



VJAZZ 41  
FEBRUARY 2009



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

*From the General Manager - Ray Sutton*

**O**n behalf of the dedicated team of volunteers at the Archive, I extend a very happy and prosperous New Year to everyone – as we look forward to another busy and productive time in 2009.

At our 12th AGM held in November 2008, the Archive's Board of Management accorded Honorary Life Membership to two famous Australian "Greats" of the Jazz fraternity, in appreciation of their outstanding contribution to this boundless universal music. They are world-class musicians with international reputations, and have become legends in their own lifetime. On behalf of the Board, it's my great pleasure to warmly welcome Bob Barnard AM, and Don Burrows AO, MBE to our "family". As each had other commitments on the day of the AGM, suitably framed certificates and citations were sent to them. Bob and Don now join Graeme Bell AO, MBE (and the late Roger Bell and Ade Monsborough) as Honorary Life Members of the Victorian Jazz Archive Inc.

### **NEW BUILDING FUND APPEAL**

**T**his year of 2009 marks the beginning of our new building program which will be carried out in stages as finance permits. The V.J.A. is bursting at the seams. Without additional space the important task of preserving Australian Jazz for the future will grind to a halt.

I ask each and every one of you to invest five minutes of your time in the Archive, along with a 55 cent postage stamp to bring this project to fruition in the foreseeable future.

Enclosed in this newsletter is a questionnaire, which when completed and returned, will provide the Board of Management with clear guidelines on YOUR THOUGHTS about fund raising. Remember, 500 + members x one suggestion each = a hell of a lot of ideas!

As discussed at the Annual General Meeting in November, stage one will involve the gutting and refurbishment of the existing brick toilet block to provide adequate facilities for our members and visitors, and allow us to encourage tourism via the recently completed East Link Road works.

Professional drawings prepared at no charge by our member Peter Barker, and formally approved in writing by Parks Victoria, will have been put out to tender by the time you receive this newsletter. Again - Thank you Peter.

A family business connection with our Collections Manager, Mel Blachford, has generously offered to supply all the necessary plumbing, hardware and chinaware at cost, reducing our financial outlay for this stage of the project. 'On Ya Mel.

There are two further points which should be stressed here :

1. All monetary donations are income tax deductible, with a receipt available on request.
2. All funds raised will be held in the dedicated building fund and can be traced at any time via our MYOB accounting system. Even if it takes some years to achieve our goal, the money will not be syphoned off for other projects or used as general revenue.

Please complete your questionnaire and return it – ASAP.

*Jeff Blades* - Project Manager

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE VICTORIAN JAZZ ARCHIVE INC. PATRON: WILLIAM H. MILLER M.A., B.C.L. (Oxon.)  
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# MY 60 YEARS IN JAZZ

by **ERIC J. BROWN**

I have been asked to write about my life in jazz, but found difficulty fitting 60 years into the restrictions imposed so important things have been left out.

I was born in Melbourne in 1931 becoming an engineering student at Caulfield Technical College in the late 1940s. Bill Armstrong, a fellow student used to put on jazz record recitals at lunch time where I learned about the Uptown Club and the 4th Australian Jazz Convention to be held in the Prahran Town Hall. My parents thought I was too young to go to the Uptown Club, but I did jump on my bicycle and go to the 4th A.J.C. After listening to Graeme Bell's band live on the ABC Swing Show and purchasing my first 78 of Adelaide's Southern Jazz Group on Memphis, I was hooked on jazz—clarinetist Bruce Gray being my hero—he still is!

When ICIANZ sent me to Adelaide to solve an engineering problem I met up with some wonderful jazz people which has prompted me to return there at least once a year.

At the Melbourne Jazz Club in 1959 I met up with a couple of young lads who had just formed the Yarra Yarra Jazz Band. They were Maurie Garbutt and Bob Brown. The band will be celebrating its 50th anniversary this year.

Through tennis I met up with Nick Polites who was in the Llew Hird New Orleans Jazz Band playing at the Blue Heaven restaurant in St Kilda. This band became the Melbourne New Orleans Jazz Band which achieved phenomenal success eventually getting a contract to go to England. I was lucky to travel to England with them and go to their gigs both in England and in Europe.

Ron Gray contacted me as the 17th AJC in Sydney in 1962 wanted a guest musician. Their first choice was Acker Bilk who said he would have loved to come, but would be making a film at that time. Next I went to the 51Club to invite Ken Colyer and of course he said "We would love to come".

Returning home to Melbourne in 1962 I thought I would visit New Orleans. My first stop was New York where I was lucky to hear the wonderful Wilbur de Paris Band and then through Jim Smith of Adelaide I was able to meet Wayne

Jones in Chicago. He is the drummer with the Salty Dogs and one of America's top record collectors. This started a long-long friendship with me staying at Wayne's home on several occasions.

