

# Camden New Journal

Classical and Jazz: Review - Gwilym Simcock



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A ROLL call of the classically trained giants of jazz would include names such as Nina Simone, an alumnus of the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia, and Miles Davis, who briefly attended the Juilliard School of Music in New York before 52nd Street and the Charlie Parker quintet proved too strong a lure for the 19-year-old trumpeter from Illinois.

Bangor-born piano player and composer Gwilym Simcock, the first young jazz musician acclaimed as a BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artist, has now joined this illustrious line-up.

Davis famously quit the Juilliard after only a few months – 29-year-old Gwilym stuck it out, studying piano and French horn at Chetham's School in Manchester, Trinity College and the Royal Academy in London, before graduating with a first-class honours degree.

After being bitten by the jazz bug in Manchester, he has for more than a decade comfortably straddled the divide between classical music and jazz.

This week, at The Forge in Delancey Street, Camden Town, he launched his latest album on ACT Records, *Good Days* at Schloss Elmau.

Laden with just about every jazz award going, Gwilym has toured extensively in Britain and in Europe, and played alongside the most renowned jazzmen of that earlier generation, including Lee Konitz, a sideman with Miles Davis in the 1940s.

Chick Corea, another former Davis collaborator, chose his Welsh counterpart to star at the festival he ran in Germany in 2007. Gwilym returned to Bavaria to record his new album at a ski resort near Munich.

There are echoes of Keith Jarrett but his own accomplished style is what is on display here – the technical brilliance of a great improviser matched with powerful and passionate changes of mood and tempo, the unique blend of classical and jazz that is his keynote.