

Classic Jazz was the first important synthesis of the African-American and the dominant, eurocentric American musical traditions in the nineteenth century and revolutionized the world of popular music for ever. Now, over a hundred years later, a group of comparatively young professional musicians, under the name of the South West Oldtime All Stars, has resolved to return to the fountainhead of modern music and rediscover its creative possibilities.

The appearance of this band on the international jazz scene is a welcome addition and yet an unexpected development. Every renaissance needs a core of young representatives in order to thrive and sustain its impact, so this group has appeared on the European scene at an opportune moment: not only to captivate and inspire the existing audience but also to tap into the potential of new generations of music lovers.

For me this is a journey of rediscovery. It is the repertoire that drew me into the magic of classic jazz sixty short years ago. In my home town there was a modern jazz pianist who commented my advent as a traditional jazz musician with the assurance that I would eventually play a more contemporary style, given time to mature. He ended up entertaining as a bar pianist. I am gratified to have never felt I'd outgrown a music that is eternally young and yet wise beyond its innumerable years.

There was a time early in my career when I was invariably the youngest member of every band I played in. My enthusiasm knew no bounds: I even traveled by public transport from West London to Belgium and back the next day, carrying all my drums, for one gig. These days I am doomed to the role of band relic—or at least one of them—but this brings with it the advantage of a lifetime's experience and always being able to find a younger musician to carry my drums for me.

Trevor Richards

