



**VJAZZ 40**  
**Oct/Nov 2008**

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# VJAZZ

## *“Saving and Preserving our Australian Jazz for the Future”*

### *From the General Manager*

I see we are almost at the end of another year - with our AGM for 2008 just around the corner. How time flies! I invite as many as possible to be at the AGM and the BYO BBQ lunch on Sunday, 9<sup>th</sup> November 2008.

Since our last communiqué, we have successfully acquitted the three Knox City Council grant projects for 2008. We also applied to KCC for funding covering another three projects for 2009, including a computer software library management system (to cater for our large book library and our printed material collection), and an upgrade to some of the equipment in the Sound Room. We've now been officially advised that unfortunately in this instance we were not successful.

The Fitzgibbon Dynasty exhibition (ending on 31<sup>st</sup> October) will be followed by an exhibition honouring the New Melbourne Jazz Band. Its leader, Ross Anderson, lives in Wantirna, and is a great supporter of the VJA.

Euan McGillivray of Museums Australia (Vic) has conducted a training session (for 15 volunteers) on conservation of photographs and prints, and two general sessions (for 25 volunteers) on the principles of conservation and preservation. These sessions were extremely valuable in providing attendees with basic concepts of conservation and preservation practices in relation to Museum Accreditation requirements.

We've installed an air conditioner in the Jilly Ward room to provide a more comfortable working environment for our volunteers in that area of the Archive, whilst an extraction fan has been installed in the Sound Room to complement the air conditioner.

We are still looking for volunteers to help as tour guides, and to provide assistance with data entry, so if you know of anyone who might be interested in joining our happy band, please invite them along to the Archive for a “look and chat” about what we do in our “spare” time.

Thanks to the tremendous work done by volunteers John Salter (Webmaster), Hugh Williams and Terry Norman, the VJA website is now under our own “in-house” control, and will be frequently revised with more up-to-date information.

*Ray Sutton*

### ***IMPORTANT NOTICE TO MEMBERS VISITING THE ARCHIVE***

***The Committee of Management has identified a serious problem when members or visitors enter or leave the Archive car park.***

***Vehicles moving across the cycle/walking path (installed since the completion of the Eastlink Project) may encounter the following:***

***Cyclists entering Koomba Park from Mountain Highway are confronted by the crossover after making a blind sweeping left hand turn. With heads down and tails up they have very little time to react.***

***Similarly, members entering or leaving the car park are equally surprised by the appearance of these lycra-clad riders who seem to appear from nowhere.***

***Seriously, there have been several accounts of near accidents between cyclists and members, particularly when the latter are opening or closing the “farm gate” with their backs turned to the pathway.***

***While short and long-term solutions to this problem are under consideration by Parks Vic. and ourselves, I urge all members to observe due diligence—stop, look left and right, and sound your horn when entering or leaving the car park.***

***Thank You.***

***Jeff Blades, Project Manager 23/9/08***

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE VICTORIAN JAZZ ARCHIVE INC. PATRON: WILLIAM H. MILLER M.A., B.C.L. (Oxon.)

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### DOWNBEAT WITH MEL TORMÉ

I'll never forget my night with famous jazz singer Mel Tormé. I was known as a winning Pro boxer which gave me an "In" with people. I became good friends with Bob Clemens, owner of Clemens Musical Service, a Mecca for Melbourne jazz lovers. Bill Duff whose brother Edwin Duff was a top entertainer and Keith Connelly (nicknamed Kacko) worked as sales staff in the Little Collins Street shop.

Clemens specialised in contemporary modern jazz, traditional Dixieland and a range of musical instruments. The shop sold vinyl 78s, black Decca, Parlophone, imported microgrooves and records that were rare. There was always marvellous humour about the place. Peg Coleman, Bob's girlfriend was over 6 ft tall and a lot of good fun. She was a telephonist for a Collins Street company and spoke with a bit of a plum, hence her name *Lady Whatabigun*. One of her pet phrases was "See you in the morning before the break of day, four and twenty blackbirds baked in a pay".

We loved to attend the big Downbeat shows at the Melbourne Town Hall which were well supported with a variety of local performers from a young Barry Crocker with guitar to great jazz piano from Ron Rosenberg, Bruce Clarke on guitar, Paddy Fitzallen, trumpet and Frank Johnson and his Fabulous Dixielanders, all regarded as top musicians. Bob advertised those concerts in the Herald, so I drew up

the ads with black and white sketches of musicians. In 1953 Mel Tormé was a guest performer at the Town Hall. He had previously been appearing for two weeks at the Tivoli and this night was on stage with a Downbeat big band. The main hall was three parts full; I was standing just inside the foyer near the entrance to the hall with Frank Johnson. Mel was singing on stage and Frank was most impressed with his unique sound and presentation despite his traditional Dixieland jazz background. "This man is brilliant, his phrasing and voice, it's a musical instrument" he said.

