

THE ERROL BUDDLE STORY (PART TWO)

by Eric Myers

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At the conclusion of The Errol Buddle Story (Part One), Buddle was in the United States in 1954, leading his own quintet at Klein's jazz club, Detroit. Other than Buddle the group included Barry Harris (piano), Pepper Adams (baritone sax), Major Holley (bass), and Elvin Jones (drums). On Saturday nights, Billy Mitchell (tenor sax) was booked for a three-way battle of the saxes. NOW READ ON...

“We used to get a lot of people sitting in at Klein's,” Errol remembers, “Stan Getz used to come in some times. An unknown bass player, a young guy, used to come in and stand up in front of the bandstand, almost begging to sit in. His name was Paul Chambers [who later made historic recordings with Miles Davis.] I think he'd only been playing several months at that time.”

Buddle remembers meeting Miles Davis himself when the trumpeter was at the Blue Bird Lounge, one of Detroit's jazz clubs. Miles invited Errol and Don Varella up to his room, where the two Australians were fascinated to see about 40 paperbacks — all Westerns — lining the mantelpiece. They asked Miles why he liked cowboy stories. He replied: “Man, I love horses”, and explained that his father had bred horses on a ranch in the South.

This was shortly before Miles Davis, in a supreme act of self-will, kicked the heroin habit. “Miles told us how he was really hooked on drugs”, says Errol, “that he didn't dig heroin, and wanted to get off it.”

One night Buddle had a choice between hearing the Stan Kenton band with Zoot Sims on tenor, or Charlie Parker, who was in Detroit for one night playing at a black dance. “I chose Charlie Parker and I've never regretted it”, says Errol. “He played incredibly. It wasn't long before he died.”



Charlie Parker: “he played incredibly... It wasn't long before he died.” PHOTO COURTESY TELEGRAPH.CO.UK

“I spoke to him and he was happy, smiling and laughing — quite bright. He seemed to be a really nice person. I heard him again two or three months later doing a matinee in another club, and he was really down. His playing was nowhere near that first night I heard him. He died not long after that.”

Meanwhile, the gig at Klein’s proceeded. Buddle remembers that the musicians seldom put deputies in, or took a night off for any reason. On one occasion Barry Harris asked for a night off to go and hear the pianist Teddy Wilson who was in town. Similarly, Pepper Adams would take a night off to hear Harry Carney whenever the Duke Ellington band came through Detroit.

Errol Buddle was struck by the fact that these brilliant, younger musicians held the older giants in such high esteem. “They not only respected the older players but would go out of their way to hear these guys,” says Errol. He contrasts this with attitudes in Australia where, during the 1950s, many younger musicians were in the habit of putting down the older players. “Then when I went to Detroit, and found people like Pepper Adams idolising the older players, it was a real eye-opener to me. It was a much more mature outlook in the States”.

Towards the end of 1954, Buddle’s contract expired at Klein’s. For a while, he stayed on at the club with a quintet led by the guitarist Kenny Burrell. By this time Buddle had developed a solid reputation in Detroit. Soon he got a call from Ed Sarkesian, who owned the Rouge Lounge, Detroit’s plush, leading jazz club. Sarkesian had been told that Buddle had an all-Australian group, and asked them to come in for two weeks as the backing band for the singer Chris Connor.



The singer Chris Connor: Ed Sarkesian, owner of the Rouge Lounge, Detroit’s leading jazz club, asked Buddle to bring in his all-Australian group, as the backing band for her....

In December 1954 Buddle went into the job with the Australians Bryce Rohde (piano) and Jack Brokensha (drums & vibes) plus the American bassist Dick Healey, who also doubled on flute and alto sax. They called themselves the Australian Jazz Quartet, partly because they liked the name of the Modern Jazz Quartet, which was then popular. Healey played mostly

bass but when he played his horns, Brokensha moved onto vibes, giving the quartet the unusual sound of two woodwinds, piano and vibes.



The original Australian Jazz Quartet: Bryce Rohde (at the piano) then, clockwise, Errol Buddle, Dick Healey, Jack Brokensha...

