

The Happy Pals -- New Orleans Jazz in Toronto

CD Review - New Orleans Party Orchestra

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THE HAPPY PALS – NEW ORLEANS PARTY ORCHESTRA

Patrick Tevlin (tpt,vcl 3 &5) Roberta Tevlin (tbn,vcl 7 & 9) Toby Hughes (as) Roberta Hunt (pno,vcl 2 & 4)
Rainer Hunck (bjo) Philip J. Carney (bs) Chuck Clarke (dms,vcl 6)

Grossman's Tavern, Toronto, Canada, May 2005

*1.Algiers Strut 2.Mama's Gone Goodbye 3.Don't Think Twice It's Alright 4.In The Garden 5.Folsom
Prison Blues 6.Short Dress Gal 7.A Lovely Way To Spend An Evening 8.Climax Rag 9.Love Songs Of
The Nile 10.Maryland My Maryland*

New Orleans North CD-006

Every Saturday, at the unusual hour of 4 pm, Grossman's Tavern, a pub on Spadina Avenue in Toronto, is the scene of a true New Orleans jazz party. The band, The Happy Pals, have been playing there for many, many years in front of an enthusiastic audience. The band was founded by the legendary Kid Bastien. Remember our review of his latest CD in the company of his old buddy George Berry with the Danish/Swedish New Orleans Delight, one of the best CDs of that year. Legendary indeed! He was one of the few people whose annual visits local New Orleans musicians were looking forward to. Most of the time he was accompanied by some of his band members like Roberta and Patrick Tevlin and drummer Chuck Clarke. When I talked to them and asked where they learned the difficult art of true New Orleans jazz to such a high degree, the answer was always the same: "Bastien taught us!". Cliff Bastien was not only a fine trumpet player – he played other instruments as well – but also a tremendous teacher who taught New Orleans jazz to everyone who showed interest.

After Bastien's untimely and sudden death in the beginning of 2003 he left a rich heritage, not in recordings – there were too few of them! – but in a band that was ready to take over his tradition. The Happy Pals' reed player, Patrick Tevlin, switched to trumpet and took over the leadership of the band. This is their first CD, twelve years after the previous one and just like that one recorded live at Grossman's. Just like Bastien Patrick doesn't believe in recording in the cold atmosphere of a studio, in fact he doesn't believe very much in recording at all, which is our loss! All he wants to do is to play for a live audience who drink, dance and have a good time accompanied by the music of his band. This will ring a bell to those who are familiar with the great Kid Thomas. HE never really got used to play at Preservation Hall in front of a listening audience who were "staring at him". Right from the start of the Happy Pals their concept was based on the music and philosophy of Thomas Valentine who made such a strong impression on Bastien when he first visited New Orleans: play simple music to entertain the people and make them happy.

Believe me when I say that the music on this CD is the closest one can get today to the music played many years ago at the old dance halls of New Orleans. This is raw, unadulterated, exciting New Orleans jazz. Just like Bastien's, Patrick's trumpet playing is based on Kid Thomas. It is not an imitation – Bastien already said that it was impossible to imitate Thomas – but it is true to the spirit of the legendary band leader from Algiers. In the

same way Chuck Clarke's drumming reflects the influence of the unforgettable Sammy Penn. The new sax player, Toby Hughes, fits the band like a glove (shades of Ed Washington!). And what can I say about the two ladies in the band? They both could have been born and raised in New Orleans! Listen to Roberta Tevlin's simple, very individual trombone playing. I loved it from the first time I heard it in New Orleans! The other Roberta plays two-fisted New Orleans piano both as a soloist and as a member of the driving rhythm section.

Now take a look at the repertory. I know it must be immense. I would happily subscribe to a weekly CD by this band! Just like the Kid Thomas band they not only play the old classics, but they keep adding new material all the time. Didn't Kid Thomas during his last days at the dance halls add rock 'n' roll numbers to his repertory? He even had someone special to sing them! This CD reflects this variety very well. Listen to Bob Dylan's "*Don't Think Twice It's Alright*". I'm sure the great master would smile approvingly when he would hear how his music has returned to the folk roots where he came from himself. And what about Johnny Cash's "*Folsom Prison Blues*"? I bet the "man in black" would have loved to sing with this band! How many New Orleans bands play "*A Lovely Way To Spend An Evening*"? This could very well have been an appropriate title for this CD! The two Roberta's sing in the great Sweet Emma tradition. Neither of them has a tremendous voice but they sure know how to put true emotion in their vocal efforts. And isn't this exactly what this music is all about: emotion!

The old classics are played with immense gusto. Listen to the exciting breaks on Piron's "*Mama's Gone Goodbye*" and James Scott's "*Climax Rag*". The seldom played Sam Morgan tune "*Short Dress Gal*" has Chuck Clarke's singing and Roberta's version of the famous Jim Robinson solo joined by Toby in the second chorus. And of course there is "*Love Songs Of The Nile*", immortalised by Billie and DeDe Pierce.

If you love true New Orleans music you HAVE to add this CD to your collection and like me you will be looking forward to the next one by the Happy Pals. You can order it on line from Patrick Tevlin at Patrick@HappyPals.ca. If you do you will agree with me that playing it again and again is a lovely way to spend an evening!

Marcel Joly

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