

## REFLECTING ON “REFLECTIONS OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA”: A BICENTENNIAL COMMISSION

by Garry Lee\*

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*Garry Lee on vibes: he arrived in Perth in November, 1983...*

**I**n mid-1985 I was responsible for initiating a unique jazz project in Western Australia that created a story and history that needs to be told. There was an advertisement in the daily WA newspaper – *West Australian* – calling for applications for Composer Commissions to celebrate Australia’s Bicentenary that would take place in 1988. The ad was submitted by the Australian Bicentennial Authority [ABA]. Information on this was also disseminated by then WA Jazz coordinator, Adrian Kenyon.

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*\*Garry Lee is a leading Perth jazz musician (vibraphone, guitar) and educator. He was a member of the WAAPA jazz staff when the program commenced in 1984 and now teaches in the WA secondary system. Garry was administrator of the WA Youth Jazz Orchestra, early 1985, and then Jazz Coordinator of WA from late 1985 to 1992.*

At this time my wife, Sue, and I had only lived in Perth for about 18 months. We left Sydney in September 1983 spending about ten weeks travelling through NSW, Victoria, South Australia and then arriving in Perth in November. Our reasons for leaving Sydney included the lack of work opportunities, the cost of housing and the rapidly increasing population and traffic. Perth was an entire contrast. The Bond Syndicate had won the America's Cup while we were travelling and the atmosphere in Perth when we arrived was incredibly optimistic.

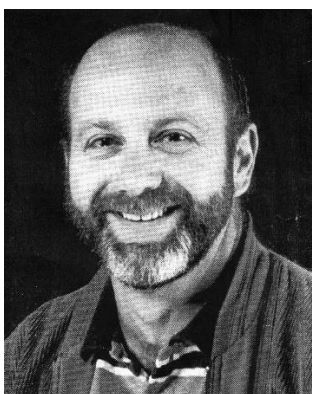
In very quick time through 1984 I joined the committee of Perth Jazz Society, was offered teaching hours in the inaugural year of tertiary jazz at what is now the WA Academy of Performing Arts [WAAPA], we bought a house just 4Ks from Perth's CBD in Mt Lawley [a property in a position like this would have been impossible for us to purchase in Sydney], Sue became pregnant with our first child and I became the first WA jazz musician to receive an International Study Grant from WA Department from the Arts.

I spent the first two months of 1985 studying jazz vibraphone in New York and in late March our son, Ryan, was born. I also became the first Administrator [half-a-day per week] for WA Youth Jazz Orchestra [WAYJO].

So when I saw the ABA ad for Commissions I met with colleagues from WAAPA, Pat Crichton and Mike Nelson and suggested that the three of us apply to compose a three movement jazz suite. Pat and Mike were keen and the application was made for a work, *Reflections of Western Australia 1788-1988*.



*Garry Lee's colleagues in this application were Pat Crichton (left) and Mike Nelson (below)..*



It was decided that we would approach composing the suite whereby I would be responsible for the 1<sup>st</sup> Movement that would reflect the timelessness of the Australia that the first Europeans were exposed to; Mike would write the 2<sup>nd</sup> Movement that would encapsulate more the struggle of the first Europeans to adapt to non-British climate and conditions; Pat would compose more with 20<sup>th</sup> century contemporary Australia in mind. Conveniently we saw it as me – 1788; Mike – 1888; Pat – 1988.

The application was successful. Later in 1985 I was appointed to the position of WA Jazz Coordinator. I have written extensively on my seven year-tenure as JCO elsewhere on Eric Myers' jazz website\*. I did mention the Bicentenary project but I feel, as a standalone project, it deserves to be further described.