From that initial engagement at the Rouge Lounge, the AJQ had what can only be described as a meteoric rise to the top echelon of American jazz. Ed Sarkesian liked the group, and recommended them to Joe Glaser, the owner of Association Booking Corporation, New York — the biggest jazz agency in the world at that time, which managed groups led by Louis Armstrong, Dave Brubeck, Gerry Mulligan, Miles Davis, Chico Hamilton and others. Glaser didn't even hear the AJQ. On the strength of Sarkesian's recommendation, he sent the contracts out to Detroit and signed the group for 12 months.

Following the engagement with Chris Connor, the AJQ was booked for two weeks at Campbell's Lounge in London, Ontario, then they came back to the Rouge Lounge. They quickly assembled an impressive repertoire. Soon Buddle hit on the idea of getting out the bassoon and using it in the group. "I had the instrument and thought I might as well use it", says Errol. "With the flute and the bassoon together and the vibes, it was a really distinct sound. No other group in America had had that sound before."

Thus, Errol Buddle carved out a niche for himself in the history of jazz. As Leonard Feather wrote in his *Encyclopedia of Jazz*, "Buddle [was] the first musician in jazz to make extensive use of the bassoon in ad libbing".

While working at the Rouge Lounge, Buddle got a call from the manager of the trumpeter Conte Candoli, and was offered the tenor chair in Candoli's group. It was a tempting offer but, after two years of trying to get the Australian group started and working, he had to say no.



Carmen McRae in 1954: Joe Glaser booked the AJQ to back her in Washington. On the same programme were the Dave Brubeck Quartet, and the Modern Jazz Quartet...PHOTO COURTESY PINTEREST

Early in 1955, Glaser booked the AJQ in Washington to back the singer Carmen McRae. On the same programme were the Dave Brubeck Quartet, and the Modern Jazz Quartet. Then they went on to four weeks at the Hickory House on 52nd Street in New York.

“It was quite amazing — we really had hit the big time quite suddenly,” says Errol. “We didn’t know at that time if it would last. It was a bit mind-boggling. For four or five nights at the Hickory House, Stan Getz came in to hear the group — he was working around the corner at Birdland. Stan Getz was my idol. I was petrified to have him in the audience, sitting down at the table, eating a steak and listening to us”.

The Australians might have viewed themselves modestly, but the work was to come in non-stop for four heady years, until they left the US for Australia towards the end of 1958. With work provided by Joe Glaser’s powerful agency, they were on the road continually. For the first six months they worked often with Carmen McRae, then increasingly went out in their own right. Normally they would have a six-nights engagement at a leading jazz club in one city, then move on to another city the following week. During their four-years career in the US, they played virtually every major jazz club in the country, and went out every year on package tours throughout the United States, in the company of leading groups.

The AJQ did a number of concerts at New York’s Carnegie Hall. Their first, on November 12, 1955, was billed “New Jazz At Carnegie” and included, along with the AJQ, the Gerry Mulligan Sextet, Bob Brookmeyer, Zoot Sims and Jon Eardley, Carmen McRae, and the Dave Brubeck Quartet.

Reviewing that concert in the *New York Times*, the jazz critic John S Wilson wrote: “The Australian Jazz Quartet, a versatile and entertaining foursome who double, triple and, in one case, quintuple on a variety of instruments, brought a change of pace to the program with selections highlighted by flute and bassoon duets and an amusingly melodramatic vibraphone solo.”



Newspaper advertisements for the Australian Jazz Quartet's club engagements in the United States, circa 1955...



More newspaper advertisements for the AJQ's performances. Note that the AJQ is billed above Hampton Hawes Trio and the Jazz Messengers featuring Art Blakey and Horace Silver...

Another of the AJQ's Carnegie Hall appearances took place on November 22, 1957, when they played to two separate audiences — at 8.30 pm, then again after midnight. Entitled “Jazz For Moderns”, the program also included the George Shearing Sextet, the Gerry Mulligan Quintet, the Miles Davis Quintet, the Chico Hamilton Quintet and the singer Helen Merrill.

During the mid-1950s in the US, jazz was experiencing a surge in popularity. Dave Brubeck had appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine and the music had gathered an immense following in the colleges. The AJQ largely rode along on this wave of popularity.



The famous Time Magazine cover, featuring Dave Brubeck (November 8, 1954): jazz was experiencing a surge in popularity...

