

## JOY YATES & DAVE MACRAE IN THE UK

by Christina Fraser\* in London

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*Joy Yates (above) and Dave MacRae (left): rare in any business to find a married couple who are able to combine a happy home life with a creative and productive work situation.... PHOTOS COURTESY ENCORE MAGAZINE*

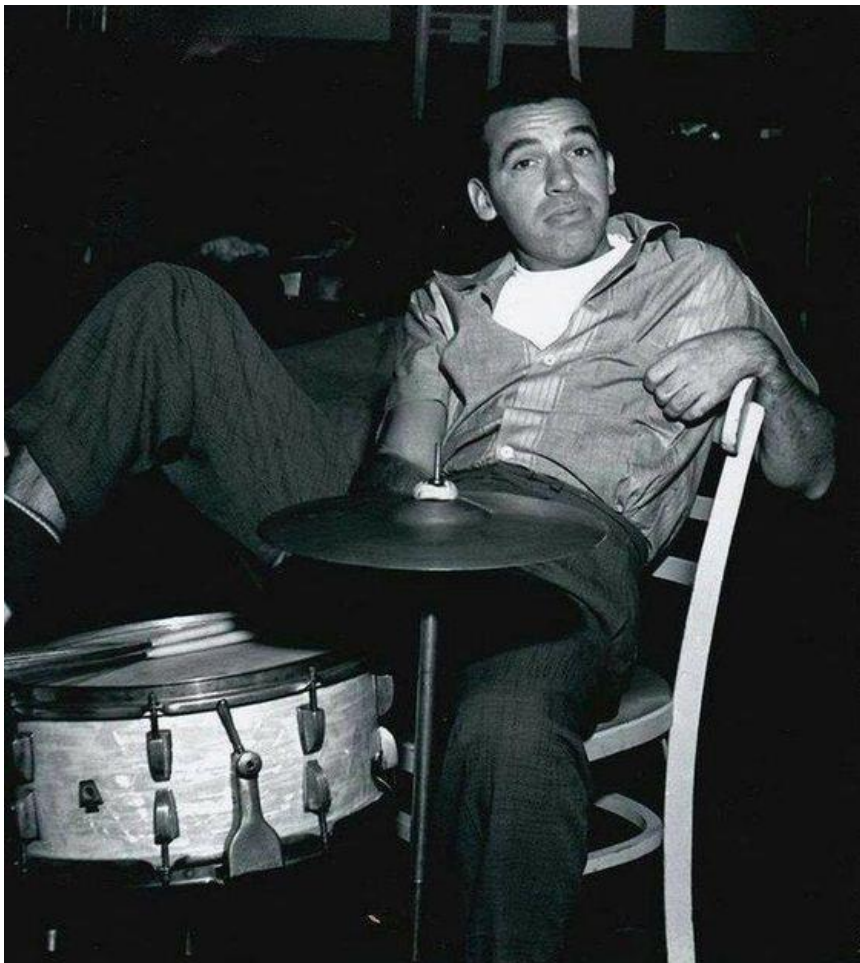
**I**t is rare in any business to find a married couple who are able to combine a happy home life with a creative and productive work situation. It was particularly enjoyable for me to be able to talk with such a duo this week: singer/songwriter Joy Yates and pianist Dave MacRae, who have surmounted the many problems inherent in this situation. They are among London's busiest musicians.

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*\*In 1978 when this was written Christina Fraser was Encore magazine's London correspondent.*

One wonders why such a couple decided to leave the security of a hard-won position in the upper echelons of the Australian jazz scene, for the relative obscurity and anonymity of life overseas. Dave and Joy left during the late 60's when the influence of American music was strong, and they felt the need to go to the source of all the energies they were feeling, and experience the scene first-hand.

They were not disappointed — in the short time they lived in California, their home became an "open house" for a cross-section of American musicians, and a variety of Australians who were also living on the West Coast of the US. At that time, these were people like Bruce Lynch (now bass player with Cat Stevens), Alan Broadbent (now pianist/arranger with Woody Herman) and Rick Laird (now bass player with Chick Corea).



*Drummer Buddy Rich: Dave wryly admits that when he landed the prestigious gig with Rich's big band, he was terrified... PHOTO COURTESY PINTEREST*

Rick was at that time with the Buddy Rich Big Band, and when Buddy's pianist left, Dave promptly auditioned. I asked him how he felt when he landed such a prestigious gig, and he wryly admitted that he was terrified! During this time, Joy had been writing and, like Dave, sitting in on impromptu jam sessions, but her talents had not gone unnoticed.

"Those were ridiculously exciting days to be involved in," Joy remembered. "A very good part of the American experience was that, apart from the jazz people around, there were country-rock people who were very good writers. We would have long music sessions of just sitting and talking about songs, and writing songs on the spot, trying out a few bars at a time."