From the ABA's commissioning of the work in mid-1985 to the launch of the CD – *"Reflections of Western Australia"* [Request: RQCD2001]– in late 1992, the project incorporated many WA musicians and support from the following:

- Australian Bicentennial Authority
- Australian Music Centre [AMC funded the music copying]
- Sons of Gwalia [WA mining company that co-funded regional performances in Kalgoorlie and Geraldton, of the work in conjunction with ABA]
- ABC [supported the recording of the work at its studios in Perth; broadcast the work on ABC FM's *JazzTrack* presented by Jim McLeod; provided the master tape for the transferal to CD]
- WA Department for the Arts [supported by a grant the transfer of the Work to CD]
- WA Academy of Performing Arts, Edith Cowan University [provided rehearsal space and provided the appropriate venue for the Work's premiere, which took place on 24 June 1988; Dr Bob Vickery, Director of WAAPA wrote the Foreword for the CD's cover notes and his support and enthusiasm for the project was invaluable]
- Request Records [John Green, proprietor of Request, was essential for the design of the CD's booklet and the release of the CD – WA's first jazz CD. John's support and enthusiasm for the project was also invaluable]

The Work's premiere at WAAPA – 24 June 1988 – was quickly followed up on consecutive weekends with performances in Geraldton and Kalgoorlie. Prior to the premiere there were three paid rehearsals for each movement [something that is extremely rare for jazz in Australia. With three quite different and distinct

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\***Editor's note:** This article, entitled *"The Jazz Co-ordination Program of WA 1985-1992"*, written in September, 2020, can be read at this link <https://ericmyersjazz.com/jazz-coord-page-9>

movements it is important to note the instrumentations and musicians involved. For my first movement I wrote for ten musicians; Mike's 2<sup>nd</sup> movement incorporated 11 musicians including the WA String Quartet and Australian Chamber Orchestra French hornist, Darryl Poulsen; Pat's 3<sup>rd</sup> movement incorporated a slightly larger line-up than the traditional big band with five trumpets, four trombones, five saxes, French horn, piano, guitar, bass, drums, percussion, totalling 20 musicians.

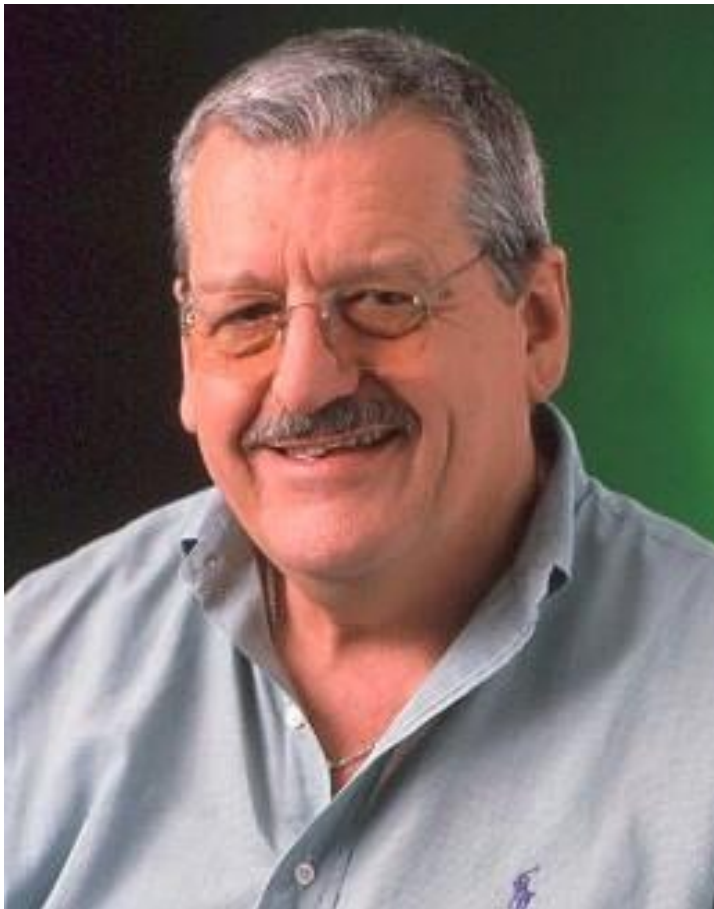
For the two regional performances Pat, Mike and I agreed that presenting only our original Work may cause a problem for audiences that heard very little live jazz. It was decided that the first half of the regional concerts would feature a brief history of jazz. So there were tunes from the traditional jazz repertoire, swing era, bebop and Latin jazz. Sue Kingham, vocalist with the WA Youth Jazz Orchestra, guested also with some typical popular big band charts.



