

## IAN DAVIES' PURCELL ROOM RECITAL

Fortified with Discus' rave notice of Ian Davies' recording, I attended his recital at the Purcell Room on January 20. I left with mixed feelings.

There can be no doubt that his technique is remarkable in one of still-tender years and experience, or that he is immersed in flamenco and with an outstanding talent and love for it. Yet, there were several features of his recital that bred discomfort.

One thing that distinguishes the great artist from the rest, at any stage in his career, is his absolute certainty. I speak as one who has seen many artistes develop and who first knew and heard both Bream and Williams when they still wore short trousers. Ian Davies did not display this certainty and, far too often, over-reached himself at a technical level. The artist's first consideration on a concert platform is to play what he knows he can play with ease, so that he is able to convey the musical content unhindered by technical strain. The great artists make mistakes, but they do so infrequently and they invariably fall under one of two headings: a slip of memory, which can happen to anyone, no matter how well he may know the music, and a momentary slip of technique from which he rapidly recovers; this latter will often spur a good artist into redoubling his concentration and, maybe, to play even better than before its commission.

Ian Davies frequently pushed his technique so far that he either broke down (though his capacity for covering it by improvisation was the mark of a good trooper) or lost vitality. Too often there was a loss of rhythmic drive and, even when no perceptible mistake occurred, the strain of difficulty deprived the music of its real impetus. Energy was never lacking, but impetus frequently was.

It might be submitted that Ian Davies is still only young but this is irrelevant. He has enormous talent, as have and had Bream and Williams, but even in their early recitals they did not show this measure of enthusiastic indiscretion. As he has placed himself on the concert platform, he must

accept the standards of criticism that go with the sort of career for which he is basically very well equipped. It might also be argued that these mistakes are an acceptable part of partially spontaneous music-making, that they occur in the enthusiasm of the moment. They do not, however, happen to the greatest (or even the rather less than greatest) artists, even in jazz—which is at least as improvisatory as flamenco. The concert platform demands discipline as well as talent.

The programme was well balanced with, perhaps, some over-emphasis on quicker movement—which we can write down to youth and which is not confined to flamenco artists. The sole exception was the Choros No. 2 by Villa-Lobos. This was not only dreadfully interpreted, it was scrappily played—despite being, perhaps, the easiest piece of the evening. Ian Davies would be well advised to avoid these cross-bred flirtations (as Montoya in relation to rubish—in this context, such as Tiger Rag and the Blues), which add nothing whatsoever to the original concept but, rather are no better than a parody. No one had more clear-cut ideas on what he wanted from a performer than Villa-Lobos who, failing to get what he expected, would *demonstrate* it to the luckless offender. If this was a flamenco interpretation of Villa-Lobos, it did no credit to flamenco.

If I did not believe in Ian Davies' talent I would not have bothered to write at all. I do believe he can succeed, but he must first acquire the control and discipline necessary. There is a weakness in his left hand which could be overcome with attention, but it is the only flaw in his technique. Musically and in terms of his sound production I can see no justification in his diverting from a career as another Sabicas, for instance, in favour of one in the realm of the classic guitar. He, no more than any other, can live in both worlds at once—not, at least, with distinction. A young talent never lacks sycophantic adulation; it is nice and warming but can be a poor counsellor.

JOHN W. DUARTE.

## DAVID TAPLIN AND BRYAN LESTER DEBUT RECITAL

Twenty-five year olds David Taplin and Bryan Lester gave their debut recital on Friday, January 10, 1970, in their home town, Manchester, in the Lesser Free Trade Hall. The audience contained a significant proportion of acquaintances, friends and admirers and despite the 'flu epidemic the hall was practically full.

The programme promised a wide variety of interesting solo and duet pieces and began with some demanding Dowland solos by a very nervous Bryan Lester.

David Taplin showed promise and dominated the concert. The failure of the duo to cohere was frustrating; one wished repeatedly for a more compatible partner for David Taplin's broader conception of the music and more polished interpretations. This incompatibility was reflected in the rather spongy tone produced by Mr. Lester's Kohno guitar which he played close to the

fingerboard where the deficiencies seemed most distracting, whilst David Taplin played a clear precise Rubio which consistently dominated the ensemble.

The final duo pieces were some musically slight works by Jean Absil and Armin Kaufman which succeeded better than those in the first half which included the very attractive and little known lute duets from Fronimo Dialogo collected by Vincentio Galilei, with interesting but technically undemanding asymmetrical phrases requiring better understanding between duet performers.

David Taplin also was understandably nervous in his solo items which began the second half but his interpretations were invariably interesting. He moved over the fingerboard with considerable assurance and was able to establish a rapport with the audience which was enhanced by his en-

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passant introductory comments. He concentrated on recent Spanish composers and his greatest success was with the Burgalesa by Frederico Moreno-Torroba which achieved a satisfying depth of interpretation. With a few more recitals behind him he will be able to overcome the nervousness which this debut generated and we can look forward to some interesting concerts from a young player who has something personal to contribute.

MALCOLM WELLER.

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