

# JAZZ IN BRITAIN

## CHRIS MCGREGOR AT RONNIE SCOTT'S

If Ronnie Scott's excellent new 'upstairs' policy persists we are in for some rare treats for, despite a fire delayed opening, the first week set a frightening standard. The sign on the door read Chris McGregor but the pianist's regulars Barry Guy, Louis Moholo and Monks Feza were augmented by Westbrook favourites Mike Osborne (alt) and John Surman (sop/bari) and S.M.E. expatriate Evan Parker (ten).

The outcome was some of the most exciting live jazz I have heard this year. Moholo, who in the past I have sometimes found stiff, was magnificent and it was his unflagging drive that lifted every soloist, to say nothing of the powerful collective ensemble. The soloists, for their part, responded admirably. Guy and the leader played with real passion, Osborne demonstrated how well he can now play in a free context and Feza produced his own brand of individual and fiery pocket trumpet. Surman was brilliant and, on the night I visited, said he really wanted to play. Both his baritone and soprano work confirmed this attitude and his group playing on the latter horn deserved special mention. His solo talent will be known to most readers but it was noticeable how much attention he paid to inventiveness while in a contrapuntal role.

I have left mention of Parker until last because he strikes me as the most improved pazzman in the country. Perhaps due to his experience with John Stevens, he is a superb group player. In this pick-up unit he seemed to balance the four man front perfectly, always sensing when to drop to his lower register with Ayler-like growls and when to pierce its upper limits with Barbieri-like screams. Not that his style really resembles either but he shares Barbieri's awareness of timbre and seems to have developed a melodic sense that does hint at the Ayler school. In commenting on the players individually I might be guilty of suggesting a band of disparate parts. Nothing could be further from the truth for this was a tremendous collective achievement — the ensemble at times crying in full throat with an animation that verged on hysteria. The effect was exhilarating, completely unselfconscious and abandoned in a total manner. There was never musical disintegration and the result underlined the fact that McGregor is a remarkable catalyst who deserves to keep such a group together on a permanent basis.

Barry McRae

Jazz Journal Limited

**JAZZ JOURNAL**

*Published Monthly*

The Cottage, 27 Willow Vale,  
London W.12.