

## Jazz breaking news:

### Manchester Jazz Festival packs in the new discoveries

(the section towards the end of the article, highlighted red, is relevant)

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Day One at **Manchester's** increasingly distinctive **jazz festival** saw **Band On The Wall** hosting **Jez Nelson** and *Jazz On 3* – for broadcast in early August so it's one you can review yourself via the wireless. Day Two started in fine style in the post-modern **teepee-shaped 250-seater tent** in **Albert Square** – around which the festival turned the corporation formality in front of the Town Hall into a suntrap social scene worthy of any outdoor festival. Within the tent, not loitering but definitely sweltering, trumpeter and composer **Yazz Ahmed** (pictured) impressed a full-house with her Arabic-inflected approach to jazz and impressed this writer with her choice of bandmate in vibraphonist **Lewis Wright** whose quicksilver solos danced across the tunes with a rare skill and lightness of touch.

**Trish Clowes** proved another fine judge of bandmates in her Tangent group as well as being another representative in a very creditable line-up of women players in the festival (are we making progress in the Women In Jazz thing at last?).

The bar, set happily high, was vaulted over and taken to the roof of the **Town Hall** by the third group of the day, Spanish quartet **Ultra High Flamenco**. The name matched the gig. An exquisite European discovery (on their first ever British gig) by the festival's omnipresent director, Steve Mead, UHF swept their flamenco roots up into a relentless surge of extended improvisation and rhythmic variation, sweeping the audience into a standing ovation along the way. Virtuoso playing from each member of the group – Spanish guitar, double bass, percussion and violin – was so assured, so precise, often so fast and always utterly embracing. Discoveries of this kind are what festivals should be about – the Mancs already score the highest in the UK in the discovery ratings but this gig earned them a fistful of bonus points.

A previously sunny Day Two ended with monsoon-like thunderstorms, echoing the tornado whipped up by UHF and the steaming atmosphere generated at **Matt & Phred's** by the youthful enthusiasm and punk-ish crowd pleasing of **Fresh Dixie Project** who, despite their obvious love of ripping up and grooving on old tunes, might have a wee bit of explaining to do under the Trades Descriptions Act (band names and genre associations, paras ii.b to vii.c) 2013.

Day Three (Sunday) saw another slew of discoveries – diverse and interesting but none that compared in this reviewer's shaky handwriting with the Status Quo-mauls-a-bit-of-jazz head-on attack by Luxembourg's **Benoit Martigny Band**. Benoit had obviously got a drum kit for Christmas and a soundproof bedroom to practise in. Teepees apparently are not soundproof. **Snarky Puppy** were sold (and souled) out and therefore not available for comment.

Day Four's teepee was cooler and drier but the day's programme was no less discoverable.

Trumpeter **Kim Macari's Locus** featured inspired and thoughtful playing by the leader and saxophonist **Leah Gough-Cooper**, proving sensitivity is always better than the glazed-eyed thrashing of a Benoit or frenzied whoop-it-up of Fresh Dixie. **The evening session at RNCM with a pan-European selection of leading younger players including the UK's Arun Ghosh on clarinet and Chris Sharkey on guitar gave an insight into just how strong the European scene continues to be. Courtesy of the Take Five Europe project (an extended residential, meeting and learning opportunity for high flyers) the resulting band had numerous individual styles and qualities, as did much of their material. The discovery lesson of the day was that it is highly focussed musicians like Kim and Leah who should be in line for similar opportunities a couple of years from now.**

*– Robert Beard*

**Original article here:**

<http://www.jazzwisemagazine.com/news-mainmenu-139/70-2013/12801-jazz-breaking-news-manchester-jazz-festival-packs-in-the-new-discoveries->