After the show Bob Clemens invited Mel, a non-drinker, Kacko and me back to the Musicians' Club for a social drink. As I remember Mel Tormé was an absolute gentleman. "I did that show as a favour to support Bob and Kacko" he told me. "It's bad luck we didn't pull a bigger crowd".

During his life Mel made a reputation singing with the best of the big bands, Tommy Dorsey, Glen Miller, Woody Herman etc. He shared the limelight with such greats as Duke Ellington and Ella Fitzgerald and disliked the bestowed name 'The Velvet Fog'. *It wasn't all Velvet* was the title of his autobiography. A highly-rated singer - one of the classiest entertainers of our time.

#### *Bryan Membrey*

Bryan is a retired professional boxer and artist with Southdown Press. He is also a jazz-loving neighbour of Ed's and asked if we could use the above. Thanks Bryan.

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#### Letters to the Editor

I was delighted to receive the August edition of VJAZZ from my old friend and guitarist Don Schade. The many articles therein were of great interest in several cases. My wife June and family resided in Melbourne from 1961-74 before moving to Perth. In the 60's I did numerous commercial recordings for Bruce Clarke on flute and sax but I was unaware of his jazz

credentials at the time. I was with a versatile 'pop' group with my wife June on trumpet/vocals which recorded an LP for Jack Varney's label on the strength of the popularity of a single, 'Riding Through the Dandenong Ranges'. He knew of Jack's earlier connection with Graeme Bell, and he was very pleased when we included a Dixieland version of 'Sister Kate' in the LP.

I enjoyed the articles on Roger Bell and Humphrey Lyttelton both of whom I had met on odd occasions. Also the tribute to Danny Moss was well deserved.

I met Danny at the Toowoomba Jazz Convention in 1982 when he was a special guest. We got on well as we were both former members of the John Dankworth Orchestra. I helped arrange his visit to Perth in 1984 and from that he decided to make WA his home base. Despite his illness he continued working and touring right up to his demise.

I am enclosing a newsletter of the Jazz Fremantle programme and I am actively involved in it after 17 years. My wife, June, and I have also appeared many times at the Perth Jazz Society and will be performing at their 35th birthday later this month. Next month we have Bob Barnard coming over for a visit to Jazz Fremantle and the Jazz Club of WA. (Yes! We have 3 weekly jazz clubs in Perth). I have been pleased to play alongside Bob Henderson and George Washingmachine in recent years.

#### *Lew Smith*

#### Apologies

Unfortunately gremlins got into the printer's office prior to the printing of VJAZZ 39 and their machines did not recognise the font which we use for "signatures". Because of this, the last line in our tribute to our friend and colleague Reg Jennings was omitted. We are reprinting it with apologies to his family - and of course only Ed would make the mistake with the football colours; Reg barracked for the Swans not the Saints. Also, the Humphrey Lyttelton book referred to in Bill Brown's article was *I Play as I Please*.

*Ed*

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The Victorian Jazz Archive acknowledges the support of the following organisations: The State of Victoria through the Department of Premier and Cabinet and Arts Victoria, Parks Victoria, The Ian Potter Foundation, The Myer Foundation, The Pratt Foundation, The Trust Company of Australia, The Helen McPherson Smith Trust, Diana Allen of Jazz Australia, The Estates of the late Don Boardman, Ron Halstead and David Ward and Ward McKenzie Pty Ltd. The Archive gratefully acknowledges the financial support given to the VJA Capital Fund by Dame Elisabeth Murdoch, A.C., D.B.E.

## BRINGING BACK MEMORIES

When I first was told by Jim Beal that Helen Violaris had passed away, I remembered meeting her at Lorne during the Christmas Holidays in December 1955 and that I had a photo of us both taken at the Pacific Hotel where I was playing at the time.

That year was a monumental occasion for both Helen and myself, but perhaps more so in my case in that I first met Graeme Bell who was playing with his band at the Beach Hotel.

I got the gig at the Pacific Hotel through the guitarist Doug Toll, an Aussie who spoke with an American accent and drove a green MG TC sports car which was very trendy. Also in the band was the pianist George Scholer and a local drummer.

