

MusicEd attends the Leeds launch of the NEW JAZZ HORNS SYLLABUS

At long last, a true jazz syllabus for horns and from the most prestigious of sources – the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music. So later this year, exams are being introduced for grades 1 to 5 for clarinet, alto and tenor saxes, trumpet and trombone in the UK and many overseas countries. The Associated Board's jazz piano syllabus of 1999 has been a notable success both musically and commercially for the Board. An enormous amount of work has gone on since then involving leading jazz practitioners (who are also jazz educators) on those instruments. Piloting involved over 300 teachers and their students.

Whatever one thinks about the process of formal assessment of jazz performance, there can be no denying the relevance and value of the approach adopted. There is no short changing of the fundamental ingredients of successful performance. Thus scales, major and minor pentatonics, arpeggios and chromaticisms are covered along with an inspired selection of tunes in the blues & roots, standards and contemporary categories. We say inspired for the numbers range from the sublime "My Ship" by Weill and Gershwin to the outrageous "I'm an old cowhand". We can imagine the heat generated by the argument over what to include and not to include: yet it was worth it, for it seems to us that the "architects" of this syllabus got it as right as humanly possible!

Go to the Associated Board's website (www.abrsm.ac.uk/jazz2003/index.html) to register your interest in obtaining the materials when they become available within the next few weeks.