall** on the phone enthusing about **Eddie Palmieri** at **Ronnie Scott's** in late June where the rhythm section and percussionists tore the place apart. Mr Palmieri hopes they will be back for longer next time... It's not often you can count on the presence of a multi-billionaire popping up at a jazz gig but so it was when **Roman Abramovich** dropped by his rather swanky **Under The Bridge** club in Chelsea at the album launch for jazz-funksters **PB Underground**. The club takes a **bling** approach to everything – there's even flat-screen TVs in the Gents – while Abramovich's seven 'security' chaps would not have been best pleased if you'd looked at them the wrong way. Lucky it was the house security guys that dealt with the heavily refreshed bass-leg-end and **Level 42** front man **Mark King**, as he jumped on stage not once, but twice, only to ushered away to a safe distance while saxophonist **Tom Richards** and singer **Brendan Riley** looked on in disbelief... Sad to see a complete lack of jazz or improvised music at **Glastonbury** this year as the festival moves more towards manufactured pop pap and fancy dress. The heady days of the **Glastonbury Jazz Lounge** between 2004-2008, that featured a brilliantly diverse range of artists from **Empirical, Fraud and Liane Carroll** to **John Tchicai, Dennis Rollins** and **Get The Blessing**, now seem an eternity away and even the Jazz World Stage has been re-named the West Holts Stage... **Jazz venues, festivals and regional jazz organisations** around the UK are bracing themselves for more **funding cuts** by **Arts Council England** following the most recent cuts announced in late June by the **Department of Culture, Media and Sport** in the spending review for 2015/16. Apart from opera, music is expected to suffer the most cuts, while rumours persist that the **DCMS** itself is up for the chop, fitting rather worryingly with the overriding plans of this terrible Tory regime to privatise and strip the state back to the bone... And finally, hold the front page, *Jazzwise's* **Roy Carr** has located his last ever interview with **Jimi Hendrix** that he conducted, while an **NME** writer, in the downstairs bar at **Ronnie Scott's** club with Hendrix talking about possible jazz directions just 48 hours before he tragically died. Miss next month's *Jazzwise* at your peril...

