

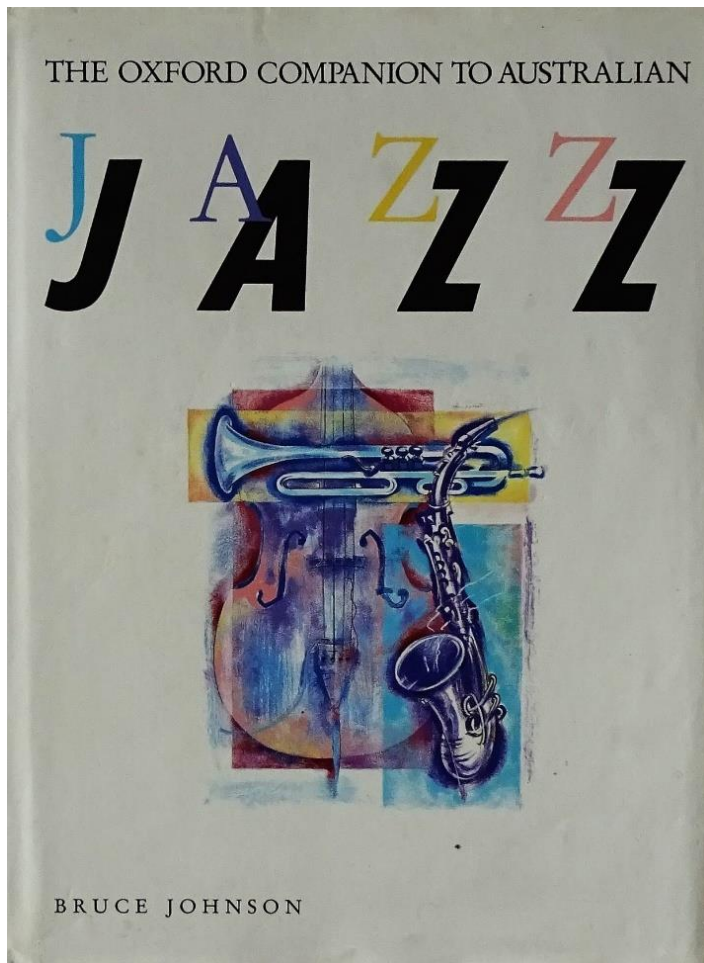
## **SYDNEY**

**by Bruce Johnson**

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*[The following is the 'Sydney' entry, pages 262-272, in Bruce Johnson's Oxford Companion to Australian Jazz, published in 1987]*

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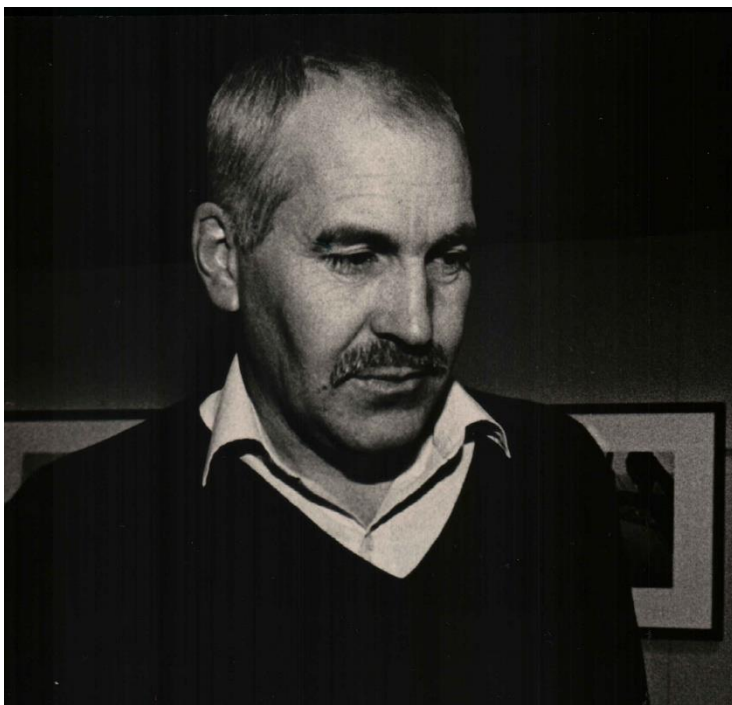


*At the beginning of this entry, Bruce Johnson writes: "Sydney Like Melbourne, Sydney has set the standards and determined the directions of various movements in Australian jazz. To a large extent, therefore the opening discussions which have traced the evolution of jazz attitudes have simultaneously disclosed developments in Sydney's jazz history, and less need be said on that general subject in this essay than in those covering other centres. At the same time, however, the scale of activity in Sydney makes it the most difficult city to deal with in terms of taking note of all those musicians who have sustained the music. In each individual entry I have attempted to include reference to other musicians who have not elsewhere been remarked. Even so, a dismaying number continues to slip through the net,*

*particularly so when we come to the burgeoning of young talent from the late '70s. The problems of determining what and who is significant in the '80s are discussed in an introductory essay. The number of musicians currently working in Sydney, and the intimidating comprehensiveness of their instrumental command, make the problem especially acute. The size of Sydney's jazz population means that many who would have been outstanding in another city have been swallowed up. Furthermore, the general level of musicianship is so high that there are many musicians in the city who go relatively unnoticed, but whose capacities are considerably greater than musicians who, being based elsewhere, have gained notable reputations; this volume itself reproduces the anomaly, but with limited space, that is unavoidable."*

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**J**azz in Sydney is not only distinctive in degree, but in kind. In terms of musical interchange, it is the most fluid scene in the country. An unparalleled level of freelancing gives the picture a bewildering diversity. Each entry pertaining to a Sydney musician is therefore likely to be more skeletal than those for other regions; most subjects are, in addition to regular band membership, busy as freelancers, deputizing on short- and long-term bases. This richness of interchange has had a reflexive relationship with the stylistic character of the local music. The lines of stylistic demarcation (traditional, modern, etc) are less clearly defined than anywhere else, not only within the jazz spectrum, but across the whole musical range. There are enclaves of purist exclusivism, but these are exceptions rather than norms, unlike the case in other centres.



