

ERROL BUDDLE

Interviewed by Andrew Dickeson

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We reflect on the life and music of Errol Buddle with an archival interview, recorded by Sydney drummer Andrew Dickeson - and originally broadcast on ABC RN. Errol Buddle passed away in February 2018 at the age of 89. Born in Adelaide in 1928, he became one of Australia's most prominent and respected jazz musicians. After cutting his teeth with local bands, Buddle re-located to Windsor, Canada - just across the river from Detroit.

At the time, Buddle was asked to replace saxophonist Yusef Lateef in a local band, and he found himself performing alongside a number of young musicians who would become jazz greats, including Tommy Flanagan, Elvin Jones, Kenny Burrell, Barry Harris and Alvin Jackson. Stan Getz would come and visit his gigs to chat about jazz bassoon. From there, he formed a group with some of the Aussies living in Detroit, with the band eventually becoming a quintet.

Errol Buddle is one of Australia's most prominent jazz musicians. He was born in Adelaide on April 29, 1928 and became a fulltime professional musician when he was 18, working in Adelaide and Sydney in clubs, recording studios and giving concerts.

During this time he studied the bassoon at both Sydney and Adelaide Conservatoria and after working in his home city and in Sydney in the '40s, travelled to Canada in 1952 where he played first bassoon with the Windsor Symphony Orchestra.

At this time he was sitting in with Yusef Lateef's quintet at Klein's Jazz Club in Detroit (just across the border from Windsor). He was asked to take over another group at this club which included Tommy Flanagan (piano) Alvin Jackson (bass) and Frank Gant (drums) which he did for a period of three months, working six nights a week, five hours a night. Errol then worked with a different line-up which included the outstanding Elvin Jones on drums along with Barry Harris (piano), Major Holley (bass) and Pepper Adams (baritone sax). Subsequently Errol continued at the club as a member of Kenny Burrell's group with Elvin Jones, Barry Harris and Billy Burrell.



Errol Buddle (centre on tenor saxophone) at Klein's, Detroit in 1953. Pepper Adams (baritone) is to the left. Barry Harris (piano) can just be seen to the right. Obscured behind Buddle is Elvin Jones (drums)...

He formed the Australian Jazz Quartet with a group of Australian musicians who were also living nearby, including Jack Brokensha and Bryce Rohde and this group eventually became a quintet. They signed up with the top jazz agent Joe Glaser in New York on a five-year contract and were booked into all the major jazz clubs in the US from coast to coast including Birdland, Basin Street and Blue Note in New York city. They worked 48 weeks a year touring throughout the USA.

Every November they played on 30-night concert tours at all the main concert halls in America including Carnegie Hall in New York where they played six concerts in all. The group developed a large following in clubs, concerts and on national radio

and eventually became the fifth most popular group in America. They recorded seven jazz albums and were placed three years running in the prestigious *Downbeat Magazine* poll in the Tenor Sax Section and Miscellaneous Section on bassoon.



The original Australian Jazz Quartet: Bryce Rohde (at the piano) then, clockwise, Errol Buddle, Dick Healey, Jack Brokensha...

After four years of continuous traveling in the US, Errol returned to Sydney in 1958 and worked in the studio bands of all the TV stations (*Bandstand*, *Don Lane Show*, the *Midday Show*) doing approximately 3,000 TV shows with the various studio orchestras. He also worked extensively as a session musician for documentaries, movies and commercials over the next 30 years.

Buddle has remained at the forefront of Australian modern jazz for many decades and is regarded as Australia's most successful jazz export.

**The two-part Errol Buddle Story, written by Eric Myers, is on this site. Part I is at this link <https://www.ericmyersjazz.com/essays-6>, and Part II is at this link <https://www.ericmyersjazz.com/essays-8>.*