By the same token, the jazz business was intensely competitive. The circuit was a tough one, and any group that was unsuccessful in an initial engagement was never re-booked. For instance, the saxophonist Lee Konitz had a group which dropped out; the Modern Jazz Quartet, even though it was winning jazz critics' polls, might be unemployed for months. The AJQ, however, worked consistently — for 49 weeks out of the year. “We were pretty professionally run”, says Errol. “We had different instrumentation, a different sound with the flute and bassoon together, also vibes. The Americans had heard vibes before, but not in that combination. The Americans do go for something different — they go for originality.

“Also, we were quite well-organised on the stand. We knew exactly what we were going to play before we went on, and in what order. We had memorised all the arrangements; we didn’t need a note of music. We could play a concert without stopping for five or six hours.

“We did six or seven tunes a set; there was no delay between tunes. Also, we dressed well for those days — suits and ties. Jazz musicians looked like a bunch of businessmen then, Miles Davis included.”

Early in the career of the AJQ, the members of the group considered hiring another musician. When Healey played alto or flute, naturally they had to soldier on without bass. And there was always the option of bringing over another horn player from Australia, so that Healey could stay on bass permanently.

Andrew Bisset, in *Black Roots White Flowers*, says that Buddle tried to get Don Burrows over to the US when the AJQ was initially formed. Buddle says this is incorrect, although he always liked the idea of having Burrows in the group. "I thought a lot of Don's playing, particularly his clarinet playing", says Errol. "At that time, so far as I knew, he didn't play the flute". Buddle had written to Burrows, suggesting generally that it would be a good idea for him to come over.



The Melbourne singer Edwin Duff: he came over to Canada in February 1955, but was not able to work legally in the United States...

Meanwhile Jack Brokensha had written to the singer Edwin Duff, who had worked with the Brokensha Quartet in Melbourne, telling him of the success of the AJQ. Duff came over to Canada in February 1955, but was not able to work legally in the United States until November 1955. He was also signed up quickly by the Joe Glaser agency, and half expected to work with the group, but by that time the AJQ was well established as an instrumental combo, and couldn't use a vocalist.

As it turned out, the extra member was hired when the AJQ was about a year old. He was Jack Lander, an Australian bassist then living in Toronto. The AJQ became the Australian Jazz Quintet. When he left about a year later, his place was taken by Jimmy Gannon, who had played bass with the Chico Hamilton group. When Gannon decided to go off the road and settle down in LA, the AJQ was playing in St Louis in June 1957. Into the club walked a young Ed Gaston.

"Somehow or other, Ed sat in with us," says Errol. "We really liked his playing and he was offered the job right there and then. He was a member the whole time until we started to disband".

Concomitant with its standing in jazz, the AJQ signed a recording contract in early 1955 with Bethlehem Records, at that time the biggest of the small, independent American record companies. The A & R man was Creed Taylor. Over four years, they recorded seven LPs which all sold well. Also they appeared on several other albums. On one they backed the singer Johnny Hartman; on another they participated in a jazz version of *Porgy & Bess*, with



The Australian Jazz Quintet, snapped at New York's Basin Street club, 1956. From left, Bryce Rohde at the piano, Errol Buddle (holding the bassoon), Jack Brokensha (vibes), Jack Lander (bass), Dick Healey (holding the flute).



The Australian Jazz Quintet, playing at the Continental Restaurant, Norfolk, Virginia in June, 1956. Visible are (from left) Buddle, Dick Healey and the bassist Jack Lander. This photograph is a historic one, because the Clifford Brown/Max Roach Quintet with Richie Powell (piano) played this club the previous week. It was the last club engagement for Brown and Powell, who were killed on the Pennsylvania Turnpike on the way to Chicago on June 25, 1956...

Mel Torme as Porgy and Frances Faye as Bess. (This was a three-record set, arranged by Russell Garcia, on which the Duke Ellington orchestra also appeared).

Their first LP, *The Australian Jazz Quartet*, was favourably received. "A thoroughly professional group with a jazz feeling, a sometimes Shearing-like quality and a reflective and deliberative air, these four musicians who play a combination of eleven instruments on this record, produce very listenable music, certainly derivative, but distinctive for all that," wrote Bill Coss in *Metronome*, August 1955. "The focus is most kindly put on scoring lovely combinations of flute and bassoon, clever use of the bassoon for the bass line, attractive combining of vibes, piano, clarinet and bassoon. Dick Healey's flute and tenor and Errol Buddle's bassoon are the most distinctive solo instruments. Jack Brokensha's vibes solo on *Debussy's Girl* is delicately done."



