

AJAZZ

The Magazine of the Australian Jazz Museum[©]



WHEN YOU COME TO

The Coffee Pot

THE COFFEE POT WILL COME TO YOU

350 WELLINGTON STREET, PERTH

Perth's Iconic Coffee Pot Café

australian
jazz
museum

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Contents:

3. **Vintage Radio Broadcasts...
The Wilco Label**
By Ken Simpson-Bull OAM
4. **Perth's Iconic Coffee Pot Café**
By Elaine Curtis
6. **A Century of Jazz Recordings**
By Bruce Johnson
8. **Reading About Jazz**
By Ken Simpson-Bull OAM
10. **Trombone Travels**
By Wendy Moulton
11. **Top tHat**
By Ralph Powell
12. **Skidaddle Down to Blackburn**
By Con Pagonis OAM
14. **World Tour, Paid with Jazz**
By Günter Geschke
16. **Those Swingin' Swedes**
From *Centrepiece* magazine
17. **Sydney Reunion** Liner Notes
By Eric Myers
18. **Well Travelled Jazz**
By Ralph Powell
- All That Jazz**
By Peter Stagg
19. **Geoff Kitchen's Clarinet
Jazz Guitar Pioneer**
By Ralph Powell
20. **Beryl Newell**
By Ralph Powell

Images:

AJM's collection	AJC Collection
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See Perth's Iconic Coffee Pot Café on pages 4 and 5

PLEASE NOTE:

The deadline for contributions to the next AJazz is 15th of January 2025

Please discuss your contribution with the editor prior to January 1st
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Australian Jazz Museum

Established in 1996

A fully accredited Museum run entirely by volunteers.
Home to the largest Australian Jazz Collection.

All items catalogued to Museum standards and stored in archival conditions.

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Dear Editors,

Thank you again for the latest issue of your journal, as well as the continuing sterling work in archiving Australian jazz. Just an additional note supplementing the brief summary of Memphis records: [AJazz 101]

In 2004, the National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA), at that time called ScreenSound Australia, issued a two CD set of remastered Memphis Records, incorporating three categories of Memphis and Memphis-related recordings:

1. Recordings of the Southern Jazz Group made at the initiative of Memphis founder Bill Holyoak, but not necessarily for release on Memphis.
2. Recordings of the Southern Jazz Group made for Memphis but not released.
3. Recordings made for Memphis by other groups but which included musicians associated with the Southern Jazz Group.

Among the 44 sides, the gems include an early recording under the name Southern Jazz Group featuring a very young Errol Buddle on sax.

I believe the NFSA would still have copies available.

Keep up the essential and excellent work.

Bruce Johnson

In the spirit of reconciliation the Australian Jazz Museum acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, water and community. We pay our respect to their elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.

Vintage Radio Broadcasts Available for Streaming

THE late Bill Miller is remembered for several major achievements – his creation of Australia’s first Jazz Record label “Ampersand”, his establishment of the long-running *Jazz Notes* magazine, and as the foremost driving force in creating a forum for jazz discussion and activity before World War 2.

In 1939 Bill commenced a series of weekly jazz programs broadcast over radio station 3UZ. Bill wrote the scripts and provided the records used but the programs were presented by radio announcer Rowley Barlee.

Although no original recordings of these programs exist, Bill’s original typed scripts are in the possession of the Australian Jazz Museum. The programs were initially called “Jazz Night” but later changed to “Swing Night” reflecting the increasing popularity of swing over the New Orleans style of jazz.

Some years ago the museum produced a re-creation of two of these programs using the 78rpm records originally used, with ABC announcer (the late) Bill Passick reading the original scripts, thus providing what listeners in 1939 and 1940 would have heard. The original broadcasts were aired on 3 July 1939 and 19 February 1940 respectively.

The two re-created programs can now be heard, streaming, from the AJM web site at www.ajm.org.au by clicking on the piano image on the home page. Under “Please select your PlayList” scroll down to the 3UZ programs and press “Play” ■

The WILCO Label

FURTHER to our article in Ajazz 101 incorporating Australian jazz record labels from the 1940s, we have discovered some additional information on Wilco and its founder.

Wilco was started by Ron Wills and his brother Merv and friend Max Cohen in 1948. Approximately 30 jazz titles by local artists were produced over the next few years, many by the Southern Jazz Group. Ron also produced the Circle and Star labels which featured jazz artists from France and the USA.

Ron’s father had been in the Jim Davidson Orchestra for more than 20 years, and Ron’s own career had included being jazz reviewer for the magazine *Music Maker* under the names of Ceris and Disque from the mid-1930s. He was also the reviewer for *Tempo* magazine. From late 1935 Ron was broadcasting over 2UW and later the ABC. He was also the first secretary of the Sydney Swing Music Club. Ron joined EMI in 1940 but became an officer in the RANVR in 1942, re-joining EMI after the war where he later became involved in the introduction of LP records.

As A&R producer for EMI, Ron was responsible for recording Graeme Bell and Don Burrows among a number of other popular artists.

Ron compered several jazz concerts from the Sydney Town Hall as well as continuing his radio broadcasts. In 1964 Ron left EMI to join RCA where he was responsible for many releases by RCA. After retirement in 1978 Ron continued his interest in the music industry by attending annual meetings of ASRA. In 1993 Ron was awarded an OAM for his service to the music industry. He died in 2002 at age 89. ■



78th Australian Jazz Convention

Mildura December 26–31, 2024.

Thanks to a generous benefactor, the Executive Task Force is pleased to advise well known international trumpet player **Jon-Erik Kellso**, will attend as our guest artist.

Registrations are open for musicians, bands and delegates.

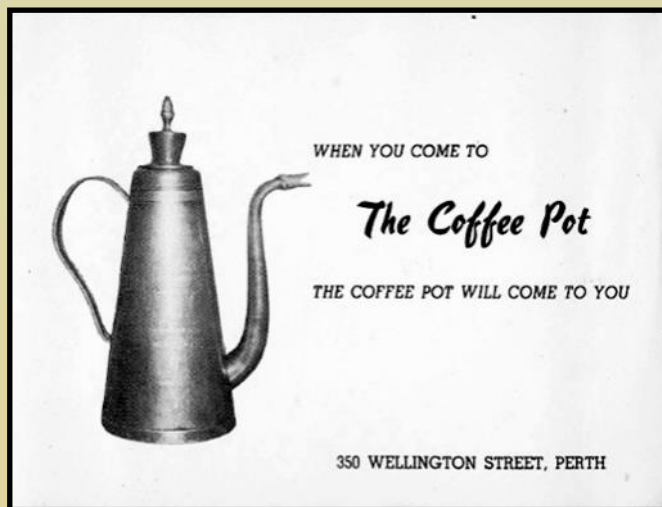
Website: www.australianjazzconvention.org.au



Perth's Iconic Coffee Pot Café

an important part of Perth's social and cultural fabric

By Elaine Curtis



The Coffee Pot was an iconic Perth venue frequented by all stratas of society, in a time of intolerance and discrimination for gay and other marginalised minorities. The warm hospitality and vision of an enterprising Dutch couple made The Coffee Pot, which they owned and ran from 1956–1982, a much-loved institution which rose above the prejudice and social injustice of 1950s and '60s Perth to provide a haven of coffee and jazz for all to enjoy. Delicious coffee (made from a secret Dutch recipe), home-made pastries and cakes with continuous jazz in the background made this compact gem in the heart of the city, popular with many who found their reasonable prices affordable and their late night hours for a coffee shop (open until two am weekdays and three am weekends) amenable.

The Coffee Pot, situated at 350 Wellington Street, was bought by Rob and Prada Van der Nagel in 1956, with the discreet help of openly homosexual West Australian author Gerald M Glaskin as a silent partner. After the austere years of the Great Depression and WW2, Australia was enjoying prosperity and affluence. Prada and Rob had emigrated from war devastated Europe to Australia, with its thriving economy and better prospects. Leaving behind the easy-going inclusive society of Amsterdam, the Van der Nagels brought with them European sophistication and laissez faire to a 1950s conservative minded Perth.