*Sue Kingham (above), vocalist with the WA Youth Jazz Orchestra, guested also with some typical popular big band charts...PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN*

I believe this was a sensible way of preparing the regional audiences for the originality of the commissioned Work. The feedback we received from members of the audiences at both concerts certainly seemed to support this approach. It is important again to note that all musicians were paid appropriately for touring which included overnight accommodation and travel via coach with a truck carrying larger instruments and music stands.

The recording of the Work took place later in the year at ABC Studios, Perth on December 14,15 & 16, 1988. There were some slight changes to the line-ups for the recording. Again it is important to note that all musicians were paid for the recording sessions.



*ABC broadcaster Jim McLeod: his role in exposing WA jazz musicians to a national audience should always be acknowledged...*

The broadcasting of the Work by Jim McLeod on ABC FM's *JazzTrack* took place in early 1989. It was significant, in that for the first time, Jim heard the standard of WA jazz. In the ensuing decade and until his retirement in the early 2000s, Jim encouraged countless recordings of WA jazz at the ABC studios in Perth. He also visited WA on several occasions often to make live recordings from Perth Jazz Society's weekly Monday night venue at Hyde Park Hotel, York Jazz Festival as well as concerts from ABC Perth studios. Jim most certainly championed the notion of presenting a truly national jazz radio program and his role in exposing WA jazz musicians to a national audience should always be acknowledged.

Now the task was to document the ABC recording and the question was which format? – vinyl or CD? From 1988 I had commenced presenting a weekly jazz radio program from Curtin University's 6NR. The program went to air on Mondays for a drivetime audience from 4 to 6pm and allowed me to showcase Australian jazz as well as plug both Perth Jazz Society [their Monday night concerts at Hyde Park Hotel] and Jazz Club of WA [their Tuesday night concerts of traditional jazz at same venue]. Over the first year – 1988/89 – I was playing exclusively vinyls and then the radio station was equipped with CD players. Slowly but surely, following the instalment of a couple of CD players, CDs became more prevalent. Jazz labels in Sydney and Melbourne rapidly transited to the CD format.

Following the unexpected death of 6RTR FM jazz broadcaster and Perth Jazz Society President, Graham Fisk, his program was now presented by John Green. Englishman Graham Fisk's program was called *The Best of Jazz* and was modelled upon Humphrey Lyttleton's BBC program of the same name. Graham certainly played an enormous amount of British jazz. Sydney-born John Green retained the program's name but sought to play far more Australian jazz. The program went to air every Saturday morning and was very popular with jazz fans in Perth. John was a retired PhD in Botany and also owned a record label – Request ["Recorded in the West"]. He was most enthusiastic to release WA CDs. John and I got along very well and complemented each other with our respective skill sets. He was happy to take care of the business side of CD manufacture – printing, copyright, layout etc. I was happy to make grant applications where required and of course organize the actual music. When we looked at cover notes, I would draft a first copy, he might amend and then we would discuss, agreeing always at the end. Together John and I worked on five CDs together with *Reflections of Western Australia* the first. John also released several CDs of the early jazz piano virtuoso, John Gill, that assisted Gill with regular solo tours to the US.



*The early jazz piano virtuoso, Perth's John Gill, who released several albums on Request Records...*

John and I both agreed that *Reflections of Western Australia* should be released on the new CD format. In many ways this was a relief as the work was three movements and, with a vinyl, this would have been quite awkward. The total duration of the work was 44'20" so I sought approval from Jim McLeod and ABC Perth for Pat, Mike and myself to return to the studio and record original tracks with smaller line-ups. As was customary back in those days, the ABC was amenable. So in May 1991 Mike Nelson recorded his composition *Let the Dream Begin* with himself on keyboards; Fred Grigson, guitar; Paul Pooley, electric bass; Gary Ridge, percussion/drums and the vocal trio Birdland with Jenny Wrenn, Sue Bluck and Kerry Byrom-Carter.



