

Smith's Academy Informer

founded in 1985 by John & Margery Styles

A quarterly journal with information about all Westbrook projects, tours and recordings.

No.85

December 2009

A Toast

As the staff of Smith's Academy gather in the hallowed ambience of the ancient Common Room for their traditional Xmas beano of mulled wine, mince pies and twiglets, the yule log struggles bravely in the grate to combat the winter chill. Glasses will surely be raised to two senior members for whom this particular festive season is especially significant.



Martin gets some tips from the Maestro

Martin King, distinguished editor of The Informer, is to be heartily commended on giving up his day job to devote himself fully to pianistic studies.

Chris Topley, webmaster supreme, is to be congratulated on ten years in which he has steered westbrookjazz to its current eminence.



Chris Topley, webmaster supreme

Here's to you, Gentlemen, with a thousand thanks from all your colleagues and friends at Smith's Academy. Under your expert stewardship may the SAI and westbrookjazz soar to ever greater heights in 2010.

Merry Christmas, one and all.

The Dean

In the Kool Midwinter

Us locals thought The Village Band's show at The Carlton, Teignmouth back in July was one of its best shows yet. People who'd travelled from Suffolk, from London and from far away Switzerland all went away happy. *ENGLISH SOUP* was on the menu again a week later at Ealing, a jolly occasion despite the usual rain and mud of an English Summer Festival. In the tent the five lads and one lass served up a tasty musical feast, made new friends .and even got a mention in Jazz UK. Fame at last!

Now it's time for mulled wine, mince pies and Xmas Ales as The Festive Season is upon us. First it's across the Tamar to the land of Pixies and Pasties to see what the Cornish make of the old Zuppa Inglese. Then it'll be time to see what goodies Santa has got in his musical sack of tricks this year. This is the Band's fourth Xmas extravaganza at St, Greg's, its third at The Bridge. Now the good folk of Ideford have decided to get in the groove, and get hip to those singalong licks. Next year, the World!

Flipster



Cartoon by Geoff Wall

A Jazz Singer's Almanac



Whether she was performing the poetry of George Herbert at Wilton's Music Hall, singing jazz cabaret at Zurich's Cabaret Voltaire, William Blake in Covent Garden or belting out *Polythene Pam* at Canary Wharf, 2009 has been a year of exceptional variety in the already wide-ranging musical career of Kate Westbrook.

Kate has premiered two works this year. The album *FINE'N'YELLOW*, dedicated to the memory of John and Margery Styles, and recorded in **February**, called forth some of her finest song lyrics. It was released in **March**, the first anniversary of Margery's death, in a limited edition for family and friends.

September saw the avant premiere of another major Westbrook collaboration, *THE SERPENT HIT*. Here Kate's libretto takes up contemporary political themes, and the piece combines her voice with the four saxophones of the Delta Sax Quartet. Never one to dodge a challenge, Kate was also involved in the premieres of two works by other composers. The Spitalfields Festival, in **June**, launched Michael Finnissy's magnificent *TRANSGRESSIVE GOSPEL*, in which Kate sang, with classical bass/baritone Richard Jackson, and the ensemble Ixion. **November** found her once again walking the tightrope between jazz and contemporary straight music in a concert with that maverick pianist/composer Frank Campbell.

Extensive rehearsals for these projects were interspersed with performances of no less than four existing works from the Westbrook canon. In **May**, at the Actors' Church, St. Paul's, Covent Garden, The London Festival of Contemporary Church Music reunited Kate and Mike with long time partner Phil Minton in a special revival of *GLAD DAY*. The concert was dedicated to the memory of Adrian

Mitchell. By contrast, an evening in the splendidly threadbare Carlton Theatre, on Teignmouth seafront in **July** brought The Village Band together for a special performance of *ENGLISH SOUP*, or *THE BATTLE OF THE CLASSIC TRIFLE*. This 'Be-bop Music Hall' centres on Kate's portrayal of the two protagonists, Dolly and Doll. It was a chance for the Bollwater Project, on holiday from Switzerland, to see and hear at last the piece that they had commissioned. They were not disappointed.