*Bruce Johnson: it is useful to note the number of musicians listed in this book who are resident in Sydney but were born elsewhere. Sydney is the jazz capital of Australia...*  
*PHOTO CREDIT PETER SINCLAIR*

The jazz landscape is also diversified and enriched by the huge pool of studio and session musicians, members of which regularly but often unpredictably surface in a jazz setting. All these characteristics have had a self-perpetuating effect, in that they help to make Sydney a magnet for musicians throughout Australia, who in turn multiply the diversity of talent. As a statistical exercise, it is useful to note the number of musicians listed in this book who are resident in Sydney but were born elsewhere. Sydney is the jazz capital of Australia, with its particular strength lying in post-traditional styles. Again, however, even that reservation has less point than would its equivalent observation in, say, Melbourne; the stylistic blending robs the distinction between traditional and modern of much of the clarity it would retain elsewhere. As a familiar example, most of Graeme Bell's Sydney alumni have worked in bop and later styles, and without experiencing any disorientation.



*Most of the Sydney alumni of Graeme Bell (left) have worked in bop and later styles, without experiencing any disorientation...*  
PHOTO COURTESY ERIC MYERS

As in other parts of Australia, the distinctive character of Sydney's jazz began to emerge during and after the Second World War. Hitherto, the main distinction had been one of degree: Sydney has had more night life, with more musical opportunities, than other cities. Through the '30s Sydney developed a reputation as more musically advanced than Melbourne, in relation to the standards being set in the US. This circumstance and some of its corollaries have been discussed in introductory essays. At the same time, however, the war years represented the same watershed as in other

cities, as a new generation with new attitudes emerged into sudden prominence. Many faces and institutions receded during this period. The main public 'hot' music venue of the '30s, the Ginger Jar (by now renamed again the Oriental) closed in 1942. Its bandleader Jack Spooner moved to a new cabaret, the Rex, but was scarcely visible as a performer in the post-war period. Many pre-war band leaders and musicians retired, moved out of Australia (as in the case of Jim Davidson shortly after the war) or moved into more entrepreneurial roles—Dick Freeman was one of many who became involved in the management of dance circuits. The reasons for change were much as they were in other cities, including notably the gaps left by enlistment (which also encouraged the formation of all-woman dance bands), and the American presence, which gingered up audiences and musicians.



*Many pre-war band leaders moved out of Australia after the war, such as Jim Davidson, pictured here at his desk on his first day in London working for the BBC...PHOTO COURTESY A SHOWMAN'S STORY: THE MEMOIRS OF JIM DAVIDSON*

One immediate effect of the Americans was a fertilization of the nightclub/cabaret scene. The opening of Romano's new restaurant in 1938 was fortuitously timed in this respect; the Roosevelt, originally restricted to Allied officers, was opened to the public in 1944, and became one of the most popular night spots in Sydney. The Golden Key reopened in 1946, but had previously established itself as a nightclub for servicemen. American tastes also gave further stimulus to swing and hot jazz performance, and various 'jamming' venues appeared during and immediately after



*A jazz/ jitterbug session at the 2GB auditorium, Sydney, circa 1946. Music by the Port Jackson Jazz Band, with, from L-R, Bob Rowan (trombone), Doug Beck (guitar), Ken Flannery (trumpet), Clive Whitcombe (drums), Wally Wickham (bass), and pianist Jimmy Somerville (obscured)... PHOTO COURTESY WALLY WICKHAM & ASSOCIATED NEWSPAPERS LTD*

the war. As a record session club, the venerable Sydney Swing Music Club was little affected, but progressive forms of hot music were played at the 2KY Jazz and Swing Club (from 1943), the Baltimore in Pitt St (1943), jitterbug championships (as at

Leichhardt Town Hall, circa January 1944), the California coffee shop (from 1946), Actors' Equity Club (from 1947), Ellerston Jones's Rhythm Club (founded January, 1948). A number of clubs were opened specifically for, or generally aimed at, the American market, including the Yankee Doodle Club and the Booker T Washington Club, and these gave Sydney musicians the opportunity to mix with and play for audiences with well-informed and up-to-the-minute jazz tastes.

In the years immediately following the war, Sydney experienced the national intensification of jazz activity. Bop enjoyed some exposure with Wally Norman's record sessions in 1947 being an early focus. The Harbour City Six was one of the first Sydney bands to present small group bop in public, Ralph Mallen was an important early big band leader in the Stan Kenton mould, and a succession of clubs sprang up to foster progressive styles: the Stan Kenton Society (1949), the Society of Modern Music (1951), the Australian Jazz Club (1954). Traditional styles were promoted by Jack Parkes (trombone), who established the very important Port Jackson Jazz Band (1944), the Midway Stompers (1947), and the Riverside Jazz Band (1948).



*Personnel of the very first Port Jackson Jazz Band, 1944, L-R, Jack Petty (clarinet), Jack Parkes (trombone), John Sweeney (bass), Ken Flannery (trumpet), Alf Feeney (piano), Mal Cooper (drums)... PHOTO COURTESY BILL BOLDISTON*

Tony Howarth (trombone), who was later involved with early Sydney Jazz Club activities, and in the late '70s has been an important organizer in the Parkes/Forbes area of NSW, formed a traditional group as early as 1947. Duke Farrell's Illawarra Jazz Gang (1949), the West Side Stompers, with Bill Boldiston (clarinet), the Pacific

Coast (aka East Coast) Jazz Band, Frank Johnson's (not the same as the Melbourne bandleader) Harbour City Dixielanders (1950), were other early traditional groups whose activity has subsequently been obscured by the extensive documentation on Melbourne bands in that style during the late '40s to early '50s. These disparate jazz enterprises were brought together in the jazz concerts, which attracted enthusiastic audiences from their outset in 1947. Much of the music presented on these concerts was played by professional musicians who were employed in the nightclub and ballroom scene, and who welcomed this new music forum as a chance to play relatively unfettered jazz. Following a brief slump during the fluid and therefore uncertain period immediately after the war, Sydney's nightclub activity picked up and became, in many respects, an extended workshop for professional musicians with progressive jazz interests. Many clubs were fly-by-night operations, but some



*Trumpeter  
Wally Norman  
& Olive Lester  
in the  
Roosevelt  
Restaurant,  
1944... PHOTO  
COURTESY  
AUSTRALIAN  
JAZZ MUSEUM*

premises became institutions, even if under a succession of names. Romano's and the Roosevelt had comparatively long histories under those names. Sammy Lee's, opened in 1949, became the Flamingo (1951), the Sheridan (1954), the Pigalle (by 1960), and briefly, the Diamond Horseshoe, under which fading sign it currently stands derelict in Oxford St opposite Centennial Park. Christy's reopened under the more famous name Chequers in 1951, and the Orchid Room changed its name to Andre's within a year of opening in 1954.