My visit to New Orleans proved to be a marvellous experience with many of the legends of jazz still playing. The pinnacle of this visit was to be invited by Ken Mills to be present at a number of his Icon recording sessions held in old halls. What wonderful jazz and something I will never forget. I have never heard the excitement of those sessions anywhere! This prompted me to return a further three times and in 1969 I stayed three months and felt like a local when I left. I would go out to the Tulane University Jazz Archive whenever possible. It was run by Dick Allen who let me hear many of the interviews that he and Bill Russell had done with many musicians. I spent a lot of time taking photographs of old halls, musicians' houses etc.

On returning to Melbourne in 1970 I decided to set up my own Archive which included recording bands, taking photographs of them and doing taped interviews with musicians.

On leaving New Orleans in 1969 my next stop was Manchester, England. I met up with my friend, record collector Jim Lowe. After a short stay I went down to London and found out the Yarra Yarra Jazz Band was here too. Roger Janes offered to have me stay at his house in Chiswick with Angela and himself. The following 4—6 months proved to be an incredible experience, not only going to many of the Yarra's gigs, Roger and Angela's wedding, but also meeting up with many famous collectors with John R. T. Davies and Charlie Crump. Incidentally, Charlie and his wife Pat were ticket holders Nos. 1 & 2 at the Leicester Square Jazz Club where the Graeme Bell Band played in 1948. I also met many famous English jazz musicians and heard their bands like Ken Colyer, Chris Barber and Humphrey Lyttelton.

Back in Melbourne I found out there were some great jazz bands in Japan. This prompted me to go up to Osaka and hear the New Orleans Rascals who knocked me out at their Saturday night gig at the Suntory 5, by their wonderful band and with their incredible hospitality. I have returned 7 or 8 times where I have organised visits for Nick Polites, Roger Janes and Gary Walford, Maurie Garbutt and Andy Symes. Probably the most satisfying thing I organised was for

the Yarra Yarra Reunion Band to go up to Osaka to represent Melbourne at their "Sister Fort Festival" in July 1994 and the "All Japan Dixieland Jazz Festival".

In 2002 I was invited to come to the Rascals 40th Anniversary Celebrations by their leader Ryoichi Kawai. This was a great honour as the others invited included Butch Thompson, Carol Leigh, Tom Sharpsteen and Geoff Bull.

In 1992 I helped the Rascals on their visit to Melbourne which included a reception by Melbourne's Lord Mayor.

Together with Maurie Garbutt I helped The New Orleans Naughties of Tokyo to tour Melbourne and Sydney. While in Melbourne Maurie was the coach captain, a job he does for the Fitzroy Council's Community bus.

Other overseas musicians I have helped get to Melbourne are N.O. trumpeter Alvin Alcorn, pianist Don Ewell, who recorded with the Yarras, and pianist Alton Purnell. The latter was done in conjunction with Geoff Bull in 1976 and we both made \$40. (A success?)

During the 1970s Graeme Bell asked me to put together his scrap books as he had no time. Geoff Holden persuaded me to accept the task and this persists up to the present. The number of scrap books is 12 and these are lodged in the Mitchell Library in Sydney.

I am doing another series of scrap books for Allan Browne which he started in a huge album he was given for his 21st birthday. The number of these scrap books is growing and is 4 at the last count.

The Victorian Government originally gave Ray Marginson A.M. the task or relocating the Melbourne Museum to Southbank and he had plans to include a Jazz Archive. Jeff Kennett put a stop to this and it is now known as "Jeff's Shed". Following this the Victorian Jazz Archive is located in a Board of Works shed in Wantirna and I have been the registrar, who puts numbers on donations, ever since.

*Eric J. Brown* 26.01.2009

### **Apologies**

**To Eric Brown for leaving his name off the end of his excellent article on the launch of Graeme Bell's latest CD. As we told you, this is a 2 CD of 47 of Graeme's Compositions and is available from the Archive for \$30 for members, \$33 non-members plus \$5 postage.**

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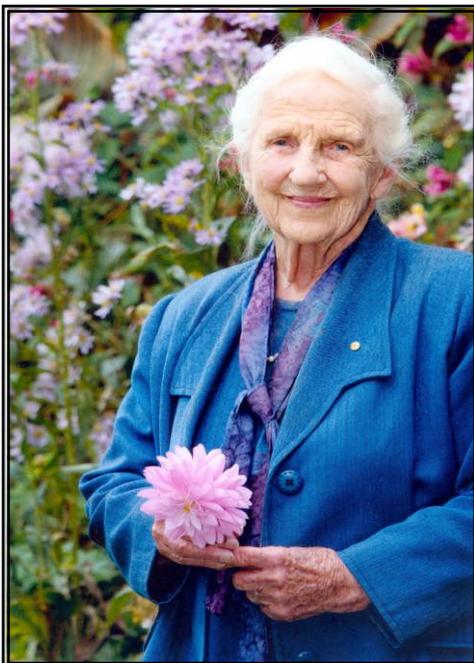
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The Victorian Jazz Archive acknowledges the support of the following organisations: The State of Victoria through the Department of Premier and Cabinet and Arts Victoria, Parks Victoria, The Ian Potter Foundation, The Myer Foundation, The Pratt Foundation,

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.

