

The Brass Funkeys



Finale of funk at Brass in the Park

Cambridge band The Brass Funkeys are to appear at Jazz 'n' Brass in the Parks on Sunday (September 17), writes Adrian Peel.

The nine-piece collective, who this summer performed at Glastonbury, North Sea Jazz and the Secret Garden Party, will be kicking off its UK tour and launching its new album, *Rabble Rouser*, at the event, which takes place from 3pm to 5pm on Jesus Green.

The gig this Sunday is the grand finale for Jazz and Brass in the Parks, a series of free summer events organised by Cambridge Live and staged by Cambridge City Council. The event is also chance to preview the upcoming Brewin Dolphin Cambridge Jazz Festival, which takes place later in the year from November 11 to 26.

Performing soulful funeral marches and pumping brass-driven funk with a unique modern take on the New Orleans sound, this energetic band also incorporates reggae, hip-hop, gypsy, swing and Latin influences.

The Brass Funkeys will open the Brewin Dolphin Cambridge Jazz Festival with a parade through the city on the afternoon of Saturday, November 11, and will also be closing the festival on Sunday, November 26, at a new all-day 'NewGenJazz' event at the Cambridge Corn Exchange. This will feature some of the most talented young musicians on the UK Jazz scene, including Mobo award-winning sax and drum duo, Binker & Moses with special guests Tori Handsley and Byron Wallen.

Reflecting on recent shows, Vij Prakash, a trombone player in The Brass Funkeys, said: "It's been a really fun summer for us. I love pretty much all festivals really – they all have their own unique charm.

"Two that really stood out for me this year have been our debut at North Sea Jazz Festival in Rotterdam where we got to spend the festival hanging out with a load of our musical heroes.

"Also Glasto where we got to close one of the main stages at 5am-6am on the Monday morning. As the sun came up playing to a very large crowd of people who had survived until the very end was a pretty surreal experience!"

Rabble Rouser is the group's second album. "We're really excited about releasing this album," said Vij. "It has been taking shape over the last couple of years and features writing from all the band's members and also a couple of slightly obscure covers.

"We recorded at Giant Wafer Studio in mid-Wales. We were snowed in while in the studio and it was a pretty intense four days, but we are really happy with the results."

The Brass Funkeys consists of three trumpets, two trombones, a saxophone, a sousaphone and two drummers. Rob Smith, Rob Slater and Matt Letts are the trumpet players, Tom Green and Vij are the trombonists, David Robinson plays saxophone, John Caddick is the sousaphone player, while Scott Jowett is on drums and Chris Brice takes care of percussion.

"We formed six years ago in Cambridge when we were studying," recalled Vij. "It took a bold eBay bid, but once we managed to get hold of our sousaphone we were up and running!"

Vij was very active on the Cambridge music scene during his student days. He said: "As a student I spent most of my time playing in lots of different university groups.

"There were some really inspirational musicians who I learnt a lot from during that time, and who are still scaring the hell out of me every time I hear them play!"

Discussing the Cambridge Jazz Festival in November, Vij said: "This looks like it'll be a really great event. It is a wonderful opportunity to hear some of the most exciting jazz groups on the scene at the moment, all at one venue. I would say that this is the first time I've seen an event like this happening in Cambridge. I'm especially looking forward to checking out Resolution 88 and Binker & Moses."

Vij concluded: "I feel really lucky having this career. The variety of projects I get to play in, pupils I teach and people I meet is endless and I am always learning."

cambridgejazzfestival.info/newgenjazz



Picture: James Callaghan

Dame Evelyn Glennie

**Millers Music, Sunday
November 19, 2.30pm**

Five young musicians will be selected to perform at this masterclass led by Dame Evelyn Glennie – an event organised by Brewin Dolphin Cambridge International Jazz Festival and Millers Music.

Dame Evelyn is a double Grammy and Bafta award winner and had a leading role in the opening ceremony of the London 2012 Olympic Games. Having composed over 200 pieces and released more than 30 CDs, Dame Evelyn has cemented herself as a percussion pioneer.

To be one of the lucky five musicians to be in the masterclass, you must be aged 16-22, grade 6+ and submit a one-minute video playing an instrument of your choice. Apply at millersmusic.co.uk/cambridge-jazz-festival.



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