

## JACK MITCHELL RECEIVES OAM

by Ciara Bastow\*

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<https://www.lithgowmercury.com.au/story/5882411/jack-mitchell-receives-oam-for-work-on-the-australian-jazz-scene/>]



*Jack Mitchell, pictured with his books “Happy Feet” and “Blistered Heels”, upon receiving his OAM for his hard work with jazz music. PHOTO CREDIT CIARA BASTOW.*

**H**undreds of jazz records line his office, newspaper clippings cover his desk, photographs of jazz bands from another time and books that he has written are laid out proudly. Lithgow resident Jack Mitchell has dedicated over 40 years to the jazz scene in Australia, making sure that its legacy lives on and is remembered, which is why he has been awarded an OAM.

“I became interested in jazz in the 1940s, so I started buying jazz records and writing the details,” he said. Jack’s knowledge of Australian jazz is second to none and his continually updated version of *Australian Jazz on Record*, a comprehensive jazz discography, is invaluable.

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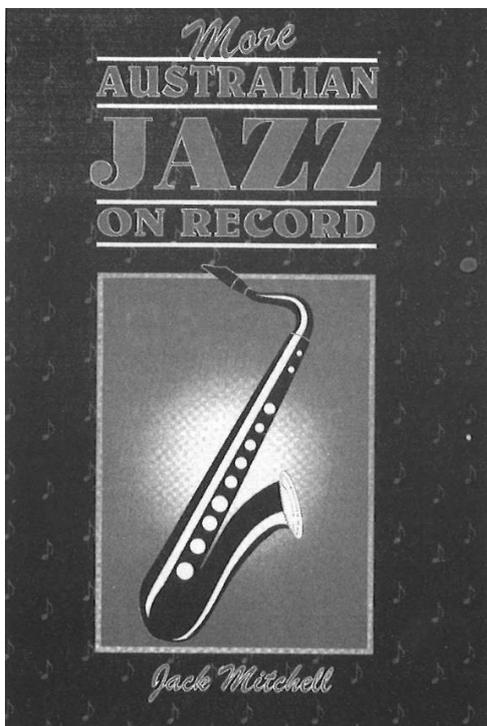
\* *Ciara Bastow is a journalist with the local newspaper Lithgow Mercury.*

Jack has collected material that dates back to the 1920s that allowed publications and Australians to gain their knowledge of jazz from the information that Jack put together. In 1950, at 23, Jack had the idea to compile and document the achievements of Australian jazz musicians in a comprehensive publication.



*Jack Mitchell in 1975: compiling and documenting the achievements of Australian jazz musicians...*

It wasn't until 1988 that Jack's first fully professional hard-cover discography was published by the National Film and Sound archive. Later editions of his discography are titled *More Australian Jazz on Record* and *Even More Australian Jazz on Record*.

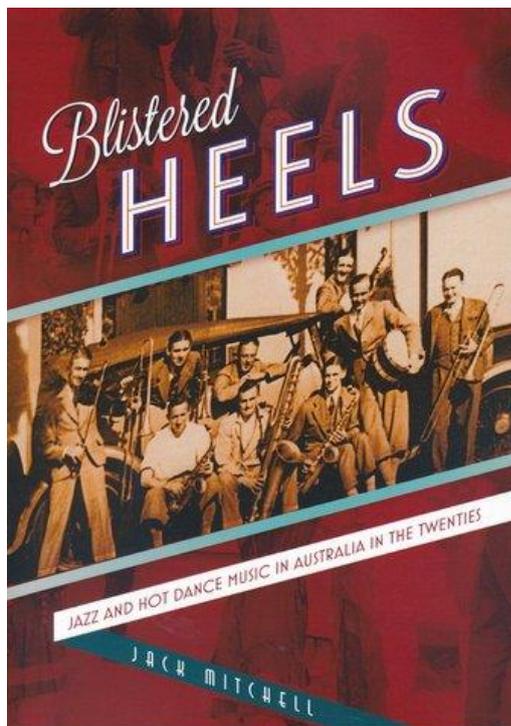


Jack's latest edition is now published in CD ROM form and contains a complete listing of every officially recorded Australian jazz performer from 1926 to 2014. "I worked with other researchers for their work, it is really a team effort, I couldn't do it without help from others especially for the discographies, even though I did try," he said.

Jack has also written biographies, including his work *Coggy* on the great Australian trombonist and bandleader, Frank Coughlan. He has also put together *Blistered Heels: Jazz and Hot Dance Music in Australia in the Twenties* and his latest *Happy Feet: Dancing and swinging in Australia in the Thirties*.



*Jack's books such as "Coggy" (above) and "Blistered Heels" (below), have been used by everyone from National Film and Sound Archive administrators, to musicians, to students completing university degrees ...*



Jack's books have been used by everyone from National Film and Sound Archive administrators, to musicians, to students completing university degrees and using them as material for their thesis.



*Mitchell sitting in his jazz music office, surrounded by CDs, records and information...*

Despite retiring 27 years ago, Jack keeps himself busy with all his jazz research. He has strong ties to the Australian Jazz Museum in Victoria, Melbourne, as he is an honorary member. "Every couple of days they ask for different information so that keeps me busy," he said.

Presently Jack is organising a photographic collection in his scrap books which he will then send down to the archive. The scrapbooks include photos and newspaper clippings that Jack has collected over the years.

"I have thousands of photographs of jazz bands in Australia, so I am in the process of putting those together and getting the names of them," he said. "It's just a hobby and I love doing it, and I believe it needs to be done."

Jack also presents a three-hour jazz show on EasyFM on a Saturday night, using all his own records. "I have over 1,200 records on a hard drive that I take to the station, it keeps me busy and gets me out of the housework," he said.

For this Jack has earned himself an Order of Australia Medal which he humbly states surprised him. "It came out of the blue, I didn't know I was nominated, I think my daughter did it for me," he said.

Jack said he wanted to thank his family as they have put up with a lot over the years. “I need to thank the family for their support over the years and not just with the award...I am very lucky that I had a supportive family,” he said.

Jack was born in Sydney but moved to Lithgow in 1958 and spent his time as a dentist in Main Street. Living in Lithgow, Jack found himself a part of the Lithgow Arts Council for many years as well as playing in the Lithgow Brass Band for over 10 years.



*At Mick Fowler’s funeral, L-R, Duke Farrell, Jim Young, Jack Mitchell, Bill Boldiston... PHOTO COURTESY BILL BOLDISTON*

Jack's wife Jan said it had been an interesting life meeting all these people through Jack's work with jazz. Jack and his wife still make time to listen to live jazz music, going to Blackheath to listen to the music every fortnight. “It’s lively and entertaining, we use to travel to Sydney for live gigs but the journey gets further and further the older you get,” he said.

Jan only had praise for her husband’s work within the jazz society. “He has done a lot, and he has done it quietly and has remained so humble,” she said.

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