It was not unusual for other musicians playing at various venues in Lorne to drop into the Pacific Hotel after hours for a late night drink, moreover everyone was made welcome by mine host Ron Todd, the former champion Collingwood full forward. And while I can't claim to be a participant, the Pacific was often referred to as the "college of carnal knowledge".

The "house band" for the jam sessions consisted of Doug Toll, Neil "Kanga" Yeoman on bass, Charlie Blott on drums with yours truly on clarinet and Helen Violaris, vocals, all depicted in the photo with the exception of Charlie Blott.

Graeme Bell's band comprised Charlie Blott on drums, Kanga Yeoman on bass, John Sangster on trumpet, Doc Willis on trombone and Geoff Kitchen on clarinet. And when I first met these great musicians, I can vividly recall them asking me why they had never heard of me and where had I been playing. I responded by telling them that I was playing at least two nights a week all over Melbourne with a Coburg based band led by the drummer John Henderson, Laurie Honey on piano and the trumpet player Ray Heinz, not to mention Graeme Steel who was also playing trumpet in the Coburg scene.

Because of Geoff Kitchen's unavailability Graeme Bell offered me the gig to tour South Australia with his band the following two years and naturally enough I jumped at the opportunity. The personnel was the same as already detailed, except one year Joe McConechy replaced Kanga Yeoman and Len Barnard replaced Charlie Blott.

It was the first tour that put me on the map so to speak, because hitherto I was unknown in the upper echelons of jazz musicians.

In 1958 I joined Ted Preston playing at



*L to R Kanga Yeoman, bass, Doug Toll, guitar, Helen Violaris & Alex Hutchinson, clarinet*

the prestigious Scotts Hotel in Collins Street six nights a week with Graeme Morgan on drums and Lennie Taylor, the Sydney bass player, Ted Preston and Terry Wilkinson were unquestionably the leading jazz pianists in Australia at the time.

Any success that I may have achieved in my musical career can, in the main, be attributed to my having met and played with Graeme Bell and Ted Preston and, as they say in the classics, the rest is history.

Afterthought: I am indeed fortunate in that I have had great satisfaction in playing quality music with quality musicians for over the last fifty plus years and hope to continue as long as I am in good health. However I am inclined to think that the young musicians of today don't have the opportunities to play, which I had together with my confreres so many years ago. And perhaps the major contributing factor to the decline in the number of gigs nowadays is the proliferation of poker machines into the hotels which historically have been the bread and butter venues for musicians. Furthermore, rock and pop bands have contributed to the dumbing down of society's taste in good music and sadly I feel that the situation will get worse and not better.

*Alex Hutchinson*

**PLEASE NOTE  
DEADLINE FOR COPY FOR  
VJAZZ 41 IS 9th JANUARY 2009**

### FINAL TWO WEEKS OF THE FITZGIBBON DYNASTY EXHIBITION

If you have not yet visited the Archive to see this most popular exhibition, you have until 31st October to do so. Opening on the 22nd November will be our new exhibition featuring the history of

### **THE NEW MELBOURNE JAZZ BAND**

### VALE - REG JENNINGS 19/1/1931 - 27/4/2008

On 27th April our friend and colleague, Reg Jennings, lost his long battle with cancer. He had worked tirelessly as our publicity officer. Reg never complained - he was always bright and breezy and his happy disposition was always welcome. Reg had a long association with the Melbourne Musicians' Club, many of whose members were there to farewell him. He had for many years been the happy face behind the bar.

Reminders of Reg's dedication to the Swans was evidenced by the releasing of dozens of red and white balloons after the funeral service. Our sympathy goes to his wife Beverley and family. He will be greatly missed and hard to replace.

*Gretel James*

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**Recording Brass B-flat Tuba (Bass)**  
made by Boosey and Hawkes circa 1930s

Standing 1.2 metres high, this tuba is rare because its detachable recording bell faces outwards rather than upwards as in a conventional tuba. It was owned and played by Lou Silbereisen in the 1940s, and first went around the world with Graeme Bell's jazz band in 1947 when they toured war-torn Czechoslovakia, Great Britain and the Continent. It is alleged that on a trip to/from Ireland, the tuba was packed with contraband ladies silk stockings.

