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**March 2, 2016**

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Music, Jazz

## A swinging cover band

By **Anthony Rodgers** *Wed, Mar 02, 2016*



The Kansas City Jazz Orchestra is a staple of our rich arts community, consistently offering fresh ideas and high levels of musicianship with each endeavor. This weekend saw no exception as the band, led by artistic director/conductor Clint Ashlock, waved the Union Jack to cover classic hits from the British Isles at the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts.

A great aspect of this program was the fact that KCJO members arranged all of the tunes performed, although the

majority were done by Ashlock. Some of the arrangements were fashioned after well-known versions, including “She’s Not There” by Santana and the classic Maynard Ferguson screamer, “Hey Jude.” “March of the British Grenadiers,” arranged by Paul Roberts, bass trombone, was complete with old school fife and drums and a fantastic fading effect from the big band into the colonial sound at the end of the chart. A large selection came from the The Beatles oeuvre, and I’m sure the Fab Four would have enjoyed the smooth saxophone quartet that opened “Blackbird” and the waves of colors that drifted from the band during “With A Little Help From My Friends,” which also included the wonderful rawness of Joe Crocker’s version—a raucous sound that the relatively reserved Helzberg Hall doesn’t often feature. A personal favorite of mine was a translucent “Downtown” that replaced Petula Clark’s peppy sound with a modern reverence for a cityscape. Brett Jackson made the baritone sax the sexiest instrument of the night during “Paint It Black” reimagined as an intimate Latin number for a small ensemble and rhythm section. And while the opening was a little scrappy, “Baba O’Riley” was certainly fun to hear from a jazz band and contained a great contrast of simultaneous solo styles: Steve Lambert’s active lines and suspended notes on the tenor sax versus smooth, melodic passages by Brian Scarborough, trombone.

Rod Fleeman was a rock star on guitar this night. Shredding on tunes such as “You Can’t Always Get What You Want” and “She’s Not There,” Fleeman made great choices in picking the most appropriate electric timbre for his features and was visually stimulating as well, rocking out from his center position. While the

sound was often ethereal, John Kizilarmut made the vibraphone an incredible force of sound with his improvisation style. Kizilarmut often went his own way from the band with regard to harmony, such as his use of various modal scales during “I’m Not In Love.” A man of many basses, James Albright also was a great regular soloist. His solo in a warm, dark adaptation of “Norwegian Wood” by Paul Roberts stayed close to the melody while touching on the song’s delicious harmonies.

Jazz vocalist and radio host David Basse joined the band for a few numbers, including “Mellow Yellow,” in which his low, gritty vocals gave the song its elastic and hazy feel. Scatting a little during “Nowhere Man,” Basse kept the style clean and simple, which allowed the improvisations to feel more natural and coherent. Local singer/songwriter Jessica Paige stole the show with her vibrancy during the latter portion of the show. She added some gentle portamento to phrase endings in “Blackbird” that were delightful and really gave it her all during “With A Little Help From My Friends,” inciting cheers from the audience on numerous occasions.

Subtle changes in the lighting for the stage and hall added a great dimension to the performance, altering the atmosphere with different sets and making the hall feel more intimate on many occasions. Unfortunately, Helzberg Hall is still a large space, and the acoustics made some passages difficult to hear from the band. Many musical intricacies were evident but underwhelming, often due to the amplification of instruments, not translating as well as they might have in a smaller venue. The overall sound of the band, however, was excellent, complete with brilliant blending and an artistic attitude that was nothing less than groovy.

## **REVIEW:**

### **Kansas City Jazz Orchestra**

#### ***British Invasion***

Friday, February 26, 2016

Helzberg Hall, Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts

1601 Broadway Blvd., Kansas City, MO

For more information, visit [www.kcjazzorchestra.org](http://www.kcjazzorchestra.org)

Top Photo: Kansas City Jazz Orchestra

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Music, Classical

# **Chanticleer sends audience “over the moon”**

By **Christopher Gage** Wed, Mar 02, 2016

A first glance at the program for Chanticleer’s concert in Lawrence might have given pause to the casual observer—how could an all-male choral group perform such a wide range of SATB choral repertoire,