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*Dame Elisabeth Murdoch  
A.C., D.B.E.*

***The Archive shares with many other groups in the community, the benefit of Dame Elisabeth's long and perceptive generosity over very many years. We are delighted that she is celebrating her 100th Birthday this month.***

***She was an immediate quickly responsive donor when we were in our initial stages and desperate for substantial financial support to get us off the ground at Wantirna more than a decade ago.***

***Her long-held involvement with Classic Jazz is reflected in her frequent use of traditional jazz bands for functions at Cruden Farm; also by her presence at the Assembly Hall for Graeme Bell's 90th birthday concert. These and many other involvements, like her visit to us in 2005, are testimony to her love of our music and her support for the work of preserving it.***

***We look forward to her celebrating her 101st and send our warmest congratulations and best wishes for the great occasion of her 100th.***

*Ray Marginson*

**BOOK REVIEW**

by John Kennedy.

"I Wanted To Be A Jazz Musician" by John Sharpe.

John Sharpe is a well known jazz trombonist who for many years was the driving force behind the Canberra-based jazz band "The Fortified Few". He has already published two books – "Don't Worry Baby – They'll Swing Their Arses Off" and "A Cool Capital - The Canberra Jazz Scene 1925 to 2005". He is to be commended for his authorship of this wonderful publication of jazz interviews of jazz people he conducted over a period of years, and are part of 100-odd held in the Australian Jazz Archive collection at the National Film and Sound Archive in Canberra.

There are some 16 interviews that have been transferred to the printed word, complemented by a wonderful array of accompanying photographs. Transferring audio tapes to the printed word is no easy job, as I can well testify. I would like to know how he did this so accurately, as voice recognition software takes time to recognise the speech patterns of the persons being interviewed.

The Victorian Jazz Archive has in it's vaults some 137 interviews from the Australian Jazz Interview Project, coordinated by our own Tom Wanliss, and also lodged at the State Library of Victoria. It would seem that the interviews in this book are not duplicated by those held by the VJA.

An interesting concept in addition to the basic interviews, are three separate chapters "Interests Outside Music", "Highlights" and surprisingly, "Rock and Roll Experience".

To quote the author – "*The Rock And Roll Experience*" is interesting. *Blamed for the demise of jazz over the past fifty years, many of the most prominent jazz musicians in the country started in Rock, and some have no problem in changing backwards and forwards*".

The photographs accompanying the interviews are of great interest and high quality. One of my favourite photos is of pianist Terry Wilkinson taken by Ron Falson in 1947 when Terry (a child prodigy, no less) was snapped at the piano with a 'ciggie' hanging out of his mouth, at the ripe old age of 16!

Most noticeably John lets his subjects do all the talking, only asking brief questions to spark their memory. This is a research project for the Centre of Scholarly and Archival Research (CSAR), which is sponsored by the National Film and Sound Archive, and is an excellent publication that enhances jazz research in Australia.

The list of the interviews is in the last VJAZZ Newsletter (Oct-Nov 2008), as are the details of how this 380 page book can be obtained. It would be \$40 well spent. Highly recommended. Further details from John Sharpe (02 6286 1728) or john-sharpe@grapevine.com.au.

**Editor's note:**

Thank you to Eric for this interesting insight into his earlier life in jazz. As so many important things had to be left out because of space restraints, Eric has agreed to write a further article for us.

**New Members:**

Since our last newsletter we have welcomed the following new members: Denis Blanchard, Robin Blackman & Jill Boyce, David Boyd, Malcolm Braham, Rod & Pam Clements, Neil Davidson, F. Doreen de Bruin, Neil Davidson, John Devoy, John Dickinson, Weston & Jo Elvins, Warren Ferrie, Loryce Rogers & Ken Foster, Richard Hill, Graeme Huntington, Russ Johnson, Ian Patterson, Terry Piper, Donald Standing, Elise Wade and Max Watson.

**Cash Donations:**

We thank the following people for their generous cash donations: Virginia Fraser, John Smyth, R & M Coldicott, Margaret Powell, Victorian Jazz Workshops, Margaret (Maggie) Fitzgibbon, Bruce Mitchell.