*The Perth vocal trio Birdland with L-R, Jenny Wrenn, Sue Bluck, Kerry Byrom-Carter, pictured in 2019...PHOTO COURTESY FACEBOOK*

Pat Crichton recorded two originals *Portrait* and *Happy Jack* with himself on flugelhorn and trumpet; Jim Cook, tenor saxophone; Ray Walker, guitar; Keith van Geyzel, piano/synthesizer; Murray Wilkins, double bass; Ric Eastman, drums. I recorded *Dunsborough Blues* with myself on vibes, Vaslav Jelonek, piano; Murray Wilkins, double bass; David Vrcic, drums. I was thrilled that one of my earliest influences on vibraphone, Alan Lee, also played on this track. At this stage Alan was living in Perth and leading a band with the guitarist, Tim Van Der Kuil. Tim, now based in Britain, returned to Australia a few years ago as musical director/guitarist for the pop singer, Adele.



*Perth guitarist Tim Van Der Kuil, who became musical director/guitarist for the pop singer, Adele...*

John Green's wife, Ann took the photo for the front cover. It is a photo of clouds reflecting on Geographe Bay taken from Dunsborough in the South-West region of WA. Her photo is also titled *Dunsborough Blues*.

The following musicians played on the CD *Reflections of Western Australia*. This includes the musicians who played the three movements of the work as well as the four additional small group compositions:

Trumpet/flugelhorn: Pat Crichton, Lindsay Timms, Rochelle Fleming, Tony Goodland, Rex Innes Mills  
Trombone: Chris Greive, Jordan Murray, Bill McAllister, Andrew Raymond  
Saxophone/reeds: Roger Garrood, John Mackey, Jim Cook, Tom Martin, Paul Millard, Emily Tarrant, Ray Vine, Lee Buddle  
French horn: Darryl Poulsen  
Guitar: Mark Shanahan, Fred Grigson, Ray Walker  
Vibraphone/marimba: Garry Lee, David Vrcic, Alan Lee  
Piano/keyboards: Mike Nelson, Russell Holmes, Keith van Geyzel  
Bass/electric bass: Murray Wilkins, Robbie Pisano, Andy Price, Paul Pooley  
Drums/percussion: Gary France, Chris Tarr, Heta Moses, Gary Ridge, Ric Eastman, David Vrcic  
Vocals: Jenny Wrenn, Sue Bluck, Kerry Byrom-Carter  
Members of WA String Quartet

A total of 43 musicians perform on the CD.



I would not wish to comment on the compositions of Mike Nelson and Pat Crichton other than to note that I enjoyed their music and with respect to the Work, I considered their compositions were most appropriate in terms of covering the time periods we set out to describe.

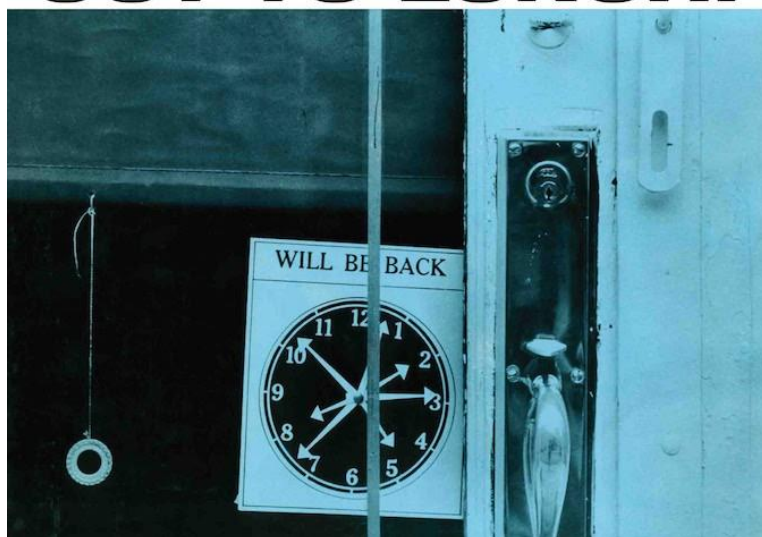
Hereunder I will describe the background, inspiration and approach I took in composing the 1<sup>st</sup> Movement. I recall I was very conscious of never wishing to offend First Nations people but rather to somehow musically describe the timelessness of the landscape of Western Australia. I was aware that the coastline of WA had faced west for tens of millions of years and the weathering of the landscape was far more pronounced than eastern Australia. The Porongurup Range is a very ancient mountain range near Albany south of Perth and a place I had visited and enjoyed a couple of times in the mid-1980s.



