

Melhuish back to his roots

Remarkable what two years travel can do. For jazz trumpeter Kingsley Melhuish it put him in touch with his roots, as it were.

Having played in brass bands as a kid and then moving sideways through the colliery tradition and into Dixieland and New Orleans styles, he found himself in that city which is a hot bed of musical styles and experienced what he laughingly calls "a flashback."

As a longtime fan of Lester Bowie's Brass Fantasy — an out-there brass-heavy band not averse to playing Marilyn Manson and Beatles songs alongside Jimi Hendrix tunes and traditional New Orleans music — Melhuish naturally gravitated to New Orleans' Maple Leaf Bar where the Rebirth Brass Band were playing.

"They had traditional instruments but a real contemporary sound, a whole funkiness. And the place was just hopping.

"In New Zealand people are used to the sound of brass bands, but not that genre. We just had our national brass band competition recently and New Zealand bands are some of the best in that style, but the brass sound I like ..."

Inspired by what he had seen and heard — he caught Bowie twice, one in New York's Knitting Factory and the second time in a more straight concert situation at London's Barbican — Melhuish returned to this country determined to get his own brass band together and to play that funky music.

By word of mouth he has pulled together eight other players for The Brassouls who debuted at Khuja



BOLD AS: Brassouls play at the Kings Arms Tavern on Saturday.

Lounge last month. This weekend they take their fat bottom funk to the Kings Arms with the comedic vocal troupe Telling Stories.

Melhuish says the band came together largely by word of mouth ("that's the thing about this country, it's so small you can do that, and have opportunities you wouldn't have elsewhere") and although initially intrigued but mystified by the concept he had, the musicians fell into it very quickly after listening to a few albums by the likes of the Dirty Dozen Brass band.

"I also explained that it was like an r'n'b band brass section — but without the band.

"The repertoire now also includes

some reggae things by Toots and the Maytals with a touch of ska, some soul covers and the inevitable New Orleans things from Dr John and Professor Longhair, tunes such as Big Chief and Iko Iko."

So it's funky backbeat grooves for dancing, slurry tuba and trombone, and blues to party down to.

No, it's not quite the Innes Tartan Brass Band of old, but something much more skankin', fonkie and groovilicious, as they say.

— Graham Reid

Who: Brassouls, with Telling Stories

Where: Kings Arms Tavern, Newton

When: Saturday, 8.30 pm