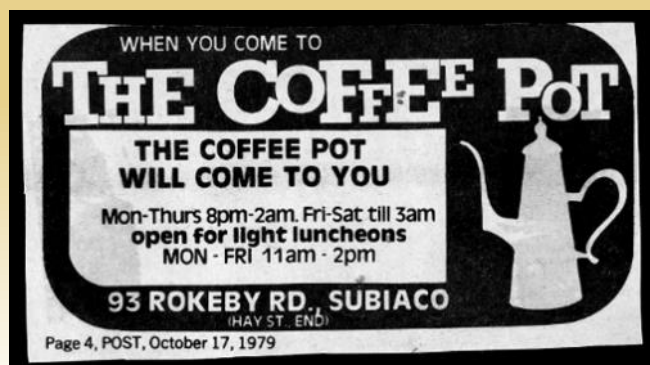
Perth was already known to Prada. Prada (Julie van Vloten) had been brought up in Surabaya, then the Dutch East Indies, before Indonesia's declaration of independence in 1945 and had attended Methodist Ladies College in Perth for two years. She returned home at the outbreak of war in 1939. Her subsequent marriage to a Dutch Naval officer, Hans Van der Nagel, was short-lived, with Hans killed in action not long after. Prada's charm and elegance as the hostess of The Coffee Pot, with its jazz, good coffee and indulgent treats, showed nothing of the horrors of the four years she had endured, imprisoned in a Japanese

prisoner of war camp with her mother and sister. Accounts of these camps told of the hellish conditions and suffering of Dutch internees, torn from previously comfortable lives. After liberation, Prada travelled to Holland to meet her late husband's family and fell in love with Hans's younger brother Rob, whom she married in 1947. Prada's traumatic experiences of the Japanese occupation may have further influenced her to prioritise making life good, fun and enjoyable. Certainly, there was a warm welcome for all to be found at the Coffee Pot, especially for those persecuted unfairly.

Centrally located in the city, between Barrack and Pier Street, with many places closed at 8pm, The Coffee Pot with its late night hours, became a regular haunt for performers and patrons alike. Ideally situated for concert, theatre and the Embassy/ Canterbury Court Ballrooms, it was also a favourite cafe for nurses from the Royal Perth Hospital Nurses Quarters in Wellington Street and trainees from Graylands Teachers College.

Its affordable prices were an added attraction for its eclectic customer base which included artists, students, actors and musicians. As artist Jo Darbyshire describes in her catalogue for an exhibition for the Perth Museum in 2010 "The Coolbaroo Club and the Coffee Pot: two extraordinary places in 1950s Perth", the customers of the Coffee Pot were people from "every walk of life and every part of the world."

The Coffee Pot was a sanctuary for the gay community to openly socialise at a time when homosexuality was illegal (these discriminatory laws remained until 2001) and for other marginalised minorities. Benn Dorrington, interviewing Jo Darbyshire in his 2010 article "Hot Steaming Cup of Nostalgia", asks why she considered the Coffee Pot to be so special. "Darbyshire said the importance surrounding the Coffee Pot was due to the little remaining evidence of gay culture from that era. 'There's not a lot of recorded information about where gay people would hang out,' she said. 'The gay community lost a lot of its history during the '50s and early '60s because people couldn't record anything; they couldn't keep anything, including love letters'."





Darbyshire also tells how the Indigenous population of Perth had been subjected to what amounted to Apartheid in all but name. "Aboriginal people were not allowed into most of the CBD unless they had a permit, and suffered continual police harassment. A prohibited area around the city was in operation from 1927 until 1954 and a curfew existed which excluded aboriginal people from the city for any reason after 6pm. Aboriginal people had no rights and lived under the strict control of the Chief Protector and the Natives Affairs Department.

Ironically, with Australia's love of coffee today, at the turn of the twentieth century, tea was the accepted social beverage of the time, coffee consumption only a tenth of tea. After WW2, coffee became more commonplace in Australia, partly due to the influx of US servicemen stationed in the country during the war in the Pacific. In the 1950s, Italian and Greek immigrants also brought with them their love of coffee which had been introduced to Europe back in the 16th century by the Turks invading Hungary. In the initial years of the Coffee Pot, drinking coffee was regarded with suspicion and disapproval by many in Perth, seen as a decadent indulgence of the bohemian set, though coffee houses had existed in Damascus since the 15th century.

Even with no alcohol being served, The Coffee Pot was considered a "risqué" establishment by Perth's upright matrons. Mothers warned of the "dangers" of The Coffee Pot. There are reports of mortified sons and daughters being dragged out of the Coffee Pot by their mothers, who believed it to be, as one described, "a den of iniquity". The younger generation, in turn, were attracted by the avant-garde coffee shop, its trendy atmosphere permeated with the savoir faire of its chic hosts. It was a 'cool' place to be, somewhere the young could feel unfettered and free, validated by the disapproval of conservative members of society.

The compact interior many customers fondly recall as a "tiny, smoky coffee lounge" more than made up for its lack of space by its cosmopolitan and intellectually charged atmosphere. In an interview with

Harvey Deegan on radio in 2010 to publicise the Coffee Pot scrapbook, consisting of mementos collected by the Van der Nagel family, for the State Library, Historian Dr Kate Gregory explains the importance of The Coffee Pot in Perth's social and cultural history. It had existed not only to provide hospitality but supported the visual arts as well, displaying paintings by local artists on its walls on a rotation basis, painters well-known now but young and unknown then, including local artists such as Guy Grey Smith and Brian MacKay. This late night coffee and jazz bar, with its hours extending to 2am weekdays and 3am weekends, suited shift workers as well as those enjoying a night out. Dr Gregory states, "It was an important part of Perth's social and cultural fabric, particularly through the 1960s in the development of Perth's cafe culture" and describes it as "a very stylish jazz bar with a great deal of vibrancy, a refuge from the conservative policies of the time."

In 1979, a road widening project in the city forced its move to 93 Rokeby Road, Subiaco and there it remained until 1982 when Rob and Prada retired. They had provided a haven of inclusivity and harmony for Perth when it needed it most. Their cafe nurtured the human spirit as well as providing delicious sustenance. It was an intimate place to meet for convivial conversation, where customers could linger into the early hours of the morning, enjoying a decent cup of coffee and jazz. It was a place ahead of its time for Perth, that treated all equally, it was a herald of the cafe culture of today. The Coffee Pot was considered decadent for its time, but by only those with biased and prejudiced opinions. It had provided a place where different sections of society and differing cultures could thrive, interact and enjoy convivial conversation with the aroma of freshly percolated coffee and jazz playing in the background. At a time of unimaginable restrictions for many in society, the Coffee Pot helped to pave the way to the society we would become. ■

Images:

Coffee Pot scrapbook. By Prada Van der Nagel, 1956.

A Century of Jazz Recordings 1924–2024

Bruce Johnson

The invention of the sound recording was reported in Australia as early as 1878, in the *Telegraphic Electrical Society Journal*, and the first demonstration of the phonograph was in the following year.¹ English academic Douglas Archibald, who had purchased a phonograph from Thomas Edison, arrived in Australia in 1890 and gave a massively successful eighteenth month national tour, also taking in New Zealand, demonstrating the new technology. The earliest imports and attempts to establish a local record industry were cylinders, the production of which had begun by 1907 under the label *Australia*. Discs were not generally available locally until the beginning of the twentieth century. Early attempts to build up local production, however, were undermined by cheap imports, meaning that our early exposure to recorded sound was primarily imported sound.

By the early 1920s, gramophones had become a staple medium of domestic entertainment, with an estimated one million units throughout the country, and it is significant in the present context that this latest example of modern technology was so often aligned with the latest in modern music. The record player enabled 'jazz parties at home' declared one advertisement.

In 1921 the Melola record player was advertised as being 'as effective as a full jazz band' (Johnson 2000: 9). Both recording technology and jazz being manifestations of modernity, attitudes to both – negative and positive – were generally aligned.

By 1924, Australia had already enjoyed over thirty years of exposure to sound recordings.²

The most obvious way of documenting this continuing process is to provide a history of recorded jazz in Australia.

