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Yellowjackets and Mafikizolo

The Yellowjackets caught live in London at Ronnie Scotts, and Mafikizolo live in concert in London.

Last month we went "Back to the USA", this month we move to England and the London Jazz Scene for a look at some outstanding Jazz from a prominent US band. In addition, I had the opportunity to hear a unique Pop group hailing from South Africa during a boat cruise down the Thames. Music continues to cross borders and infuse sounds across the world.

London Jazz Scene

The middle of every November ushers in the world renowned London Jazz Festival, which brings Jazz musicians from around the world to London. This past November, Debra C. Argen and I along with our friends Neil and Sue Richardson, also prominent Jazz musicians, attended an evening of Classic Jazz by the US based band **The Yellowjackets** (www.yellowjackets.com) at **Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club** (www.ronniescotts.co.uk).

They say Jazz is the first original art form to develop in the United States, and to hear The Yellowjackets Live you come to appreciate the many nuances of the art form from polyrhythm, call and response to the live improvisations. The evening was a feast for the ears and eyes. The band, Bob Mintzer on tenor and soprano saxophone, Jimmy Haslip on five string and fretless bass, Russell Ferrante on piano and electronic keyboards, and Marcus Baylor on drums and percussion, captivated the audience through 2 unbelievable music sets.

Senior Editor, Debra C. Argen was able to sit with the band between sets to talk about their extraordinary journey through 22 recordings over the past 24 years, and countless Grammy Nominations and awards; this is a band that has come together and continues to grow with powerful new and innovative music.

Highlighting 2 of their recordings, **Time Squared** (2003) and **Four Corners** (1987), you hear the maturing of sound, style and collaboration over the years. From **Four Corners**, which is a slower more Classic Jazz recording, I like the cuts *Out of Town*, *Open Road*, *Past Ports*, *Postcards* and *Room With a View*, it must be the extensive travel experiences coming out in me. The **Time Squared** recording is progressive Jazz showing the bands growth and fusion of their talents. Selections I like from Time Squared include, *healing waters*, *time squared*, *monk's habit*, *sea folk*, *v*, and *village gait*. If The Yellowjackets are not part of your Jazz collection then you must visit their web site (www.yellowjackets.com) to listen to their extensive list of recordings, and start your collection today.

South African Pop (Genre – Kwaito, African)

During an event sponsored by the South African Tour Board in London, I had the honor of hearing live one of the top Pop groups from South Africa, **Mafikizolo** (www.mafikizolo.za). The audience, predominantly South African, who were signing and dancing along with the group, tells you that the band is very well known and carries a strong following in South Africa. Listening to them live and watching the energy they possessed, you could understand the attraction. This genre of music is known as Kwaito, African and carries a rhythm and beat that has you tapping your fingers, swinging and dancing to the sound, which we all did on the dance floor as we cruised down the Thames. I was honored when the group presented me a copy of their current recording entitled *kwela*, of which many of the songs were performed live during the event. I have had time to sit back and enjoy this recording with my favorite cuts being *Kwela Kwela*, *Udakwa Njalo*, *Ndizolila*, *Soka Lami* and *Emlanjeni*. This was a unique evening of sights and sounds, and I was thankful I was a part of it. You can see into a culture from their music, and this group showed a passion, energy and love for their language, people and heritage that you could hear in the music and view in the dance.

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