The Hayden, Golds', the Stork Club, the Silver Ash, were other nightclubs/restaurants which constituted a sort of woodwork from which Sydney's progressive jazz musicians emerged to play the jazz concerts from the late '40s through the '50s. The concerts in some ways represented in microcosm one of the distinctive features of the Sydney jazz scene in that they presented countless combinations and permutations of musicians, both amateur and professional, with

interests ranging from 'righteous' jazz to relatively commercial cabaret material. A man who led a small progressive group one night would be likely to be playing in the section of a Glen Miller-style big band the next, and on another occasion filling in in a more or less ad hoc dixieland group. Many of the perennial leaders were also regular sidemen, and familiar faces in the early period included Ralph Mallen, Bela Kanitz, Les Welch, Ron Falson, Wally Norman, Enzo Toppano, Johnny Best, Billy Weston, Ron Gowans, Jack Allan, Gus Merzi, Jack Brokensha. Later, Frank Marcy, Bob Gibson, Bob Limb, Pat Caplice, Lee Gallagher, Keith Silver, Joe Singer, and at various times, the Mannix brothers Ron and Bill, were prominent.



*Familiar faces in the early period included piano accordionist Gus Merzi (left), pictured playing at Romano's restaurant in 1945, & trumpeter Ron Falson & trombonist Billy Weston (pictured below together) ... PHOTOS COURTESY DON'T WORRY BABY THEY'LL SWING THEIR ARSES OFF*





In a concert situation, vocalists were particularly popular; Georgina de Leon and Edwin Duff had explicit jazz credentials, and Norman Erskine and Larry Stellar leaned more heavily towards cabaret/variety material. The more traditional styles of jazz were presented by various groups, including many of those referred to above, with the Port Jackson Jazz Band as the main standard-bearers as a group, and Jim Somerville frequently leading bands assembled on a short-term basis through the traditional to mainstream range. Other important participants in the Sydney concerts have been acknowledged under individual entries. As the concerts lost momentum in the mid-'50s, most of the musicians disappeared from jazz settings into television and radio, restaurants, licensed club', teaching, copying and arranging, various forms of production and promotion, and into the nightclubs, although for various reasons this last category was also soon to languish.



*Pianist Jim Somerville (above, pictured in 1948) frequently led bands assembled on a short-term basis through the traditional to mainstream range.... PHOTO COURTESY DAILY TELEGRAPH*

Concerts did continue, though with greatly diminished frequency and altered character, the main change being in favour of imported performers: Gene Krupa (1954), Buddy de Franco, Frank Sinatra, Winifred Atwell, Ted Heath (all in 1955), Stan Kenton (1957), and from 1960 to 1965, Dave Brubeck, George Shearing, Sarah Vaughan, Dizzy Gillespie, Jonah Jones, Mel Tormé, Ella Fitzgerald, Kenny Ball, the Eddie Condon package, Thelonious Monk. Most of these were presented at the Sydney Stadium.



*From the mid-50s jazz concerts in Sydney were dominated by imported performers, including Americans Jonah Jones (left) and Thelonious Monk (below)...JONES PHOTO COURTESY A CENTURY OF JAZZ; MONK PHOTO COURTESY THE GUARDIAN*



The mid-'50s witnessed considerable changes in the entertainment industry, two important factors in Sydney being the advent of TV and of late-night hotel trading. Nightclubs were to feel the strongest effects of these changes, but TV in particular, and the arrival of the long playing record, had more far-reaching effects, including the gradual winding down of the venerable Sydney Swing Music Club.

If jazz ceased to be a broad-based public recreation, it nonetheless has never disappeared completely in Sydney. Its continuity was ensured by a determined minority for whom the music was inherently rather than commercially compelling. Mainstream to modern venues were established at the Sky Lounge, circa 1956 or 1957, where, in the interests of dancers, the emphasis was on relatively well-established mainstream music, the Biltmore, Club 11 (which opened 13 January, 1957), and the Mocambo at Newtown.



*The Mocambo in Newtown: one of the venues where jazz was played by those for whom the music was inherently rather than commercially compelling... PHOTO CREDIT THOMAS BRIAN*

Overshadowing all of these, however, was El Rocco, which became not only the centre of the modern movement in Sydney during its lifetime, but one of the seminal venues in Australia's jazz history. Apart from activities sketched elsewhere, its reputation spread with such compulsion that many musicians regularly commuted from Melbourne simply to play or listen at El Rocco for a weekend. The interest which it generated led to the establishment of other venues such as the shortlived Cellar in Liverpool St, and the Parramatta Modern Jazz Club.

Traditional jazz found a similar focus in the foundation of the Sydney Jazz Club in 1953, under the aegis of which several bands, notably the Paramount Jazz Band and the Black Opal Jazz Band, and hundreds of enthusiasts, were able to satisfy their appetite for the music in the years preceding the boom of the early '60s. The spread of the 'jazz pub' venue also provided an outlet for the sudden explosion of activity from around 1960. Mery Acheson's residency at the Criterion was an early and durable example. These pubs generally favoured the more extroverted 'good-time'

