



QUALITY OF DOWN UNDER JAZZ UP

Interview with US pianist Arnold Ross by anonymous writer

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There is a healthy jazz scene Down Under, and it is studded with several remarkable players. This is the report of pianist Arnold Ross, recently returned from Sydney, Australia, as music director with entertainer Jane Russell's nightclub act. Ross, who is also leader of the Synanon jazz group, took time out during the Russell engagement at a Sydney night club to investigate jazz activity in that city.



American pianist Arnold Ross, music director with entertainer Jane Russell's nightclub act...

"A girl pianist from New Zealand, named Judy Bailey," he told *Down Beat*, "really knocked me out. She was playing at the one jazz club in Sydney, the El Rocco, when I heard her trio. Judy writes very well too, and she told me she may be coming to the States. I wrote a letter of recommendation for her."

The audiences at the El Rocco, Ross said, were particularly impressive. "They sit there very well behaved and applaud," he related. "There's no liquor served in the club—just coffee, tea, hot chocolate, and soft drinks. The people go there strictly to hear music, and that gassed me."



At the El Rocco jazz club Ross was highly impressed by pianist Judy Bailey (left) and vibist John Sangster (right)...

Ross was amazed, he said, at the playing of a drummer-vibist named John Sangster. "He's a tremendous vibes player and a better-than-average drummer," Ross said. "Boy! he can really play vibes."

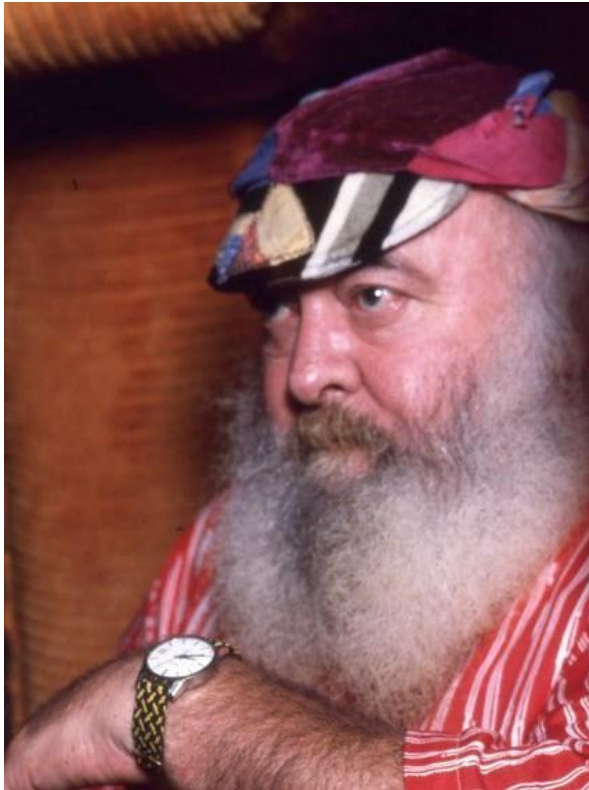
Another musician in Sydney who impressed Ross was Errol Buddle, who plays tenor saxophone, oboe, and bassoon and was a member of the Australian Jazz Quartet seven years ago. "Buddle plays great tenor and good enough jazz on bassoon to rate it as jazz bassoon," Ross added. "Then, there was another tenor player, Graeme Lyall, a young guy with real good ideas. He's going to develop into something really good."



Ross says that Errol Buddle (above) plays great tenor and good enough jazz on bassoon to rate it as jazz bassoon... BUDDLE PHOTO COURTESY LEE BUDDLE. Below, L-R, are three musicians Ross heard in Sydney who impressed him for various reasons: Don Burrows, John Sangster and Graeme Lyall... PHOTO COURTESY SEEING THE RAFTERS



"Don Burrows," Ross continued, "is an excellent clarinetist and a very good alto player and plays good baritone too. But he's mostly hung up in the TV studios. And there's Stewart Speer, a good drummer who swings, and two bass players—Lyn Christie and Mike Ross. They alternate with one another with Judy Bailey's trio.



Stewart Speer (left), says Ross, is “a good drummer who swings” while Lyn Christie (below) is one of two bassists who alternate, playing in Judy Bailey’s trio...



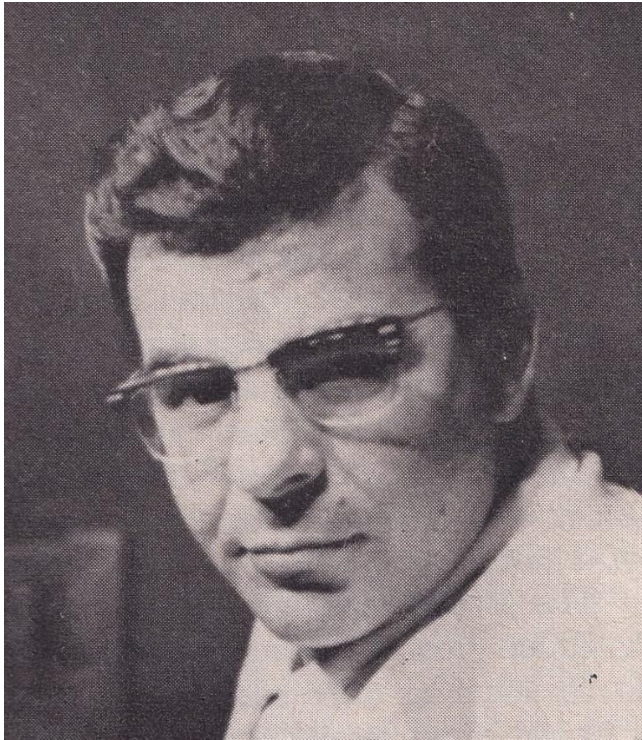
"A really fine drummer is Len Young. He's young and solos and swings like mad. He plays his head off." Sunday evenings in Sydney, said Ross, jazz can be found in a room called the Sky Lounge, played by a group led by pianist Terry Wilkinson. "This group plays for youngsters," Ross explained. "Burrows plays in it, along with a tenor man named Dave Rutledge. Wilkinson has his own band—a more commercial proposition—at the Chevron-Hilton..."



Len Young (above) "a really fine drummer", he "solos and swings like mad", says Ross. At the Sky Lounge Ross heard the Australian All Stars group, which included pianist Terry Wilkinson, tenor saxophonist Dave Rutledge (second from left), Don Burrows (far left, clarinet) and Freddy Logan (on double bass)...



Because of his personal experiences and his life at Synanon, the California narcotics-rehabilitation institution, Ross took an extra close look at the Australian musicians he met. "I found nobody, nobody," he emphasized, "using any kind of drugs in this scene. Not even any pot. I didn't even see anybody get lushed. Frankly, this amazed me.



Another shot of Arnold Ross, this time from Down Beat: Australian jazz musicians are "never aloof... in fact, they're all a gas..."

"In the larger clubs with bigger bands, where there are some jazz players, I didn't see it either. "My answer to this is that their social structure is not conducive to the use of narcotics or chemical stimulants of any kind. "Finally, the attitude of the musicians is so different from many of ours. They're never aloof, with that don't-bug-me attitude you find so frequently here. "In fact, they're all a gas."
