

# The Academy's Jazz man speaks out

**Derry plays host to a remarkable 12 day Academy of Arts, providing a unique opportunity for 200 specially selected students of dance, music, acting, creative writing and visual arts.**

**By Julieann Campbell**

Those selected for the prestigious Academy will benefit from expert tutoring by several accomplished professionals in the arts, from renowned writers and musicians, to dancers, actors and visual artists. Not only is this the only intensive Academy held in Ireland, but its the only such project in all of Europe.

One of the Academy tutors is the highly acclaimed Linley Hamilton, a jazz trumpeter who has played and recorded with Paul Brady, Juliet Turner, Eleanor McEvoy and Jacqui Dankworth, among others. He also gigged and toured with Van Morrison, The Commitments, and Super Furry Animals. Linley spoke exclusively to the 'Journal' about his career and the importance of educating others in the arts.

Having spent the past 30 years playing trumpet, Linley has become an

established part of the Irish jazz scene, later branching out and immersing himself in Ireland's rock scene.

In 1992, he turned professional and spent several years touring with The Commitments as they reaped the rewards of their successful big screen breakthrough. Linley spoke of his successes so far: "There have been several highlights over the years," he said, "But playing the St. Patrick's Day Ball in New York in 1993 with The Commitments was amazing. Another memorable evening was with Van Morrison at Belfast's City Hall when President Clinton was visiting in 1995, and then I was once on Top Of The Pops 2 playing with Paul Brady."

But nowadays, Linley's more likely to be found concentrating on sharing his considerable knowledge and talents. He explained: "From an educational point of view, an important highlight would be this



Linley Hamilton

course and the music workshop I do too. Its a massive level of achievement and very exciting stuff. There is a lot of talent in Northern Ireland as a whole, and young people like to play the music they're most familiar with. So these courses give them the opportunities to play it. Its the key to success."

But does Linley have any negative experiences that remain with him? He

struggled to think of any, and then said: "Even gigs that go wrong have their good points, and I learn from everything, good and bad. I love music and love playing, and so it would need to be something really bad for me not to enjoy it."

Linley's 2001 debut album called 'Up to Now' received many favourable reviews in the Irish Times, Irish Independent and Jazzwise magazine, amongst others, as well as receiving widespread radio play. Among his many influences, Linley recommends the 1950's trumpeter Freddie Hubbard as one of his favourites, as well as Michael Frank and Al Jarreau. His preferred bands are Steely Dan and U2, he added.

With 30 years under his belt, does Linley have any advice for aspiring artists like himself? He said: "Any professional, like doctors and solicitors, have to spend years studying and training, and its the same with music. To be a professional you should get a regime going, practice as hard as you can if you really love it. Music is about what is happening now, so be creative with music too."

Whilst staying here in the city as he

tutors at the Academy, Linley has attended several local gigs. But did any one band or musician particularly impress the ace trumpeter? "One band I saw a few nights ago had massive potential" he told the 'Journal': "The Mr. Organ Piano Trio were fantastic and if these guys got resident gigs playing the jazz they play, it would do them a lot of good. They have the potential for a great future, if people would invest in them. They get bums on seats, which is what counts."

Linley also believes that he has met one of the most talented people ever, in Strabane! He spoke of a singer called Megan McLaughlin who is aged only 16, from Strabane, whom Linley met last year. According to Linley, Megan is "The best singer I've ever heard."

Before Linley returned to his Academy, he said: "I do love Derry. I used to live in Strabane, and so I know Derry and you've got a great music scene here."

"Derry people also have a lovely accent, and they are really friendly people too. Its a great and supportive place to be" he added.