

Jazz Notes with Mick Day

Jazz relies heavily on independent recording companies to promote music and one most active at present is *Splash Point* who gave us the *Sue Richardson CD* I reviewed last month and now excel themselves with a first rate album from Britain's top male jazz singer Ian Shaw. *'The Abbey Road Sessions'* (SPRO12CD) – no need to guess at which studio it was recorded – features the singer with a six piece international band and an eclectic mix of standards, show tunes and more modern popular songs. Throughout, Shaw demonstrates his vast vocal range, clear diction and an understanding of the music he is providing. There is no chance of this being simply a competent rendering of swing style numbers: Ian and the band create exciting and at times challenging versions of their selected programme. The opening Cole Porter *'Get Out Of Town'* leaves you in no doubt that Shaw will do things his way and the Russian, New York – resident, alto sax man Zhenya Strigalev figures strongly in this interpretation. This is followed by an interesting take on Michael Jackson's *'Human Nature'*, while Ireland's Phil Ware on piano and American drummer Gene Calderazzo provide the up tempo Latin feel to *'Obsession'*. By accident



this album is also something of a tribute to the late Gerry Rafferty who died in January. A refreshingly different version of his *'Stuck In The Middle With You'* gives Shaw and guitarist Dave Preston a chance to explore the tune. (All arrangements on this album are credited to Shaw and Preston). This really is a CD with lots to enjoy but a standout track has to be *'The Lady's In Love With You'* in which veteran British bass player Peter Ind shows he is still at the top of his game as he provides the only accompaniment for the singer in the first couple of choruses before the band is let loose. Add in two blues, a bit of Duke Ellington, the almost obligatory Joni Mitchell song and a *'Darn That Dream'* which had me going to my library and listening to a 1950's version by Billy Holiday (an interesting comparison), overall I feel that Shaw and *Splash Point* have on their hands a CD which will eventually be voted one of the best jazz releases of 2011.