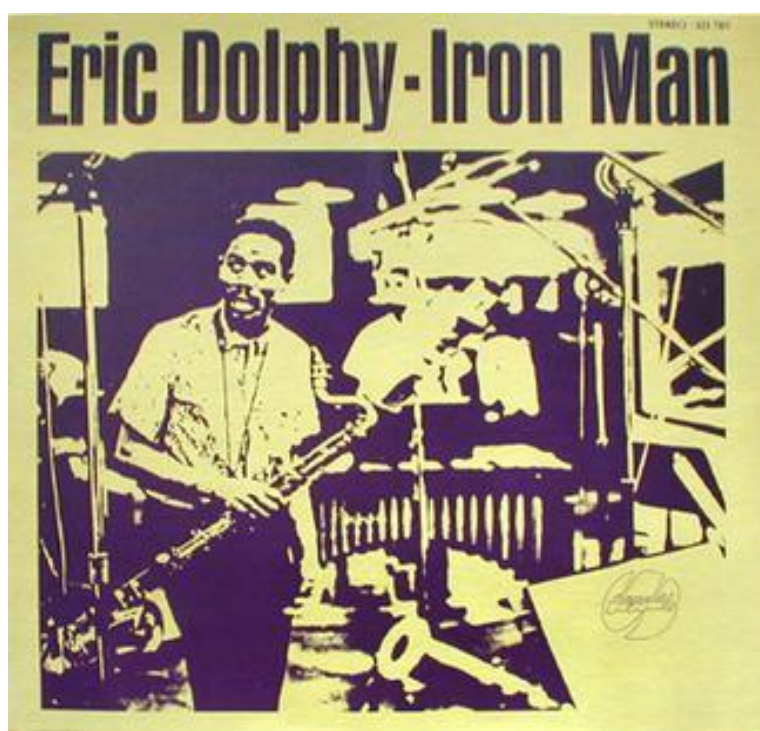
*A view of the Porongurup Range, a very ancient mountain range near Albany south of Perth...*

I believed then, as I do now, that a way forward for jazz is the juxtaposition of instruments creating original textures especially in backings behind a soloist. Key recordings that informed my belief and influenced me included the two Eric Dolphy albums – *Out to Lunch* and *Iron Man*. *Iron Man* was recorded in 1963 but released a few years later. It featured trumpeter Woody Shaw. *Out to Lunch* was recorded in 1964 and featured trumpeter Freddie Hubbard. Both albums featured vibist, Bobby Hutcherson, as the only chordal instrument. Although Hutcherson never made it to Australia, Woody Shaw [1981] and Freddie Hubbard [1982] both did and I heard both several times in venues in Sydney like The Basement as well as at Sydney Conservatorium where they were part of the annual Jamey Aebersold Jazz Camps held over a week in January for several years in the early 1980s. They were organized by Greg Quigley and I attended three of these camps.

ERIC DOLPHY STEREO THE FINEST IN JAZZ SINCE 1939 84163 BLUE NOTE  
FREDDIE HUBBARD | BOBBY HUTCHERSON | RICHARD DAVIS | ANTHONY WILLIAMS  
**'OUT TO LUNCH!'**



*Two Eric Dolphy albums – “Out to Lunch” and “Iron Man”. “Iron Man” was recorded in 1963 but released a few years later. It featured trumpeter Woody Shaw. “Out to Lunch” was recorded in 1964 and featured trumpeter Freddie Hubbard...*



*[A quick interlude here.*

*Looking back these were heady days for jazz in Australia and I count myself fortunate to have been living in Sydney at this time. Woody Shaw brought his quintet – Steve Turre [trombone], Mulgrew Miller [piano], Stafford James [double*

*bass], Tony Reedus [drums] – and hearing this tight rehearsed band live was an amazing experience. During this week also I heard Woody sit in with a quartet led by trumpeter, Randy Brecker – two of the world’s finest trumpeters pushing each other to greater heights on the bandstand - but a Sydney bandstand.*



*Seated in front of Greg Quigley’s team of American jazz educators in 1981 are trumpeters Randy Brecker (left) and Woody Shaw (right): two of the world’s finest trumpeters pushing each other to greater heights on the bandstand but a Sydney bandstand...*



