



25 October 2011

JAZZMANDU FINALE

Surya Nepal
Jazzmandu 2011
finished in style
today at Hotel

Shangri-La. In a beautiful garden illuminated by firelight, the Jazzmandu bands came together for one last big jam. It was a happy and upbeat affair, but there was also often a melancholy note in the air as the musicians, the audience, and the organizers were all sad to have come to the end of an incredible festival.

Jens Filipsson, saxophonist for Swedish band Neighbourhood, described his band's reaction to the festival: "We've never experienced a festival like this before. We've been so well taken care of, the bands were great, the people are nice... everything was great! We don't want to leave! ...The big



difference between Jazzmandu and other festivals we went to is that here we got to play a few gigs and not just play and go. We all stay for the whole week so we have time to get to know the other bands. You make friends here! I like that."

Other musicians also acknowledged the incredible spirit of synergy that has characterized this year's Jazzmandu. "This year there has been 100% connection between the musicians. It was great," said Tala Faral, keyboardist and saxophonist with

Mumbai-based Window Seat, and a Jazzmandu returnee. That musical



connection was evident onstage for much of the Jazzmandu Finale, as bands invited other musicians on stage to play with them during their sets, and finally as the stage was crowded by all the Jazzmandu musicians eager to jam together one last time.

The evening opened with the faculty from the Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory playing several jazz favorites to warm the crowd up, setting the mood with Subani Moktan singing some slow ballads. Swiss band bconnected came next, playing with infectious passion on their last night in Kathmandu. The veteran musicians showed what years of playing together can do, moving through intense solos and complex rhythms with impressive cohesion and ease. The band's performance tonight felt especially adventurous, all the musicians



clearly eager to solo as the band built its signature blend of fusion which, though

challenging to some in the audience, was a real treat for dedicated music aficionados. Xavier Nussbaum on saxophone, Yoann Julliard on drums, and Dominique Favre were especially impressive on the night and got the crowd roaring.

Indian outfit Window Seat came next, with Tala Faral showing off his customary wizardry on keys and saxophone, and Sonu Sangameshwaran and Lindsay D'Mello offering very able support in the rhythm section. Tala Faral's irreverent style was again a highlight of the show, with the master musician throwing caution and convention to the wind and playing with tremendous originality and imagination. Window seat also invited saxophonist Nick Aggs and the brass section from Swedish band Neighbourhood onstage, continuing the musicians' ongoing musical exchange.



Next, popular Jazzmandu regulars Cadenza Collective brought out their grooving, afro-beat influenced sound, with Nick Aggs adding melodic imagination to the ensemble on his saxophone. To add an extra punch to his melodies, Nick was joined by bconnected saxophonist Xavier Nussbaum, and the brass section from Neighbourhood, with Neighbourhood trumpeter Jonne Bentlöv delivering the first of his several memorable solos. As a Nepali band playing to a Nepali audience, Cadenza really knew how to get the crowd going, and drummer Navin Chettri soon had the crowd singing along to a pulsating rendition of *Deusi Re* to celebrate the beginning of Tihar.

Neighbourhood then took the stage, and kept the crowd dancing with their infectiously catchy melodic lines and grooving rhythms. The band also delivered great solos that drew spirited applause, especially for bassist Aleks Brdarski whose solos have seemingly become crowd favourites during the course of the festival.



Neighbourhood were soon joined on stage by the full complement of Jazzmandu musicians, who immediately launched into a jam session characterized by a high degree of interplay, with percussionists layering rhythms and instrumentalists passing melodic lines on to one another. As the sound kept soaring into repeated crescendos, smiles and pats on the back onstage testified to the degree of camaraderie and mutual appreciation among the musicians.

As time ran out it was evident that few in the audience or onstage wanted the night to end. When the music ended, many hailed Jazzmandu 2011 as a great success. Saxophonist Tala Faral called it "one of the best Jazzmandus," while Pratik Adhikari, a music enthusiast in the audience, was delighted to say "Jazzmandu is getting better every year." Even as a touch of sadness came over everyone at the end of the show, Jazzmandu organizer Navin Chettri was quick to deliver some good news: Jazzmandu will be back next year, bigger and better for its 10th anniversary, starting on November 1, 2012.

Jazzmandu 2011 Reporter - *Roman Gautam*