**Deadline for copy for the May newsletter is April 17th.**

**Copy can be sent by email to:  
info@vicjazzarchive.org.au or  
by ordinary mail to:**

**Victorian Jazz Archive, PO Box  
6007, Wantirna Mall, Vic. 3152**

## ON THE SHELF

That heading has nothing to do with Spinsters of the Parish [as they used to be known] being bypassed from the joys of matrimony. Indeed it applies to a great love affair in my life since the year I left school back in 1951; namely the pursuit of collecting Jazz records or magazines, books about this strange exotic phenomenon.

Not greatly endowed with means, my family initially didn't have a gramophone or record player but I used to tune into the radio, first the Jazz programs on the BBC then later the music put out on the continental wavelengths from France or Holland. Also there was the print media such as the weekly Melody Maker and the magazines Jazz Monthly and Jazz Journal [the latter happily still going].

Eventually I purchased a portable record player and as my means increased I was off on my journey. An embryonic soccer player, I soon got sick of chasing a football round a cold wet Scottish field on a Saturday afternoon and opted for browsing through record shops for magic vinyl treasures of Jelly Roll Morton or Duke Ellington: much better fun and nobody was trying to break my legs.

As time went by the shelf in my room began sporting the various treasures I'd acquired causing a bit of angst with my parents 'That bloody row' - my dad was no Jazz critic. As this was the late fifties the E.P. and L.P held sway and I actually didn't have any 78s. My young brother did but his stuff was skiffle and rock type offerings They weren't allowed near my sacred shelves.

My joining the Merchant Navy in 1957 posed a problem - months of being away from my collection. As the playing of records was hazardous on a ship as even when things were calm there was a bit of movement which could affect smooth playing of discs. However I solved this dilemma by purchasing a tape recorder. I used to record my favourite vinyl material whilst on leave then I could listen to the tapes at my leisure on my off-duty times. My cabin was often the social hub of the ship among us officers as this was the Trad Boom time and a few of the guys were Jazzers - usually strictly Trad fans. When I was a tad weary and ready for my bunk I would play a program of a frantic bebop type band I'd picked up from a French radio station. That usually had the effect of emptying the cabin.

On arrival in Australia I started a new collection and after I knew I was staying I got my father to send out the original collection so my shelves at my various bachelor abodes increased.

Luckily my newly-acquired wife was a very tolerant lady and she accepted my all-embracing hobby. A room was des-

ignated to this enterprise and as a librarian she said 'I'll catalogue this lot' - sadly she never did. Jean used to say she was a 'Jazz Widow' but she didn't really mean that. She was constantly sending up my interest. She found a cartoon depicting a bearded collector seated in his room surrounded by CDS. The caption said 'Your compact disc collection doesn't seem all that compact anymore'. Also, she would deliberately muddle up my heroes' names saying 'I don't think much of that Jelly Roll Monk fellow'. Once she asked if in the event of a fire would I save her or the collection? I said I'd save her then she could help me save the collection.

Since her passing six years ago the collection has grown, cassettes, CDs from my mates overseas, magazines books etc. At one time this room was the Archive as it were. However things have expanded and The Good Noise is advancing like a tsunami down the hall to other rooms. If Jean is looking down she can't disapprove as there hasn't been a bolt of lightning yet.

The LPs were listed in decades as I figured the Ellington Band of the twenties was different from the band of the fifties. But the CDs were listed alphabetically. However a new initiative has them listed numerically [just reached 900]. However, finding things can still be a problem. I've just read an article on the Buck Clayton Jam Sessions so I'd like to re-listen. Now was that under B for Buck or C for Clayton or J for Jam Session or.....

*Bill Brown*

## THE LAST SWALLOW OF SUMMER

I write this as an addendum to the article in Newsletter VJAZZ 40 regarding the Jazz activities at Swallows' pub in Port Melbourne. I mentioned that a change of management could upset the swinging appletart. Sadly this has come to pass as on Sunday Jan. 18<sup>th</sup> Jo Stevenson's Rockets played their last gig there. A fine night of music was enjoyed by the faithful who had attended this Sunday night soiree over the past nine years. Even without the varied talents of the absent Ian Smith, Jo and Chris Ludowyk, aided by John Scurry and Richard Opat, provided their usual varied program criss-crossing the Jazz spectrum from Bechet numbers to the Woody Herman tour de force Golden Wedding even featuring that old Jazz standard 'Eidelweiss' [with vocal yet].