*This is a shot of Freddie Hubbard at The Basement in January, 1982\*, taken on the night Garry Lee attended...PHOTO CREDIT KEITH EDWARD BYRON*

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*\* Eric Myers’s review of this Freddie Hubbard performance at The Basement, published in the Sydney Morning Herald on January 16, 1982, can be read on this site at this link <https://ericmyersjazz.com/ericmyersreviews19808780>*

*The following year Freddie Hubbard came as a soloist and was featured in concert with a quartet led by bassist, Rufus Reid – Bob Rockwell [tenor sax], Art Resnick [piano], Victor Lewis [drums]. Freddie was not happy to learn that Woody had toured the previous year with his own band. As luck would have it, a friend and I arrived at The Basement about 2pm to buy tickets for the evening concert. Freddie was just about to rehearse the band. Although it was to be Hubbard compositions, he had no music for his sidemen and what took place was quite astounding. The musicianship of the sidemen was superb. I recall Hubbard pushing the pianist off his stool and then playing a syncopated intro with two-handed voicings and Art Resnick playing it back exactly. Hubbard glared at Rufus Reid after he made a tiny glitch in a two-bar bass ostinato and Victor Lewis went to the bar to get a pen and some paper to write himself a quick chart for a tune with a 19-bar sequence alternating between swing and Latin. The evening concert was excellent and recorded by the ABC – I hope it is still in their archives.*

*At the Sydney Con I was in pianist Hal Galper's ensemble and we were working on the beautiful Hubbard waltz, "Up Jumped Spring". Hal was not happy with the changes [chords] and just at that moment Freddie walked by in the corridor. Galper quickly asked him to correct and amend. I have always felt privileged and fortunate to have been in this situation at this point in my musical development.]*



*Hal Galper at the piano: he asked Freddie Hubbard to correct and amend the changes in the beautiful Hubbard waltz, "Up Jumped Spring"...*

Bobby Hutcherson was [and remains] a major influence on my vibes playing. I was fascinated by his role on the two Eric Dolphy albums from the 1960s but I was knocked out by his 1982 album *Solo/Quartet*. A vinyl, Side A was Bobby overdubbing himself playing vibes, marimba, bass marimba, glockenspiel and various percussion; Side B was a quartet with McCoy Tyner on piano. The texture of the tuned percussion and percussion was reminiscent of Max Roach's percussion ensemble M'Boom that I had heard on radio in New York in early 1985 but the mallet playing of Hutcherson was, not surprisingly, superior.



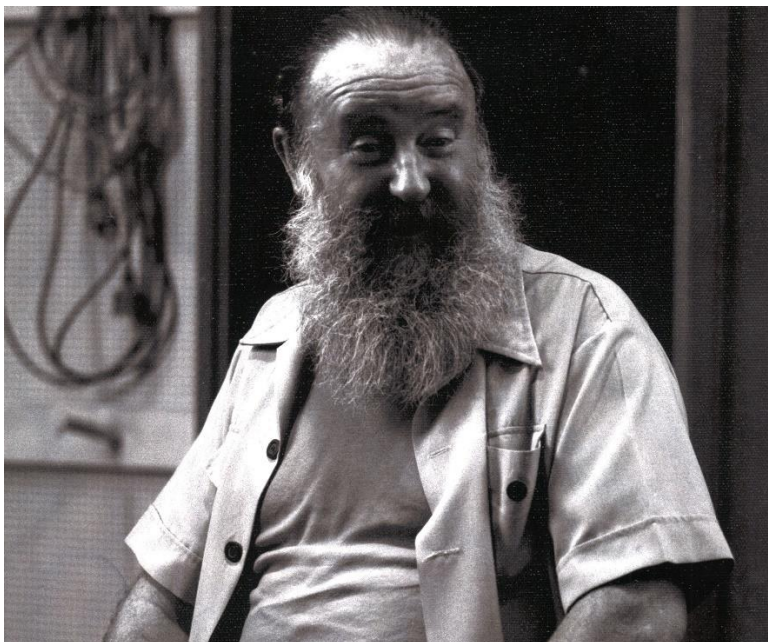
*Bobby Hutcherson, pictured in 1965: a major influence on Garry Lee's vibes playing...*