This would include an account of the first 'jazz' recordings produced locally, such as those featuring visiting US bands like those of Bert Ralton and Ray Tellier. We would also talk about the emergence of local specialist jazz labels, starting with Bill Miller's Ampersand (and XX) and the venerable and durable Swaggie label, started by Graeme Bell in 1949. Most, but by no means all, were manifestations of the 'revival', itself having a localised flavour often defined by young ex-service personnel with high curiosity levels who also reacted against tepid and formulaised Swing and postwar 'pap' emerging from a conservative culture. Subsequent independent labels continued to the

present, proliferating as new technologies enabled what amounts to private domestic recordings (not really so new, since the earliest phonographs included a 'record' as well as a 'playback' function). With the transition through CDs to internet streaming, I haven't actually had to play a material recording in any format over the last two decades. Other significant points in a simple chronicle of the relationship between jazz at source and the availability of recordings would include, by way of examples: the transition to electrical technology and subsequent developments such as stereo sound, as well as the well-known hiatus caused by the Petrillo ban on recording just as the music was undergoing a radical stylistic transformation.

By 1924, with over thirty years of exposure to sound recordings, Australians had developed certain what are called 'listening dispositions' that conditioned their reception of recorded sound. These included the belief that recorded sound was indistinguishable from the sound of live performance. Early comparisons between the 'live' and recorded sound of performances report that listeners could not tell the difference. This is extraordinary to us today as we listen to the earliest sound recordings. This should alert us to the importance of factors which are not disclosed by a simple listing of jazz recordings as they became available. There are two tacit assumptions that would underpin a straightforward chronological account of the stages through which Australia came to know jazz through sound recordings. One is that jazz has always been understood as sound, and the other is that the sound coming out of a recording is an accurate reproduction of jazz as performed at the supposed source. While sound recordings were crucial in the dissemination of the music, however, our earliest understandings of the word were not specifically as something merely heard. This is why, to get a sense of the cultural impact and development of jazz in Australia, we need to enlarge our sense of what was understood by the word from the time of its arrival. In the present context I can only signpost the avenues of enquiry this would lead to. So please bear with some simplifications of what are highly complex dynamics.

In the post WW2 period jazz increasingly sought to raise its status as an 'artform'. There are many reasons for this, including race politics and the attempt to find sanctuary from the rock'n'roll barbarian at the gates, with the vulgar physicality and often transgressive and abandoned deportment of its musicians and fans. But in its earliest manifestations from the teens of the twentieth century, jazz was the 'rock'n'roll' of its time, and also widely held to be not so much a cerebral as a physical phenomenon – a form of dance. This explains the otherwise puzzling use of the definite article before the word: 'The jazz', like the waltz, the tango, the two step. 'The jazz is a dance', declared the early Australian 'lifestyle' journal *Table Talk* in August 1919. The world's first jazz festival, as far as I have been able to discover,



1. There is obviously a 'discord' between words like 'demonstration' and 'exhibition', both of which are visual in orientation, and a technology that is acoustic; this linguistic dissonance is not universal, and the implications for how we conceptualise acoustic phenomena are profound - see eg Johnson forthcoming.
2. Except as indicated, the foregoing details are drawn from Laird 1999, pp. 3-32.



was held in Australia in that year and it centred on two silent films: the locally made *Does the Jazz Lead to Destruction?* (now lost), and the US production *The Whirl of Life*.

'scoreless' music – as compared with, say the symphonic or so-called 'classical' tradition – the sound recording was a primary medium of its circulation, and the interventionist role of the technology was therefore of special significance in letting the world know what the music sounded like. Second, the particular instrumentation of a jazz band imposed distinctive constraints on how it could be effectively recorded. In the 'straw hat' bands that sprang up in the wake of the traditional revival and the trad boom, the banjo became *de rigueur*, while photographs and accounts of early New Orleans bands indicate a frequent preference for guitars. These, however, did not cut through as strongly as banjo, for which reason the latter became dominant on recordings. Similarly, the fact that drums could make the recording head jump required a further adjustment of balance. These are familiar enough examples.

The former featured, not instrumentalists, but exhibition dancers George Irving and Ethel Bennetto, and the latter starred world renowned ballroom dancers 'Mr and Mrs Vernon Castle' (accessible at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zweYnCHGdwU> For more detailed discussion see Johnson forthcoming). The same identification with dance is evident in Australia's early silents incorporating 'the jazz', such as Charles Chauvel's 1926 *Greenhide*. It was not until the post WW2 era that jazz recordings stopped carrying words like 'Foxtrot' or 'Two-step' on their labels. The transition from jazz understood as a music for dancing to a music for listening relocates the music to a very different political economy, expressed most simplistically as the shift from the visual display of the body to the auditory access to the mind.

Less often noted is the question of volume. Early recording technology was relatively unresponsive to dynamics, requiring a level of volume that was uniformly high. But accounts of early New Orleans bands speak of sometimes bringing the volume down so low that you could hear the swishing of the dancers' feet. When the first black US jazz band, The Coloured Idea, arrived in Australia in 1928, the scandal raised by its party miscegenation has eclipsed another aspect of the band that was reported in reviews: that the band used a wide dynamic range, sometimes playing its final choruses at barely above a whisper. What we learned of US jazz practice was also filtered and distorted by the politics of the recording industry, which decided not only who had access to the recording studio, but even the question of repertoire. In live performance, for example, Fletcher Henderson's orchestra played a wide range of material that extended to sentimental pop songs and waltzes for its dancers. But the US record industry regulated the band's repertoire on the unstated premise, not just that only black bands could play jazz, but they could play only jazz.

One of the most important correlatives of this shift as far as this essay is concerned is that we gain a different understanding of the relative importance of sound recordings in the history of jazz in Australia, and the media that shaped that understanding. Yes, sound recordings were essential, but, surprisingly, they were preceded by the impact of silent film, at a time when jazz was understood to be physical spectacle at least as much as an auditory experience. This also helps to explain all those photographs of our pioneer jazz bands assuming often grotesque physical postures. If jazz was dismissed as sonic nonsense by its early detractors, it was also visual nonsense. I would argue that the dominant jazz narrative, generally defined by stylistic or geographical transitions, is more illuminating if conceived in terms of the gradual severing of the music from dance, from body to mind, – or perhaps more correctly, that dance erased the body/mind distinction. Can we distinguish between 'doing' the tango and 'thinking' the tango?

The arrival of the LP recording not only increased fidelity, but also opportunities for repeated 'learning' listenings without significant wear. They also enlarged the social role of recorded music by the creation of extended thematic or emotional 'programmes' (*Songs for Swinging Lovers*), which complemented such social activities as dinner or seduction, without constantly having to change the record. But they brought something else to the global development of jazz which had not normally been provided by the old 78 rpm record in its paper sleeve: a space for alternate masters and extended cover notes and booklets which vastly enlarged our knowledge of jazz history and practice.

The second assumption that I want to examine is that the medium of a sound recording gives uncontaminated access to what audiences for live performance were hearing in the US. Put simply, sound recording has not been a frictionless medium, but significantly interventionist. Both the act and the technology of recording changed the music. What we heard coming out of the phonograph/gramophone bell or speaker is not what would have been heard in a live performance. This happens to have particular relevance to jazz, for several reasons. First, as a largely

The main conclusion to be drawn from this discussion is that to understand the full impact of the first 'century of jazz recordings in Australia', we have to go beyond an inventorial model and explore the broader politics of the material and cultural history which these recordings entered. ■

The foregoing discussion draws upon a range of sources, including:

Johnson, Bruce: 1987, *The Oxford Companion to Australian Jazz*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 2000, 2021. *The Inaudible Music, Jazz, Gender and Australian Modernity*, Sydney, Currency Press (Book and CD), book republished 2021, Melbourne, Untapped, Ligature Pty Ltd. Forthcoming: "Diasporic Jazz and the 'Material Turn': A Case Study", in Adam Havas, Bruce Johnson, David Horn (eds). *The Routledge Companion to Diasporic Jazz*, London and New York, Routledge.

