

JAZZ IN ITS PLACE: VENUE 505

by John Clare

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As I no longer ride at night or in rain, it can be a fair hike up from Wentworth Park, taking the Bay Street option. Cutting across to Broadway, passing between the two great globes of perspex embraced by steel hoops that face each other from the corners of the old Grace Brothers buildings (which gave their names to *Are You being Served?*, an English department store series). In fact each has a circle of griffins bearing it on their winged backs.



One of the old Grace Brothers buildings on Sydney's Broadway...

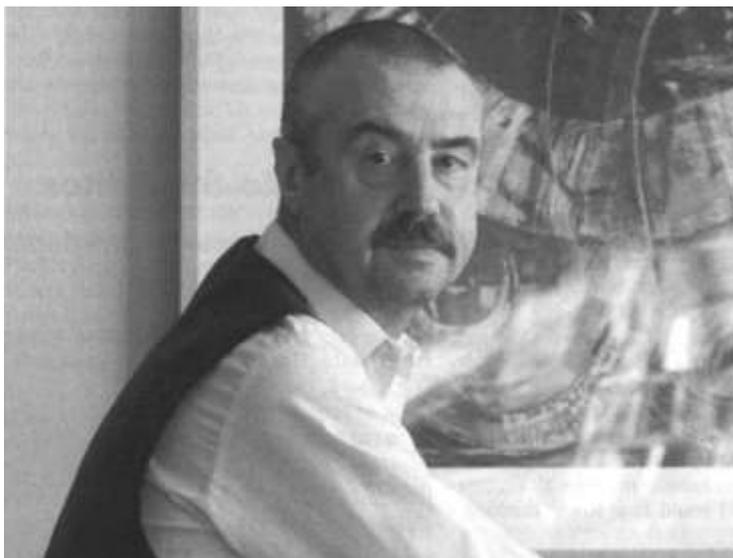
Alternatively this could be *The Daily Planet* where Clark Kent, mild-mannered reporter, pursues investigative journalism while not donning cloak and tights and confronting evil wherever it might occur.

We now angle across the park on the city side of Sydney University to City Road which we follow past Toby's Estate Coffee Grinders for whom my late son once worked. To get to Club 505, for this is where we are heading, we slip along and down Cleveland Street beside the Seymour Centre which houses several venues including The Sound Lounge, base of the Sydney Improvised Music Association. Also past a dislodged engineering faculty from nearby Sydney Uni.



The Seymour Centre which houses several venues including The Sound Lounge, base of the Sydney Improvised Music Association...

Here begins a long, rising and falling vista of streaming traffic flanked by tight blocky lanes of brick with side passage windows and doorways. Some buildings are residential terraces, some mysterious defunct businesses. Somehow this is the inland Sydney of my childhood, though we are walking toward the sea, through Surry Hills and Marrickville, toward beaches where I began life. Along here was a place called The Performance Space, which is where Roger Frampton and I performed one of our



Roger Frampton: at the Performance Space he and John Clare once performed one of their improvised duets involving words and chanting and a duel in deeper and thicker cockney accents...

improvised duets involving words and chanting and a duel in deeper and thicker cockney accents. Also of course Roger's grand piano, percussion and reeds including the soprano saxophone. There is a wide green park and a swimming pool on my left. Beyond that the city rises. On the length of the other side there are two off-white buildings that have squared off ends – well a squared off end with the other end curved. They seem to have portholes. This is the bauhaus touch.

Curiously enough there is a derelict car repair place, and here is a big Humber Super Snipe, abandoned long ago by another club owner. Too hard to park I think I recall.

Now we mount to the intersection just beyond which is Venue 505 (280 Cleveland St), comfortably situated among Lebanese restaurants including Abdullah's, Nada's and The Prophet. Yes yes, The Prophet. Many large black and white signs rise along the footpaths: ANZAC BRIDGE, HARBOUR BRIDGE, ROCKDALE, PARRAMATTA and many others. Is this the centre of Sydney?

In 505 you sometimes see a gentle quirk of chaos as you enter along the raised walkway on one side and friends make room for other friends, for some of the tables, chairs and sofas are different sizes. When it is well packed I find this comfortable and companionable. A major attraction for me is the presentation of bands comprised of many of the best of Melbourne and Sydney. The owner Cameron Undy is himself one of the major double bassists in the country, and also a great electric bassist. Also a major advocate of the late Ornette Coleman.



Owner of the 505 Club Cameron Undy: one of the major double bassists in the country, and also a great electric bassist...

505 has two nights of jazz, a night of funk and something else. This should get you the details: www.venue505.com. It comes to me that one of the most memorable nights was the appearance with a great band of locals by American alto saxophonist Gary Bartz, whose sound had a resemblance to Jackie McLean's and whose lines had something in common with the generation developing from bebop into the freer tonality and time of Ornette Coleman.



One of the most memorable nights at 505 was the appearance with a great band of locals by American alto saxophonist Gary Bartz (pictured above)...

It has also come to me that another important Australian bassist, Jonathan Zwartz often appears at 505 with leading Melbourne and Sydney players, including saxophonist Julien Wilson and electric and acoustic pianist Barney McAll,



L-R, Jonathan Zwartz, Barney McAll, the late Allan Browne, Julien Wilson...

each of whom has won the annual Wangaratta Jazz festival Award. They are part of an association of players who combine jazz, rock and exotic influences with equal intensity. It is a contemporary manifestation which as yet has no label or name. Jazz/rock will no longer do. This movement began it seems to me during Miles

Davis's move into electronics. But acoustic jazz retains a strong position in these places.

Many do not need to be told that at the age of 77 you have begun to lose a number of friends. They die that is. The kind of jazz that is needed at this age is passionate but leavened with intellectual interest. In these clubs I discovered and then wrote about young players of remarkable quality. Here are names to watch: Peter Farrer, Casey Golden, Paul Cutlan. Well, they're not all so young now, but young enough to be still developing.



Names to watch: pianist Casey Golden (above) and saxophonist Paul Cutlan (below)... GOLDEN PHOTO CREDIT KIRAN MANE... CUTLAN PHOTO CREDIT TOMAS POKORNY



The atmosphere along here is markedly different to the harbourside and general maritime feeling around the place I wrote about last time. Well it was the Foundry. There are markedly different aspects to the internal atmosphere too. I find it quite fascinating that they each share youth in the main and inner city youth. But the age differences can be major or minor or both on the same night. That is something I love about cities. Jazz is by and large a city music.