Playboy Magazine Awards, 18 November, 1957. From left, DJ Bill Mertz, Playboy bunny Carolyn Delowese, Errol Buddle, singer Helen Merrill, Chico Hamilton. The AJQ received an award, along with George Shearing, Chico Hamilton, Helen Merrill, Miles Davis and Gerry Mulligan...

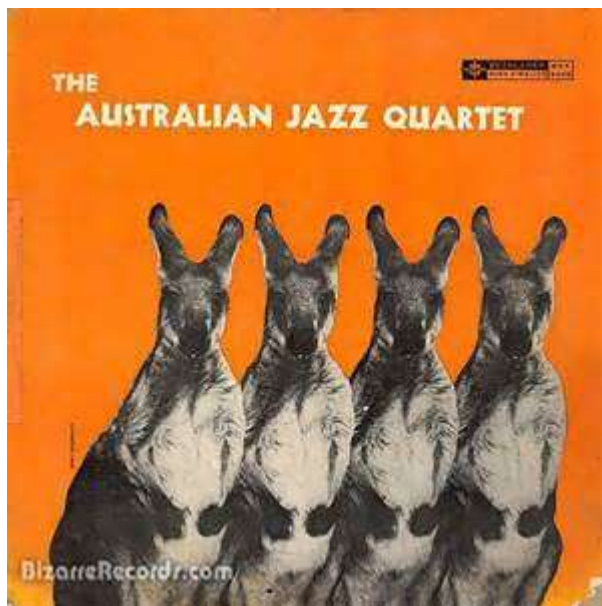
Some inkling of the AJQ's standing in American jazz can be gauged by the fact that the quartet soon began to appear in various polls. Just a year after their initial engagement, the AJQ was placed 20th (out of 29) in the Instrumental Combo section of *Down Beat's* 1955 Annual Music Poll (announced in the December 28, 1955 edition of the magazine). They were ahead of groups led by men such as Billy Taylor, Eddie Condon, Dizzy Gillespie and Terry Gibbs.

Buddle was the only individual member of the AJQ to feature in the polls. In this same *Down Beat* poll, he scraped into the Tenor Sax category (27th out of 27) and, as a bassoon player, was placed 17th out of 24 in the Miscellaneous Instrument category. In the latter he was ahead of Wild Bill Davis (organ), Ray Nance (violin), Count Basie (organ) and others.

In the *Metronome* All Star Poll (announced in the September 1956 edition of the magazine) the AJQ was placed 8th (out of 11) in the Small Group section, which was won by the Modern Jazz Quartet. They were immediately behind Shorty Rogers and just ahead of Kai Winding and J J Johnson, Shelly Manne and Hampton Hawes.

In *Metronome's* All Star Poll of January 1957, Buddle (this time listed on oboe) was placed 6th (out of 10) in the Miscellaneous Instruments category. He was ahead of the flautists Buddy Collette and Frank Wess, and the accordionist Art Van Damme.

In the 1957 *Down Beat* Poll, Buddle again scraped into the Tenor Sax list (30th out of 30). As a bassoon player, he was placed 21st out of 27 in the Miscellaneous Instrument category. Again, he was placed ahead of Ray Nance (violin), Cal Tjader (bongos), Count Basie (organ) and others. The Combo section was again won by the Modern Jazz Quartet, with the AJQ 13th out of 30 — just behind Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, but in front of groups led by Horace Silver, Errol Garner, Thelonious Monk, Stan Getz, and many other American players.



Australiana: the cover of one of the Australian Jazz Quartet LPs...

In 1958, the Australian Jazz Quintet was at its peak. It was into its fourth year on the road, and had been at the top in American jazz for four years. By this time, the Australians were well and truly homesick; they had been away from home for five to six years. Buddle had met an American girl, married her, and their first son had arrived. The members of the AJQ were looking kindly on the idea of returning to Australia.

