



Press and Promoter's Kit

www.skamonics.co.uk www.myspace.com/skamonics

About the Skamonics

The Skamonics are a seven strong London band of jazz musicians who play ska, and ska musicians who can play jazz. With an irreverent repertoire and a proven ability to fill dance floors across the capital their roots go back to the birth of ska.

When Jamaica's sound system owners wanted to end their reliance on US imports in the 1960s they turned to the island's jazz musicians. From a blend of New Orleans rhythm and blues, mento - Jamaica's own calypso style, Rastafarian drumming and the musicians' own jazz roots came forth ska.

The unique combination of offbeat guitar chops - the ska - and a driving drum rhythm could take almost any tune and use it fill to fill a dance floor.

The pioneers of ska were a horn-led instrumental band - the Skatalites. They wrote their own tunes, reworked jazz standards, borrowed pop songs and even raided the classical repertoire. Anything was fair game.

The Skamonics fast-forward the same attitude 45 years. They play the classic ska tunes and season them with two-tone favourites from Britain's 1980s ska revival. But they have the advantage of 45 extra years of popular music to raid, ensuring that they are no simple 60s tribute band.

So alongside ska evergreens such as the Guns of Navarone and Gangsters, a Skamonics set can include tunes from Kraftwerk, Herbie Hancock, Black Sabbath and Tchaikovsky - as well as lounge swingers such as Fly me to the Moon.

With members from their 20s to their 50s they can draw on a wide range of influences and experience, and have got audiences from West End clubs to East End pubs, summer festival stages to private functions on to their feet. The Skamonics have played the 100 Club, Gaz's Rockin' Blues, the Borderline and have been building a crowd with regular appearances at West London beat dungeon, Ginglik.

The Skamonics appeal is the same that first filled 1960s Jamaican dance floors - a driving rhythm section underneath, with tight arrangements, thrilling horns and quality improvisation on top.

Who are the Skamonics?

The distinctive front-line ska instrument is the trombone. Nick Richards is drenched in ska and took up the trombone originally after hearing the Skatalites' Don Drummond on record. He has received praise and encouragement from Rico Rodriguez, a survivor of the 60s Jamaican scene and ex-Specials and Jools Holland.

Dan Spanner can almost be said to have run away from the circus to join the Skamonics. But while it is not quite true, Dan certainly has straddled music, performance and circus in a hugely varied career including a tour with Archaos. He also runs the uncategorisable Spanner Jazz Punks.

Leah Thomas is a hugely talented young tenor sax player, who runs the University of London Big Band. On trumpet, the Skamonics feature Yann Touzet. The epitome of Gallic cool, Yann is busy on the London jazz scene.

No ska band can succeed without a disciplined rhythm section. Mark Huggett on drums and Nigel Stanley on bass have played together in a number of jazz and blues bands. Mark has been a pro-player in a wide range of bands from free impro to singer-songwriter, latin street bands to tight rock outfits. Nigel, who also writes most of the arrangements, also plays big band jazz. As the band's veteran, he has been featured in the Daily Telegraph as still gigging at 50+.

Completing the line-up is the Serge Gainsbourg of ska, front man Benoit Viellefon on guitar and the occasional vocal. Benoit is also in UK ska maestro Gaz Mayall's band, the *Trojans*, plays "Django Reinhardt meets Vera Lynn" in *Benoit and Lili*, flies 1920s biplanes in his spare time and runs his own record label www.johnjohnrecords.com.

There are fuller biographies at www.skamonics.co.uk/members.htm

Bass player Nigel Stanley says, "The great thing about ska is that almost everyone likes it, without it ever becoming any kind of lowest common denominator music. It has always had one of the great rhythms that gets people on their feet without losing the subtlety of its jazz and Caribbean roots. Yet on this firm foundation you can build both tight arrangements and provide a platform for improvisation."

Drummer Mark Huggett adds, "The great thing about playing in the Skamonics is that you are surrounded by quality musicianship, but it is always lightly worn. There's none of the navel gazing ignore-the-audience that you can get in jazz, but you never forget that these are fine players."

Nick Richards says, "Ska from the start has always had its irreverent side with bad puns and a jackdaw tendency to take any tune and ska it for life. The wide range of backgrounds in the Skamonics means that we can draw on decades of music to plunder."

Benoit Viellefon says, "The Skamonics get people crazy everytime, dancing like animals all night."

How to describe the Skamonics

Promoters and Listings may find these helpful:

“The jazzy ska dance floor filling septet”

“A jazzy ska septet filling dancefloors with instrumental versions of ska favourites and absurd covers from Kraftwerk to Black Sabbath”

“The Skamonics are a seven strong band of jazzers playing ska. They have been filling dance floors across the capital not only with instrumental versions of original ska classics, but, just like the 1960s Jamaican musicians they admire, take any tune they fancy and ska it for life. Kraftwerk and Black Sabbath will never sound the same again.”

How to contact the Skamonics

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A free copy of the Skamonics debut CD *Hello Pork Pie Hat* is available to promoters and venues.

Photos of the Skamonics and the band logo are available at www.skamonics.co.uk

Technical requirements for gigs

The Skamonics have four horn players – trumpet, alto,tenor and trombone.

Each needs a microphone, and they need to be close together in a line at the front of the stage. In addition an extra mic for announcements and vocals by the alto player is highly desirable.

The guitarist can supply own back line, but also needs a microphone for vocals and announcements. He should be to (stage) right of the drums or with the front line oon far (stage) right.

The drums should be in the rear centre of the stage, with the bass to (stage) left. The bass player can provide back line and an XLR DI.

The Skamonics can supply their own PA suitable for small and medium sized venues such as pubs. They are generally happy to share backline and drums with other bands.