

BRILLIANT**CORNERS**

Jazzwise stagers down memory lane, delves into dark corners and revisits the shrines that pepper the history of the music.

THIS MONTH: MILESTONES, LOWESTOFT STORY: DAVID GALLANT

Milestones, the UK's most easterly jazz venue (200 yards further east and you'd be taking a dip in the North Sea) has just celebrated its 15th anniversary. One of Lowestoft's longest running musical institutions, it was the brainchild of accomplished jazz guitarist Stephen Mynott and saxophonist Dave Ingham, who saw no reason why Lowestoft couldn't host regular high quality modern jazz concerts. "Dave and myself played a couple of gigs that drew large crowds which made us realise that other people in Lowestoft were into jazz and that maybe they would support a local jazz club," says Mynott. "We wanted the club to have its own identity – hence the name – and feature musicians that tried to push the music and assert their own identity through it. We didn't want a Sunday afternoon snooze!"

The club spent the first six years at The Marquis of Lorne before moving to the now-defunct club Reflections and then ending up at its present home, a sumptuous basement room in the Hotel Hatfield on the seafront. After ten years of involvement with Milestones, Dave Ingham dropped out in 2007. Since then Mynott has continued on his own, but making it all tick along financially can be a bit of a strain. "Everybody who puts on this sort of music knows you are much more likely to lose money than make it," says Mynott. "But since Milestones is a not-for-profit venture and we receive no external funding, I am resigned to the fact. Most gigs break even, some lose money, some even make some! But those rare profits go straight back into the next gig. I don't think I'm any different from scores of other people who plough in the time, effort and their own money because they love this music so much and want a wider audience for all the fine musicians that are trying something

new. If I didn't do it there would be one less gig in existence. Jazz is a broad church," says Mynott, "so we feature different strands of the music every month. No two concerts are the same in style. If you don't like a particular band, then you can be sure that there will be another one along a month or two later that you will like. We've always tried to open the doors to everyone and attract people of all ages and not just the over-sixties jazz aficionados. We also try to avoid both catering to jazz snobs who are not as adventurous as they think they are, or going to the lowest common denominator and worrying that the audience won't get it."

Over the years Milestones has played host to some nationally respected musicians including Peter King, Michael Garrick, Jack Parnell, Partisans, Jim Mullen, Ingrid Laubrock and some lesser known bands like Compassionate Dictatorship, but also plenty of local musicians from East Anglia. As Mynott comments: "Milestones has become such a draw for great musicians that they now phone Lowestoft, asking to play at the club!"

Through the years the principles of Milestones have remained the same. "It's a listening gig," says Mynott: "We don't accept artists having to battle with the noise from an audience and it's also very cheap! The price has remained at £7 / £6 for years."

Clearly Milestones has become a draw for both players and punters alike and is fast making its mark on the national jazz map. "It's gratifying to walk out of Ronnie's at two in the morning and have some of the top players ask how things are going with Milestones in Lowestoft," says Mynott. "We must be doing something right!"