Laird, Ross: 1999, *Sound Beginnings, The early record industry in Australia*, Sydney, The Currency Press. This outstanding volume remains the most authoritative study in its field.

Mitchell, Jack: 1988, *Australian Jazz on Record 1925-80*, Canberra, Australian Government Publishing Service. This was the first of a series of Australian jazz discographies in both hard copy and on CD by Jack Mitchell. They remain my most often consulted sources for the study of Australian jazz.

Reading About Jazz

By Ken Simpson-Bull OAM

As a volunteer at the Jazz Museum I am frequently called upon to address visiting community groups. I often show them a 78rpm record of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band that we have on display, stating that this was the world's very first jazz recording. When I ask the group when they thought it was made or when jazz of the original or Dixieland style originated I get answers that vary between 1890 and 1940. I have also found that if I happen to mention a jazz icon such as Bix Beiderbecke or, say, Bob Barnard, I get quite a few blank stares. Thus it seems that although many of the general public may be fond of jazz music, there appears to be much incognisance of the subject. For those desirous of learning (more)

about jazz, the best way, surely, is to read about it.

But what to read? Excluding on-line material, there are *books* on the history of jazz, on the bands, and on individual musicians. There are books on the structure, style, and musical development of jazz, and more.

The Jazz Museum possesses many hundreds of books on every aspect of the subject of jazz, most of which are available to members for in-house reading. There is also a number of books which may be borrowed on request by members.

As an avid reader myself, let me discuss a few of the jazz books that I've read over the years and offer my own personal view (albeit subjective) of their worthiness.

Probably the most inceptive book on jazz history is *Jazz* by Rex Harris. Although long out of print it is still advertised for sale on the internet. Harris delves into the early pre-New Orleans history more deeply than any other book I have read on the subject. It (and the other books here-mentioned) is available for access on the Museum's bookshelves.

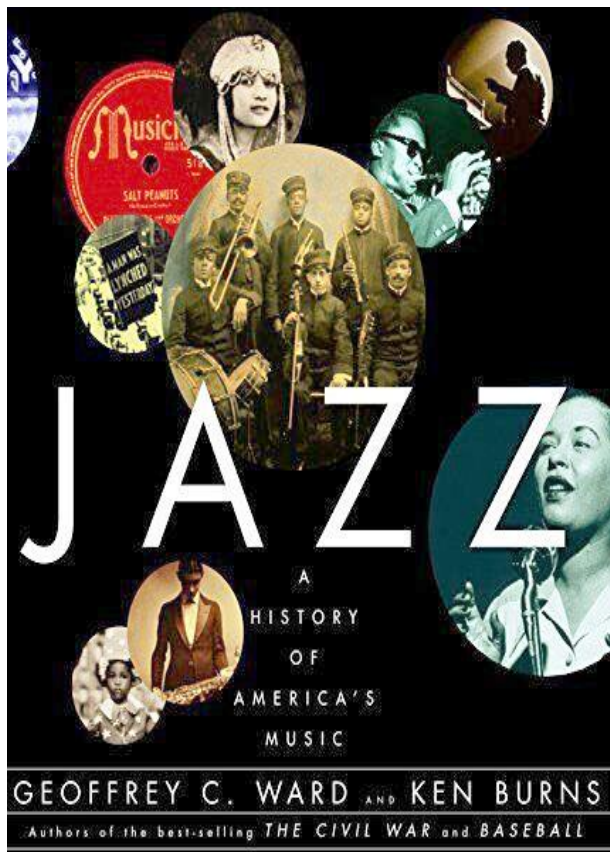
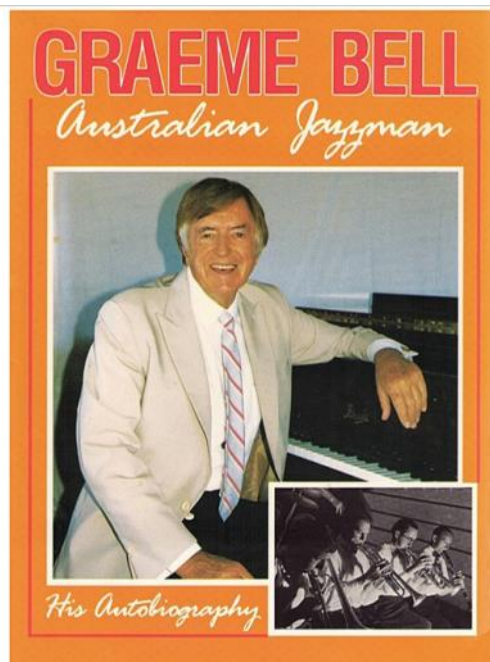
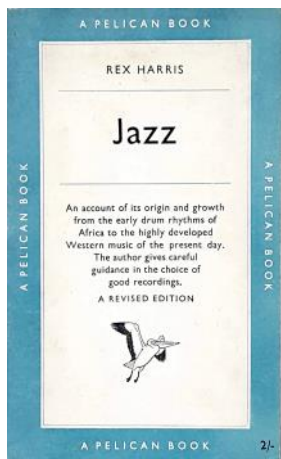
Someone learning about jazz for the first time will probably want to know about the performers who have been responsible for its development over the years. The one book in my own library that achieves this in both an informative and entertaining way is *Jazz* by Geoffrey C. Ward and Ken Burns. It is lavishly illustrated and probably the best buy for an "all round" book. It is listed on the internet from as little as \$34.

Those more deeply interested in performers may like an encyclopedic-style publication which lists just about everyone you could think of. One of many such books is *Jazz – The Rough Guide* by Carr, Fairweather and Priestly which is readily available for under \$20.

Otherwise there are innumerable biographies available about individual performers. These are probably a personal preference, but some that I have enjoyed reading

include those on Bix Beiderbecke, Louis Armstrong, Hoagy Carmichael, Jack Teagarden, Artie Shaw, Benny Goodman, the Dorsey Brothers, and Cab Calloway to name just a few.

The books mentioned so far mainly only cover the American scene and



mostly exclude Australian performers. Regrettably there are not a lot of books that incorporate Australia's own contribution to jazz, but some which should be mentioned include *Graeme Bell Australian Jazzman* (Graeme's autobiography), *Black Roots White Flowers* by Andrew Bisset, *The Oxford Companion to Australian Jazz* by Bruce Johnson, *The Inaudible Music – Jazz, Gender and Australian Modernity* also by Bruce Johnson (also available as an e-book), *Jazz – The Australian Accent* by John Shand, and *The Encyclopedia of Australian Jazz* by Mileham Hayes, Peter Magee, and Ray Scribner.

For a complete listing of almost every jazz recording made in Australia between 1923 and 2019 there is *Australian Jazz on Record* by the late Jack Mitchell. Originally in book form it is now only available as a CD ROM.

Those who would like a fully illustrated book of Australian jazz musicians from the 1940s to the '70s should seek out Norm Linehan's *Australian Jazz Picture Book*, now out of print but advertised on the internet from \$10.

Australians have historically had an empathy with British jazz, and one book that adequately covers this

subject is *A History of Jazz in Britain* by Jim Godbolt (although only the period from 1919 to 1950).

Looking at the Amazon internet site (for instance) reveals a plethora of new jazz books of which I've not had the pleasure of reading. That said, I'll briefly discuss those that I have.

As a writer for *Vjazz* and *Ajazz* magazine over the last 14 years I have reviewed a number of books chosen mainly for their engaging content. By referring to those reviews I will here outline some factors which made those books worth reading:

The Story of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band by H. O. Brun (reviewed in *Vjazz* 48) informs us that this band was the first to use the word "jazz" in its title.

One particularly interesting chapter in the book describes in detail the legal battle for the rights to the now-standard Jazz tune "Livery Stable Blues". The original clarinet player Alcide Nunez absconded from Nick LaRocca's Original Dixieland Jazz Band taking with him this tune. LaRocca sued and published the tune as "Barnyard Blues". In a strange verdict, no one won the court case!