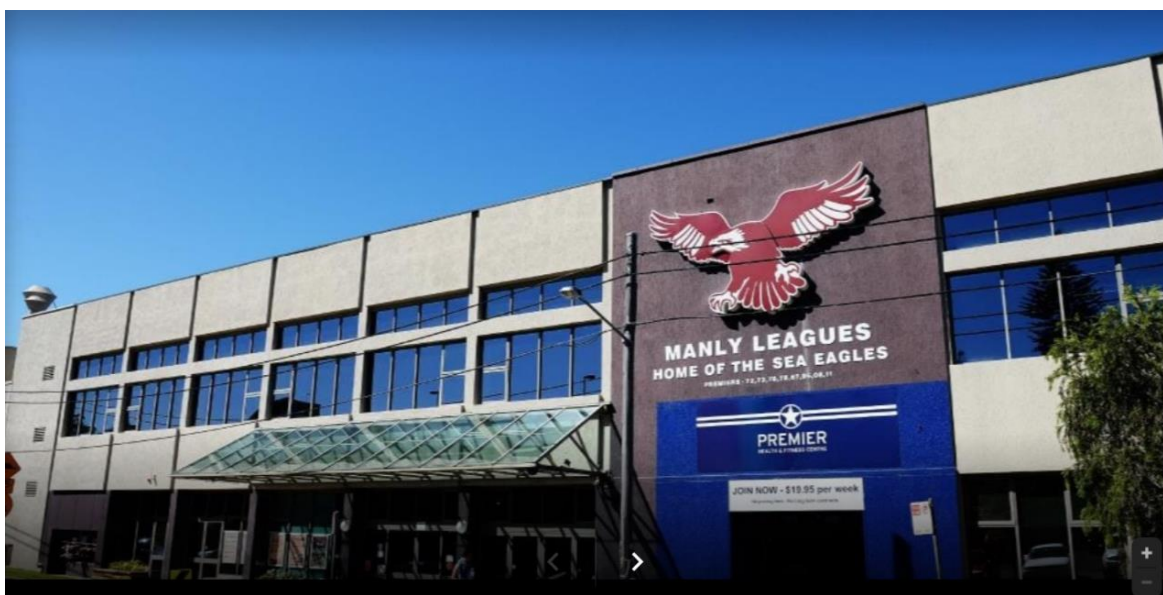
flavour of traditional jazz, and among the scores of pub venues which came and went, at short order, the Macquarie in Woolloomooloo, Adams, and the Criterion, were virtual institutions. Later in the '60s but in due time no less celebrated, were the Brooklyn and the Orient in George St across the road from Ironworkers' Hall where the Sydney Jazz Club held its functions, and the Windsor Castle in Paddington. The Ling Nam was somewhat unusual, not only in being a restaurant with an explicit jazz policy, but also in presenting at different times a variety of jazz styles from mainstream to traditional, with a group led by Noel Gilmour, to the Port Jackson and Riverside jazz bands. The main venues for more modern forms of jazz in the early '60s continued to be El Rocco and the Sky Lounge, with short-lived ventures like the Jazz Workshop in Orwell St, Kings Cross, the Bird and Bottle in Paddington, and Basil Kirchin's big band at the Pigalle.



*Pianist Barrie Heidenreich with unidentified bassist & drummer Lenny Young performing at one of the short-lived ventures, the Bird & Bottle in Paddington...*  
*PHOTO COURTESY JUDY BAILEY*

The national jazz slump from the mid-'60s led to widespread terminations of jazz policy including at institutions like Adams, the Criterion, and the Sky Lounge. A Jazz Appreciation Society established in August, 1967, and in which Doc Willis was a moving spirit, struggled for about a year before petering out. Live entertainment was now dominated by electric pop, and the professional musicians who were a significant repository of progressive jazz talents were increasingly earning a living in the commercial field of licensed clubs. It is important to make a parenthetical explanation of this term. The multitude of venues comprehended by the term 'club' in Australia is compounded in NSW by these entertainment venues. In this book I

have referred to jazz clubs, which are centres of relatively well-informed and dedicated interest in jazz as opposed to all other forms of twentieth-century popular music, excluding rock, which in any case they generally predated. There have also been the 'casual' clubs, primarily a feature of Melbourne in the late '50s to early '60s, and discussed elsewhere. The phrase 'licensed club', particularly as used in NSW, generally refers to RSL or sporting clubs. In many instances these are virtually community entertainment centres, incorporating a fully equipped auditorium for floor shows which present top-line local and imported performers, restaurants, bistros, bars, a cinema, and ancillary facilities like swimming pools and saunas. Primary sources of revenue are liquor sales and poker machines; it is the latter, licensed in 1956, and confined to NSW, which have enabled these clubs to become so economically significant in that state.



*Licensed clubs such as Manly Leagues Club (above) provided secure employment for many musicians who might otherwise have directed energy into support for jazz enterprises...*

From the '60s until the growth of home video and the advent of random breath testing in the '80s, these clubs (collectively known among musicians as 'clubland') have dominated live entertainment in Sydney, and have been probably the largest single employer of musicians in the popular field, particularly the fully literate professional who is able to back acts at short notice and with minimum rehearsal. In terms of jazz, that means, most frequently, the musician with a command of mainstream conventions. The rise of the clubs complemented the jazz slump of the late '60s in Sydney. On the one hand, they were a competing focus of musical entertainment. At the same time, they provided secure employment for many musicians who might otherwise have directed energy into support for jazz enterprises.

Paradoxically, this slump created a situation which, although requiring further investigation, I believe encouraged a brief efflorescence of big band activity, embracing the Daly-Wilson band which was formed in 1969. One of the problems of holding a big band together is the competing offers from small groups which require no rehearsal, and which an accomplished freelancer can rely on in Sydney if there is a healthy jazz scene. If that scene withers, however, a big band with a committed jazz policy is ironically able to count on continuity of support from musicians with an emotional need to play in at least some approximation of a jazz context. In the late '60s, a number of big bands came into existence, and if they were unable to find regular employment, they nonetheless maintained a stable rehearsal existence which would probably not have been possible if the various members had easily been able to satisfy a wish to play jazz as a way of 'letting off steam' denied them in more commercial employment. In addition to the Daly-Wilson band, there were big groups being led by Dick Lowe (sax), Billy Weston and Edwin Duff, and Peter Lane.