Next on the agenda were rehearsals for the resurfacing in **August**, in London and Willisau, of *OFF ABBEY ROAD*. The Beatles extravaganza brought Kate together with a favourite vocal sparring partner, John Winfield in one of the great Westbrook Band line-ups.

In **September**, hard on the heels of *THE SERPENT HIT*, came a rare performance at the Dusseldorf Art Museum, of *ART WOLF*, coinciding with the opening of the first major exhibition of Caspar Wolf's paintings ever seen outside Switzerland. Fired by Kate's potent lyrics, which she delivers in English and German, and the brilliant improvisations of Chris Biscoe and, on this occasion, Phil Todd *ART WOLF* remains perhaps the most radical of the Westbrooks' current artworks.

January had begun with the completion of the Duo album *allsorts*, a lovingly assembled compilation of songs recorded by Jon Hiseman over twenty years of visits to his studio in Sutton. *Limehouse Blues* was added to the Duo's repertoire of standards and originals which continued to evolve over a year of public and private gigs that took them to Lucerne in **April**, and, in **October** to an Adrian Mitchell tribute at the Tricycle Theatre where Kate sang Adrian's *The Children of Blake*. She repeats this in December at the Queen Elizabeth Hall as part of a major celebration of the poet's life and work.

We haven't heard the last of Dolly and Doll. **December** promises a renewal of the *TRIFLE* debate, and then, as Christmas approaches it will be down to The Village Band to offer its customary seasonal fare, and no doubt to Kate to lead the crowd in that Music Hall classic, *The School of Jolly Dogs*.

What a crazy and triumphant year, Kate!
Bravo, and more please in 2010!

The Dean

Off Abbey Road

It's 40 years since the Beatles made *Abbey Road*, the last time they recorded together. They decided to go out on a high, forgot their differences, and created a groundbreaking album. 40 years on it still sounds good, brim full of McCartney's infectious tunes and Lennon's gritty take on the blues. The album also includes Ringo's only drum solo (all eight bars of it!), and George Harrison's peak as a songwriter, with *Here Comes the Sun* and *Something* (the second most covered Beatles song after *Yesterday* - some 150 artists including Elvis Presley, Frank Sinatra, Ray Charles, Smokey Robinson and James Brown have recorded it).

It's also 40 years since Woodstock and we've learned as thing or two about putting on open air music festivals. Have a good pa, and large screens so that even the people at the back can see what's happening, a varied programme timetabled to allow time for setting up so that things run more or less on time and – what you can't plan for but the factor that makes all the difference – good weather.

The Canary Wharf Jazz Festival had all of these and a sunny summer Sunday afternoon on the Canada Square lawn listening to live music recalled the halcyon days of the Bracknell Jazz Festivals.

Booking the Westbrook *Off Abbey Road* band was an inspired way to conclude a memorable weekend. The re-surfacing of *Off Abbey Road* was one of the surprise delights of 2009 and the Canary Wharf Festival brought the piece to a diverse audience who received it enthusiastically.

The Westbrooks' take on *Abbey Road* is highly original, quirky in places, hugely entertaining and at time truly moving. Particular highlights were the groove established from the word go in the opening *Come Together*, Brian Godding's guitar solo on *Something*, Andy Grappy's tuba bass – especially that wonderful line in the verse of *I Want You (She's So Heavy)*, the big riff at the end of *I Want You* starting with Mike's solo piano gradually adding instruments building majestically to the full ensemble in overdrive, the sudden cut to Pete Whyman's circular breathing solo clarinet feature, joined later by Alan Wakeman on soprano. The written sax ensemble parts were strong too, especially on *Oh! Darling* and *She Came In Through the Bathroom Window*.

Richard Newby's rock-solid drumming drove the band throughout.