Ella Fitzgerald by Stuart Nicholson (reviewed in *Vjazz* 49) reveals that Ella was a 17-year-old runaway from a female reform school who had won a couple of first-prizes at amateur vocal



The Jazz Museum's extensive Reference Library (soon to be relocated).

Groovin' High – The Life of Dizzy Gillespie by Alyn Shipton (reviewed in *Vjazz* 50) is a good book about the beginnings of "bop".

The Life and Legend of Duke Ellington by John Edward Hass, reviewed in *Vjazz* 47, is a well researched important biography.

Of Minnie the Moocher and Me – An autobiography by Cab Calloway. (reviewed in *Vjazz* 53). Did you know that Dizzie Gillespie played in Cab's band in the 1930s?

Coggy by Jack Mitchell (reviewed in *Vjazz* 55) is the story of Australian trombonist / bandleader Frank Coughlan.

Lost Chords by Richard M Sudhalter (reviewed in *Vjazz* 75). This was the best book on jazz that I had read for quite some time. It's an 800-page tome largely based on the mistaken assumption that jazz is a purely African-American invention and development. Thoroughly researched and meticulously written, its author (himself a jazz trumpeter) unearthed the often unrecognised influence that white musicians had on the early development of ragtime and jazz.

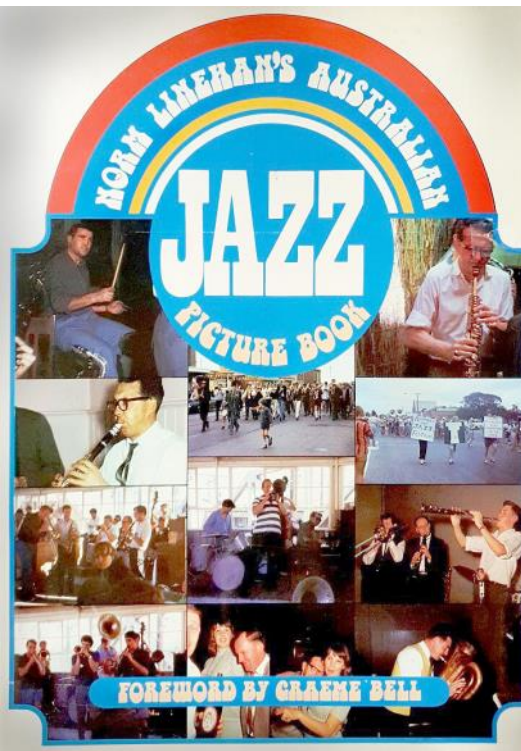
He specifically covers in detail the white contribution during the period between 1915 and 1945. He also traces the origins of the word "jazz". Sudhalter's book is full of revelations and intriguing conjecture that make for enthralling reading. Although it was

published in 1999, the book is readily available on-line.

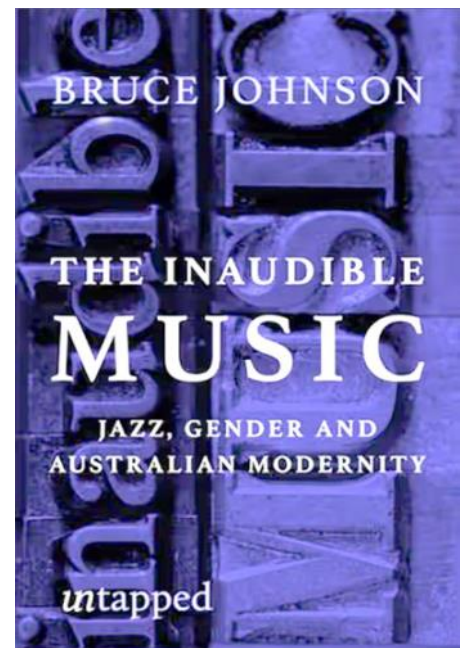
Silences and Secrets, by Kay Dreyfus is the story of the Weintraub Syncopators who were a group of internationally celebrated German musicians who migrated to Australia just before World War II. It was covered in an article in *Ajazz* 86.

The selection of books described above is not meant to represent the best or most essential, but rather to highlight the huge selection available both in the marketplace and the Museum's own library.

The enjoyment of jazz can be enhanced by the knowledge gained in the reading of appropriate books. ■



nights and was suggested to bandleader Chick Webb. Chick took one look and said, "You're not going on my bandstand." (Ella was badly clothed, unwashed, and was said to have stunk.) Well, she did go on, and the rest is history.



Trombone Travels

By Wendy Moulton, Coorparoo, Qld

During the late 1950s and 1960s Bill Rudd lived at 46 Rockley Road, South Yarra and he loved his jazz music. Also living in Rockley Road was Nick Polites.

On Sunday afternoons the musicians used to congregate at Alan Watson's house, also in Rockley Road, for some jam sessions. Llew Hird was one of the attendees along with his wife Pamela and Llew gave Bill his old trombone prior to the band's trip to England.

In the 1970s Bill gave the trombone to Alan Moulton (Smoltsey Moultsy) [sic] to play at the Melbourne Jazz Convention (1974). This was the occasion that Clark Terry (flugel horn/trumpet) was guest artist. The trombone was also played at the Queanbeyan Parade in 1973. ■

Editor: *Llew's trombone and monogrammed leather instrument case were recently donated to the Australian Jazz Museum by Wendy Moulton, adding significantly to the collection of historical instruments.*



LLEW HIRD



Llew Hird at the 9th Convention in Sydney with 1954 Original Tunes winner Peter Pretty on clarinet



In 1972, Festival released "Best of Bell", a compilation issue by the Graeme Bell All Stars.

On the record sleeve Graeme is dressed in tails and an Akubra top hat.

Lounging back against a tree trunk and resting a foot on the piano keyboard he looks for all the world like a mixture of the Cat in the Hat and a Where's Wally figure.

Graeme gave Jiří Křípač the top hat which Jiří recently passed on to the Australian Jazz Museum ■



Skidaddle down to Blackburn

By Con Pagonis OAM

For many years, on the second Saturday of each month at Melbourne's Blackburn Station Village Market, locals have been charmed by the "Skidaddle" jazz band providing the soundtrack as we go about our business shopping, meeting friends at the local cafes, or catching a train into town. Many passers-by linger at the rotunda opposite the shops by the railway line, where the band performs their repertoire of classic olde jazz tunes.

Skidaddle are a traditional band that embodies the essence of the genre with passion and expertise for the jazz rhythms and timeless melodies. Richard Desmond on cornet drives the band's enchanting tunes. He also volunteers at the Australian Jazz Museum. Skidaddle boasts a line-up of other seasoned veterans, including the soulful tones of Tony Lee on clarinet, and the rich harmonies of Ezra Kawadlo on trombone. They are backed by the rhythmic precision of

Simon Gilbert on guitar, Jim Badger on banjo, Dave O'Sullivan on drums and Rod Evans on double bass. This ensemble delivers an authentic classic jazz experience.

The Skidaddle jazz band evolved out of the Claire Castle Jazz Band which was led by Tony Harling (trombone). Tony played for many years at the Blackburn Market which is organised by the local Rotary Club. Like many jazz bands, membership was a bit of a moving feast with various members coming and going for other gigs. Tony passed away in 2019 and the leadership of the band was passed to Rod Evans, the band's double bass player. Rod kept the then current personnel of the band but renamed the band "Skidaddle", still continuing to play in the traditional jazz style with a range of tunes from the 1920s, 30s and 40s. The current line-up now includes guitar as well as banjo, so Skidaddle has a particularly strong rhythm section.



Dave O'Sullivan, Jim Badger, Simon Gilbert, Richard Desmond, Rod Evans, Ezra Kowadlo and Tony Lee.



AJM Volunteer Richard Desmond on cornet lays down the melody.

Band leader Rod Evans came to jazz as a teenager listening to bands like the Red Onions. It was "the sound" that captivated him – it was unlike the contemporary pop music of the day. However, he was a late starter as a stand-up acoustic bass musician. He commenced learning his instrument as his children started to learn music at primary school. Part of Rod's early musical education was provided through the Australian Jazz Museum workshops organised by the late Marina Pollard. It was from there that Rod dropped playing with the Maroondah Symphony Orchestra and took jazz a little more seriously. On 13 April 2024, Rod's son – David Evans – took the photos for this article as they performed at the Blackburn Market.