However all is not lost. The Rockets will rise Phoenix-like from the ashes as from Feb. 8<sup>th</sup> they will be featured at that other nearby watering hole the Emerald Hotel, a feature on the Melbourne Jazz Scene

over the years. So the Rockets will land there hopefully causing no collateral damage but continuing to give pleasure to their supporters who have a penchant for swinging Jazz of a free and easy nature - Another door opens and all that. Doctor Jazz lives.

*Bill Brown*

## VALE—MIKE HANCOCK

30.11.34—19.10.08

Mike's introduction to jazz was as a teenager when he was taken to, and also meet, Louis Armstrong, who was performing at the West Melbourne Stadium. A life of unequalled boredom followed school when employed in a firm of chartered accountants, rendered palatable only due to visits to Power House, 431 Club, Maison de Luxe and the Collingwood Town Hall. His life was saved from eternal ennui by getting a job on the Stock Exchange, which, twenty years later, led to him owning and running three pubs. Meeting Louis was decidedly the catalyst for his extreme love of jazz. Owning the pubs in which to present the music was the platform for the rest of his working life. This actually started in 1974 with Toad's Krazy Kats at the Golden Fleece Hotel in South Melbourne, a major change from stockbroking, options and futures trading, just as hectic, just as little sleep, not as financially rewarding, aggravating bureaucratic difficulties, but bags of fun which he wouldn't have missed for worlds!

Following a few years at the Golden Fleece and the Middle Park Hotels, Mike found the 'suitable music room' at the Limerick Arms Hotel. Mike was joined in this venture by his wife Carol and Jackie Das Gupta.

For over 11 years this venue became home to the likes of Peter Gaudion's Blues Express, Kim Rushworth's Maple Leaf Jazz Band, Vic Petraitis' Black Onyx, Ross Anderson's New Melbourne Jazz Band and an especially long gig for Allan Browne's Onaje, with Bob Sedergreen, as well as many interstate and overseas artists including the famous English saxophone player and London Jazz Club owner Ronnie Scott.

Eventually Mike got out of the business and moved to Anglesea where he got involved in the Surf Club and the Liberal Party. Carol lost her battle with breast cancer and eventually he married Joan Hurley, a long time friend. They were extremely happy for the few short years they had together.

We send our deepest sympathy to Joan and her and Mike's families.

*Gretel James*

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## Ernest Pettifer – Clarinet Virtuoso by Graeme Pender

Sydney jazz musician and historian, Bruce Johnson writes that Ern Pettifer was one of Australia's most influential pioneers of jazz, who, along with other Australian musicians during the early 1920s, served their 'apprenticeships' in the company of imported overseas dance bands. Melbourne jazz historian, John Whiteoak describes Pettifer as one of the many pre-1936 Australian dance band musicians who was "capable of extended jazz improvisations." Not only was Pettifer an important pioneer of Australian jazz during the 1920s, but he also succeeded in building a notable reputation as a legitimate performer and composer, who played in professional orchestras, theatre bands, tutored and played in various radio groups. Pettifer was arguably one of Melbourne's most technically proficient improvising jazz musicians during the 1920s and 1930s.

It was probably his technical prowess in both his improvisation and sight-reading abilities that caused him being invited to join Walter Beban's 'Californians' in 1926. Chris Long describes Pettifer's period with this band as one that was "...stunningly successful". The recorded jazz solos and collectively improvised jazz performances of Pettifer display a certain restraint in his improvisatory approach. This control could possibly be attributed to a number of possibilities that include current stylistic limits, recording deficiencies and moreover, Pettifer's own overt emulation of Boyd Senter's unusual clarinet style. Senter's approach to improvisation practiced much use of glissandi and other curious effects. Undoubtedly, Pettifer possessed the technical genius, imagination and expertise to become a progressive and Australian archetype in the field of Australian jazz improvisation. In *Australian Music Maker and Dance Band News*, Pettifer wrote a series of articles which referred to the freedom of improvising entire choruses over standard chord sequences: "The freedom of playing cannot be believed...and it forms a basis for hot playing that reduces any tune to a series of chords that can be extemporized upon at the

 Pettifer was arguably one of Melbourne's most technically proficient improvising jazz musicians during the 1920s and 1930s.

will of the player." He later moved away from jazz performance and focused on professional symphonic and radio work.

