

## TAKE FIVE BLASTS OFF INTO EUROPE

As an international event with A-list headliners, the Jazztopad Festival in Wroclaw, Poland in November was an entirely appropriate setting for the final performance in the Take Five: Europe scheme. Previous concerts had taken place in Coutances, Rotterdam, Norway and London, whose respective jazz festivals [Jazz Sous Les Pommiers, North Sea, Molde and London] were partners of the initiative, but the consensus, certainly among the musicians, was that the chemistry peaked in the land of chest-warming cherry vodka and that the crystalline sound at the Teatr showed individual and collective skills to their best advantage.

Britain's Tom Arthurs and Fraser Fifield, Norway's Gard Nilssen and Ole Morten Vagan, Poland's Maciej Obara and Maciej Garbowski, France's Benjamin Flament and Holland's Bram Stadhouders were the Fivers who formed a stellar octet that played with the cohesion of a long running ensemble. "It was the culmination of our work together, and just like at the London Jazz Festival the week before, the band really gelled" said trumpeter Arthurs, whose sterling performance was surrealised by a frankly priceless moment in which his mute fell loudly to the floor.

Take Five:Europe is an ambitious development programme that draws together 10 young improvisers from five countries on the Continent and provides them with all of the necessary tools to survive, and hopefully flourish in a contemporary jazz industry that requires pragmatism as well as talent. Anything from the intricate mechanics of arranging, under the expert eye of 'enabler' John Surman, to the nuts and bolts of marketing and PR were covered during an intensive residency at Bore Place, an organic farm in Kent last February. The players, which included two Wroclaw absentees, France's Celine Bonacina and Holland's Oene Van Geel, also formed an ensemble to which each member contributed compositions.

"The impact of the scheme is two fold," said Martel Ollerenshaw, associate director of Serious, producers of the London Jazz Festival and prime movers of Take Five Europe. "It provides 'time out' and valuable advice for the artists to explore their creativity and expand their 'artistic' networks and also to gain access to, and to concentrate on, how they deal with the business side of the industry. An overall aim being to empower artists to take control and make decisions that are right for their career.

John Cumming, director of Serious, added: "A welcome - but relatively unplanned - side effect of the first year of Take Five: Europe has seen musical partnerships emerge that are already finding their way onto festival and club stages over the coming years."

Take Five:Europe 2013 launches in just a few months time. Given the breadth of jazz talent in the 'Old World' there is every chance that the next batch of players will be just as exciting as this first one, but if they were looking for inspiration then the inaugural cohort provided it in spades. On stage, the standard of soloing was high and the stylistic range of the writing broad.

In any case, this kind of scheme was a priority of the key actors on the European jazz festival circuit. "Supporting and showcasing emerging talents has been one of my priorities from the very beginning," said Jazztopad festival director Piotr Turkiewicz. "Take Five:Europe is a very unique and exclusive project and I am really thrilled that Jazztopad is one of the partners. The final concert, even though with up-and-coming artists, was one of the highlights of this year's edition. The quality of talent on stage was just overwhelming and it was a great final performance of the first edition of Take Five:Europe."

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**Jazzwise, February 2013**

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