

Scene & Heard

JazzUK's press pack is let loose on the live jazz scene

Leeds International Jazz Conference

Warm, friendly and absorbing was the recent Leeds International Jazz Conference. Nothing new there. What was new came via the distaff side, with Louise Gibbs debuting with élan as conference architect and MC Sandi Russell effectively closing the conference with a cabaret performance celebrating the writings and music of African-American women which told the story more entertainingly than any number of words. 'The Word on Jazz: critical writing and the relationship of jazz with the Media and Academe' was the conference theme. Stuart Nicholson kicked off with a hard-hitting swipe at the BBC and the media generally for their reprehensible neglect of our music. Evidence in abundance was provided by Jazz Services' commissioned research by Mykaell Riley and Dave Laing in the form of a comparative review of media coverage of jazz, classical and world musics. Unsurprisingly, they came across that irritating bleat of 'Yes, but our readers/

listeners won't wear it unless we can hook the jazz onto something more interesting/exciting' and, best of all, 'Just don't call it jazz!' There were fascinating papers galore from the usual array of international presenters, yet it wasn't all academe. Practical performance classes were delivered by that seasoned US jazz educator, Mike Tracy, who put first and second year LCM students through their paces with a sure and insightful touch. (IW)