With years of collective experience between them, performing in bands across the country and gracing the stages of numerous jazz festivals, each member of Skidaddle brings a wealth of knowledge and artistry to the ensemble. From upbeat swing tunes to soulful blues ballads, Skidaddle's repertoire celebrates the rich heritage of traditional jazz while infusing it with their own unique style and improvisational prowess.

"What you don't get with this band is social media, pitch correction, lighting or any glam effects," says Rod. "We just play, and people just listen."

Rod recalls that recently, the band had an elderly Chinese-Australian man approach them and request the tune "On a Slow Boat to China". He says: "We played it and he quietly sang along to himself but when we finished, he walked off wiping tears from his eyes with his handkerchief. We didn't play it that badly by the way," he hastens to add! Rod wonders what this man's back-story was, and what memories did the tune evoke? Did he listen to the "Old Jazz Band" in the 1940s at the Peace Hotel in Shanghai, or was he just homesick – who knows? This doesn't happen every time Skidaddle performs, but it's nice to think that those who hear them enjoy the experience musically as well as for the memories that are triggered from these old-time tunes.

Experience the magic of live music with Skidaddle, where every performance is a celebration of this timeless art form – jazz that continues to inspire and uplift new generations of music lovers around the world. While the monthly Blackburn Market is Skidaddle jazz band's main regular gig, they are available to play at weddings, parties, anything. ■

Booking enquiries can be directed to band-leader Rod Evans on email:

rod.evans@macrodynamics.com.au

Photos:David Evans

World Tour Paid With Jazz

Until I got to know “Mookey” [sic] I didn't think much of jazz. I didn't go out of my way to get tickets for a jam session, nor did I buy the latest Benny Goodman records. Admittedly, on the dance floor I liked a jazz rhythm from time to time: not bad, and the hotter one too. Provided I was in the right mood, I could get a certain taste for Louis Armstrong's singing.

But when there were riots by young people who smashed the furniture of time-honored music halls in wild jazz enthusiasm and had to be dispersed by the police with water cannons and tear gas, it was always incomprehensible to me. In short: the “elemental force of jazz” had, as my jazz-loving friends said, actually “passed me by without a trace.” Until I got to know Mookey Herrmann.

“We're playing at Pigalle,” he said, “Why don't you come along if you fancy it?” He said this with such a nice inviting smile that I overcame my indifference and actually went on a free evening. Why wouldn't I? After all, as I knew from the newspaper, a few days earlier Nikita Khrushchev had also mingled with the working people of Moscow to pay his respects to jazz, represented by Benny Goodman and his band.

The bar is located in the middle of a large shopping street in Hamburg: A narrow entrance, a barely noticeable colorful advertisement, a notice board with a few photographs, steep stairs down, checkroom, and the entrance. A man at the door: “Admission fifty pfennigs”. Then the cellar: Low, but wide and spacious with dense rows of clean tables and benches, always for two and two. In the back left corner, slightly elevated, is the bar; to the right, in the semi-darkness, an alcove. The walls are painted: a commercialized Toulouse-Lautrec style tried and tested in a thousand dance bars between Soho and the Reeperbahn. “Very ordinary, very ordinary”, Lotte Lenya's “Bilbao Song” comes to mind.

What is unusual, however, is the jazz band in the middle of the cellar, on a flat podium between two pillars, blasting their music into the room, making my ears ring at first. The hot rhythms spur twenty or thirty teenage couples on to dance to the beat and applaud for minutes on end. And yet (you can tell at first glance) neither the applause nor the dancing betray the shapeless raving that the older generation know-it-all attaches to jazz in general.

I take a closer look. As the long trombonist leans to one side, I see a poster on the pillar. There's a big kangaroo on it: the band's emblem. It comes from the homeland of this cute creature, Australia. Melbourne to be precise. The seven have been on tour in Europe for seven months. How it came about, how this band traveled

halfway around the world to play in this Hamburg jazz club, is a story that illustrates much of what makes jazz so popular, what is “about” this way of making music. Mookey, the bass player, told me this story during the short breaks.



Paul Marks (inset), Max Collie tb, Willie Watt bj, Frank Turville t, Mal McGillivray d, Mookie Herman sb, Nick Polites cl

Mookey's real name is Wolfgang Herrmann and he is a German emigrant. Eight years ago, he could no longer stand it here and decided to move to Australia. In just a few years, he built up a photography business and at the same time cultivated his old love of music. The son of a well-known German professor, he had studied at a German conservatory. However, his passion was not for classical music, but for jazz.

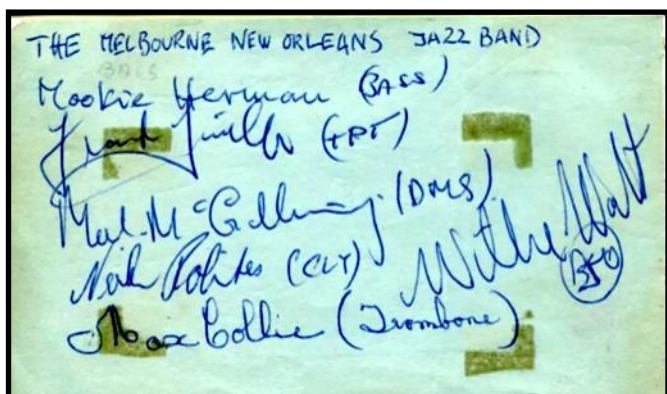
And it was this passion that gradually brought him and the other six together, as chance and coincidence would have it. They practised together, played at smaller and then larger festivals. And at some point they had their first engagement. Once a week they played in a small bar in Melbourne, after work of course, because everyone had a regular job. They were amateurs and wanted to stay that way. But after a short time, they were well received by the public. First two, then four evenings a week, they played at “Center 44” [sic] in “St. Kilda”, Melbourne's entertainment district.

Jazz music is a big thing in Australia and a band that can do something rises quickly. This was also the case for the “Melbourne New Orleans Jazz Band”, as the young group now called itself. Their first participation in the very popular annual Australian jazz festival was a resounding success. The band's style was well received. Mookey is almost offended when I, a complete layman, refer to this style as “Dixieland”. “We play,” he says proudly, “a pure New Orleans, original style indeed, as taught by George Lewis, the old Negro who is still our role model today.”

And then a firework of names, schools and styles comes crashing down on me, suddenly I feel like I'm in a musicology seminar. I'm glad when a few familiar islands appear in the ocean of unfamiliar names and terms: Chris Barber, for example, or Ken Colyer, who were also heavily influenced by George Lewis, the musical progenitor of the Melbourne band.

I can only understand one thing straight away: this so-called "traditional jazz" is an entirely serious matter, even if the sometimes extremely lively music only seems funny or "snazzy" to the layman. I realize how smooth the transition is from lively rhythm to a thoroughly artistic musical performance when Paul Marks, a slender little man with a bearded "Christ head", performs a spiritual, discreetly accompanied by the band. What had just been boisterously dancing, boisterously stomping, singing and whistling along, suddenly stops, becomes quiet, slowly, almost shyly comes closer and listens to the singer.

Whoever had told me before that in a dance hall, a jazz cellar, such calm, such a listening emotion could arise among "half-strengths", I would not have believed them. Paul Marks refrains from any showmanship, sings with a lowered gaze, more inward-looking, as it were, and performs not only famous spirituals such as "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" but also simple Australian folk songs - a mixture of melancholy bush loneliness and homesickness for good old Europe and the self-assertion of the old convicts who were once the first to populate the distant lost continent.



Well, the seven musicians on the podium are not convicts. They are highly respectable people in their private lives. Frank Turville, for example, the talented trumpeter ("He represents our style most purely," says Paul Marks with warmth) is a technical draughtsman. The clarinetist Nick Polites is a businessman, a partner in a large chocolate factory. He studied economics and philosophy. But Mal McGillivray, the drummer, was shearing sheep just a year ago, having worked as a technician for a farmer in the bush for a while.

