

# Australian Jazz Museum

Proactively Collect, Archive & Disseminate Australian Jazz

## A WALK THROUGH THE MUSEUM



2015

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**Location:** Koomba Park, 15 Mountain Highway Wantirna, VIC 3152 – Melway 63 C8  
**Open:** Tuesday, Thursday and Friday 10am-3pm  
**Phone:** (03) 9800 5535  
**Postal Address:** PO Box 6007, Wantirna Mall, VIC 3152  
**Group tours by appointment**

## **BACKGROUND**

Jazz music has been accepted universally as a progressive and sustainable art form. Embracing both the blues and ragtime, it is the only musical art form to emanate from North America – spreading to the Western World via Europe during WWI (1914-18).

During the 1920's in Australia and Victoria in particular, the dance music of the day was sparked by elements of jazz, heard on early records from the USA and was greatly influenced by the musicians performing on these records. Australian jazz musicians – both early and contemporary – are held in high esteem locally and internationally, and much of their work is now of important historical significance to our national heritage.

In the mid 1990's jazz enthusiasts realized Australian jazz-related material and memorabilia was being destroyed by the ravages of time and were in great danger of losing this valuable and historic part of our performing arts heritage.

In 1996 the Victorian Jazz Archive Inc. (VJA) was established to:

- Create an accurate account of the history of Jazz in Victoria and Australia.
- Collect, preserve and exhibit all types of Australian recorded jazz music, material and memorabilia.
- Provide a home for significant private jazz collections which otherwise would be lost to future generations.
- Provide a comprehensive library for study and research.
- Stimulate community interest in a culturally important aspect of Australia's heritage not dealt with by any other Australian museum.

In 2003 the VJA won full accreditation as a Museum by Museums Australia, Victoria and in 2014 changed its name to Australian Jazz Museum (AJM).

AJM is a non-profit organisation operating through a Committee of Management, elected annually by members. The Museum is run entirely by 60+ volunteers. At present it has nearly 700 members, ranging from jazz improvisation workshop students, through single, family and life members to corporate sponsors.

## **PROGRESS**

Great progress has been made within the Museum over the past few years. Some of them:

- Installation of a heavy-duty sliding security gate
- Extensive renovation to the administration & cataloguing area (Sam Meerkin Room)
- Upgrade and complete revamp of the toilet block
- Purchase of a 4<sup>th</sup> shipping container outside the building, fitted with compactus moveable and fixed steel shelving
- Use of the MYOB computer software for accounting, membership and archive shop inventory
- Transfer of the extensive reference library catalogue to the Bibliotech electronic database and the use of the Dewey Decimal System
- Flat screen monitors on the computer network
- Replacement of the electronic security system
- Upgrade of the main electrical switchboard from fuses to contact breakers
- Installation of a new telephone system
- Additional two forty foot containers to allow to store the ever-expanding collection

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## ENTRANCE

The Australian Jazz Museum looks like a friendly cottage from the outside, surrounded by nurseries and parks, but in fact it is the combination of modified shipping containers – still keeps extending together with the ever growing collection it houses. The latest additions are the two 40 foot containers at the front side of the building, installed lately to increase storage capacity.

The entry hall contains the pamphlets, forms, brochures and this is where volunteers and visitors sign in. There are three doors opening from this area. Opposite is the largest, multi-purpose room called

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## R.D. MARGINSON LIBRARY & EXHIBITION ROOM

*Roy Marginson M.A. was the founding President of the Australian jazz Museum (then Victoria Jazz Archive) and was one of the major forces in creating and promoting the organisation.*

This is the largest room in AJM and serves many purposes:

- ✓ **Library:** the valuable 1200+ item Reference Library fills up the whole length of one of the long walls, made available to members and the general public to use in the room only.
- ✓ **Exhibition:** along the walls is displayed the current exhibition, *The Barnard Legacy: The Barnard Family and their impact on Australian Jazz.*
- ✓ **Research:** AJM welcomes, assists and encourages partnerships between researchers and the Museum. Apart from the largest jazz collection in Australia, the bulk of our recorded music is also available in all formats for listening.
- ✓ **Tours:** a comprehensive tour of the museum, including what goes on behind the scenes usually finishes in this room with lunch, afternoon tea or light refreshments and a live jazz performance.
- ✓ **Rehearsals & Improvisation Workshops:** the room is the location of the trad jazz workshops, run at the AJM by an independent business on weekends.
- ✓ **Meetings:** suitable for accommodate large number of staff, regular Board of Management and other work related meetings also held in the room.

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## DON BOARDMAN SOUND ROOM

*Don Boardman, a drummer played with bands for many years and was the Museum's original sound engineer, who donated the equipment to create the first sound room.*

On the left of the entry hall opens the **Sound Room**, the musical nerve centre of the Museum. Music from any recorded format is assessed and transferred direct to the computer hard drive for preservation. The Preservation and Access CD's are stored in Vault 1. Transfer of the music is made 'flat', meaning there is no clean-up or enhancement to the original music.

Additionally, limited-run CD's are also supplied for sale to members. By using the latest technology they are carefully re-mastered to provide the best possible sound quality. The material for these CD's has not been previously available to the public.

