

Es - Kofi Wirral Review

ESMOND SELWYN

International Guitar Festival Of Great Britain

At The Floral Pavillion - 11th November 2016

Tonight sees the return of jazz guitarist, ESMOND SELWYN, a performer of international fame (he played for Frank Sinatra at a private party at the Savoy, and he performed alongside Chick Corea, Elvin Jones and Charlie Byrd, and is a noted teacher). Following a solo performance at the Festival in 2014 tonight he plays with his quartet featuring saxophonist, Tony Kofi, a band leader and reputed performer in his own right.

The band launch effortlessly into versions of Charlie Parker's "Cool Blues" and Kenny Dorham's "Blue Bossa". Selwyn cuts a relaxed figure, glasses perched on his forehead as though browsing the Sunday papers, while his fingers do the talking. Kofi's playing is lyrical, the melodies strong and sweet. "Nancy With The Laughing Face" (van Heusen/Silvers - yep, that's Sgt Bilko to you and me!) sees a floating Selwyn solo underscored by guttural Hammond growls courtesy of John-Paul Gard and Kofi coaxing rich, flowing passages from his alto. It's becoming apparent that this is a night to sit back and revel in a choice set list delivered with absolute quality.

"Bernie's Tune" (Bernie Miller) lifts the tempo, Kofi blasting off some fancy riffs and Selwyn's fingers a blur on the fretboard. Beneath it all, drummer Coach York anchors the rhythm with a delicate intensity before flying off into passages of polyrhythmic propulsion as he duets with Gard. The piece ends with an Eastern flourish before Selwyn opens John Coltrane's "Mr PC", demonstrating his famed technical ability, wringing clean sharp notes from his customised Hagstrom.

Towards the end of the set Selwyn surveys an audience where knowledge of his pedigree might be considered a badge of honour, and then leans into the mic and says "As John Coltrane once said, if just one member of the audience is really listening, it's like having another band member on stage. So thanks for being part of the band tonight." That's not just professional, that's downright cool.

On van Heusan's "Polkadots And Moonbeams" Selwyn is flying. On the closer "Blue Monk", York delivers a knockout solo before being joined by Gard's gnarly swirling Hammond. Kofi bobs and weaves like a middleweight, light on his feet, as he plays out the final hook of the melody quite delightfully. The applause is sustained.

A night when the promoters have continued to drop this kind of quality musicianship on our doorsteps.

Glyn Akroid

Bido Lito – The Liverpool Music Magazine.