A "Professional" is actually only the singer Marks, an Englishman by birth and a qualified accountant. The air in the offices was too stuffy for him. Paul became aware of this when he practised his guitar for hours after work and secretly sang his first songs. "I just needed more life, more

atmospheres," he said. And so he hung up his accountant's robe and took a job as a road worker. He saw the bush and the natives. Only after months did he return to the city. Paul Marks then became a letter carrier to earn a living for himself and his family. At the same time, however, he began his rise as a singer. He had a great weakness for "folk songs", the Australian folk songs that won him enthusiastic audiences everywhere. In Australia, he has since made around a dozen records, including one of his own compositions: "Postman's Blues", in memory of his time as a letter carrier.

While Paul Marks has dedicated himself to art for good, his six companions have hung up their jobs and businesses for just one wave. "That's nothing unusual here in Australia, they tell me, every Australian wants to go to Europe twice in their life. Once when they're young, like us, and then again when they're old, just before they retire. The companies plan for this. We can all go back to our old jobs."

"How did your European tour come about?" I want to know. And again, Mookey, with whom communication works best (I have a hard time understanding the wonderfully broad Australian accent of the others), is the reporter: a jazz-loving Englishman had heard the seven in Melbourne. When they had blossomed into one of the best Australian jazz bands and had already produced six or seven records, he put them in touch with an English manager. He then arranged the seven months in England and Scotland and the engagement in Hamburg.

An adventurously painted Volkswagen bus, "the first to be assembled in Australia", assures Mookey, and several private cars, including a sky-blue Mercedes, make the band more mobile than almost any other.

As I marvel at the luxury of the young people, they tell me frankly what they earn: "If we played five nights a week, we would each earn around 1,300 to 1,400 marks a month in England. In Germany, where life is even more expensive, it's only 800 to 1000 marks in the same time."

Nevertheless, the band stayed in Germany for longer. They play in Cologne, then in Düsseldorf, and they hope to get an engagement in southern Germany. But in between, and all seven of them are particularly looking forward to this, they are going to Warsaw. Polish Radio has invited them and for two weeks, one jazz event will follow another: Jazz behind the Iron Curtain!

In late autumn, they will return to their home country: modern travelling journeymen, musicians for fun and for a while, young, likeable citizens of Australia. Their trip around the world was worth it for my sake.

I have encountered Jazz. ■

Written by German journalist Günter Geschke and originally published in Sonntagsblatt [Sundaypaper] Nr. 27, 8th July 1962, page 4

(Translation by Detlef A. Ott)

Those Swingin' Swedes

Condensed from an article in *Centrepiece*, the magazine of The Jazz Centre UK

The Jazz Centre UK recently received a donation of a large collection of Swedish Jazz records from the 1950s, many on the British Esquire label. What was intriguing was that they were nearly all seven-inch 45rpm discs, mostly EPs. In order to find out why, *Centrepiece* decided to consult jazz correspondent Andi Schönheit for the story of Swedish jazz records and jazz in Sweden in the 1950s.

UNLIKE the development of recorded jazz in the UK and many other countries (including Australia), shellac 78rpm records in Sweden were not immediately superseded by 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ rpm LP vinyl discs.

Instead, throughout the 1950s, almost all jazz in Sweden was recorded on seven-inch 45rpm Singles or Extended Plays. The lesser amount was on 10" LPs.

All the young modernist jazz musicians made their mark on these Swedish 45rpm records – Ake Persson, Bengt Hallberg, Lars Gullin, Arne Domnérus, Putte Wickman, and others. (Performers which would not have been commonly known in Australia.)

Several factors greatly aided the development and popularity of Swedish jazz in that decade: Swedish radio presented contemporary jazz two or three times a week, and regular lectures on jazz history were broadcast on a radio jazz club. In addition there were two national jazz journals with a wide circulation, and many regular newspapers and magazines had regular jazz columns. Sweden also has a nationwide system of "folk parks" featuring live summer music with steady employment for jazz musicians.

One advantage Sweden (and some other European countries) had in the immediate post-war years was scores of visiting American jazz musicians, lending their talent and experience to local musicians. They often recorded with their Swedish contemporaries. For instance James Moody recorded "I'm in the Mood for Love", with pianist Thore Swanerud.

Stan Getz originally recorded "Dear Old Stockholm" as "Ack Värmeland, du Sköna", a Swedish folk melody, in 1951 with Bengt Hallberg (piano),

Gunnar Johnson (bass), and Jack Noren (drums). Other names that can be added to the visiting jazz men include Chet Baker, Art Farmer, Clifford Brown, Jimmy Raney, Quincy Jones, Red Mitchell, and Lee Konitz

A third important factor in the rise of Swedish jazz was British jazz writer and entrepreneur Leonard Feather. In the early 50s he visited Sweden, and, impressed with the talent, arranged for recordings on the British Esquire label, founded in 1947 by Carlo Krahmer and Peter Newbrook. Some Swedish jazz recordings had earlier been issued in the USA by the American labels Prestige, EmArcy and Roost. But it was the championing of Feather's recordings, through multiple articles in America's most prominent jazz journal, *Down Beat*, that gave the main boost to Swedish jazz.

In 1958 *Down Beat* held a poll of its readers: "Which country outside of America has produced the best jazz talents?" Sweden received almost 50 per cent of the votes. (England got 32 percent.) ■



Leonard Feather presents "Swingin' in Sweden". Label: Metronome 7" EP 1954. Design: Stig Soderqvist.



Stan Getz: "Cool Stan in Cool Sweden". Label: Karusell 7" EP 1956. Photo: Sven-Erik Deler

Sydney Reunion Liner Notes

By Eric Myers

Indra Lesmana
Sydney Reunion
Steve Hunter
Andy Gander
Dale Barlow



When Indra Lesmana contacted me recently and asked me to write the liner notes for this album, I felt a frisson of excitement, because Indra became one of my favourite jazz musicians of all time during the years he spent in Australia as a young man. In 1979 he arrived in Sydney from Indonesia with his parents Nina and Jack, and sisters Mira and Lani. The Lesmana family spent five years in Australia before returning to their home country in 1984. During that time Indra was one of the most exciting and interesting jazz musicians in Sydney.

There were then two prominent jazz idioms which naturally influenced all modern jazz musicians at the time: acoustic jazz (Keith Jarrett and many others), and jazz/rock fusion (principally Chick Corea's Return To Forever and Weather Report). During his time in Sydney Indra demonstrated a mastery of both idioms. He worked with several leading local Sydney bands including Women & Children First which featured Sandy Evans. He and electric bassist Steve Hunter wrote original compositions for the fusion sextet Nebula, which led to their celebrated album No Standing in the early 80s. And later, in 1987, after his return to Indonesia, Indra's jazz quartet toured Indonesia playing mostly his original music featuring saxophonist Dale Barlow, bassist Steve Elphick and drummer Tony Buck. In many ways, the Sydney Reunion album brings together the two jazz idioms in which Indra was active 40 years ago in the company of Sydney musicians. This is perhaps best illustrated by the keyboards he chooses to play on this album. There are ten compositions here. In five Indra plays Rhodes electric piano where the music has the flavour of fusion; in the other five he is on acoustic grand piano where the flavour of acoustic jazz is dominant.

When it comes to cultural interaction between Australia and Indonesia, this is nothing new in the case of the art form of jazz. Very few expressive practices in Australia have closer contact with Indonesia than jazz. I will remember accompanying the unforgettable tour of Indonesia in 1982 by Children of Fantasy, a sextet which included Indra and his late father, then the doyen of Indonesian jazz, guitarist Jack Lesmana. That group also included Dale Barlow, featured here on tenor saxophone. Indonesia had a big impact on Dale, who has written in his memoir, soon to be published, that he found in Indonesia "a deeply musical culture where jazz was loved and appreciated far in excess of anything I'd known in Australia." On Sydney Reunion Dale is playing with the authority he built up over a long career as a member of groups led by iconic African Americans such as Cedar Walton, Art Blakey and Billy Cobham.