They had played virtually every major jazz club in the United States. The nature of their fame had only barely filtered back to Australia, but there was an awareness, in some enlightened circles, that Buddle, along with Jack Brokensha and Bryce Rohde, had acquitted themselves in an extraordinary fashion in the world's most competitive jazz scene. They were doing the

same sort of work as Miles Davis, Dave Brubeck, Gerry Mulligan, George Shearing, the Modern Jazz Quartet (MJQ) and others.

When they were in New York, they often went up to the offices of the Australian Broadcasting Commission on Fifth Avenue, where the idea of an Australian tour was constantly mooted. Clem Semmler, a jazz enthusiast who had known Buddle and Rohde in the early Adelaide years, had reached a position in the ABC where he could exert real influence. As early as 1955 he had come to New York, and gone down to hear the group at Birdland. He was highly impressed and set the wheels in motion in 1956.

Buddle himself was keen to raise his family in Australia. His first son Lee had been born in March 1958 and his wife Ollie, who had always accompanied him on the road, now had to stay back in Detroit with the baby. The new baby was named after Lee Konitz. “Lee and I had got to know each other fairly well,” says Errol. “He was probably the leading jazz alto player in those days, but also a very nice guy. On some of the tours we did with the Mulligan and Brubeck groups, Lee Konitz played with Mulligan. Sometimes, when we’d get back to New York, he’d leave his sax in my room and go home to where he was living in Connecticut. We got to know each other fairly well, so I named my son after him.”



The Australian Jazz Quintet, circa 1958. Front L-R, Dick Healey, Bryce Rohde, Jack Brokensha. Rear L-R, Ed Gaston, Errol Buddle: Clem Semmler at the ABC arranged for them to do a tour of Australia...

When the offer came through from the ABC to do a tour of Australia, the AJQ jumped at it. It involved a series of concerts in the major capital cities plus provincial centres like Newcastle and Wollongong, and also some television appearances.

Buddle quickly decided that the Australian tour would be his swansong with the group. “About a month before we left the States, I told the guys that I was going to stay in Australia. It threw a bit of a spanner into the works — they were wondering who they could get to

replace me. There was just no-one to play the bassoon and saxophone in those days. I suggested that they get Don Burrows and let him play bass clarinet instead of the bassoon.”

Buddle also turned down a number of invitations to settle on the West Coast. He was prompted to go there by people like Lee Konitz and Paul Desmond. There was no-one, he was told, in Los Angeles who could play jazz tenor and bassoon in the studios. “I didn’t take that up”, says Errol. “I just wanted to get back to Australia. I thought it would be a better place to raise a family.”

The AJQ did four weeks at the Round Table in New York, plus farewell concerts in Detroit and Ohio, drove to San Francisco and boarded the liner *Orcades* for Australia. It was September 1958. When they left, the Joe Glaser agency in New York expected the group back with a replacement for Buddle. The Australian Jazz Quintet was not destined, however, to survive. Dick Healey met a Canadian girl on the ship and, shortly after arriving in Australia, Ed Gaston met his wife Diane. Gaston remained in Australia.

Back home in October 1958 the AJQ swung straight into an extensive concert tour for the ABC. The specially printed programs heralded them as “the first jazz combination formed by Australians to achieve success in the United States... The Quintet plays a unique type of jazz — modern chamber jazz, as distinct from Dixieland. The Quintet is credited in America with being the first ensemble to introduce the bassoon as a jazz instrument.”

“Between them, the members of the group play eleven instruments, and their unusual combination of these instruments produce interesting and original sounds. It has been said that ‘blending the sounds of those horns to create a mood for a particular tune over the basic rhythm structure is the true skill of the Australian Jazz Quintet’.”

The concerts went well, even though Errol Buddle felt that, after American audiences, the Australian audiences were inhibited. “I remember a lot of concerts we did in the United States that were spectacular — we really had spectacular applause. Australians were a little more sedate than the American audiences were. But they were good.”

At the end of the tour in early 1959 Buddle left the group. For a time Brokensha, Rohde and Gaston had a job playing at Sydney’s Windsor Hotel. Dick Healey soon was married, and none of the members of the group were keen to go back to the United States. “They just didn’t bother to go back”, says Errol. “They didn’t approach Don Burrows, either. Jack eventually went back several months later, but Bryce stayed for a fair while. Dick certainly did and, of course, Ed settled down here. The agency in New York wasn’t too happy about us staying out here, but they couldn’t do anything about it. We had done everything over there, and we wanted to raise families and that sort of thing.”

