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ROBBIE GREENIDGE... received a warm welcome



A MEMBER of the audience cools it after a hectic session. Photos by ARTHUR EDWARDS

A memorable night of jazz

By JOSLYNNE SEALEY

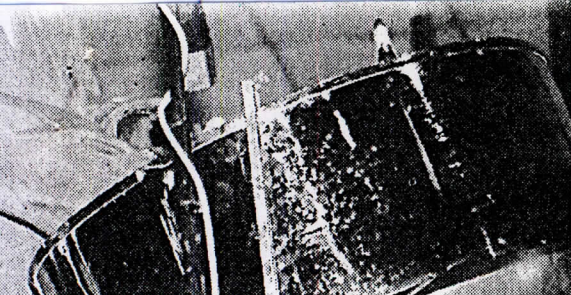
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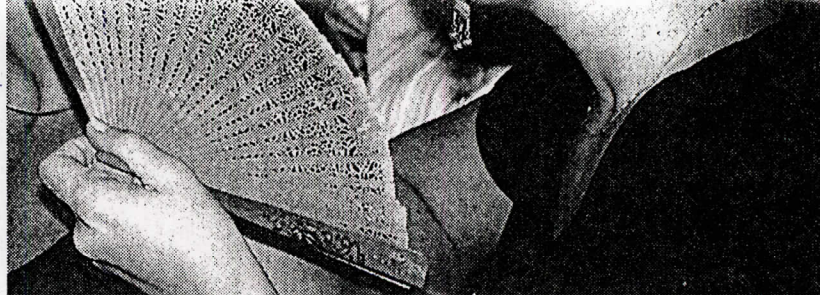
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IF YOU missed Pan Jazz Festival VII at Spektakula on Friday last, you may have missed some of the best jazz music you are ever likely to hear. With performances from WITCO Despera-

does, our own Robbie Greenidge and his sextet and the famous Charlie Haden's Quartet West, the evening was one that I shall not forget for a very long time.

Chairman of the Festival Nicky Innis and Festival Manager, Ms Georgina Masson and their hard working committee, are to be congratulated on the excellent programming. "Despers", as they are affectionately known, opened the show with such "golden oldies" as *For the Love of You*, *The A Train*, *Tangerine* and *Autumn Leaves*.

Theirs was a tightly-knit sound, with some exciting solo work, especially from tenor soloist Sean Richards. Although most enjoyable, I could not help thinking that a smaller stage side would have been more effective (more like a jazz combo) with the flexibility to really open up the improvisational style.

The talent and the technique was certainly there. Robbie Greenidge only had to appear on stage to receive warm welcoming applause from us all. A former Desperadoes member/arranger, he has been based in Los Angeles since the 1970s where he has recorded with John Lennon, Barry Manilow, LARTH, Wind and Fire and Grover Washington to name but a few.

This year his friend Ralph Mc Donald, no stranger to us, appeared with the Robbie Greenidge Sextet doing the honours on percussion. With Michael Utley on keyboards, Jim Mayer on bass guitar, Peter Mayer on guitar and Roger Guth on drums, they thrilled us with their music. If you like the sound of "sweet pan", particularly with Greenidge on the double seconds — then this was the place for you.

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sheer joy to hear. The combination of piano and pan created a marvellous intimacy of sound.

The section ended with *Paradise Garden*, as Robbie explained; "a sort of Brazil/calypso rhythm" which was very enjoyable. The sound of our applause filled the Spektakula Forum as the band made its way off stage.

The Charlie Haden's Quartet West is world renowned, having performed in Europe, Japan, Canada and the US. Although the quartet was formed in 1987, Haden's career spans more than three decades. His latest album *Dream Keeper*, with the Liberation music Orchestra won both the Downbeat Critics' and Readers' polls for Album of the Year. The quartet is comprised of Charlie Haden on bass, Ernie Watts on tenor sax, Alan Broadbent on piano and Larance Marable on drums.

From their opening sounds, we knew that we were going to hear some really fine Jazz. The programme presented a variety of stylings and tempo, exploring samba rhythms, sometimes a slow soulful mood, as well as the up-tempo beat. Ernie Watts on sax displayed a tremendously impressive technique. As he played, he seemed to become one with his instrument, soaring high into the upper registers of the sound of his sax.

There was an expansiveness and freedom in his playing which was extraordinary. Pianist Alan Broadbent also has a wonderful command of the piano — a very sure and even touch. (One tends to forget how beautiful that instrument can be).

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We heard *Trini Style* and *The Life of a Pan Man* (compositions by Greenidge), *Beat*, composed by keyboardist Michael Utley, which really brought the house down, and *Funk On Steel*. Right from the start, Peter Mayer impressed us with his versatility and technique which earned him ripples of applause as the pieces progressed. No less impressive was the keyboardist Michael Utley with a memorable bass solo from Jim Mayer as well.

McDonald was also excellent in an extended solo in *Funk on Steel*. Greenidge *Sweet Pan*, with piano accompaniment only, was definitely one of the evening's highlights. A master of the lyrical flowing cadenza, almost free-style at times, he gave a magical performance. I recognised the piano from Queen's Hall on stage — a Steinway — with a sparkingly clear sound which was a

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The applause flowed freely after each exciting solo, such was their appeal. In a distinctly classical and lyrical vein, Broadbent gave us a wonderful opening to the "bluesy" rendition of *It Ain't Necessary So* by saxophonist Ernie Watts. Haden on bass, has a very distinctive style. With a very sure touch on the double bass, he seemed to be able to "walk" his way cleanly through endless semitones, sometimes exploring a counter melody and sometimes staying close to the bass line.

Last but certainly not least, drummer Larence Marable had us all on the edge of our seats as he explored a variety of percussive sounds. These four musicians seem to be a perfect complement to each other — able to break away and give us exciting jazz improvisations and yet they work together as one musical voice.

Joslyne Sealey is a
musicologist.