



## INTERVIEW WITH JIMMY GLASS OWNER CHEVI MARTÍNEZ

Jimmy Glass (C/Baja, 28, Zona Barrio del Carmen) is Valencia's best known jazz club but don't expect to stroll in to find people in double-breasted suits and kipper ties, drinking whisky sours to a backdrop of Miles Davis or Billie Holiday. Apart from the stage and the photos of jazz performers on the walls (mostly taken by the owner himself), it has the look and feel of a typical, atmospheric, old Barrio del Carmen late night bar. The music you'll hear is always some form of jazz and you might get the odd Blue Note classic but priority is always given to new approaches to the music and younger contemporary artists. Jimmy Glass is not about using jazz as some kind of instantly recognizable label or as décor to add a bit of cool and pleasant background music; it is about the musicians who are pushing the boundaries of the genre.

There are regular (almost weekly) Tuesday night concerts and slightly less regular solo and duo slots on Friday nights. The concerts are open to anyone who's interested and are attended by a mixed bag of tourists, people passing through and a hardcore of local jazz fans who try to attend most of the shows. As music writer Don Snowden explains, "it's the kind of place where you can get exposed to jazz and figure out for yourself

if you like it or not. It's not like you're going to church or sitting in some concert hall with your hands folded in your lap, listening to culture." However, don't think, as is often the Valencia way, that any performance in a bar is there merely to add colour to your own conversation. If you chat through the quieter solos, you'll be hushed down.

Jimmy Glass is a venue where local jazz musicians regularly hang out and owner Chevi Martínez has gone out of his way to ensure that the club is becoming increasingly well-known as a place to play for young jazz players around Europe and further afield, particularly among the scene of younger musicians developing in Brooklyn, New York. The venue has showcased a vast array of internationally acclaimed artists across the jazz spectrum.

This month's Jimmy Glass International Festival is a great indication of the club's growing reputation. The festival celebrating the club's 20th anniversary is typically ambitious in scope and a must for anyone interested in finding out what's going on in the contemporary world of jazz as it spotlights a number of leading European and American bandleaders and featured performers.

Alto saxophonist Perico Sambeat, the most widely known Valencia-based artist on the contemporary jazz scene, debuts his new international quintet on the 15th while his younger compatriot Javier Vercher's trio on the 11th includes African-born guitarist Lionel Loueke, a recent Herbie Hancock sideman with one Blue Note CD under his own name. The quintet co-led by pianist Aruán Ortiz and bassist Mike Janisch on the 2nd features Greg Osby, an innovative alto saxophonist with a 25-year career as performer, composer and mentor to many younger musicians, while Danish guitarist Mikkel Ploug returns to Jimmy Glass on the 8th with the influential tenor saxophonist Mark Turner in his quartet. Drummer Antonio Sánchez's Migration group has an impressive line-up of acclaimed saxophonist David Binney, up-and-coming pianist John Escreet and bassist Matt Brewer while Argentinean pianist Emilio Solla's intriguing Tango Jazz Insiders quartet includes Chris Cheek, a saxophonist well-known in jazz circles for his contributions to over 60 albums by major artists.

### How did Jimmy Glass get started?

I have always felt part of the Barrio del Carmen. I have friends here from the '70s



and '80s and we used to go to some great places round here like La Torna, La Jungla or La Tardor. After studying photography, I set up this place with a friend of mine. We started off as just another place to go in a neighbourhood full of bohemians. We didn't really have any particular theme. In 1994 I became the sole owner, and since then we've been dedicated exclusively to jazz. The look of the club has never changed much but I find with jazz it's not the look that matters too much. In other places, people have spent a lot of money creating ostentatious re-imaginings of a 1920s speakeasy and it hasn't always worked out. It's not the container, it's the content.

### Why a jazz bar?

The simple answer is that I love jazz. This is somewhere that's different from the rest of the bars in the Carmen. I believe that over the years it has become a place of reference in the city of Valencia as a place that stands out.

### Tell us about your love of jazz?

Jazz is a living thing. It is in a constant state of evolution. You can't just focus on the classics as many people do, although they are there as great works and deserve respect. Jazz is an art form that you have to reinvestigate continuously to find new groups, new trends. It is a type of music that you can never tire of, there is always



something new there for you to discover. This isn't a time of revolutions, musically speaking, but it is a time of investigation and there are a lot of very good musicians out there working on it every day.

### Who comes to your club?

We are in the Carmen, a focal point of Valencia nightlife, so we get all kinds of people at weekends. It's different during the week, our clientele is a little more homogeneous, more regular. There are concerts here every Tuesday, and you get many people who are nearly always present at these concerts, who come week after week. For people like us, a real jazz fan will get to 20 to 25 concerts a year. In a funny kind of way, we are educational. We are offering people new ways to appreciate this music. Making them aware of new groups, new styles and people seem to enjoy that.

### Tell us about the musicians who play here?

Jimmy Glass has put Valencia on the international jazz circuit. We get groups from all branches of the music, established musicians who play here and in the most famous clubs in New York or London and groups that are making a start in the world of jazz. There are groups that first played here as unknowns and have become acclaimed all over the world. They all seem to enjoy playing

here at Jimmy Glass. They know the public here will appreciate them and, of course, Valencia is not a bad city to visit. The food, a nice climate and a good place to play.

**We all know the image of the smoky jazz club. How has the smoking ban affected the atmosphere?**

I can't see any effect at all. People come to hear the music and have a drink with a few friends. They can smoke in the street if they want. Personally speaking, if they changed the law back, I would maintain the smoking ban in this club.

**What about the jazz scene here in Valencia?**

There are some great musicians in Valencia. Perico Sambeat and Jesús Santandreu are perfect examples of that, and we have always supported them from day one. The pianist Albert Sanz is another, and you should try and get to hear the trumpet player Voro García or the trombonist Toni Belenguera.

**What's your take on the jazz festival organised each year at the Palau de la Música?**

It is an important event and they go for quality. The problem is they always go for established stars who have earned their respect but usually don't have anything new to offer. I would like to see a section of the festival dedicated to new, younger talent.

**What's different about the Jimmy Glass festival?**

Well, we'll be focusing on current trends in jazz, contemporary and the avant-garde. There won't be any of the already acclaimed old guard. We want to introduce people to what's cooking in the current world of jazz. That's why, amongst many others, we have people like Will Vinson, who's been a revelation and will be playing the opening concert with people of the calibre of the internationally acclaimed guitarist Mike Moreno. If you're a jazz fan in Valencia, you should be checking out the festival.

**David Rhead and José Marin** with special thanks to Don Snowden