For much of the time the spotlight was on the two vocalists John Winfield and Kate Westbrook. John Winfield's voice is a powerful instrument but it's capable of an affecting tenderness (*Something*), is always melodic and clear, even at its most frenzied (*Oh! Darling*). Kate gets the chance to explore a range of characters – a touch of *Limehouse* in *Maxwell's Silver Hammer* (very apt for Docklands)

For an encore we were given a song from an earlier Beatles era. *She Loves You* with it's 'yeah yeah yeah's was the raucousness that made our parents' generation wary of the Beatles, yet beneath this brash exterior some of us detected was a rich vein of genuine and original musicality. Mike's arrangement clearly taps into this and gives the song a ballad treatment. A sketch of this arrangement was first heard as an encore for the original *Off Abbey Road* performances when it was performed as a duet for Pete Whyman and Mike. Now it's been expanded for whole ensemble – it holds back on the 'yeah yeah's, focusing instead the harmonic richness of the verses, saving the triplicate affirmatives for a triumphant conclusion. Yeah! Yeah! Yeah! YEAH!

Martin King

The Show Goes On & On

If I remember correctly it was at a *PLATTERBACK* gig that I first suggested to Kate and Mike that I felt I could do something



Cartoon by Geoff Wall

better than the "shared model" website that they were then using. The site was very basic with a few photos and the text was a rather difficult to read default font. They agreed immediately, which I thought was quite brave as I was very new to website building. I had read a lot about design and navigation and had a few basic ideas. Then as now I felt that we should keep the site relatively simple and not have lots of 'flash' things going on. Kate and Mike were not on the Internet themselves at this stage and all the information was either posted or faxed to me.

The first site was on the free web space that my ISP provided and a year or two after that it was decided that there should be a proper domain name and webspace for the site. The end of 2009 marks the 10th anniversary of the first registration of the domain **westbrookjazz.co.uk** .

With a proper hosting package we were able to add sound courtesy of 'Real Audio' streaming. We moved our hosting to another provider after a couple of years and the loading speed of pages and the streaming improved quite a bit. The host moved over to Windows Media streaming a few years ago and we were able to improve the quality of our sound clips with what is a rather superior system. We have been with this host ever since. More recently we added embedded players for the streaming audio which we hope makes things easier for visitors.

It took a while for people to notice the site but over the years we have had emails from promoters and followers of Kate and Mike's work in many countries. The site has become very large and in 2005 it was decided to split it into two main parts, a site for Kate and a site for Mike. Kate's Gallery was already a separate part of the site and the creation of two new main sites has made it easier to show the joint things that Kate and Mike do as well as the many solo projects that Kate undertakes.

Before the website began the only way for followers of Kate and Mike's work to keep up to date with 'Westbrookian events' was to subscribe to this quarterly magazine (SAI) which was available on paper only through the post. The magazine was started by John and Margery Styles in 1985. Margery continued with the magazine after John's untimely death in 1989 with editorial duties being taken on by Martin King. Sadly Margery died in March 2008 and after some discussion it was decided to launch a free online version of the SAI on Westbrookjazz with Martin editing, and myself doing the behind the scenes part of turning it into a downloadable PDF and emailing it to subscribers. We had always featured extracts on the site but in September 2008 with edition number 81 we launched the first online and downloadable version. As with the print version, it is read by people all over the world.

Several months ago the site became host to 'Westbrook Records' to enable people to buy some of the more recent Westbrook CDs direct from the artist. A new undertaking for us is the addition of video clips to the site

(see *Westbrookjazz 'Tube'* below). This is an ongoing project and we hope to bring you a number of Westbrook video clips over the coming months.

Here's to the next 10 years!

Chris Topley

Adrian Mitchell Celebration



Adrian Mitchell (1932 - 2008)

Michael Rosen introduces a programme at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, London on 9th December to celebrate the life and poetry of the late, great Adrian Mitchell who died last December. An evening which also marks the publication of Adrian's collection 'Tell Me Lies'.

Phil Minton, Kate Westbrook, Chris Biscoe and Mike Westbrook will perform *'The Children of Blake'* and *'Let The Slave'*. Many poets, musicians, theatre people and journalists will participate at the celebration, including Patience Agbabi, Carol Ann Duffy, Joanna McGregor, Andrew Marr, John Hegley, Jackie Kay, Liz Lochhead, Roger McGough, Brian Patten, Jonathan Pryce, Sasha Mitchell, Pete Moser, Michael Horowitz and more, plus films.