In the late 1950s, Lou Silbereisen sold the tuba to Melbourne's Brian Carter who absolutely treasured the beautiful brass instrument with its lovely tonal quality. Brian's widow Mary Bould says: "It became an integral part of our life, especially as I played piano in a band with Brian until our first daughter was born in 1960. Then tragedy struck in July 1963. After playing a gig at Bob Clemens' Downbeat Club in Melbourne, Brian was killed in a car crash.

After some months, I took the battered instrument to Legato, and it was restored to its original state.

For the next 35 years it had a varied life – sitting on display at my home, sometimes on loan to impoverished musicians, and once lost, I thought forever. One of the muso's left it outside a hall after a gig - how do you forget an instrument this size? An unscrupulous person who waited for the lost/found reward notice to be advertised found it. The Melbourne Herald eventually published an article about it being stolen, and to my great relief, it was returned, albeit to a large financial outlay from the unfortunate muso involved in the loss.

Then the final resting place – the Victorian Jazz Archive, and I had absolutely no hesitation in giving the tuba to this wonderful institution. It affords the instrument the home and recognition it deserves, and it allows me the pleasure of knowing it has earned its rightful place in the history of Australian Jazz." About two years ago, the VJA had the tuba professionally cleaned and now it

is proudly and permanently displayed at our Wantirna premises. The Victorian Jazz Archive acknowledges and sincerely thanks Mary Bould for this wonderful instrument and its story.

*Ray Sutton*

### **NEW BOOK ON AUSTRALIAN JAZZ RELEASED**

Fascinating oral histories by some of the country's most prominent jazz musicians are the highlight of a recently released book on Australian jazz.

The book, *I wanted to be a Jazz Musician*, was edited by Canberra based musician, jazz historian and author, John Sharpe. It is his third book on Australian jazz, the others being *Don't Worry Baby, They'll Swing Their Arses Off - The Stories of Australian Jazz Musicians (2001)* and *A Cool Capital - The Canberra Jazz Scene 1925—2005 (2006)*.

*I Wanted to Be A Jazz Musician* is the result of a Research Fellowship John Sharpe received from the National Film & Sound Archive which also houses and administers the Australian Jazz Archive.

The research project was to prepare a publication of edited oral histories of jazz musicians which are held in the Australian Jazz Archive and illustrate it with photographs from the Archive's collection. In the past decade John Sharpe has conducted over 100 oral histories and interviews with leading Australian jazz musicians for the Archive, so he had a very rich field of material from which to draw. James Morrison has written the Foreword. The book comprises 390 pages with 200 photographs accompanying the text. Some of the musicians and singers included are:

*Terry Wilkinson, Sandy Evans, Barry Wratten, Marie Wilson, John Morrison, Margret Roadknight, Joe Chindamo, Peter Gaudion, Mike Nock, Bob Bertles, Ian Date, Grace Knight, Miroslav Bukovsky, Bob Sedergreen, Kevin Hunt, David Glyde, Ron Falson, Mark Isaacs, Judy Jacques, Warren Daly, David Jones, Paul Furniss, Anita Thomas, Trevor Ripplingale, Kerrie Biddell, John Pochee & Col Nolan.*

The book is available for \$40 plus p&p (Sydney \$10, Melbourne \$12). Copies and further information from John Sharpe 02 6286 1728 or [johnsharpe@grapevine.com.au](mailto:johnsharpe@grapevine.com.au)

We have a copy at the Archive if you wish to look at it.

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## WHEN THE SWALLOWS COME BACK TO PORT MELBOURNE

Not a very inspiring title perhaps but Port Melbourne is easier to spell than Capistrano. One swallow may not make a summer, but this one in question certainly produces some fine swinging Jazz of a hot casual manner, by a group of inspired 'musicianers' as the late great Sidney Bechet called Jazzers. Doctor Jazz was of course that famous Jazz number from the Oliver/Morton school put into the Jazz lexicon by the legendary Jelly with his Red Hot Peppers. This convivial tavern has its own practitioner of hot music in Doctor Jo who forsakes his stethoscope and bedside manner to dispense fine reed playing to his patients sadly in need of the healing medicine of Johnny Dodds, Barney Bigard or Johnny Hodges.

The dispensary in question is a cosy retreat called Swallows pub where hot music is administered definitely on the National Health. It has a very intimate closely knit environment. The expression of not been able to swing a cat springs to mind. I tried it [Tibbles was off his milk for a week].

Sunday evenings there are the ultimate. Four of Melbourne's greatest Jazz players hold forth plus whoever happens to stumble in complete with instrument. As the band grows in size the punters just breath in. The repertoire extends from various Jazz Classics through to 'fun' numbers which all seem to hit the spot with the enthusiasts.