After some work with Seals and Crofts, Joy became involved with a group called Time Capsule — formed to emulate the success of The Fifth Dimension. Time Capsule were signed up with World Pacific. The prodigious talents of Orson Welles, Dory Previn and Rick Marlowe (composer of *Taste Of Honey*) were invested in the success of the band, which worked together for a year before disintegrating, due to internal conflicts.

This group gave Joy opportunities to work with many top LA session players, such as Joe Sample, keyboard player with The Crusaders. Many of Joy's contacts in America were made through Russell Garcia, the legendary arranger (and author of *The Professional Arranger Composer*) who made himself known to her one night when she appeared on Australian television. He was impressed with her work, gave her valuable introductions in the States, and remains one of her closest friends.



*Russell Garcia, the legendary arranger and author of "The Professional Arranger Composer": he remains one of Joy's closest friends...*

During this time, Dave MacRae was travelling around the US with the Buddy Rich band. I asked about Buddy's reputation as a demanding bandleader. Dave agreed that the rumours were true, but added that Buddy never asked the band to do anything he didn't do himself.



Summing up his experiences with the Rich band, Dave explained: "It was a great event for me because, for the first time in my life, I was involved in the top line of the jazz world". He was astounded to find himself playing gigs where he was billed with such illustrious figures as Charlie Mingus, Duke Ellington and Cannonball Adderley.

Despite all this musical activity, bureaucratic problems were never far away, and their difficulties obtaining visas became insurmountable. They spent a lot of time and money trying to legitimise their working status. This problem was particularly acute working on the session scene because, in the US, all money is paid to musicians through the Union, and they were unable to fully resolve this situation.

When Buddy Rich took Dave to Europe for a tour in 1970, Joy decided to join him in London, and they arrived in England around Christmas, 1970. The determining factors in their decision to stay were purely sentimental — they met up with old friends in London. Combine this with their first sight of snow, and they were sold!

Aided and abetted by Aussie friends Brian Smith and Bruce Lynch, they acquainted themselves with the London music scene and, before long, Dave joined Ian Carr's Nucleus, and the Mike Gibbs Band. About this time Dave was featured on two albums with the legendary Marching Mole, which included ex-Soft Machine drummer, Robert Wyatt.

Another old friend, producer Dave MacKay, had contacted Joy and asked her to form a female vocal backing group to work with Cliff Richard —this included fellow Australian Janice Slater, and was named Bones. Through challenges like these, Joy learned the techniques involved in top session work, and sang, amongst others, with Olivia Newton-John and her guitarist/songwriter/ producer John Farrar.



*Bones in the early 70s, L-R, Janice Slater, Joy Yates, Bridget Lokelani Dudoit...*  
*PHOTO COURTESY FACEBOOK*

David MacKay offered Joy another opportunity to work with a multi-national group he was producing, called Esperanto — soon to be joined by Glen Shorrock (now lead singer with The Little River Band). The band signed with A & M Records and produced their first album, but Joy decided to quit. I asked her why.

"During the past three years," she recalled, "David and I had been separated as husband and wife through our individual commitments which, although all music, were in different directions. So we decided to try and amalgamate what we had to offer."

They talked their situation over with each other, and with friends in similar situations, and they soon found others who wanted to share their creative outlets, and who felt a cultural and musical empathy. These included Tony Richardson (saxophones), Bruce Lynch (bass), and Rick Miller (drums) — thus, the group Pacific Eardrum was born.



*Pacific Eardrum, with Jeff Seopardie (drums, at rear), below him MacRae (keyboards), below them in a row L-R, Billy Kristian (bass), Yates (vocals), Isaac Guillory (guitar), then in front Jim Cuomo (alto sax): feeling a cultural and musical empathy...*

Pacific Eardrum's second album *Beyond Panic* was released in England a few weeks ago. Currently, negotiations are in progress for a possible tour of Australia early in 1979, providing the backing and support for Max Merritt. Meanwhile, Dave is busy doing freelance sessions in London, and acts as musical director/arranger for *The Goodies* television show. Lately, he has been getting into record production, and the Walker Brothers' new LP is amongst his credits.



*Pacific Eardrum's second album "Beyond Panic" was released in England a few weeks ago...*

For her part, Joy has as many sessions as she can fit into a day (and often the night as well). But, she is more than willing to sacrifice these, if it benefits Pacific Eardrum.

There are still hurdles to cross in the future. One of their biggest difficulties is getting enough promotion for their album from a record company which is used to handling more overtly commercial bands (like Genesis). Another problem is finding suitable management to enable them to move away from the business side and hustling for gigs, and concentrate on the music —which is, after all, what these two talented people are best at.

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