*The jazz slump from the mid-'60s perhaps encouraged a brief efflorescence of big band activity, embracing the Daly-Wilson band (above) which was formed in 1969...*

The renaissance of jazz activity which spread across Australia in the '70s was being intimated in Sydney in a new expansion of the pub scene from the beginning of the decade. The Vanity Fair and Albury Hotels were two new jazz venues destined to enjoy long lives. They were followed by the Lord Roberts, the Forest Lodge, the White Horse in Newtown, and by 1974 the Grand National in Paddington and the durable Unity Hall in Balmain. The jazz pub has been a crucial element in Australia,

especially since late-night trading crept across the continent. It represents a distinct subculture which receives little public attention as compared with the cosmetically more acceptable jazz bistros and restaurants. The latter venues have the air of the slightly special occasion, the audiences are discrete in the sense that they vary from week to week, and on any given night, the various groups constituting that audience will be strangers to one another. The jazz pubs attract a different kind of clientele and fulfil a different social function: the audiences tend to constitute a coherent community which is cognate with the members of the band. The pub and its jazz sessions constitute a fixed point in the social life of that community, and not a novel or special occasion. The jazz pub is one of the unifying threads in the local culture, having a folk function far more akin to the earliest role played by the music than the rather artificial, but more publicized, concert situation, in which everything is done to emphasize the separateness of the musicians from the everyday life of the audience, who are atomized and static. The jazz pub is the primary sustaining force of the music as a component of everyday life, and although those who lead bands in these venues receive less recognition than the regular concert performers, they are playing a more important sustaining role. Sydney is fortunate to have a steadfast corps of musicians who maintain this vital underground foundation.



*One of Sydney's durable jazz pubs, the Unity Hall Hotel in Balmain...*

In addition to others mentioned elsewhere, the bands assembled by musicians such as Dave Ridyard (clarinet), Rod Lawliss (clarinet), Don de Silva (banjo), Ian Barnes (trumpet), Rex Gazey (tuba), should be recorded, in both apposite senses. The pubs generally favour traditional groups, and again I believe it is because in so many ways the earlier styles of the music are historically more compatible with the idea of an extended community.

The '70s also saw the establishment of other key venues, primarily in the bistro style. Bruce Viles opened the Rocks Push (later aka Old Push) in October, 1971, and was later associated with The Basement (opened August, 1973). Other venues which began longstanding jazz policies in the seventies were Soup Plus (1974) and Red Ned's (1975). All four of these maintained jazz for up to six nights a week.



*Bruce Viles opened the Rocks Push (later aka Old Push) in October, 1971, and was later associated with The Basement (opened August, 1973)...*

Jazz also received what might be called institutional support from various sources: the jazz studies programme at the NSW Conservatorium (1973), where the staff has included Howie Smith, Don Burrows, Bill Motzing, and Dick Montz; the inauguration of community radio (which, collectively and in some cases individually, presents more jazz than the established AM frequency stations), beginning with 2MBS—FM in 1974; the inauguration of Australia's first Jazz Action Society, in Sydney, 1974; the foundation of the Campbelltown Jazz Club in 1975, which had some effect in decentralizing the jazz movement by creating another focus well out of the city and inner suburbs; jazz representation in various government and privately sponsored festivals, including Shelley's Jazz Festival (1978), Sydney Festivals, and Sydney Jazz Festivals which grew out of the summer jazz clinics organized by Greg Quigley in the late '70s.



*American Howie Smith, the first head of the jazz studies programme at the NSW Conservatorium, which commenced in 1973...PHOTO COURTESY JAZZ DOWN UNDER*



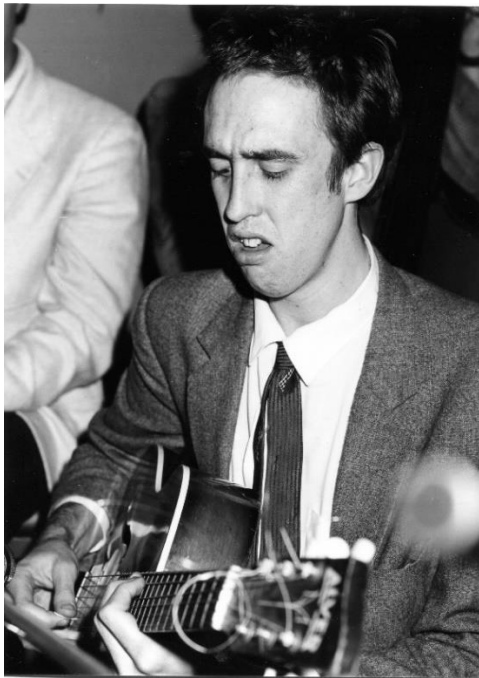
All of these developments have produced tangible results in the form of important musicians and bands, particularly in the mid-'70s. The Last Straw, Out to Lunch, Kindred Spirits, and Jazz Co-op which grew out of an informal alliance between The Basement and the conservatorium courses, became platforms for vigorous and creative innovation. The momentum thus developed was maintained subsequently in Sydney through the Young Northside Big Band, which provided an apprenticeship for some of the most important young musicians in the '80s, and regular festivals like the Manly Jazz Carnival, both of these being the work of pianist John Speight (born 21/6/35). Although the spotlight has fallen mainly on Daly-Wilson, the Northside, and the Morrison Brothers Big Bad Band in succession, a number of others have maintained at the very least, and for varying periods of time, a rehearsal existence.



*The Young Northside Big Band, conducted by John Speight, performing at the Manly Jazz Carnival in 1980...*

In addition to the big bands set up in connection with the conservatorium, there have been groups led by Ian Boothey, Terry Rae, John Colborne-Veel, Craig Benjamin, the late Dick Lowe, George Brodbeck, and Adrian Ford, in styles ranging from that of the '30s to contemporary approaches. The '80s have seen an explosion of Sydney's jazz population on a scale not witnessed since the late '50s. Some of this has affected the traditional end of the spectrum, as for example, in the case of the revived Nat Oliver band. The inauguration of Sunday hotel trading in 1980 has provided many traditionally oriented bands with an extra opportunity, but bop and post-bop groups

have also become visible in pubs on a new scale, as in the case of Joe Lane's groups in the Criterion. Indeed, the recent growth of jazz activity has been overwhelmingly in favour of post-traditional styles. The following representative list of new generation musicians who are making a mark includes an impressive number of graduates from the conservatorium, where the emphasis is on more 'modern' forms: Tony Buck (drums), Steve Elphick and Phil Scorgie (bass), Guy Strazzullo, Steve McKenna, Tony Barnard, Ian Date (guitars), Mark Isaacs, Michael Bartolomei, Kevin Hunt (pianos) — and of course others mentioned elsewhere. Barnard (son of Bob) and Date project a consciousness of earlier traditions, though the former is a more mainstream stylist.



