



# MARCIA PENDLEBURY - JAZZ SINGER



When is a trend not a trend ? When it's Jazz. Jazz has always been aesthetically functional throughout all trends since it's inception in the early 1900's. It has from time to time, slid in an out of the mainstream of commerciality in various guises, but in the main, much like The Blues, hovers around the perimeter of whatever trends leads the field in music. Jazz is not always an "easy listen" with brilliant soloists manipulating the scales in all sorts of weird and wonderful techniques and blinding speed. However, one of the most influential aspect of this idiom is the songs and various interpretations that artistes over the years have lent their vocal talents to.

Tucked away in a small corner of North Wales is a lady who has virtually spent most of her life singing and performing Jazz and Blues based songs. Marcia Pendlebury started singing Jazz at the age of 17. Her brother encouraged her to sing in this medium after he found Marcia listening to his record collection. Her first love was Blues and she further her interest in both Blues and Jazz whilst studying Art in Manchester. Here she met young enthusiasts



like the now legendary **John Mayall** and fellow student Sheila Collier who was already an established singer with the Southside Stompers. Marcia began her professional career with the Climax Jazz Band which she founded. She then moved onto a stint with the

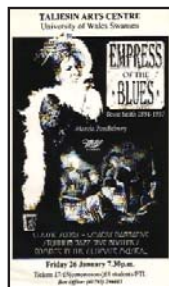
Phoenix Jazzmen and then guested with Zenith Six. It was here she met her husband to be,



Marcia with her husband Keith Pendlebury

pianist Keith Pendlebury. He was actually a professional footballer and a well known musician on the Manchester Jazz circuit. They played and stayed together until Keith dies in 2002. "Soul Mates " forever as Marcia puts it.

In the bright period for British Jazz (pre - Beatles) she was working 7 days a week, singing a mixture of Dixieland and Mainstream Jazz. She is a devoted fan of Bessie Smith and other Jazz great such as Billie Holliday and Ella Fitzgerald and includes their songs in her repertoire. In fact, Marcia wrote a complete Musical Tribute to Bessie Smith entitled "**The Empress of the Blues**". It opened



with great acclaim in 1997 at the Edinburgh Festival. The website says "*The Show follows Bessie's recording career, illustrating each song with an anecdote. A white 'Bessie' whilst acceptable in the Arts Venues, might have been a problem in the Mainstream Theatre, but Marcia's ability to get into Bessie's character and voice, singing her part in the true classical acoustic style was definitive. Keith moved effortlessly from James P Johnson to Jelly Roll Morton and with the rest of the cast..... Will Gaines, The Jiving Lindyhoppers, John Lee on Clarinet and Sax/Set Design, John Gibbon on Drums, Dave Silk on Bass/ Sound and Pete Selby as Narrator, the show was a sure fire success but although it was offered to the Theatrical Entrepreneurs such as Campbell Mackintosh, but no one felt that Jazz would be a commercial success.*" Undaunted, Marcia and Keith decided to tour the show around the UK. Taking it as far as they could go without the financial backing and support needed to propel it into larger venues, they decided to shelve the project in the hope that at some later date, a backer would be found who would view the project with the same enthusiasm as them. Marcia's vision was and still is "*to enlarge the cast of the Show and put it into the West End with a young cast and a young Bessie, whom I could school into the part. I did so much research when writing the Show, I feels I know Bessie well and the script is factually correct . Bessie was the cornerstone of Jazz Vocalisation and is not given the recognition she deserves particularly in Jazz Education curricula's.*"



Bessie Smith

Marcia and Keith lived, toured, brought up a family, whilst still singing and playing the music they both loved. They were regulars at the Brecon Jazz Festival, worked on many UK and European Tours. Appeared on TV and Radio and they also established and ran a successful Jazz Pub in Manchester, the famous Black Lion. That is until the Manager disappeared with the takings. An all too familiar story in music based venues. They finally decided to sell up and move to North Wales. Not to start another Jazz Pub or Club, but to establish a Riding Stables. This stable is now a stud for some of the finest Lusitano Horses in the World and that's really some achievement in anyone's book. Marcia compares the Lusitano breed to Jazz Musicians ! She is always the innovator and has been paramount in establishing and contributing to North Wales's largest Jazz Festival. Held yearly in June, the Abersoch Jazz Festival attracts over 20,000 people to it's program and Marcia is a regular guest. Having played Jazz Festivals on a regular basis with Keith and their band, Marcia was, in 2002, faced with taking the

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stage without her soul mate. She took the plunge with the support of her new band consisting of John Lambrick and Paul Hartley guitars, Chris Pendlebury - Drums, Clive Moreton - Bass and Saxophonist Art Theman. She replaced Keith's piano with two guitars and whilst experiencing the full quota of emotions playing without Keith, she adjusted to this loss



and has now recorded a solo CD simply called "at 60 something", reflecting the humour among Jazz Musicians as Stan Tracey's CD is called "at 70 Something".

The future for Marcia is the same mixture of Jazz and Horses. Her daughter Janine is the main stay of the horse business. She studied in Portugal under the finest trainers. They have an "In House" undercover ring where training is carried out and where they also perform a Horse Theatre Show called "Sons of the Wind". In June 2008, at the International Festival of the Lusitano Horse in Portugal, they won the coveted Gold Medal award with their stallion Vivador Da Broa...Champion Stallion, Champion Male, Gold Medal Winner. A fantastic achievement in the Global market but one which passed relatively unheralded among the inward looking politics of Gwynedd, much the same as another local girl who achieved World success in 2008....Duffy. If only someone with cash to spare and good contacts in the International Entertainment market would spend some time looking round Gwynedd, I am positive they will find rich rewards in the talent that lives here.

What I should mention in the final part of my feature is that Marcia has a great voice. Deep and rich with so much understanding of the songs she sings. One can certainly understand why she has a great passion for Bessie Smith and other Jazz greats because she understands how to deliver their songs in a timeless manner. She has surrounded herself with very fine musicians who are sympathetic to the arrangements and let the vocal breathe. This is perfectly demonstrated on Marcia's CD. It's well worth a listen and if you see her and the band playing in your area, go along and hear some great Jazz. If in fact you want a few days out of the hub-bub of daily life in 2009, why not book to visit the Abersoch Jazz Festival; in June. You won't be disappointed. To contact Marcia email [penllynlusitanos@aol.com](mailto:penllynlusitanos@aol.com)

**Paul Brett**