

Essence of Karen is captured by Claire

REVIEW

The Carpenters Story,
Grand Theatre, Blackpool

The distinctive, gentle sounds of The Carpenters music filled the Grand Theatre auditorium as the fairly sizeable audience remained enthralled throughout as this one night only concert showcased the sibling's creative genius of their lasting legacy.

The full seven-piece live band were tasteful and contributed some great backing vocals in this accurate portrayal of Richard Carpenter's unique arrangements over three decades.

But it was the voice of Claire Furley everyone wanted to hear in this performance which was essentially a concert rather than a biographical journey of the Carpenter's career until Karen's premature death in February 1983.

Predictably, they opened with We've Only Just Begun and although Furley's voice is excellent in its own right and she accu-

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rately captures the essence of Karen's delicious lower register, she nevertheless struggles to emulate the subtle nuances and understated emotion of the tragic star.

Changing easily from a slow version of The Beatles Ticket to Ride into an up-tempo Sweet, Sweet Smile it was a nostalgic love-fest for the fans. The second half opened with Yesterday Once More and moved into a jazz version of This Masquerade which included a terrific flute solo. This genre proved to be Furley's undoubted vocal niche.

Some brilliant tenor sax solos from Richard Pardy and guitar solos from Ian Latimer added an extra dimension and were highlights of the evening, as was a lovely version of The Eagle's, Desperado.

The audience joined in with their favourites whilst a medley of hits led up to the final encore of Goodbye To Love with the anticipated anthemic rock guitar solo. It was well worth the wait.

YVONNE FIELDING

Laila's big invite on lavish day at palace

BY KATIE UPTON

katie.upton@blackpoolgazette.co.uk
Twitter: @KatieUpton89

A booming Blackpool business is hoping to have a royal visitor after its founder was honoured at Buckingham Palace.

Laila Remtulla, owner of Laila's Fine Foods in Bispham, visited the royal residence in London yesterday to pick up her MBE, awarded to her in the Queen's New Year Honours List for services to food and drink.

And she used the opportunity to invite the Prince of Wales, Prince Charles, to visit the family business, as he presented her with the medal.

The entrepreneur started out selling homemade bhajis and samosas in her hometown, Lytham, and has grown the business to now employ hundreds of people at its Bispham-based headquarters, turning over £18m a year.

The grandeur of Buckingham Palace was a far cry from the shopfloor of a food factory producing meals that are sold in Asda, Morrisons, Lidl and Iceland, she said.

She said: "It was an experience of a lifetime, just fantastic. Prince Charles made it really easy to talk to him."

"He said about the business and about it being in Blackpool and that he approved of family businesses. I asked would he come to visit us then."

Mrs Remtulla found out she was to be officially honoured in late December last year. She said: "It took a little while to sink in and I'd think 'How did I do this?'"

"It was a humbling feeling to get it. It's still unbelievable."



Laila Remtulla, founder of Laila's Fine Foods in Bispham, is made an MBE (Member of the Order of the British Empire) by Prince of Wales at Buckingham Palace

She and her husband Nazir moved to the UK from Tanzania in 1976, settling in Lytham, where they raised their three girls.

While bringing up her three young children Mrs Remtulla started cooking her own recipes and persuaded a local delicatessen to sell these

instead of their bhajis and samosas, that she had found "disappointing".

For its first 10 years the business was juggled with family life but in 1999, when Mr Remtulla joined its ranks, and it quickly grew, securing its first national contract of many, creating ready to heat and eat meals.

The business now occupies a 43,000 square foot factory in Bispham and produces around 60,000 to 70,000 portions of food a day.

Mrs Remtulla paid tribute to her family and staff for their support to grow the business.

She was joined by her husband and daughters, who are all employed by the business, for her special day yesterday.

She added: "The opportunity to be in the palace was fantastic, it's so beautiful."

"And the great pleasure was that my husband and daughters could be there, because it is a family business after all."



Laila Remtulla, second from the right, with her husband Nazir and daughters Zera, Rishma and Natasha outside Buckingham Palace, London, and before being made a Member of the British Empire (MBE)



John Blackledge

Tests start to measure cleanliness of the sea

Residents are being urged to do their bit to help Blackpool's bathing water reach tough new standards.

The bathing season is now officially open which means from now until September, the Environment Agency will carry out its annual water quality test programme.

Blackpool North beach is already predicted to fail the new European standards which will be twice as tough as current standards.

It means a sign will have to go up advising people not to swim in the sea from 2016.

John Blackledge, Blackpool Council's director for community and environment services, said: "It's important to make clear our sea water is cleaner than ever and last year all our bathing waters passed the current bathing water directive."

"It is not the water quality that is changing but the new directive."

"Partners across the entire Fylde coast are working extremely hard to meet the new standards. Over £500m has been invested on improving the water quality on the Fylde coast since the 1990s and an extra £100m section of work has also started this year at Anchorsholme and Harrowside."

"We are doing our bit to improve the water quality but we need the public's help too. Whether you live on the coast or inland, people need to make sure that they are doing the right things around what they put down the drain and down the toilet."

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