There is a tradition of great audience participation in the events that unfold during the evening's entertainment. When Ian Smith [that great perpetrator of various musical instruments] swings out on the washboard he has been known to lead a Pied Piper-like parade of patrons who have looked on a glass darkly on a merry march. Smithy, ever versatile, switches to bass allowing Chris to blow on his trombone. Ian even blew on the helicon, a tuba-like instrument featured by Sousa's Orchestra [not featured at Swallows].

This scribe has attended a few evenings at this merry frolic and felt no pain. Lots of regulars attend and it has become a way of life to some.

When a few vociferous interlopers appeared they were chastised and sent on their way with a round of applause.

Apart from Jo, Chris, Smithy and the 'genius' Stephen Grant [don't tell him] other musicians appear, like pianist Johnny Adams [like Fats Waller a Harmful Little Armful] multi-reed man Michael McQuaid or Dave Hetherington born in Scotland-how good is that?

It is a winding-down spot for the musicians attending the annual Bob Barnard shindig. The resident musicians were augmented by the overseas guests from the 2008 Jazz Party. Dan Barratt played cornet, Eddie Erikson strummed his banjo and Becky Kilgour sang.

As a Jazz buff who grew up with the UK scene I was reminded of those various hostelrys in London that housed marvelous jazz happenings in genial if cramped premises.

The last session I attended had great music on show. A wonderful version from the good doctor on clarinet of tenor sax man Bud Freeman's version of the 'Eel' plus 'Mississippi Mud' with a lineup of trombone, soprano sax and Stephen on accordion. Was Paul Whiteman spinning in his grave — who cares?

This made me think of cassettes I received from friends in the UK. Apparently in Cornwall/Devon there is a band whose trumpet man doubles on bagpipes. I have on tape rollicking versions of 'Lil Liza Jane' and 'The Saints'.

I'm sure the versatile Stephen could master those 'wheeze bags', but how would the Swallows clientele react? Could empty the bar in five seconds flat.

Seriously I hope that the change in the set up there will not change the ambience of this wonderful jazz outlet. This happy venue of casual improvised jazz must be maintained.

By the way for animal lovers, relax...

I don't have a cat.

*Bill Brown*

## *JAZZ AS SINFUL MUSIC*

Jazz, it's good to report, has come 180 degrees from its origins almost exactly a century ago. Then it was loud, raucous "noise" that no responsible parent would allow their children to listen to. Today, it's highly acceptable music, heard not just in nightclubs, but increasingly in concert halls, wineries and even academic halls. No longer rebellious clatter, jazz is even used as the background for TV commercials. When that happens, you know you've arrived.

Hop in your time machine and set the date for 1904, the destination New Orleans. Although the elements that went into the creation of jazz (blues, ragtime, spirituals, folk songs, mazurkas, even light opera) could be heard all over the USA, it was in New Orleans, that remarkable gumbo of a town, that it all came together so perfectly. Here was a city that faced

onto the Caribbean and had absorbed the lilting rhythms of Cuba, Haiti and Puerto Rico. At the same time, it was a Southern city; blues, ragtime, cakewalks and gospel singing were all familiar sounds. It also boasted a superb classical music scene, and, contrary to myth, many of its greatest early jazz practitioners were highly trained and excellent sight readers. So did that mean that New Orleans jazz was instantly accepted by the whole community when it emerged in the period 1900-1910? No way. The local newspaper the Times-Picayune rarely spoke of it at all, and when they did, they called it "vile racket, unfit for civilised listening."

Part of the problem was sex. Even the name jazz (a corruption of *jass*) quite possibly has sexual connotations. One dance that very early *jass* bands played was called the slow drag; the idea was to get as close to your partner as possible and grind a lot. A bassist named Alcide Pavageau was so good at it (the playing, not the grind) that he was called "Slow Drag" for the rest of his long life. Most jazz, though, was played fast and loud. Couples made overtly sexual moves and gestures to this super-heated music long into the night and early morning.

Not surprisingly, then, when jazz spread from New Orleans across the USA in the period 1915-25, conservative clergymen heaped vitriol and scorn. One minister blamed jazz for a shocking increase in teenage pregnancies, another said he was certain that Satan himself had created it. The popular press followed the churches' lead. "Who Put The Sin in Syncopation," howled one leading magazine. "Unspeakable Jazz Must Go!" was the scream of another headline.

