

Saskia Laroo Band At Cotton Club

By **PHILLIP WOOLEVER**, Published: November 18, 2014

Saskia Laroo Band Cotton Club Amsterdam, Netherlands October 18, 2014

Source:

<http://www.allaboutjazz.com/saskia-laroo-band-at-cotton-club-saskia-laroo-by-philip-woolever.php#.VHCN0odGjzK>



Amsterdam's Saskia Laroo is one of the many hard working, far traveling players who make jazz, indeed, a global village. Laroo's afternoon gig at a venerable, center city pub took place during the Amsterdam Dance Event, a huge music mix focused on techno/dance gatherings that run past sunrise. For the approximately two hours Laroo's band played, Cotton Club was as crowded and cheerful as any place in town.

Swinging sounds may have blurred off the narrow, cramped confines of the intimate bar room, but nobody in the sweltering club seemed to mind. The Dutch beer and cheer flowed as an animated Laroo invited the crowd forward and instigated a "jazz party." She got it.

The set list was dance friendly, featuring many originals with soulful flourishes indicating the band would sound much more refined under more acoustically favorable circumstances. Still, this afternoon was all about rocking a packed dance hall, and the tight band had the tight floor filled to capacity and beyond.

Keyboardist Warren Byrd from the US gave the group a touch of Memphis Motown with his vocals while drummer Daniel Van Dalen laid down a highly danceable beat. Daniel Gueli maintained a baseline bottom throughout the proceedings. His stand up acoustic got a deeper, more distinct tone than his electric model did.

They opened with one of Laroo's solid originals, "Pretty Rome." There was no needless fiddling as the place heated up. The quartet got down into "Bag's Groove" by [Milt Jackson](#) and [Herbie Hancock's](#) "Cantaloupe Island." Other highlights included the band's original "Jazzin Jamz," a funky take on George Gershwin's "Summertime" and Laroo's "Really Jazzy."

Laroo took a few turns on the saxophone, which the swarm enjoyed. While she is a passable enough saxophonist, she shines on the trumpet, and wisely went with her ace most of the way. Those tenor tones floated through a mashed cacophony of bar room clatter, with excellent clarity.

The band could be excused if they played with a bit of a weekend letdown, after a release party show a couple nights earlier at Paradiso, a bigger and more famous venue.

Smaller stages also have their charms, and even their rarities. Such was the case here, where it looked like a time capsule from the days when jazz was a more prevalent intoxicant than coffee shops.

Perhaps Cotton Club is a refuge for bee-boppers who once swung from the heights when Amsterdam was a regular jazz Mecca. The local scene has seen highs and lows, lately enjoying a noticeable resurgence.

There was an appearance by the Old Head, a charming local character part urban legend, part coffee shop marketing ploy.

"I didn't know Old Head was a jazz fan," was overheard from the bar as someone tried to sneak a few phone screen photos.

"Everybody's a jazz fan if it's decent jazz," was the reply from behind the glass. Well said.

As the melodies drifted beyond the patio area by a sparkling canal it was really cool to hear jazz echoing along the wegs, next to monolithic Medieval towers, surrounded by tourist life that paused at the sound.

Some fools say jazz is also a monolith. Not as long as there are vibrant energizers like Laroo's crew playing. Her stage was small scale, but her performance was large. It was exactly the kind of thing that keeps jazz alive.