For the context of my composing another major influence was mallet player, Dave Samuels. Dave was an Aebersold clinician at Sydney Conservatorium in both 1981 and 1982. I was the only student who attended both clinics and have Dave to thank for teaching me the four-mallet technique of Gary Burton – the “Burton Grip”. Dave taught at Berklee where Burton was in charge. Upon moving to Perth in late 1983, I became the first West Australian jazz musician to receive an international study grant via WA Department for the Arts. The grant was to undertake further study with Dave Samuels in New York. I spent January and February of 1985 in New York studying with Dave Samuels, attending Improvisation classes with Barry Harris and listening to as much jazz as my budget would provide. At one stage Samuels went on a short tour with the fusion band, Spyro Gyra, that he had recorded with for several



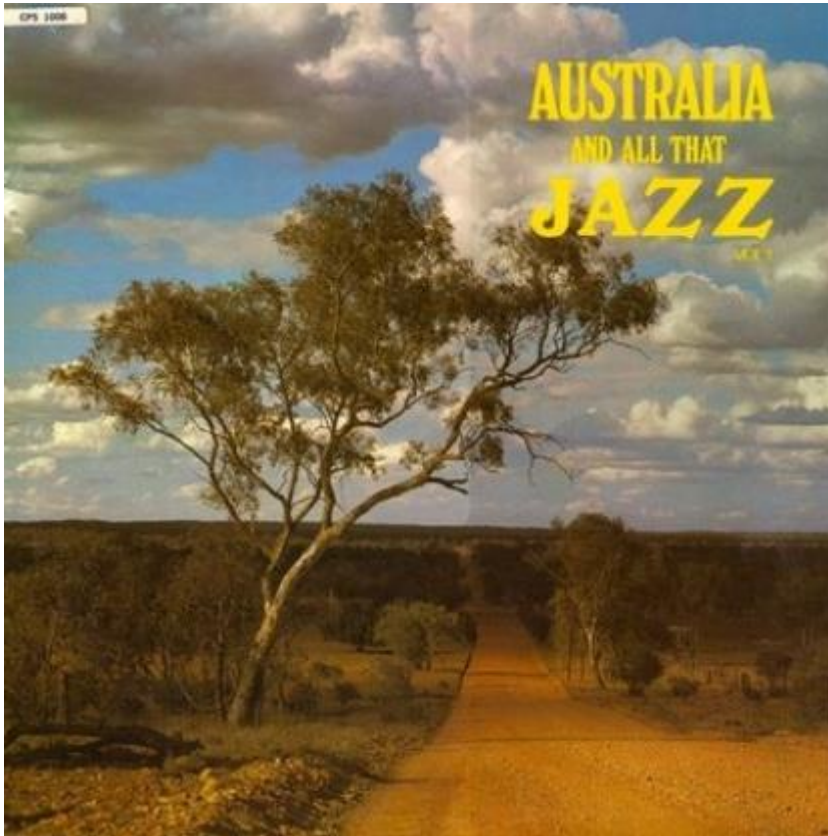
*Dave Samuels: an Aebersold clinician at Sydney Conservatorium in both 1981 and 1982...*

years including taking the marimba solo on their 1979 hit *Morning Dance*. He lined me up for lessons with David Friedman that I very much enjoyed. Since the mid-1970s Samuels and Friedman had worked together in a mallet duo, *Double Image*. In the early 1980s they had worked less together but I was fortunate to hear them in concert while in New York. Obviously there is a tendency to try to determine the superior player. They alternated between vibes and marimba and I found that I could not differentiate between their virtuosity. The repertoire was mainly their own originals and, upon returning to Perth with written music of some of their compositions, I spent some time studying their compositional structure.



*John Sangster: a long term permeating influence... PHOTO © RON FALSON ARCHIVE*

Finally I must mention a long term permeating influence – John Sango. I first heard Sango live in 1969 at Sydney Town Hall where his band was support to the progressive rock band, Tully. The two concerts I attended also included a light show. The originality of the band led by Sango was all pervasive. I also owned the album *Australia and All That Jazz – Vol 1* and I thought then [as I do now] that Sango captured a very Australian way of jazz composition. Of course the fact we both played vibes assisted but his use of flutes resonated with me somehow.