WestbrookJazz 'Tube'

A new venture for Westbrookjazz is the online availability of video clips of Kate and Mike Westbrook in various line-ups. We are slowly adding to the library and at the moment we feature two clips of the Westbrook Trio featuring Kate, Mike and Chris Biscoe. Apart from being on the YouTube site itself we have embedded the clips on Westbrookjazz:

<http://tiny.cc/ki7q7>

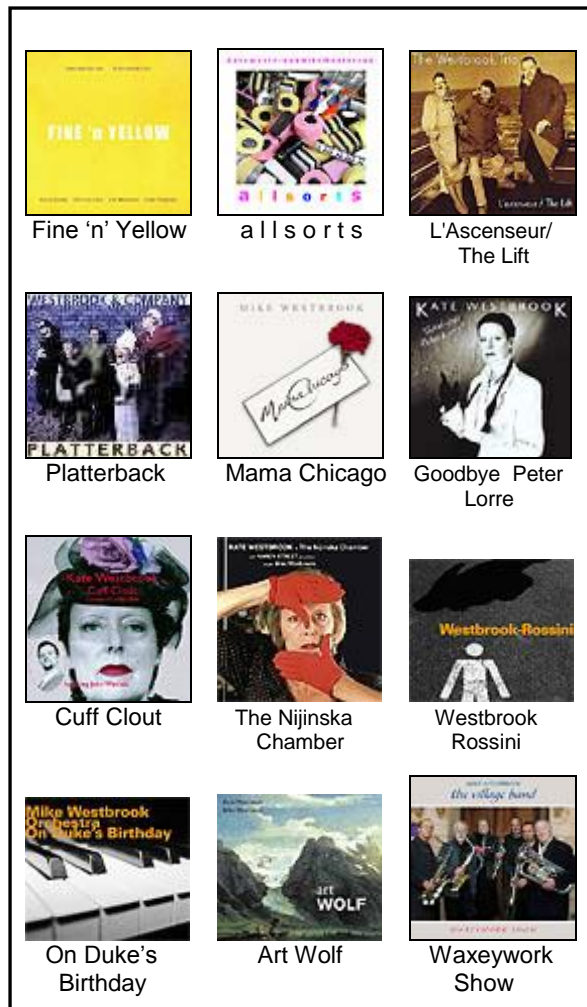
You can also view a Village Band one here:

<http://tiny.cc/RHSpc>

more soon!

Westbrook Records

It's that festive time of year again so why not treat yourself or a loved one to a Westbrook CD this Christmas. Westbrook Records stock a range of CDs that are sometimes difficult to find in the shops.



To see more information about these and other Westbrook CDs visit

[Westbrook Records](http://www.westbrookjazz.co.uk)

These CDs are from as little as £7.00 inc P/P

Diary

THE VILLAGE BAND

Mike Brewer, Kate Westbrook, Sam Smith
Stan Willis, Gary Bayley, Mike Westbrook

December 5th

Calstock, Village Hall '**English Soup**'

Xmas Concerts

December 11th The Church of St Mary the Virgin, Ideford

December 13th The Bridge Inn, Topsham

December 17th St Gregory's Church, Dawlish

All That Jazz

April 25th Tavistock Festival

KATE WESTBROOK/MIKE WESTBROOK DUO

February 5th The Cut, Halesworth

February 12th The Courtyard, Hereford

February 19th Harbour Cafe Bar, Margate

February 25th 606 Club, Chelsea, London

February 28th Jazz@Future Inns, Bristol

GLAD DAY THE CHORAL VERSION

Phil Minton, Kate Westbrook, Karen Street,
Billy Thompson, Mike Westbrook,
Steve Berry plus Choir

April 24th Tavistock Festival with the Big Noise Choir

May 15th The Edge, Wenlock

For full details of all gigs see the diaries:

Kate's: <http://tiny.cc/AYzmC>

Mike's: <http://tiny.cc/05WXB>

Smith's Academy Informer is now published quarterly as a free online only version and is also emailed directly to subscribers in Adobe Acrobat PDF format also for free. It can also be downloaded in the same format from westbrookjazz.

Contributions are welcome and should be emailed to the Editor:

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Copy for SAI 86 to be received by 1st March 2010 please.

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