



23/04/2006, INTERVIEW by Jon Rhys

ALEX HUTTON & NEW ALBUM 'CROSS THAT BRIDGE'

Although Alex Hutton is often described as one of the leading young pianists in this country he has in fact been playing the UK jazz scene for several years now and it was a great pleasure to catch up with Alex recently and to ask him a few questions about his music and his thoughts on the current London jazz scene.

Finding the time to talk with a busy jazz musician is not always easy as they're invariably dashing from one gig or session to another but we managed to find a few minutes when I met up with Alex after a Sunday afternoon gig at the Princess Of Wales in Primrose Hill, that north London enclave of well-heeled urban style.

Alex's most recent album "Cross That Bridge" received three stars and a complimentary review in the May 2006 issue of 'Jazzwise' and I began by asking Alex how he came to write the material for the album.

JR: What struck me about "Cross That Bridge" was the number of original compositions on the album. How did you come to write the tracks?

AH: Sometimes it can start with the melody, after all that's the hook to a tune, but I wouldn't say it all comes at once. You find an idea, jot it down, and then leave it for a while. Then when you come back to it later you find some more and then ultimately it all falls into place. I'll take an original chord structure too, so maybe the tune comes from the chords instead sometimes, but as I said, it all comes along in parts somehow.

JR: Which pianists have influenced your playing? Might I suggest Bill Evans?

AH: I think the notion that Bill Evans has to have been a big influence on your playing can be a bit spurious really. Of course he had a huge impact on the development of jazz, but for me my major influences starting out and even now have been Herbie Hancock, Keith Jarrett, particularly his solo tracks, Kenny Kirkland, I mean imagine what he might have achieved, and naturally McCoy Tyner and Oscar Peterson, both giants of the keyboard.

JR: And outside of jazz?

AH: Many things, but classical music has always been a big part of my life. I'm not sure how much actually comes out in my playing now but certainly Debussy and Bach are composers I love to listen to.

JR: Have you ever put words to any of your tunes?

AH: Well as it happens "Karina's Song" has lyrics and I have ideas for lyrics for some of the others so we'll see what develops.

JR: Jazz often seems to revel in its own obscurity and jazz musicians can face the accusation that they play only for themselves. How do you feel about that?

AH: I don't want my music to be just for jazz fans, it needs to be more accessible to music fans in general. I think there're some great things going on in the London jazz scene today, and there are



lots of things that cross over from jazz into other forms of music. In many ways my style of jazz is quite conservative but we're not a muso trio.

The important thing is to have fun and I'd like to think all our music has a good vibe to it, especially at the gigs. So enjoyment really is the key, and by that I mean enjoyment for the audience first and foremost. Musicians and jazz musicians particularly must want to play for the audience and not just for themselves.

JR: Your current group is Mike Janisch on bass and Simon Lea on drums. How long have you been playing together as a trio?

AH: I've been playing with Mike for several years now and with Simon for one year.

JR: Any plans to expand the format?

AH: No, we've no plans to expand at present. We'll be touring the UK as a trio in November this year and we'll be recording a new album in summer, so I'm busy writing tunes for that now.

JR: Jazz like any music has its ups and downs. How do you see jazz in the UK at the moment?

AH: Things in jazz in the UK are in really good shape right now, and there's a lot of exciting things going on, particularly in terms of people writing new material, making use of electronics in a constructive way, there's a really positive energy.

JR: Is it all relevant to jazz?

AH: I think everyone has a valid contribution to make and as long as they're bringing something new to music then I'd say it's legitimate.

JR: How about jazz vocalists? There seem to be quite a number of excellent performers around at the moment.

AH: There's a real wealth of jazz inspired singers around which is great, and obviously the success that Jamie Cullum is enjoying has provided a real impetus to that side of the music, which is great for the jazz scene as a whole.

JR: Where can we find you on the web?

AH: You can find my stuff on the web at www.alexhuttonmusic.com.

JR: Well my thanks Alex for your time and good luck with the next album. And you'll be playing 606 on May 23rd with Ian Ritchie I understand?

AH: Yes, I'm looking forward to that. Hope to see you there. Thank you.