

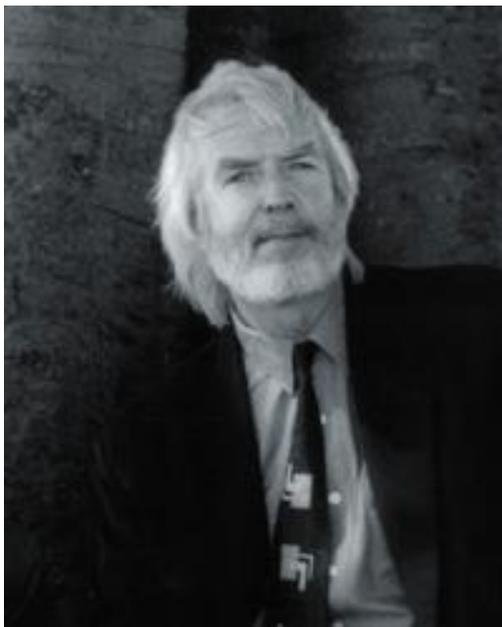
DisChords

A column by Jazz Co-ordinator
Eric Myers



JazzChord, Feb/Mar 1999

The benefit night at The Basement, Sydney, for the drummer **John Pochée** on January 18, 1999, was a wonderful gathering of the Sydney jazz community, with a lovely spirit in the air. About 300 people attended, and with door sales and donations, a considerable sum of money was raised for John, who's been ill for some time and unable to work. The highlight of the evening for me was the performance of John's great band Ten Part Invention, sharp as a razor on its return from a recent tour of Asian countries. The band played for an hour, featuring two Sandy Evans compositions *Tall Stories* and *Fortea Two*; one by Roger Frampton *And Zen Monk*, the first piece ever written for the ensemble and performed originally at the Adelaide Festival in 1986; and Miroslav Bukovsky's *Ten Part Invention Blues*.



John Pochée: stress-related health problems, exacerbated by lack of adequate administrative assistance for TPI...

These pieces are so well-known that they now seem like classics to my ears, but they sounded as fresh as ever. The drummer David Goodman, who apparently did a great job depping for John Pochée on the overseas tour, played beautifully, completely at home with the group's somewhat difficult compositions. John came up to the stage and joined the band for *Ten Part Invention Blues*, and played up a storm. This performance was a reminder of how important Ten Part Invention is, not only to



David Goodman: completely at home with Ten Part Invention's somewhat difficult compositions... PHOTO COURTESY SIMA

Sydney jazz, out of which it is an organic growth, but also to Australian jazz as a whole. John Pochée has kept this extraordinary band together for 13 years with the same personnel, and it would really benefit from the level of funding (on a pro rata basis) that goes from the Australia Council to the Melbourne-based Australian Art Orchestra. The AAO gets massive funding – by jazz standards - from the Council (\$85,000 a year from the Music Fund for 1999, 2000 and 2001) while TPI regularly applies for modest figures such as \$20,000 or \$25,000 per annum, and never receives what it asks for. Its last grant from the Fund in mid-1998 was only \$14,000. Disappointing grants from the Council have ensured that TPI, unlike many classical ensembles, and unlike the AAO, has never been able to afford adequate administrative assistance, a situation which has in turn contributed to John Pochée's stress-related health problems, because he has had to do the band's business for years. I wonder how many performances of TPI have been witnessed by the assessors on the Australia Council's Music Fund committee. Have they ever experienced this extraordinary music? I don't mean just listening to a CD, but live in a jazz club. My hope is that many of them can, in the future, develop a greater appreciation of how important Ten Part Invention is to the arts in Australia.