Early in 1928, Pettifer played clarinet and alto saxophone in *Art Chapman's Rex (Cabaret) Orchestra*. Various contingents of Chapman's orchestra recorded for *Vocalion* under different names. One of these groups was *The Radio Trio*, which featured Pettifer on clarinet, an unknown ukulele player and probably Dick Cranbourne as the vocalist. Pettifer recorded two Melbourne discs on the *Broadcast* label with this trio, namely: *Gotta Big Date with a Little Girl*, BA31/AZ107, circa September 1928 and *Say Yes Today*, BA31/AZ89, circa August 1928. It is interesting to note that both of these recordings predate Des Tooley's vocal recordings made in Sydney for the *Parlophone* label by some eleven months. Bruce Johnson writes that Tooley's recordings provided the opportunity for Sydney musicians to indulge in small group performance recordings with improvised solos. Likewise, *The Radio Trio* provided Melbourne musicians with the opportunity to record small group performances that featured a collectively improvised jazz style behind the vocalist, as well as the opportunity to play extended improvised jazz solos. Both arrangements provide significant scope for seemingly spontaneous improvisation by Pettifer amongst a small group ensemble. A noticeable characteristic of Pettifer's playing was his 'legitimate' intonation. His obligato passages behind the vocalist are minimally constructed and focus around the middle and lower registers of the clarinet. Occasionally, his improvised phrases seem to imitate the early New Orleans approach to ensemble and solo playing.

Thanks to the restorative work of many early recordings by Chris Long, various early Melbourne *Austral Duplex* and *Vocalion* pressings from the mid 1920s are now available and provide increasingly more evidence that early local Australian musicians such as Ern Pettifer and others were performing high levels of both solo and collective improvisation. Clearly, it was bands such as *Frank Ellis and*

*his Californians*, *Ray Tellier and his San Francisco Orchestra*, *Bert Ralton and his Havana Band*, as well as some of the other imported groups that provided local musicians with the musical foundation, knowledge and skills to indulge in the performance of solo and collective improvisation.

Endnotes:

1. Johnson, B. *The Oxford Companion to Australian Jazz*, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1987, p. 71.
2. Whiteoak, J. *Playing Ad Lib: Improvisatory Music in Australia 1836-1970*, Currency Press, Sydney, 1999, p. 228.
3. Much gratitude must be extended to Ern Pettifer's daughter, Judy Semmens for providing me with her father's scrapbook tracing his musical career from c. 1928 to his death in 1975.
4. Long, C. *Melbourne in the 1920s*, (Volume 3), Notes to accompany *Antiquarian* label of re-released pre-1932 sound recordings, p. 7.
5. Pettifer, E. 'Getting Acquainted with the Clarinet' (part 3), *Australian Music Maker and Dance Band News*, 1/3/1938; also cited in Whiteoak, J. *Playing Ad Lib: Improvisatory Music in Australia 1836-1970*, Currency Press, Sydney, 1999, p. 237.
6. Long, C. *Melbourne in the 1920s*, (Volume 3), Notes to accompany *Antiquarian* label of re-released pre-1932 sound recordings. Long suggests that Cranbourne as the vocalist was a possibility, although 'Music Maker' doesn't mention him as a Rex Cabaret vocalist until 1933. p. 8.
7. Johnson, B. *The Oxford Companion to Australian Jazz*, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1987 p. 73.

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Graeme Pender is a well known Melbourne musician. For many years he was known as the artist who drew the portraits of musicians which decorated the walls of the Bridge Hotel in Richmond. Now these drawings hang in the Archive. Graeme has played with various bands over the years. We thank him for this interesting article and look forward to more in the future.

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## RON "ZEKE" WILLIAMSON Died 26th October 2008

I just wanted to tell you the sad news of losing Melbourne's finest sousaphone player Ron 'Zeke' Williamson. He played and recorded with everyone during the early years of the emerging Melbourne Jazz scene in the late 1940's till the 1980's. He played with Frank Johnston and the Fabulous Dixielanders, Frank Traynor's Jazz Preachers and Len Barnard's band just to name a few. He also worked with Smacka Fitzgibbon consistently for many years. Smacka always loved him, and Zeke played on many of Smacka's records during his career. A memorable highlight for Ron was touring with Smacka and his band The Firing Squad with the Swiss Circus Royal in 1977. Zeke played as part of the Keep Australia Beautiful Campaign. He was the notorious member of the band who didn't get fined for playing in the streets of Frankston because he was actually standing in the doorway of a shop. Zeke's musical ability and knowledge of chord structure was exceptional, his timing impeccable and he really kept the rhythm section together. He was renowned as a brilliant rhythmist, a gift he has passed down to his talented sons Paul and David. Vale Ron you will be sadly missed.

### Nichaud Fitzgibbon

I was so sorry to learn of Ron's passing. In fact it was only a couple of weeks ago that I was asking Paul how his father was travelling.

I had the greatest admiration for Ron, not only as a fine muso, but also as a very kindly person, plus the fact that we worked a lot together with Frank Gow at The Cambridge Cub situated in the church on the corner of Punt Rd and Toorak Rd. In fact, it was at this venue that a young Helen Reddy first came on the scene and shortly after married Ken Weate, an old friend of mine who was playing in the Channel 9 Band.

