

WINNER  
Jazz Media Award  
2015  
Parliamentary  
Jazz Awards

LondonJazzNews

News, reviews, features and comment from the London jazz scene and beyond

**REVIEW: Marc Copland at the 2019 Cheltenham Jazz Festival**

**"SPELL-BINDING....A MAGICAL HOUR....TUMULTUOUS APPLAUSE."**



Marc Copland. Birmingham, 2018

Photo credit and © John Watson/ [jazzcamera.co.uk](http://jazzcamera.co.uk)

**Marc Copland**

**(Parabola Arts Centre. Cheltenham Jazz Festival, 5 May 2019. Review by Mike Collins)**

**Marc Copland** was alone on stage at the Parabola Arts Centre, seated at their beautiful Fazioli concert grand having been summoned back to the stage by tumultuous applause, after a spell-binding solo set. He glanced sideways at the audience, inspected his thumb thoughtfully, screwed his eyes up and briefly tilted his head back before laying his hands on the keys. He conjured a series of dense, dissonant chords, puffed out into the auditorium like smoke rings forming abstract shapes. Then, somehow, a melody line materialised, threaded through the thicket of harmony and greeted by a little sigh of recognition for *When I Fall In Love*.

Copland's describes his own approach very clearly in an [INTERVIEW](#) with LondonJazz News a couple of years ago. Exploiting harmony and texture to the full, to express the range of a piece's possibilities, drawing on the legacy of Bill Evans in the way chords lead from one to the next; these were on display. Copland likes to weave a skein of harmony, full of crystalline

resonances and then reveal a tune. He started with *My Favourite Things* and later in the set delivered a bittersweet take on *Greensleeves*. In between were his own *Day and Night* and a Gary Peacock piece that remained unannounced; "I don't know which one I'm going to play yet," he'd said as his hands moved toward the piano.

There was a sense of him discovering what he was going to play, dissecting a tune by laying out the harmony on the piano, and then selecting parts to play with in the improvisations as if newly discovered jewels. If that all sounds introspective, it was immediate and engaging, little bursts of a groove and momentum keeping things moving, not to mention a few surprises. "I don't what I'm going to play," he said again before the last tune, "you'll be the first to know." And then *All Blues* received the Copland treatment.

This was a very late substitution in the programme. Fred Hersch had been scheduled to play but was ill and not able to travel. Generous and heartfelt tributes were paid, but there was no sense in which we had been short-changed. It was a magical hour on a Sunday evening.

*Mike Collins is a pianist and writer based in Bath, who runs the [jazzyblogman](http://jazyblogman.com) site. Twitter [@jazzyblogman](https://twitter.com/jazyblogman)*