

Suite Sounds

Glasgow-based DJ, producer and jazz guru, **Rebecca Vasmant** is the brains behind Era Suite, a new party night at Sub Club bringing jazz, Afrobeat, Latin, funk and electronica to the dance floor

Interview: Claire Francis

Rebecca Vasmant has long been known in Glasgow's club scene for her fusing of jazz influences and modern electronic sounds. She cemented her place in the city's scene with her Made In Glasgów and Know The Way parties, and her regular spot on BBC Radio Scotland's *The Jazz House* saw her present some of the best contemporary jazz to a wide audience. Now, she's taking the genre in all of its iterations to the Sub Club in new night Era Suite, combining selections from her collection with live slots from jazz musicians and bands. We caught up with Vasmant to talk about her love of the genre, the genesis of the new night and her highlights from the past 12 months.

The Skinny: When did you first get into jazz, and what do you love about it?

Rebecca Vasmant: I have a massive passion for jazz and Latin American music. Jazz – whether it is Latin, modal, free jazz or nu jazz – really gets to me and touches my soul. This may sound strange, but when I listen to an amazing piece of music, no matter what style, it can have the power to put me into a meditative state where I hear nothing and think of nothing else but the music. I can feel every note and the story that it is telling. I love warmth in music, I love musicality and I love soul in music. It may sound like an obvious thing to say but music can have soul whether it's house music, jazz or funk.

How did you come up with the idea for the Era Suite nights?

Running a jazz event is something that I have always dreamed of doing, and when the Sub Club approached me to see if I would like to do it, it was a no-brainer and an absolute dream come true. Era Suite is all about allowing local talent to

come and play in a club/dancefloor environment, hopefully bringing people from both the jazz scene and the electronic scene together.

Can you tell us about Sub Club's history as a jazz venue and how this fits in with the Era Suite nights?

Sub Club has an amazing history with jazz. Before Sub Club was booking the likes of Bonobo and Gilles Peterson, it was previously called Lucifers. Before that, the club operated as the Jamaica Inn, serving chicken in a basket to patrons – a cheeky little way to allow it to stay open longer than other bars! But back in the 1950s and 60s, Sub Club was Le Cavé – a 'speakeasy' after-hours jazz venue which hosted jazz luminaries including Louis Armstrong and Ella Fitzgerald. With the Era Suite nights, we want to bring back a bit of that old spirit and create a party that combines both the history of the club and the fact that there is an amazing wealth of local jazz talent in Glasgów.

How does Glasgów's jazz scene compare with other cities in the UK and Europe?

Glasgów has a very young jazz scene and things are still growing here. Places like London or Manchester seem to have a lot of young musicians all working and playing together, and Glasgów is now starting to catch up. With the newly-opened The Blue Arrow on Glasgów's Sauchiehall Street being an 'exclusively jazz' club, it's become an amazing place for people to play regularly, and things seem to be growing all the time.

I would previously never have been able to drop a jazz record in the Sub Club at 2.30am on a weekend, and I did that a few weekends ago when I was lucky enough to have played after Gilles Peterson. The reaction was so amazing. I played this one particular track that was just saxophone



and hand claps and people were shouting and banging on the roof. It was a moment to remember forever.

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Rebecca Vasmant

Do you think people have a misconception of what jazz is and how it can be played in a club environment?

Yes, absolutely. People sometimes tend to associate jazz as something that is really tied into the more 'trad' sound. I think now attitudes are starting to change, and things are really opening up now in regards to people of all ages being into jazz too.

When did you first get into DJing and producing and what inspired you to start?

I did a radio production course back when I was 18 and I had been collecting records for a while. I

was always fascinated by the concept of playing records and would always imagine what it would feel like to play to a room full of people. I bought second-hand belt drive monstrosities and set out trying to learn how to mix. I don't come from a musical background and I didn't know anyone who was a DJ. Eventually, after at least six months of trying, I started to get the concept and just kept practicing. It was not easy for me and took a lot of work; it did not come naturally to me like for some people.

Where's your favourite place to shop for records?
Underground Solu'shn in Edinburgh, Mixed Up Records in Glasgów or a trip to Paris! Paris seems to be like a dreamland for digging.

When is the next Era Suite night and what acts have you booked?

The next Era Suite is on Friday 25 January. We have Astrosnax who will play live, featuring vocals and trombone from Anoushka Nanguy, James Mackay on guitar, Peru Eizagirre on drums, Scott McPherson on bass and Aaron L from Stamp The Wax on the turntables – as well as myself too!

What was your career highlight in 2018, and what are you most looking forward to this year?
Starting my own show on Worldwide FM, and taking local trio Aku in to play in the London studio was an absolute highlight. Playing after Gilles, as I mentioned before was another highlight; it will stay in my memory forever. I am really looking forward to playing at Gilles' festival, Leysin Worldwide, in Switzerland, playing at Mona Paris in February and also Kasheme in Zurich in March.

Era Suite, Sub Club, Glasgów, 25 Jan, 7-11pm

subclub.co.uk