The same band played at The U Club in the hall at the back of the Moonee Ponds Town Hall and Ron would arrive at the gig on his motor bike and his bass in the side car, plus the mandatory two bottles of beer, even though the guys running the dance would spike our soft drinks with spirits. I hasten to add that this was one of the most exciting bands I worked in with a front line of Bob Barnard or Des Edwards on trumpet. Harry Price on trombone and myself on tenor sax and clarinet with a beautiful rhythm section of Frank Gow piano Tony Johnson drums Alan Lee rhythm guitar and of course Ron playing bass.

With the passing of Ron and other musos in a similar age group as myself, I am prompted to ask why nobody has ever taken the time to sit down with a tape or video recorder and document the anecdotes and experiences of us older guys because the time will come when none of us will be around.

Perhaps this is something that I should take up with the Vic Jazz Archive. In fact I would be quite prepared to contribute to underwriting such a project. Naturally enough I would need some support to get this off the ground.

Best wishes

*Alex Hutchinson*

#### Editor's Note:

*We asked Tom Wanliss to comment on Alex's letter and he writes:*

#### Australian Jazz Interviews Project

*In 1984 a group of Melbourne Jazz enthusiasts met and decided to form the Australian Jazz Interviews with Tom Wanliss as the convenor/co-ordinator. Since then 138 interviews with jazz musicians and other important jazz individuals have been recorded, mainly on audio tape, and the tapes have been lodged at the Arts Library of the State Library of the State Library of Victoria. In addition tapes are placed at the Victorian Jazz Archive which in recent times have been transferred to CDs.*

*The interviews cover the individuals' participation in jazz including recording, and asks their views on subjects such as "Is there such a thing as an Australian jazz sound?" and "What are your views on the future of jazz in Australia?"*

*Most of the interviews have taken place in Victoria but many have occurred in Sydney, Adelaide and in Queensland. On only rare occasions — mainly for health reasons — have individuals declined to be interviewed.*

*Finance for the operation of the project has been generously provided by the Australian Jazz Convention Trustees.*

*Tom Wanliss*

## BRINGING BACK MEMORIES by Harry Price

When I read "Bringing Back Memories" by my old mate Alex Hutchinson in the last issue of VJAZZ, I thought about the times we played together in Frank Gow's Band at the Cambridge Club (Christ Church, South Yarra), and at the U Club at Moonee Ponds in the early sixties.

Bob Barnard had just left to join Graeme Bell in Sydney, so Frank hired Des Edwards. Des was a great trumpet player, one of the best ever; he had everything

going for him, build, good looks. He was an excellent reader, had a great range, and he was a very nice bloke. He had one flaw, that was the booze. I learned one thing early, and that was never upset him when he had too much to drink, because he could fight like a threshing machine. I'd seen him deal with blokes who did upset him.

One Friday night at the Cambridge Club after the first set, we'd been down under the stage having a beer; we were returning to the bandstand at the other end of the Hall when a young fellow asked our vocalist Margaret Becker for a dance. Margaret was appearing on TV at the time and was well known. She said "No, thank you, I don't dance when I'm working". This bloke wouldn't take no for an answer and kept asking. With that Des put his arm out in front of the bloke and said "Don't annoy the lady mate" and we all got up on the low stage and started to play; I think the tune was Tiger Rag. This bloke stood in front of Des and made out he was going to push the bell of the trumpet. "The Bear" (as Des was known) stopped playing and gave the bloke a couple of soft taps on his head,



*Des Edwards*

saying "Piss Off Mate". With that the fool shaped up. Well, that was too much for Des who hung the trumpet on a wing-nut on Graham Bennett's bass drum, hopped off the stage, put his hands behind his back and said "I'll give you first hit mate". Just then as the bloke took a swing, Alex Hutchinson jumped off the stage to back up Des, who ducked and the punch flattened Alex. "The Bear" hit this bloke in the stomach and then lifted him off the floor with an uppercut to the jaw - his mates carried him out. Des got up on the stage, together with the staggering Alex, and we finished the tune. The whole episode took no more than five minutes from the time we walked up the hall to (cont'd page 7)

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**DON ANDERSON OAM**  
**for the**  
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**FROM CRYPT No.3.**

The third container at the Victorian Jazz Archive holds a variety of items, loads of memorabilia, including some odd items, all of which have emanated from **Australian Jazz Conventions**.

**THE BEGINNING:**

The idea to hold a jazz convention in Melbourne was raised as a plan in a letter written to C. Ian Turner from Ade Monsborough. Ade was stationed in Sydney during the 1939-45 war while serving in the Air Force. He wrote "...and I have plans after the war for a Jazz Convention in Melb." The letter written on an Air Force aerogramme marked "Monday" was Post Office stamped *Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> October 1944* and signed "The Father", which was Ade's nick-name at the time.