From the earliest days, jazz and alcohol were bosom buddies. Its earliest known soloist, the legendary cornet player Buddy Bolden, went mad in 1907 (his music probably never recorded), in part thanks to the vicious effects of rotgut gin. Dozens of others (like Bix Beiderbecke and Charlie Green, to name just two) died young from the debilitating effects of almost constant inebriation.

Drugs came later. The very earliest players in New Orleans used marijuana as a cheap and safe alternative to booze. Louis Armstrong boasted he hardly went a day in his adult life without lighting up; trombonist George Brunis told me he and his brothers would eagerly await the arrival of any ship from Havana, since there was sure to be good dope for sale on the docks immediately after. In New York, the abysmally inept clarinet player Mezz Mezzrow appeared on dozens of early jazz recordings for no other reason than he was the top supplier of grass to his fellow (and far more able) musicians.

(Cont'd page 6)

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(cont'd from p. 5)

"If I don't get to play on your record," he'd say, "you don't get the stuff."

Songs with titles like *Wacky Dust* tell us that cocaine was easily available in the big cities. "I get no kick from cocaine" was a line in a 1930s Cole Porter song, later changed to "champagne".

Heroin made its unwelcome appearance just before World War II, and by the mid-1940s, dozens of musos, black and white, were regular users. Many became addicted and all had to find ingenious ways of getting a regular fix and avoiding the vice cops, who would hang around the jazz clubs just waiting to pounce. The brilliant playing of addict Charlie 'Bird' Parker convinced dozens of young jazzmen that "...to play like Bird, you gotta get high like Bird." The man himself did all he could to talk them out of it, but to no avail. As a result, an extraordinary list of outstanding musicians found themselves with needles in arms, often forced to steal to support their habits. Stan Getz, Art Pepper, Tadd Dameron, Frank Morgan, Red Rodney and many, many others all did jail time for possessing heroin, or stealing so they could afford it.

Jazz, too, was linked in its early days to organised crime. Louis Armstrong once set out on a long concert tour in Europe mainly to escape a mobster who threatened to cut his fingers off. Earl Hines and his sidemen worked for lousy pay at Chicago's Grand Terrace Ballroom because a mob boss said he'd have them killed if they left. Crime figure Owney Madden ran the celebrated Cotton Club, home for years of Duke Ellington and later Cab Calloway. Tenor sax player Bud Freeman told me once that he knew his music was pleasing club owner Al Capone when the gangster put a \$100 bill into the bell of his sax while he was still playing.

Today, jazz has largely shed its wild and sometimes criminal past. A few prominent jazz players still die from drug-related illnesses (usually heart failure connected with heroin). Others are occasionally users who either are not addicted or hide their habit cleverly. But most jazz players these days have few, if any, serious vices. It's too hard a game to stay in to allow such distractions.

*Steve Robertson*

**VALE—CHRIS ELLIS—Age 69**

On 26th Sept. Chris lost his long battle with cancer. A great musician who took over leadership of the Waterfront Cafe Band when David Ward died. Our sympathy to Elaine and his sons Matthew and Mark.

**REVIEW OF THE COMPOSITIONS OF GRAEME BELL'S CD LAUNCH. BENTLEIGH CLUB  
14TH SEPTEMBER 2008 or  
"PIG'S ARSE, HE'S IN MELBOURNE"!**

**O**n the 14th September 2008 an extraordinary event was held at the Bentleigh Club. This was organised by Diana Allen primarily to launch Graeme Bell's latest CD featuring his recorded and unrecorded compositions dating back to 1947. Coincidentally it celebrated Graeme's 94th birthday and Diana Allen's last concert before retiring.

About 200 people attended with some coming from interstate - Queensland, Tasmania and South Australia. His family, Christina Bell & Bill Ford came, plus Lorraine Bell despite illness. Also noticed were many of his long time friends including Ray Marginson. Most importantly the guests of honour, Graeme and his wife Dorothy, came down from Sydney, but having had a recent back operation Graeme did not play. Instead he told the story of the naming of the tunes.

The 2 x CD features Sydney bands like Bill Haesler's Robber Dogs, playing some of Graeme's unrecorded compositions, while Melbourne bands like Allan Browne's Sextet and Ian Smith's Scallywags recorded the others. These last two bands played at the concert, plus Tony Gould with his wife Imogen Manins on cello who played three tunes including *Kyushu Dragonfly*. The latter shows what a wide interpretation was given to Graeme's compositions.