*Guitarists Ian Date (left) and Tony Barnard (pictured below fourth from left, with his Five Guitar Band), project a consciousness of earlier traditions...GUITAR BAND PHOTO COURTESY TONY BARNARD*



Sydney's jazz population has also been augmented over the last decade by the arrival of newcomers from elsewhere and the return of musicians who have been working for long periods overseas, all this on a scale which invites a study of its own. The former category includes New Zealander Peter Cross, Americans John Hoffman (trumpet), Vince Genova (piano), Steve Giordano (reeds), and Indonesians Bill Saragih (vibes/flute), who first arrived in 1972 but only began to make his presence felt after returning from revisiting Indonesia in 1979, and young prodigy Indra Lesmana (piano), who has since settled in the US.



*Indonesians Bill Saragih (left), and young prodigy Indra Lesmana (below) are two of the many newcomers who have augmented Sydney's jazz population... LESMANA PHOTO  
CREDIT PETER SMETANA*



Musicians arriving from elsewhere in Australia include John Callaghan (bass) who arrived from Melbourne in 1978 to join John Colborne-Veel. Returning musicians include Barry Canham (drums), Don Harper (violin), Eddie Bronson (reeds), Dave MacRae (piano), Andy Brown (bass). The pool of local jazz talent has in the meantime continued to be fed by the usual influx of musicians from interstate (including Glenn Henrich and Paul Millard), wishing to take advantage of the more extensive musical opportunities in Sydney. A special mention ought also to be made

of the singers who are active in local jazz settings, partly because singers find themselves in a special situation for a number of reasons. A very large number of vocalists are essentially club musicians who are occasionally seen playing jazz concerts, and these cannot be said to be having a substantial effect in preserving a jazz tradition. There are others who confine themselves to more explicitly jazz work, and they face difficulties which instrumentalists of equivalent competence do not have to cope with. Above all, they tend to find that unless they lead their own groups, they will rarely be able to survive from week to week since there is less freelance employment for singers. The reasons are many and not always musical. They include matters of repertoire and sometimes unusual key signatures, but also a band's reluctance to share payment equally with someone who only performs, say, 60 per cent of the material presented. These are problems which singers everywhere face; they become prominent in Sydney simply because there are so many jazz-based singers. They tend to gain their exposure through 'guest' appearances or through that energetic activity known as 'sitting in'. Sandie White, Barbara Canham, Julie Amiet, Jan Adele, Trude Aspeling, Chris McNulty, Lorraine Silk, Joy Mulligan, Bobby Scott, Marie Wilson, all fit to some extent into this rarely publicized category, in spite of the fact that several of them have made highly praised recordings; Wilson's has enjoyed the rare compliment of being picked up for American distribution.



*Barbara Canham, one of the many Sydney singers who tend to gain their exposure through 'guest' appearances, or through that energetic activity known as 'sitting in'... PHOTO CREDIT PETER SINCLAIR*

Some of the important new blood in Sydney since the late '70s has made its presence known more through important bands than on an individual basis. The Benders, Jon Rose's groups, James Morrison's groups, Roger Frampton's Intersection, John Hoffman's Big Band, and Supermarket, have all provided experience for some of the hugely talented young musicians emerging recently. Three groups making significant but in many ways distinctive contributions should be noted. Crossfire is a fusion band, but with no ambiguity about its jazz commitment. Formed in the mid '70s,

most of its material has been written by band members Jim Kelly (guitar) and Mick Kenny (trumpet/keyboards). Other members are Ian Bloxsom, Tony Buchanan (reeds/flute), Greg Lyon (bass guitar), and Mark Riley (drums) (until he was killed in a motor cycle accident at the age of 23 in 1984). The band achieved considerable popularity yet without compromising its musical integrity: it has recorded extensively, including with Michael Franks, and has toured in SE Asia for Musica Viva, the US, and Europe, where it was acclaimed at the Montreux Jazz Festival in 1982.



*Crossfire, L-R, Greg Lyon, Jim Kelly, Mark Riley, Tony Buchanan, Ian Bloxsom, and Mick Kenny... PHOTO COURTESY JAZZ MAGAZINE*



*Crossfire on an international tour, here in Mumbai with (far left) the director of the Jazz Yatra festival Niranjan Jhaveri... PHOTO COURTESY MUSICA VIVA*

The band was in recess, 1983-84, and was revived in November, 1985 at The Basement with David Jones (drums), Sunil de Silva (percussion), Victor Rounds (bass), Wayne Goodwin (violin), as well as Kenny, Kelly, Bloxsom, and Buchanan.

Women and Children First is a Sydney-based band which includes a number of ex-Melbourne musicians. Sandy Evans (reeds/flute/vocals) worked on the rock circuit with Great White Noise, and with an all-woman jazz group, the Midnight Toe Jammers, before she formed Women and Children in 1983. Although drawing some of its repertoire from the bop library, the band's importance lies more in its contemporary/experimental work, fertilized by the diversity of background of its members. This embraces rock, jazz, commercial pit band work, and multi-media experimentation. Steve Elphick (bass/trumpet/vocal) is, with Evans, the longest serving member, other originals having been Indra Lesmana (keyboards) and Tony Buck (drums).



*A shot showing three members of Women & Children First in performance, L-R, Indra Lesmana, Sandy Evans, Steve Elphick... PHOTO CREDIT PETER SINCLAIR*

By 1985 the band had been augmented by Cleis Pearce (viola/percussion/vocals), with Jamie Fielding and Jonathan Glass, both from Melbourne, replacing Lesmana and Buck respectively. Apart from the vitality of its music, one of the most encouraging aspects of the group is the considerable success it has achieved in presenting highly innovative music to audiences outside Sydney, in the course of tours throughout 1984 and 1985, including a national tour assisted by the touring and access fund of the Australia Council.