This letter came to the Victorian Jazz Archive amongst papers and letters of the C. Ian Turner collection. Its importance in Australian Jazz history was immediately apparent to Ray Marginson, John Kennedy and myself. I took photocopies of the particular page of the letter by Ade Monsborough to the 61<sup>st</sup> Australian Jazz Convention (held at Flinders University in Adelaide, December 2006). When I distributed copies to the Convention Steering Committee, Peter Ransom (banjo player from Queensland) exclaimed, "This is it! This is the Holy Grail!!"

Having a plan is one thing. Having the wherewithal to carry it out is another matter. Come the year 1946, three people contributed their talents in their own particular field to bring the *Father's* plan to fruition.

First, C. Ian Turner, who as editor of the Melbourne jazz periodical *JAZZ NOTES* wrote in the issue of June 1946, "to start planning ahead for some of those jazz festivals that only the Summer can provide." He went on further in more detail "It has been on my mind for many months past that an Australian Jazz Convention is the goal that we should all strive to achieve. Are you with me fellas?" The editorial went on to detail a program that echoed items in Ade's letter and set an agenda that was the basis of the first Australian Jazz Convention.

Secondly, Harry Stein who was in the Army in 1944 (discharged medically unfit after a major operation) joined the Eureka Youth League that year. The Eureka Youth League was an Australian Communist group set up to interest the young in various activities with a slant on socialist ideals. Harry Stein was a drummer during his Army stint playing with other musicians entertaining troops until his discharge. Before the war he played gigs around Melbourne and jazz musicians he worked with at that time included Doc Willis (trombone), Cy Watts (piano and trombone), and Haydn Britton (clarinet and saxophone). He formed the Eureka Hot Jazz Society to further the cause of jazz music. One of his influences was Ian Lang, author of "Background of the Blues", and who wrote:

*"The (real) jazz is music of the people not quite the same as popular music and money making, while sometimes incidental to, is never the sole purpose of its production."*

The Eureka Hot Jazz Society with Harry Stein as President, met at the Eureka Youth League headquarters that was a hall in Queensberry Street, North Melbourne. This hall was built as a vaudeville theatre in 1874. The aims of the Eureka Hot Jazz Society were:

To encourage the appreciation and playing of hot jazz.

To study its true history and destroy its myths.

To publish material to help these aims.

The hall was ideal for a Jazz Convention, with a stage, seating for 300, it had a gallery, amplification, recording equipment, catering facilities and a café. Musicians associated with the Eureka Hot Jazz Society were Graeme Bell, Ade Monsborough, Tony Newstead, Frank Johnson, Doc Willis, Geoff Kitchen, George Tack and others.

Finally and very importantly, Graeme Bell in those days was leading his band at the Uptown Club that was held in the Eureka Hall, the same hall at which the Eureka Youth League was based. The Bell Band was a very proficient outfit that of course included Ade Monsborough. Graeme Bell was a born leader, ideal for the band with his good business sense. He was also a friend of Harry Stein through association with the Eureka Youth League. Graeme Bell and Harry Stein together worked out the logistics of running a Jazz Convention over four days or so. Finally on December 26, 1946 at 7.00

pm the opening dinner was held at Eureka Hall and the first Australian Jazz Convention was on its way. Members of the Committee comprised members of the Eureka Hot Jazz Society, Eureka Youth League, the Jazz Appreciation Society and the Geelong Jazz Lovers group.

The program included performances, discussions, lectures, jam sessions and a riverboat trip. The Convention wound up with a Public Concert with an attendance of well over 200 people. So that "plan" by "the Father" in 1944 had become fact and the Australian Jazz Convention continues this year (2009) in Melbourne for number 64. It was last in Melbourne for the huge 50<sup>th</sup> held at the University of Melbourne in 1995. This is truly a tribute to those early Australian jazz musicians who played that thing.

People who have contributed to the running of the Victorian Jazz Archive in various positions and who were at that first Australian Jazz Convention where Graeme Bell said "we were all walking on air" include, Ray Marginson AM, Tony Newstead, Ray Bradley AM, Sid Bridle, Margaret Cleaver and Don Anderson OAM.

.....and now back to the Crypt.

*Don Anderson OAM*

*~~~~~*

(cont'd from page 6)

the time they carried the idiot out. The funny part about it all was "The Bear" had hardly had a drink.

I often think about the great times we had in those days, playing three or four times a week, playing with good musicians and fun guys, and no .05 in those days.

Sadly, Alex and I are the only ones still playing. Frank's not well, Ron Williamson, Graham Bennett and Des have gone, but as I said we had great times, and I'd do it all again.

*Harry Price*

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