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## AJM SHOP

Turning to the right from the entry hall is the shop, where **merchandise** is sold; an extensive range of recordings, paintings, prints, autographed recordings, discographies and other material, mostly covering Australian jazz. Here you can buy unique CD's produced by AJM from original records and tapes held in-house. Members can choose one for free on joining and on renewal of their membership and enjoy discounts on most items.

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## SAM MEERKIN ROOM

*Named after a life member of AJM and a lifelong lover of jazz, whose generous bequest allowed an upgrade of this area in 2010.*

Located in the heart of the building, the **administration and cataloguing** area is the engine room of the operation. The computer network, electronic database is located here, with all the necessary equipment of scanners, printers and photocopier.

According to 'best archival practice', every donation is sorted, identified and registered. Photographs are scanned items logged on the database and preservation copy CD's checked for errors prior to placement in Vault 1.

Personnel include the collection manager, registrar, secretary, IT, financial managers, projects and related staff of volunteers.

Two Vaults open from this room, containing compactus shelving units. The Vaults are modified shipping containers, providing secure, stable, water-, vermin- and fireproof storage.

### VAULT 1 – Australian Collection

Dedicated to the storage of the **Australian Collection** including acetates, test pressings, 78's, EP's, LP's, cassettes, DAT tapes, reel-to-reel tapes, videos, CD's (incl. preservation and access copies), DVD's, photographic slides and all photographs.

### VAULT 2 – Print Collection

Houses the vast **print collection**; programs, posters, flyers, chord books, manuscripts, diaries, banners, scrapbooks, ledgers, personal letters and other related correspondence.

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## JILLY WARD ROOM

*Jilly Ward is the widow of David Ward, a jazz musician and band leader, who took over as sound engineer from Don Boardman (the name of our Sound Room). Jill and David both shared a great interest in and were friends and benefactors of the then VJA. After David's death, the room was significantly improved due to Jill's generous financial help.*

The room is a 'hands-on' **working area**. Large donations are identified and placed in a quarantine compactus, before further detailed processing prior to lodgement in the correct locations within the museum. Sizable mounted and framed pictures and posters are also stored here.

This room provide space for the **Members Lending Library** with another approximately 600 jazz related books and pamphlets.

Another Vault opens from this area:

### **VAULT 3 – Australian Jazz Convention Collection**

Makes room for a separate archive for the Australian Jazz Convention memorabilia. The Convention is the oldest continuously running jazz even in the world, which started in Melbourne in 1946 and moved to different locations within Australia. It is held annually between Boxing Day and New Year's Day.

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### **RON HALSTEAD ROOM**

*Ron Halsted was a highly qualified sound engineer, working for Telecom, then later with Bill Armstrong (Bilarm Music) and as a volunteer in the AJM sound room.*

The room is home to the **International Collection** of recorded jazz in all formats and it is the largest collection of international jazz recording in Australia accessible to the public. We believe this material is of national and international significance as it forms the basis of the beginnings of jazz in Australia.

The collection is graded, catalogued, transferred to an electronic database and stored in a compactus shelving unit installed in late 2006.

Large-size posters are stored in the room in flat storage cabinets.

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### **THE 'TUNNEL'**

Behind the main area runs the narrow corridor we call the 'Tunnel'. Its first part had been revamped to keep **valuable vintage** 78 rpm records on shelves, together with the old master tapes of the Swaggie Records Label (established in Australia in 1949). Donations from individuals, jazz archives and organisations are deposited here, awaiting for further processing.

The second part of the Tunnel is where household, cleaning and maintenance items are stored, together with chairs, tables and music sheet stands for the entertainment of large tour groups, jazz events and workshops.

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### **MEZZANINE — PHOTOGRAPHY and DIGITISATION**

The Mezzanine level, opening from the kitchen area is the home of the equipment for quality **photography and digitisation**.

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### **WATERFRONT CAFÉ — KITCHEN**

*The photo of the late Jilly and David Ward on the wall is a reminder of their generous contribution to the setup of the kitchen, together with its naming; David Ward's one-time Waterfront Café Band.*

The Café is an ideal place for a chat over a cup of tea or coffee with visitors, fellow members and volunteers. Commissioned in December 2004 and designed to seat up to 18 people at lunchtime, the Café can also be used as a meeting place and catering facilities for Museum functions, such as exhibition openings, group visits, etc.

## FUTURE PLANS

### Strategy

- **To Create the Premier Virtual Museum of Australian Jazz**

### Priority projects to create and continuously improve our 24/7 virtual museum

- **Stabilize Collection.** Eliminate bottlenecks, improve capacity and operating processes. Use process flow charts, recruit and train.
- Select and implement a modern **Digital Museum Management System.** Relational Database to enable access to all collections.
- **Digitization of Collection “A” priority items.** Standards, format, accessibility and search ability.
- Master plan **building expansion 2015 to 2021.** Stage 1 and 2. Space for group visits. Exhibitions and storage. Effective layout to improve processes.
- **Organisation Structure to achieve strategy.** Capacity and skills to create and manage.
- **WordPress website to enable strategy.** Capability to add online exhibitions, digital radio station, blog.
- **Increase Membership to 1800.** National and international. Self-fund operating costs.
- **Provide IT Infrastructure to enable Virtual Museum strategy.** Capability, speed, backup and security.





**R D Marginson Library & Exhibition Room**



**Ron Halstead Room**



**AJM Shop**



**Sam Meerkin Room**



**Don Boardman Sound Room**



**Waterfront Café — Kitchen**

