



20 October 2011

JAZZ for the NEXT GENERATION

Day 1 of Surya Jazzmandu 2011 saw three stellar local bands – The

KJC Quartet, All My Friends, and The KJC Power Trio – putting on a feast of music as they competed in the Jazz for the Next Generation band competition. The bands



The winning band All My Friend

played for a packed auditorium at the Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory (KJC) in Jhamsikhel, and were judged by a panel of five visiting Jazzmandu musicians. An eclectic audience of young and old, Nepalese and foreigners, students and musicians welcomed the young bands to the stage with great enthusiasm, and were rewarded with accomplished performances



The Outstanding Musician: Abhishek Bhadra

from all three groups. With the wealth of talent and ability on display, the judges faced some difficult decisions, and finally selected All My Friends as the outstanding band, with Abhishek Bhadra, the keyboard player for the band, also being named outstanding musician.

The afternoon of music opened with The KJC Power Trio, featuring brothers Binaya and Bhushan Man Amatya on bass and

drums respectively, with promising virtuoso guitar work by Dev Lama.



Guitarist Dev Lama of the KJC Power Trio

All My Friends took the stage next with Kiran Shahi on drums, Abhishek Bhadra on keyboard, and Ian Eustis on double bass, and the band started with an innovative arrangement of *Resham Phiriri* that delighted the crowd.

The KJC Quartet played third, and the group – Inap Raj Shrestha on saxophone, Mahesh Tandukar on guitar, Bijent Shah on bass, and Kismat Shrestha on the drums – presented a repertoire of some challenging standard jazz pieces.

Following the three competing bands, two visiting Jazzmandu bands also entertained the crowd. Swiss band bconnected presented four pieces of engaging complexity, with a very high degree of interaction between the six veteran musicians. Another six-man band, Neighbourhood of Sweden, showcased the impressive emotional range and power they command, with pieces ranging from upbeat and funky to melancholy ballads.

Musicians from bconnected and Neighbourhood also formed the five person panel of judges for the competition. Neighbourhood's Jens Filipsson, Aleksandar Brdarski and Edvin Nahlin, together with Eugene Montenero and Yoann Julliard of bconnected, scored the competing musicians on their musical dexterity and technique, their professionalism on stage, and their

ability to improvise and play as a cohesive group. *"Choosing the winning band was no easy task! We talked and talked and finally we selected one, because, well, we had to!"* said Eugene Montenero of bconnected. *"I want to say that all musicians played very well... in a way, they were all winning,"* he added. At the end of the event, the judges presented certificates and Jazzmandu event passes to all the participants and winners.



Young competing musicians awaiting their certificates

Though the event was organized as a band competition, Jazzmandu organizers were keen to stress that the primary rationale for the event was not to compete but to learn. According to Jazzmandu's artistic director Navin Chettri, the Jazz For The Next Generation contest was brought back after a 5 year absence in order to serve the festival's overarching goal of furthering music education and appreciation in Nepal. This includes promoting local musicians by providing them platforms such as band contests to gain exposure and experience. In keeping with these goals, all the winners of this year's contest will receive an hour long private lesson on their instrument with the visiting musician of their choice. *"The private lesson that the winning band gets is unique, just one on one with professional international musicians,"* Chettri said. As the outstanding band, All My Friends will also perform at the Jazz Bazaar in Gokarna on October 22nd. Chettri believes this is another important opportunity for the young band as *"they will have the experience of playing professional gigs."*

On the evidence offered this afternoon, the jazz scene in Kathmandu shows tremendous promise. After the bands' impressive performances, Marcus Dengate, a teacher at KJC, said, *"They are all great and work very hard. They were every morning very early here to practice and rehearse of their own free will. It is their dedication and hard work that makes all the difference."* Judging by both the size and the enthusiasm of the audience, Surya Nepal Jazzmandu is also succeeding in its goal of increasing interest and appreciation for the local music scene. *"It's the first time I see a live jazz band, and it's great!"* says Pratik Karki, a professional photographer in the audience. *"I personally really liked the KJC Quartet because of the saxophone. But my favourite musician was the bass player of the KJC Power trio."*



the KJC Quartet

Given the rapid progress in jazz education already evident among both musicians and the public, next year's competition promises to be even more competitive and entertaining than this year.

Jazzmandu 2011 Reporter
Roman Gautam

