

A dream come true as jazz festival makes vibrant return

Cambridge Jazz Festival co-founder and director Roslin Russell has two great passions – science and music.

"I've always loved music as much as I love science. I'm a nerd in both areas," she says. "They're both fascinating and creative, and in many ways I think improvisation is probably the key to both."

"They have been together for as long as I can remember. My earliest memories are of recording myself singing and playing the piano. I was creating my own songs on my new snazzy tape recorder when I was seven years old."

Roslin has a degree in biology, two masters' degrees, one in medical parasitology and the other in computer science, and a PHD in molecular and computational biology from Christ's College in Cambridge.

While studying for the latter Roslin stepped back from the music scene, but "pined for more jazz in Cambridge".

"Cambridge already had a long established folk festival and many other festivals were popping up but none of them really catered to the jazz community."

"Worse, jazz was and still is a very much misunderstood genre of music."

"The ideas I had for a jazz festival had been brewing for quite a while but Cambridge back then wasn't really ready for it and nor was I," she says.

It wasn't until Roslin had finished her studies and had children that things changed.

"I decided to end my hiatus and get back into the music scene [back in 2008] by meeting and performing with other musicians locally at jazz and funk jams. It reignited my dream and passion of having a Cambridge Jazz Festival," recalls the 44-year-old.

"Jazz is so much more vibrant and diverse in Cambridge now, although very much spread out all over the place and because of this I felt it needed an umbrella



Cambridge Jazz Festival co-founder and director Roslin Russell explains her love of the music and science

organisation to link up all the different groups and communities."

In 2014, Cambridge Jazz Festival was born and last year's inaugural festival attracted around 5,000.

"This truly was a dream come true," said Roslin, who juggles her full-time job as a scientist with running the festival.

"It certainly takes over a lot of family and social life and most of my weekends are dedicated to music and the festival."

"I also share quite a few of my responsibilities with my co-founder,

Gavin Spence, an orthopaedic surgeon at Great Ormond Street, who is also passionate about jazz," explains Roslin, who describes her musical heroes as "a real eclectic mix" with Louis Armstrong, The Cure, Aphex Twin, Portishead, Frank Ocean and Hiatus Kaiyote all making the long list.

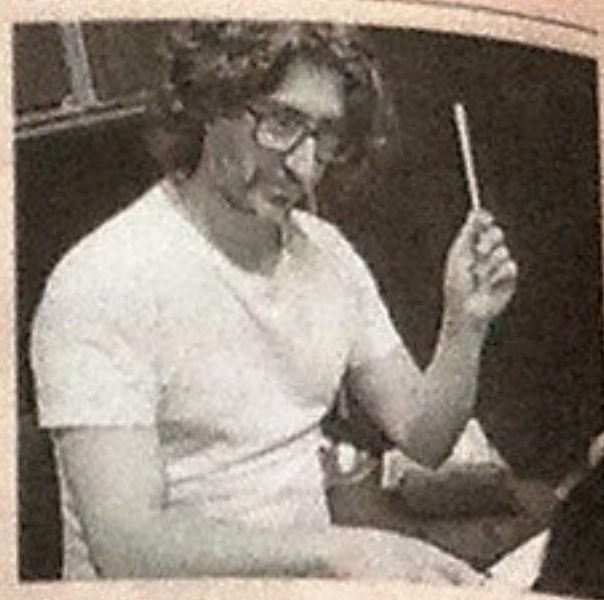
So what can audiences expect from this year's festival? Roslin believes there is something for everyone with 80 events covering everything from jazz, funk, hip-hop, soul, blues, poetry, folk and rock.

And what can we expect from Roslin in the next year?

"I've already started planning for next year's festival and very excited about it already. I'll be keeping myself very busy as usual, juggling between my scientific work developing biomarkers for various diseases, family, festival, playing and making music."

■ Cambridge International Jazz Festival runs from November 16-27 in multiple venues. For more, visit cambridgejazzfestival.co.uk or search on Facebook.

Festival guide



Bill Laurance

BILL LAURANCE: Grammy award-winner and original member of the internationally acclaimed Snarky Puppy, performs work from his album *Aftersun* – a tribute to space exploration and life in the cosmos, with dance music and African percussion at its heart. He performs at West Road Concert Hall on November 25.

SONS OF KEMET: Featuring four of the brightest stars on the UK jazz scene, culminating in a mix of music that spans jazz, rock, dub and Caribbean folk. The band perform at Cambridge Junction on November 16.

SOWETO KINCH: The award-winning alto-saxophonist and MC performs material from his new album *Nonagram*, where he draws inspiration from the incorporeal concepts of mathematics. Kinch performs at Hidden Rooms on November 24.

PHRONESIS: A band with a fierce reputation as one of the most formidable trios in Europe. They are known for their spellbinding live performances, which have won them numerous accolades, including two MOBO Award nominations for 'Best Jazz Act'. The band performed at Mumford Theatre on November 20.

BINKER AND MOSES and RESOLUTION 88 (double-bill): Multi-award winning duo Binker and Moses' debut recording, *Dem Ones*, originated from experiments between sound-checks and gigs while on the road. Over time, these initial ideas and jams have become templates for improvisation, with echoes of late period John Coltrane and Charles Lloyd. Fender Rhodes driven raw funk quintet RESOLUTION 88, led by Tom O'Grady, will be playing original funk music in the vein of Herbie Hancock and more recent innovators such as Kaidi Tatham. They will be performing material from their second album, *Afterglow*, due out this year. Both acts are performing at La Raza on November 23.

TOP PICK

Laura Mvula

The Corn Exchange, Thursday, November 24, 7.30pm

Laura Mvula is known for her inventive mix of soul, jazz, R&B, classical and pop and shot to fame in 2013 with the release of her debut album, *Sing To The Moon*.

Since then she has won a number of awards, including Best Female Act and Best R&B or Soul

Artist at the 2013 MOBO awards.

This year, she released her second album, *The Dreaming Room*, to critical acclaim.

She performs at Cambridge Corn Exchange on Thursday, November 24 as part of Cambridge Jazz Festival.

This concert is promoted by Cambridge Corn Exchange in association with Cambridge Jazz Festival.

Tickets cost £22.25 and available from cambridgelive.trust.co.uk.

Laura Mvula