The instrumentation that I decided upon required ten musicians. I was especially wanting to include Roger Garrod. At this time – late 1980s/early 90s – we were playing together regularly in a quartet or quintet that I was leading. Roger told me he really enjoyed playing various saxes and flutes so I composed for him playing piccolo, concert flute, alto flute, soprano sax, alto sax. Roger also led a saxophone quartet and I tried out some of my composition with his quartet. However I wanted to use a different instrumentation for the actual work. Instead of soprano sax, I wrote for flugelhorn; instead of baritone sax, I wrote for bass clarinet. Fellow composer and trumpeter, Pat Crichton, enjoyed playing flugel. Tenor saxophonist Jim Cook, also owned and enjoyed playing bass clarinet. So the section that opened the movement – *Martarnu* - and the fifth section that closed it – *Recapitulation* – utilized this instrumentation – flugel [Pat], alto sax [Roger], tenor sax [John Mackey], bass clarinet [Jim].



*Roger Garrood: in the late 1980s/early 90s he was playing regularly in a quartet or quintet led by Garry Lee...PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN*

For the second and third section Pat went to trumpet with mainly the Harmon mute. Jim remained on bass clarinet and John remained on tenor sax throughout. Roger moved between his five instruments. The fourth section – *Meeting Place* – is a more typical hard bop-style section alternating between swing and Latin. In 2019 John Mackey\* contacted me to confirm the changes for the solo section. This is John's earliest recording to CD and he was still a teenager but nevertheless takes a blistering solo. John contends that improvisational devices he had in place at this young age have formed the foundations for his playing subsequently and outlining these foundations are becoming part of his current PhD thesis. Significantly John's solo has been transcribed and is available from him: [john.mackey@anu.edu.au](mailto:john.mackey@anu.edu.au)

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**\*Editor's note:** *John Mackey is a long-time member of the Jazz Faculty at the Australian National University, Canberra. Garry Lee says John was "the first of what now has become a long line of highly talented WAAPA jazz graduates who have made their mark nationally and internationally." Garry says further that "in a way John is a metaphor for the way WA jazz progressed in the timespan of "Reflections". I regard him as the first significant WA jazz graduate, preceding his brother Carl Mackey, Jamie Oehlers, Jordan Murray, Graham Wood. They in turn have been followed by Mat Jodrell, Troy Roberts, Dane Alderson, Linda May Han Oh, Konrad Paszkudski and others."*



One harmonic device I have always enjoyed is the movement of a minor chord to another minor chord up a minor third – in this case Gm9 to Bbm9. It is a device that Herbie Hancock uses in his famous composition *Maiden Voyage*. Another harmonic device I have always enjoyed is the half-step ascending movement on the dominant chord as used by Miles Davis on *All Blues*. The rhythmic device of swing to Latin or vice versa is also a concept I have loved. Dizzy Gillespie's *A Night in Tunisia* is probably my favourite jazz tune of all time, and it moves between Latin or Afro-Cuban to swing in the bridge. *Meeting Place* moves from swing to Latin in the bridge. In 1985 I heard tenor saxophonist David Murray in New York and I enjoyed recordings of the World Saxophone Quartet. There are a couple of passages at the end of sections where I had the musicians improvise freely exploring unusual non-pitched sounds on their respective instruments.



*Garry Lee (above, using Gary Burton's four-mallet technique) says that sadly there has not been a jazz project in WA that has replicated the "Reflections" project...PHOTO COURTESY GARRY LEE*

Apart from the four horns, I used two double bass sometimes writing where one bassist played arco [utilizing the bow] while the other played double stops in a higher register pizzicato [plucking with fingers]. I wrote for drums and percussion with one segment where the percussionist played four brake drums following the contour of the melody line. Finally following the influences mentioned above, I had my then student, David Vrcic playing marimba while I played vibes.

Today I have a limited number of CDs available via: [jazzvibe@upnaway.com.au](mailto:jazzvibe@upnaway.com.au). Significantly there are copies in the WA State Library and the Edith Cowan University Library at Mt Lawley where WAAPA is situated.

Sadly there has not been a jazz project in WA that has replicated the "Reflections" project and this may even be true at a national level. The standard of both WA and national jazz has never been higher but the lack of funded administrative structure in our artform makes it doubtful that projects such as this will ever get off the ground.