The Sydney Jazz Quintet brings together some of the young musicians who emerged from the conservatorium jazz course in Sydney. Brent Stanton (reeds), is the leader (and the band is sometimes presented under his name). He arrived from New Zealand in 1978, studied in New York in 1981, and has worked in other groups including Bruce Cale's. Warwick Alder from Newcastle is arguably the most interesting and consistently advancing of the young trumpet players to emerge in the late '70s, his work enriched by a grounding in the whole jazz tradition. He has led his own groups and works with the Morrison Brothers band. Likewise guitarist Steve Brien, who, with ex-Brisbane drummer Ron Lemke, has also worked with Keith Stirling. The band's repertoire and style extend historically from the bop period onward. Its particular importance lies in two things: one is the cohesion it has developed as a consequence of the stability of its personnel in a city where most groups in this style are pick-up bands; the other, and potentially more important, is that, with the backing of Musica Viva, the quintet regularly presents school lecture/recitals, thus introducing jazz to the only section of the population able to ensure the future of the music.



*The Sydney Jazz Quintet, L-R, Ron Lemke, Warwick Alder, Brent Stanton, Steve Brien, Craig Scott. With the backing of Musica Viva, this group regularly presents school lecture/recitals, thus introducing jazz to the only section of the population able to ensure the future of the music...*

The 'institutional' support which Australian jazz has begun to enjoy has been fortified in Sydney through a number of non-government bodies, some of which, such as the Jazz Action Society, have been referred to elsewhere. In the early '80s. Keys Music Association (KMA) fostered experimental and other forms of contemporary

improvised work on a very considerable scale, and it is a puzzling circumstance that this organization has received so little notice. KMA grew out of a band called Keys, named in memory of young reed player Martin Keys who died in 1973. Personnel has fluctuated, with members including Mark Simmonds and Daniel Fine (reeds), Steve Elphick, Raoul Hawkins (trombone/bass), Robin Gador (bass), Azo Bell (guitar), Peter Fine (keyboards/reeds), Searle Indyk (violin/viola), Peter Dehlsen, and Greg Sheahan (drums). The band's commitment to contemporary jazz-based improvisation found further expression with the foundation of Keys Music Association in 1979. The aim of the association was to create performance possibilities for like-minded musicians through the promotion of concerts and concert series, broadcasts on 2MBS-FM, and recordings. KMA introduced the Dale Barlow Quartet (later The Benders), and Mark Simmonds's Freeboppers.

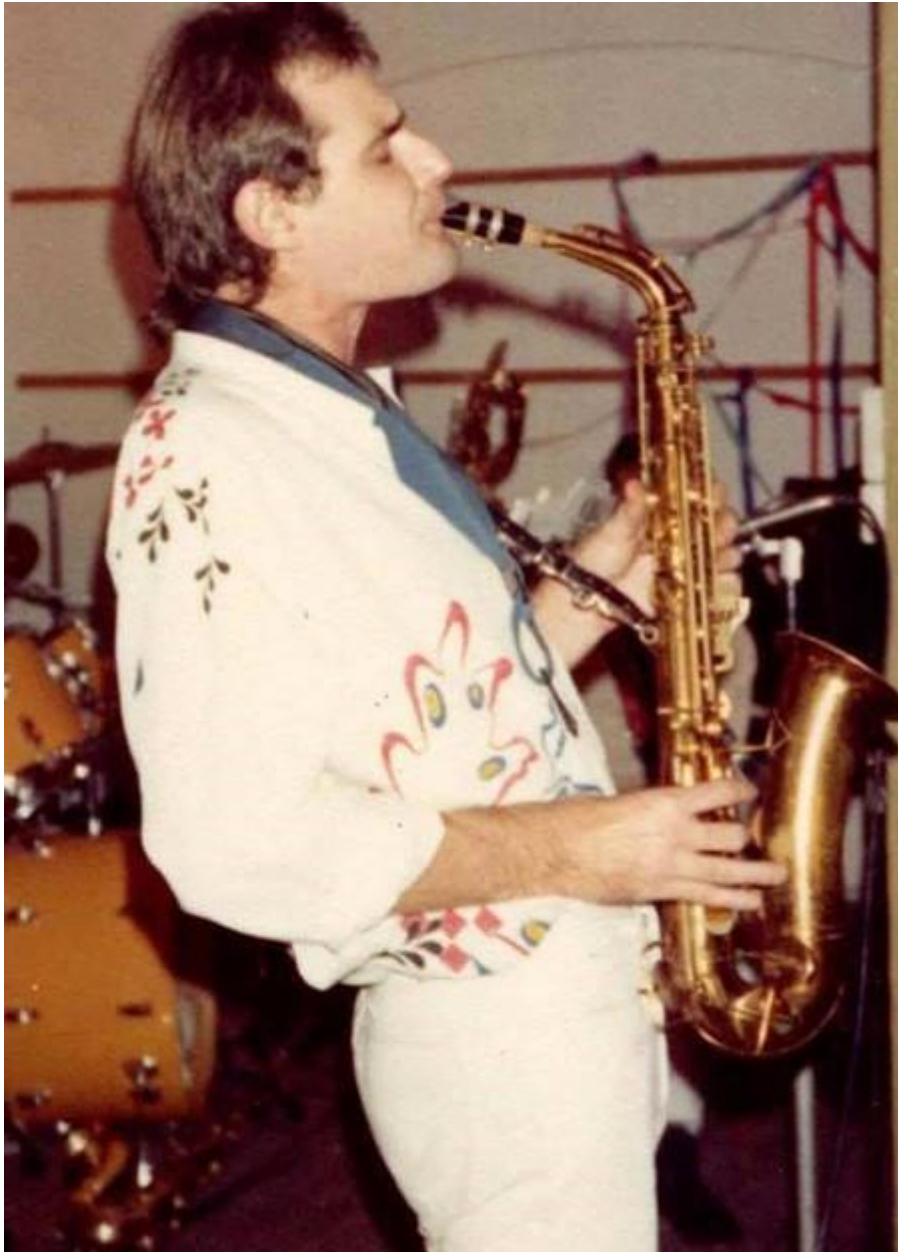


*An early version of Mark Simmonds's Freeboppers, L-R, Azo Bell (guitar), unidentified drummer, Miroslav Bukovsky (trumpet), Simmonds (tenor sax), unidentified keyboardist... PHOTO COURTESY AZO BELL*

Mark Bentley Simmonds (born 21/7/59, Christchurch, NZ) is one of the most authoritative musicians to appear on Sydney's contemporary scene since the late '70s, with an eclectic background that includes the rock band Old '55, in which he replaced Wilbur Wilde. Simmonds was a founder member of Keys, and while working with the Dynamic Hepnotics, a rock-based group, in 1986, was also preparing an album with The Freeboppers. KMA has provided support for virtually



every major contemporary jazz musician to emerge in Sydney in the '80s, including Sandy Evans. By 1982 there were around 30 musicians involved in the association, and as recently as June 1985, KMA was still involved in concert promotion through The Benders' farewell concert at The Basement.