* While the **Sydney scene** is still sick, from the performance point of view, it has started to look marginally more healthy, with the commencement of the Sydney Improvised Music Association's 1999 series at a new venue, the Side-On Cafe, on Friday and Saturday nights. (See page 3 of *JazzChord* for more information). If you add the Woollahra and Sackville hotels on Sunday nights, Monday nights at the Starfish Club, Bondi, and the Jazzgroove Association's Monday gigs at the Landsdowne Hotel, plus Corinna Taylor's Gallery performance every Wednesday night at Round Midnight (which, of course, will now probably cease, owing to Corinna's sudden and tragic death), and the Baldfaced Stag in Leichhardt on Thursdays (where there is often a great jam session), it now means that the modern scene offers jazz fans a fairly diverse choice every week. Add the occasional gig at The Basement and the Harbourside Brasserie, and of course six nights a week at Soup Plus (even though musicians report that conditions are terrible at the Soup, including an out-of-tune piano, with broken strings). Overall, though, things are beginning to look up.

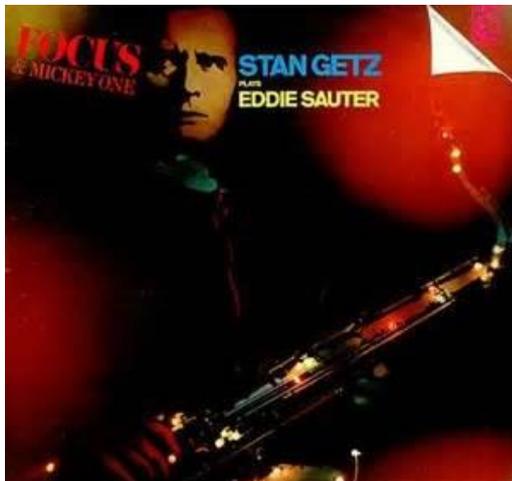


Saxophonist Dale Barlow: a performance of the Eddie Sauter suite Focus, with Philip Rex (bass), Niko Schauble (drums), and the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra...

* With all the talk in *JazzChord* about **ABC-TV's neglect of jazz** (see Adrian Jackson's letter to the editor in this edition, and my column in the last edition), it is gratifying to report that two major jazz broadcasts will take place on the ABC on Sunday, March 28 and Easter Sunday, April 4. This will be a performance of the suite *Focus*, by a jazz ensemble led by the saxophonist Dale Barlow, and including Philip Rex (bass) and Niko Schauble (drums), with the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra. *Focus* was composed by Eddie Sauter, and was recorded originally by Stan Getz in 1961. The *Focus* suite consists of seven movements ranging through the themes of time, sensuality, fantasy, memory, speed, passion and dreaming. In this production the seven movements are performed in full. Between each movement are informative interviews and documentary sequences. Dale and the other musicians discuss the divide between jazz and classical music, and the nature of improvisation. The program visits Webster Hall in Greenwich Village, NYC, the location of the original



1961 *Focus*, and explores the background and influences of Getz and Sauter. The TSO is conducted by Guy Noble. The program was produced by Stephen Snelleman and directed by Colin Grubb.



Editor's note: *In the same edition of JazzChord, Melbourne's Adrian Jackson, in a letter to the editor, commented on ABC-TV's neglect of jazz. The letter was entitled "ABC-TV has not shown film of the first Age Melbourne International Jazz Festival", and read as follows: "Sir, I read with interest your comments (JazzChord No 44, p 15) regarding Express and ABC-TV's generally abysmal track record where jazz is concerned. Unfortunately, ABC-TV's attitude to jazz is typified by its handling of performances filmed at the 1998 Age Melbourne International Jazz Festival. At the instigation of Paul Grabowsky (then the ABC commissioning editor for arts and entertainment), ABC-TV filmed some memorable performances by the Brad Mehldau Trio, Gary Bartz, the Bernie McGann Trio with Sandy Evans, Ten Part Invention, Shelley Scown with the Paul Grabowsky Trio, Don Burrows, Lisa Parrott, and many more. This was in January, 1998. At that stage, it was expected that six programs would be assembled, for screening around the middle of the year. Over a year later, nothing has gone to air. Several enquiries to the office of Grabowsky's successor, Paul Clarke (as to why there has been such a delay, or when the footage might be screened) have gone unanswered. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that ABC management regards jazz as an inferior art form, and its audience as unimportant. Adrian Jackson, Blackburn, Vic."*