

Music



Judy Carmichael at Plymouth Museum (review)

04th December 2009

It's not often that a pianist can enthrall a packed audience with a programme which seems essentially the same throughout, save for some changes of pace and the odd vocal thrown in.

But American jazz pianist and singer, Judy Carmichael, simply wowed her listeners with a great set of swing numbers that temporarily transformed the usually sedate surroundings of the art gallery into a buzzing jazz club.

Such is Judy's consummate mastery of stride piano that there was never a dull moment, and especially when coupled with her innate and so effective feel for harmonic colouring.

Her vocals hit the right spot too, benefitting from the venue's excellent natural acoustic, and avoiding the need for any unnecessary amplification.

Purists might have been bothered by the 'rhythm section' - Judy's constant foot-tapping.

But this is such an integral part of her performance, and indeed made a particularly telling contribution where only the right hand was playing.

While there was surely something in the programme to delight every jazz piano aficionado, the anecdotes and repartee, delivered in such an informal and laid-back fashion, provided an added bonus.

Best of all, though, the often-maligned Museum instrument really came into its own in Judy's expert hands, and has perhaps at last found its true forte, in this style of piano-playing where well-rounded and sustained tone isn't a major priority.

PHILIP R BUTTALL