*Saxophonist Mark Simmonds: one of the most authoritative musicians to appear on Sydney's contemporary scene since the late '70s... PHOTO CREDIT PETER SMETANA*

In 1983 Eric Myers began discussions which led to a public meeting on 25 July 1984 at which the Sydney Improvised Music Association (SIMA) was established with the objective of facilitating the 'performance and recording of contemporary improvised music'. The association was in part the expression of disappointment at what was felt

to be the Jazz Action Society's retreat into more established names and styles. Although SIMA has only been in existence for two years at the time of writing, it has demonstrated great energy and administrative ability in mounting concert series with emphasis upon non-commercial music featuring both local and imported musicians, frequently with subsidies from government bodies. The work of SIMA has been particularly important in view of the difficulty even in Sydney of supporting regular jazz venues on a sustained diet of contemporary music. The Paradise Jazz Cellar wound down its first phase of jazz policy through 1983; Jenny's Wine Bar (later briefly reopened as Paco's) lasted for only 1982-84. Other attempts to sustain non-commercial venues, like the Jazzbah in Petersham (later used as the premises for Willie Qua's Quill Club) founded under the weight of local apathy to experiment, innovation, or even just forcefully uncompromising post-mainstream jazz.



*Willie Qua on drums: he located his Quill Club on the premises of the Jazzbah in Petersham... PHOTO COURTESY RAY MARTIN*

Nonetheless, Sydney in 1986 is the most fertile centre for what is popularly known as 'modern' jazz. There are many reasons for this, and not all of them are a cause for satisfaction since they bode ill for the future of the full and rich range of jazz styles. One of these is the retirement of many musicians who are steadfast, even ideological, traditionalists. As the boom of the '60s receded, opportunities diminished and at the same time those who sustained the trad boom are now 20 years older. Jazz, especially traditional, is a high-energy music which, in the absence of extensive electronic/electric boosting, requires very considerable physical stamina, especially in the horns. Age wearies. Another important factor in the increasing predominance

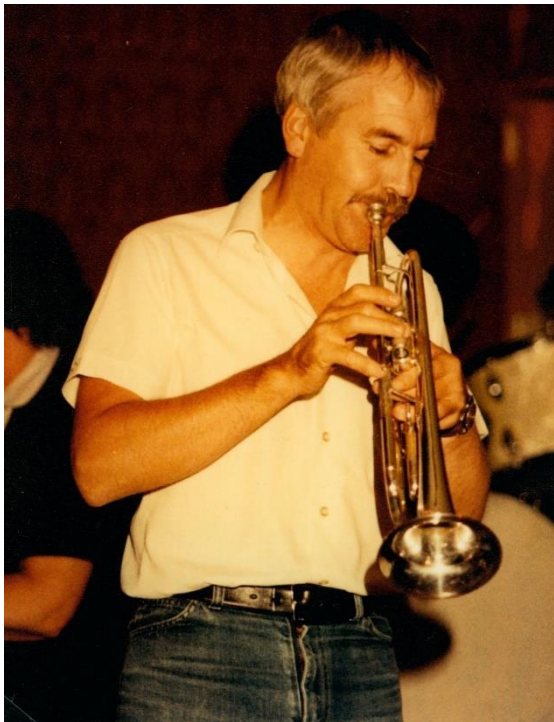
of later schools of jazz in Sydney is the stylistic development of many players. The flux, the comparatively high level of musical curiosity, the relatively low level of purist exclusivism, all encourage (or at the very least, do not discourage) stylistic advancement. To a greater extent than anywhere else in Australia, the musicians who formed the corps of traditional groups through the '60s and '70s are now working in mainstream to bop settings.



*There has been a movement of musicians from club work back to jazz, and the majority of these musicians, like saxophonist Freddie Wilson, pictured above with (from left) Martin Highland, Craig Scott & Marty Mooney; and bassist Cliff Barnett (pictured below with guitarist Jan Gold and vibist Pat Caplice), are mainstream in their jazz preferences...BARNETT PHOTO COURTESY DAN BARNETT*



The tendency in favour of later styles has also been accelerated by the bewildering proliferation of young musicians in contemporary styles, many of whom have come through apprenticeships—club workshops, conservatorium courses, clinics—which ignore pre-bop and even pre-Coltrane jazz history. The '80s have also seen the re-emergence into the jazz scene of many musicians who for 20 years or so have directed their energies into the non-jazz settings of the licensed clubs. In many instances this is simply a reflection of a new career phase: these musicians have seen their children grow up, have reached a stage of their lives where the regular income from club work is less important, and can now enjoy the luxury of more stimulating if less commercial work. In addition, the club scene has suffered from the effects of home video and random breath testing: at least the first of these (and, I intuit, the second) is more likely to affect the sensibility that had formerly found entertainment in the clubs, than that which is dedicated to jazz. All of these considerations have encouraged a movement of musicians from club work back to jazz, and the majority of these musicians, like Freddie Wilson (reeds) and Cliff Barnett, are mainstream in their jazz preferences.



*Author Bruce Johnson, here on trumpet: he writes that in 1986 Sydney remains the major Australian centre for post-traditional jazz, and the only city in which such styles actually dominate the scene...PHOTO COURTESY AUSTRALIAN JAZZ MUSEUM*

In 1986 Sydney remains the major Australian centre for post-traditional jazz, and the only city in which such styles actually dominate the scene. The 'curve' which has contributed to this situation continues to rise: progressive jazz thinking has a clear future in Sydney, though inevitably the more innovative musicians continue to struggle for a public forum. As elsewhere, the biggest question mark in the Sydney jazz scene hangs over the long-term future of its traditional varieties.