During the afternoon things I noted were the Australian jazz legend Allan Browne on drums in both bands, the incredible Stephen Grant on trumpet, piano and piano accordion - is there any instrument he does not play? Graeme was particularly impressed with Stephen's interpretation on piano of *Stepping on Two Paths* and *Is He Back Yet?* Adding history to the day Howard Cairns played Lou Silbereisen's old string bass. Others to impress were Ian Smith on trumpet and Liam O'Connell on guitar, plus Dr Jo Stephenson, who arrived as if he had just called on a patient. However, his clarinet playing was superb as ever. Ian's gesture of inviting Johnny Malpas to sit in for the last two numbers was a great idea. John and Graeme go back a long way to the days of the First Jazz Convention held in Melbourne

where John was the banjo player with Adelaide's famous Southern Jazz Group. He is one of the last two surviving members of the original band and is aged 87, but looks more like 67. Several of the musicians gave tributes to Graeme telling how they first heard his band when aged about fifteen. Chris Ludowyk had a similar story having first heard Graeme's band when growing up in Sri Lanka.

At Graeme's request I have been compiling his scrapbooks since the mid 70s. In recent years I have been looking forward to Graeme retiring and the completion of this formidable task, but he wouldn't know the meaning of the word - what an amazing man!!

The afternoon ended with various tributes and a standing ovation from all the 200 people present. It was a very emotional time for Graeme as he went off to be interviewed by Andra Jackson for Monday's Age.

Now a few thanks from me :-

- (a) Diana Allen for the concert and the great job she has done promoting jazz over the years;
- (b) Bill Haesler for his assistance to Graeme with the project and probably the best CD booklet I have seen - plenty of information;
- (c) Graeme Bell for getting me into this mess after hearing the Bell Band live on the ABC, 10th April 1947.

**GROUPS THAT HAVE VISITED US RECENTLY HAVE INCLUDED:**

Villa Maria, Wheelers Hill Probus Club, Knox Over 55's, Vermont South Ladies Probus, Blackburn Uniting Church and Mornington Men's Probus.

All were given a tour of the Archive, morning or afternoon tea and listened to live music provided by Maurie Fabrikant and his Jolly Rollers.

If you belong to an organisation that would like to visit us, please contact Marina on 9800 5535.

## LETTER TO GRAEME BELL

*This letter was received by Graeme from Wendy Law (Suart), aged 81, who lives in England, sister of Dr. Philip Law, AC, CBE, and we publish it for your interest.*

Greetings Graeme!

I cannot believe you are 94. It seems no time since, as a teenager, my brother Peter Law and I stood in worshipful admiration around the bandstand at the Exhibition Building every Thursday night listening to you, Roger, Ade Monsborough and the rest of the band. It was about 1944 or 1945, you were a handsome black-haired bloke about 30 and the jazz revival was in full flow. Pete and I were already playing swing—me on piano and he on clarinet—but I was tremendously impressed by the way the various instrumentalists improvised during their solos, weaving their variations around the basic chord structure and then joining in at the end for a wonderful ensemble.

I was a competent player of modern songs but had no knowledge of jazz piano technique, never having heard recordings of the jazz greats, so I decided to go to your studio in Bourke Street for some instruction. You showed me the “shakes” and tremelo as played by Jess Stacy. You showed me how to play a chord with the middle finger coming in first and how to play a tenth with the top note played first. You wrote out some of your arrangements (I still play your “Rosetta”, “Make Believe” and “Take the A-Train”) and you showed me different kinds of blues. You lent me a book of Jelly Roll Morton tunes and introduced me to Fats Waller arrangements. After a term I felt I could find my own way and I was playing jazz. (I was probably the only woman jazz pianist in Melbourne at that time.)

In December 1947 I secretly interrupted my bike trip around Australia and returned to Melbourne from Darwin to play with a small group at the 2nd Australian Jazz Convention held in the Collingwood Town Hall. I believe I was the first woman to play at the annual Jazz Convention.

All this I owed to you Graeme. In my subsequent life in foreign countries, I was unable to find front line instrumentalists, and now, as a professional musician, I have to resort to playing discreet dinner music ..... but I still love Dixieland jazz.

