

Metro
Festival
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Jazzing things up



FESTIVAL

12 Points! Europe's New Jazz

For jazz devotees, Ireland's backwater status has long been a cause of frustration. But perhaps things are set to finally improve – running over four nights from tomorrow, the 12 Points! Jazz Festival promises to put Dublin on the international jazz map. Billed as a celebration of the best and most innovative in new European jazz, the festival focuses on younger players and on collaborative ensembles from across Europe.

'Twelve Points is only in its second year, yet already it's starting to establish a global profile,' says festival director Gerry Godley. 'What we're doing is focussing more on the idea of jazz as a group endeavour. We're doing something nobody else has previously attempted.'

Few of the performers are exactly household names – even to jazz buffs. But Godley expects this to change before very long. He's especially excited about the acts playing Saturday's closing night bill.

'We've got a chap called Mathew Bourne who is, in the best sense, a proper English eccentric – try to imagine a jazz version of Madness, with surreal English humour. There'll also be a high-energy band from Oslo called The Core and the very highly regarded Radio String Quartet from Vienna.'

The opening evening of the festival, meanwhile, will feature Roman jazz pianist Giovanni Guidi, Shreefpunk (pictured) from Cologne and Luxembourg's Pascal Schumacher Quartet, who venture where others fear to go by incorporating a vibraphone into their repertoire. 'One of the purposes of 12 Points! is to connect not only with musicians from larger jazz scenes but also from smaller countries such as Luxembourg and Estonia, where the jazz circuits are very much a mirror of our own,' says Godley.

Representing Ireland are Togetherness, a foursome led by pianist Justin Carroll and drummer Sean Carpio, who take to the Project stage on Friday. 'What's great about a festival such as this is that it provides such a contrast between different international notions of what jazz should be,' says Godley. 'It's a very fertile recipe – there's a real

sense of togetherness.'

'The burgeoning profile of the 12 Points! Festival reflects the increasing health of Irish jazz,' he elaborates. 'There used to be an idea that jazz was a pipe-and-slippers thing. But that's changing dramatically. Among a lot of young people, there's a hunger for creative, independent music outside of the rock'n'roll mainstream.'

They are going out there and exploring diverse genres of music, using technology such as the Internet. And this has created a greater interest in jazz.'

Hand in hand with this, there has been an upswell in young Irish talent. Togetherness are only one of several dynamic new ensembles to emerge in recent years. Many of these musicians are graduates of the prestigious jazz programme at Newpark Music Centre, Blackrock.

Irish jazz is, according to Godley, even gaining its own traits and peculiarities. 'Our jazz is very rhythmic,' he explains. 'You definitely sense the connection to traditional music, in terms of the emphasis on a driving groove.'

Eamon de Paor

Tomorrow until Sat, Project Arts Centre, 39 East Essex Street, Temple Bar D2, 7.30pm, €20 per