Andy Gander, described as "the most devastatingly original and virtuosic drummer in Australia during the 80s and 90s" is also on board. As with most jazz bands, the basic character of this group comes from the drums. Andy's crisp, brilliant drumming is a delight to hear throughout. Steve Hunter, already mentioned above, adds to the sound mix the funky sound of his electric bass which is so reminiscent of the great Jaco Pastorius, who spent five years with Weather Report from 1976 to 1981 and, in the process, revolutionised the electric bass. It's natural that Steve would reflect Pastorius' influence. As for Indra Lesmana, I was wondering if the magic that was evident in his music back in the early 80s, has survived to this day. On hearing Sydney Reunion, the answer is a palpable YES.

When I first heard this album, my first impression was that the music was predominantly jazz/rock fusion. I felt that Indra's keyboard mastery, here on Rhodes electric piano and synthesiser, as well as on acoustic piano, was highly reminiscent of the best of the great Joe Zawinul who, in Weather Report, used the latest developments in synthesizer technology to produce the variety of sounds and tone colours which gave Weather Report its characteristic sound. However, the more I tuned in to Indra's use of the grand piano, which he uses on half of the album's ten compositions, the more I realised that Sydney Reunion just as much exemplifies acoustic jazz. While there is a fusion sensibility on the album, courtesy of the styles of Steve and Andy, the countervailing sound of Indra's acoustic piano reminds us constantly of the glory of acoustic jazz. The three outstanding Australians Dale Barlow, Steve Hunter, and Andy Gander – all accomplished virtuosos - have visited and toured in Indonesia a number of times over many years. It is salutary therefore that Sydney Reunion is a collective effort. Of the ten compositions, Indra has contributed five, with the other five shared by the three Australians. These are very beautiful compositions with ravishing chord changes by all the musicians here; I'm confident that listeners to this great album will agree. ■

Well Travelled Jazz

IN June 1936 cousins Jean Murch and Muriel Allen went on a four month motoring tour from Mortlake, Victoria, to Queensland. They travelled from Brisbane to Cairns by sea and from there they motored inland to stay on a cattle station 200 miles from the coast.



Pioneering tourists Muriel Allen and Jean Murch

Two years later Jean and Muriel embarked on a much more adventurous trip to Darwin, Western Australia and back home to Mortlake. Driving a Ford V8 ute, they departed on 10 May 1938.

Muriel recorded this trip in her diary.



The Gramophone and 78 rpm discs from Muriel Allen's trip in 1938.

They took with them a small case of 78 rpm records including such jazz titles as "Deep Purple" and "It Don't Mean A Thing (If It Ain't Got That Swing)" which they played on a wind-up Columbia Gramophone. The girls also enjoyed dancing at various stations they stopped at, including Argyle Downs, Victoria River Station, Anna Plains and Wallal Downs.

By the time they had returned to Victoria, on 13th September, they had covered over 11,000 miles (18,000 kms), navigated unmade roads and unmapped tracks, survived floods and bogging, been entertained by both pastoralists and Aborigines and both had met their future husbands.

We are delighted that the Australian Jazz Museum has become custodian of these pieces of Australia's jazz history. ■

All that Jazz

By Peter Stagg

SOME years ago a few good souls in the Gully attempted to get up a regular music festival. It was to be "The Blue Dandenongs Blues Festival". The first one kicked off on a Friday evening in the heart of the village. It was a cold night. The crowd was sparse. The first one was the last one. It never resurfaced.

A few weeks ago my wife and I drove to Merimbula for a bit of a get-away. In summer, Merimbula, on the NSW Sapphire Coast, is a thriving holiday destination, full of cafes, restaurants, young families and sun-bleached surfies. In winter it more resembles a retirement village. There are a lot of blokes here who resemble either Willie Nelson or Father Christmas. It's very quiet, very still. An early morning mist hangs over the oyster beds in the inlet. I was happy with that. And then – guess what! The 41st MERIMBULA JAZZ FEST. Wake up everybody.



Without warning motels and apartments pin up "No Vacancy" signs. The roads started to clog. There was music leaking from every second open door and window and small bands entertained on street corners. The sun came out. There were men in trilbies with upturned brims and women in black dresses with slinky thin shoulder straps. There were mainstream genres, traditional, modern, ragtime, New Orleans and something obliquely described as "other". There were big bands, soloists, work-shoppers, combos, swing and brass bands, school bands and ensembles. We didn't know where to look.

The three apartments above us filled with noisy players. They traipsed in with their bongos and trombones and trumpets and tripods and amplifiers and made much "do-biddy-doing" late into the first night. You couldn't help but laugh. I noticed a strange thing amongst the pages of program literature. There were four banjo players amongst the many bands. Three of them were called Reg. On the Monday, as abruptly as they had arrived, they all upped and left. The sun retreated. The mist resettled. It was as if nothing had happened.

I think "The Blue Dandenongs Blues Festival" would have – should have been a wonderful thing for the Gully. Maybe someone else will give it a go sometime. Hope they do.

I quite like the name Reg. It has a nice ring to it. ■

Originally published in *The Ferntree Gully News* No 85, October 2023.

Geoff Kitchen's clarinet



Many thanks to the Kitchen family for the generous donation of Geoff Kitchen's 1947 Selmer clarinet.

Geoff was a founding member of Frank Johnson's Fabulous Dixielanders until 1951 and considered by many to be the best clarinet player in that style at the time in Australia.



Geoff Kitchen playing at the Royal Terminus Hotel.

Jazz Guitar Pioneer



Charlie Lees, the great unsung hero of Australian jazz guitar

Born to peripatetic parents in 1913 Charles Anton AKA Charlie Lees called New Zealand home from the age of 15 until arriving in Sydney as a stowaway in his early 20s.

He went on to become a noted jazz musician playing guitar with the Frank Coughlan and Dick Freeman bands during the 1930s.

He was described by Frank Coughlan as "the most outstanding guitar stylist in the antipodes" a statement echoed by Smoky Dawson in a 1994 interview.



He is said to be the first to perform on vibraharp in Australia, accompanying visiting American Nick Lucas in recording sessions playing it.

RCA electrical engineer Ned Bevan added a pickup to Charlie's Gibson Super 400 guitar, a first for this country.

His fascination with chromaticism [a feature of jazz] was also unique at the time.

Charlie's career eventually led him to Queensland where he played and taught until March 1981 when he disappeared during a fishing trip out of Townsville. ■

By Ralph Powell

Reminiscing

Beryl Newell Pianist Singer Composer



Mary Beryl Newell was born into a pioneer grazier family at Forbes, NSW in 1905. She attended the local St Joseph's College where she learned piano, gaining honours in the annual Trinity College (London) musical exams and winning competitions from an early age.

By the age of 21 she was a seasoned soprano and pianist. Using the stage name Patsy O'Neill in Billy Maloney's "New Idea" she received glowing reviews in the Adelaide press of late 1926 and early 1927. By August '27 the 22 year-old was back in Sydney performing at the Lyceum with vocalist Shirley Cooke.

In 1928, the talented musician became Parlophone's musical director (possibly a world first for a woman) and studio accompanist to many well-known artists of the day. Singer Des Tooley was regularly accompanied by Beryl on piano.

She also played with Cliff Clarke and his Kookaburras, Abe Romaine and Frank Coughlan and was regularly heard on radio stations across the eastern states.

Following the merger of Parlophone and Columbia brought on by the Depression, she worked at the Prince Edward Theatre and then led Beryl Newell's Trio at Sydney's Embassy Theatre for some time.

In 1936 she married Theodore Best whose company, Best & Gee Ltd, had been Sydney agents for Parlophone, and following her marriage she appears to have retired, completely disappearing from the entertainment scene.

In the late 1930s Beryl required major surgery for cancer eventually succumbing to the disease in 1961 leaving an estate valued at £47,455.

"Jazz Tunes of Yesterday" with Beryl Newell and Raie de Costa is the last mention of her (*The Mail*, Monday 15th March, 1937). ■



Beryl Newell aka Patsy O'Neil on piano



Beryl regularly accompanied Des Tooley



Parlophone's musical director and studio accompanist

By Ralph Powell