My brother Peter was similarly influenced by you and taught himself slide trombone. When ‘Father Ade’ Monsborough started his own band, Pete joined your jazz band playing trombone, and played for many months in and around Melbourne. At the end of each



evening the men were paid and they signed aliases .... Roger was Muggsy Spanier, Pete was Tommy Dorsey and so on. I don't know who you were ... Jess Stacy or Jelly Roll maybe? You wanted Pete to go to Europe with the band in 1946 to play at the Prague Youth Festival but he had just graduated and went off to work as an engineer on the oilfields of Brunei, thus missing the fantastically successful European tour made by your band. In Borneo Pete formed a swing band and organized all the dance music on the oilfields for the next eight years.

Pete and I greatly regret not being able to be with you today and send our congratulations, best wishes and thanks to you, on this very special occasion.

*Wendy Law (Suart)*

### **VICTORIAN JAZZ ARCHIVE INC. 12TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**Sunday 9th November 2008  
at 11.30 a.m.**

**COME & HAVE YOUR SAY  
THEN JOIN US FOR A  
BYO BARBECUE  
FOLLOWING THE  
MEETING**

*Please bring your own picnic tables  
and chairs. Salads, bread and coffee/tea will be provided*

### GRAEME BELL'S NEW CD

*Australian jazz icon, Graeme Bell, A.O., M.B.E. returns with his most anticipated album:*

*'A Compilation of His Recorded Compositions 1947—2007'.*

*In an interview with Peter Thompson on ABC's television show Talking Heads, Graeme is quoted as saying "In classical music, a note must be pure and unadulterated, whereas in jazz you can bend that note, twist it, splurge it, whatever you like, and sort of get expression out of that one note and make it almost talk". His new album reflects this expression and his astounding 70 years of being in the music and arts industries. The recording has depth, clarity and a sense of conviction that will remind you why you loved jazz in the first place.*

*Befriended by artists like Sid Nolan and Arthur Boyd, Graeme was always surrounded by creative people. His recent composition reflects his artistic talents, traditional jazz and upbeat rhythms. Extracted from the 20th century onwards, this is truly a must have album for every music collection.*

*Available now from the Victorian Jazz Archive Inc., PO Box 6007, Wantirna Mall, Vic 3152. Cost \$33.00 or \$30.00 to members plus \$5 post & package. Graeme has most generously arranged for all profits to go to the Archive.*

*Containing 46 tracks on 2CDs, this would be an excellent Christmas present.*

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### FROM THE SOUND ROOM

Music is largely about sound, and the role of the Sound Room at the Victorian Jazz Archive is storing, preserving and restoring those recordings of musical performances particularly from the early days of Australian jazz. There is also an increasing number of video recordings of bands (especially from TV), which the Archive needs to preserve.

The Sound Room has built up a collection of equipment to play reel-to-reel tapes, cassette tapes, LP and 78 discs as well as digital media such as CDs and MiniDisc, to allow its volunteer operators to transfer these for storage. It can also recover video and audio from VHS tapes, and is looking for equipment that will allow it to play 8mm video tape as well. Computers are used to store and process the recordings before they are transferred to CD (or DVD in the case of video).

Up till now, recordings have been preserved on archival quality CDs expected to last more than 100 years. They are regularly checked to ensure they are in good condition, a time consuming process. Additional copies are made for public access so

that the preservation originals are shielded as far as possible from accidental damage.

The trend is now for such recordings to be preserved on commonly available computer hard disk technology. It is easier to manage and check, to make material available for access (especially on line via the Internet), and to make copies for security purposes, and makes it much easier to migrate the material when superior technology emerges. The National Film and Sound Archives have already started in this direction, and the VJA is planning to do the same as resources allow, with the aim of making access to its material easier and also in the best possible quality.

*John Smyth*

### WE WELCOME THESE NEW MEMBERS

Bill Angus, Ken Baxter, Lindsay Bistrup, K. Bowden, Ian Brookman & Val White, Barbara Clarris, Joyce & Clive Chew, Margaret Craske, Alan Cross, Vivienne Doolan, Ron Gill, Shirley Hardege, Moya Hebdon, Jan & Tony Hills, Leo Hodgson, Roger Horton, Tony & Delia Jessop, Steven Kiernan, Brad Lau, Graeme Lock, Kate Lock, Alan Loughron, Helen McCann, Stephen McLean, Graham Mollett, Val Parker, Keith Pocknee, Helen Price, Ralph Powell, Dorene Sadgrove, Jeremy Sadgrove, Philip Stevens, John Stubbington, John Wagener, Ronald Wakeham and Lyn Woods.

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Thank you to the Australian Jazz Convention Trustees for \$5,000 to be invested in the Victorian Jazz Archive Inc. Building

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