At that time in Sydney, jazz venues were virtually non-existent, except for the El Rocco and Sunday night at the Sky Lounge where Burrows and the Australian All-Stars played. Over the next ten years or so, Errol Buddle played jazz only occasionally. Within weeks of being in Australia, he was offered the Ford Show on 2GB, a weekly radio show which employed the Bob Gibson orchestra. Buddle had played with Bob Gibson’s orchestra at Surryville on Sunday nights until he left Australia in August 1952. When he arrived back in 1958, he found Gibson still there, in the same job. He walked straight back into the band which also did Saturday nights at Marrickville Town Hall. For Buddle, this was the beginning of a new career as a commercial and studio musician. Of course, he played occasionally at the El

Rocco, particularly after 1962, as did all the leading modernists, but generally this was a quiet time for jazz.

This was also a time of great expansion in the television and recording industries, and Buddle became one of the elite which had first priority on the work available, along with musicians like Don Burrows, Judy Bailey, George Golla, John Sangster and others — most of them happened to be, not only excellent studio musicians, but also the leading jazz players of the day.

The Errol Buddle story over the next 15 years is mostly a tale of television variety shows: the Joe Martin Show, the Mobil-Limb Show, Bandstand, The Sound of Music, the Bryan Davies Show ... If there was a radio or television orchestra Buddle was usually sitting in it. He estimates that he has played on more than 3,000 television programs since returning to Australia in 1958.



The Mobil-Limb Show in the early 1960s. Back row left, Errol Buddle is on tenor, then clockwise, Don Burrows (clarinet), Ron Falson (trumpet), John Bamford (trombone). Bobby Limb is out front on tenor... PHOTO © RON FALSON ARCHIVE

He remembers that there was some jazz playing on the Mobil-Limb Show. “But it would be a Dixieland tune,” says Errol. “Although guys like Ron Falson, Johnny Edgecombe, Burrows, Colin Bailey, played pretty modern sort of Dixieland.”

Buddle formed a band at one stage and played Jazz Messengers-style music at a restaurant on Saturday afternoons, along with the vocalist Ted Hamilton, but these occasions were rare.

Around 1963 Geoff Harvey, at that time Musical Director at EMI, arranged for Errol to record an album called *The Wind*. Of course, there was a great deal of jazz playing with the Bob Gibson orchestra. For about ten years Buddle continued in the lead alto chair, and attempted to perfect his lead alto playing. But it was not until 1973 that his career in jazz livened up again.

Buddle got a call from the pianist Col Nolan, who had a quartet at a new venue called The New Push (in earlier years it had been Sammy Lee's Latin Quarter). He played there for some months with Nolan until the job folded. Shortly after, Bob Barnard offered Buddle a guest spot with his band on a Monday night at The Rocks Push. It was the start of something big.

"I just played a couple of sets with Bob," recalls Errol, "and the following morning I got a ring from the boss of the Rocks Push, wanting to know if I'd like to put a band in." Buddle rang Col Nolan, Dieter Vogt (bass) and Laurie Bennett (drums). This became the Nolan-Buddle Quartet. "After a very short time, we ended up with four nights a week there. It was a great period at the Rocks Push."

This certainly was one of the most swinging bands seen in Sydney jazz during the 1970s, particularly after Warren Daly came in on drums. Daly has said that it was "an incredible experience" playing with this band; Col Nolan swung so much that Daly occasionally felt that



The drummer Warren Daly: Col Nolan swung so much that Daly felt that the piano was disintegrating... Later he asked Buddle to go to Russia with the Daly-Wilson Big Band.

PHOTO CREDIT PETER SINCLAIR

the piano was disintegrating. “For a while we just had Col on organ, Warren on drums, and myself — just a trio,” says Errol. “Col played the keyboard bass, and that was a really good sound. That trio was incredible. We used to get off the ground from the very first note every night.”

One night in 1975 Warren Daly came in and said to Buddle: “How would you like to go to Russia? “I’d love to”, was the reply, “When are you going?” “In about five days”, said Daly. The Daly-Wilson Big Band, with the help of the then Labor Government, was poised to begin a tour of the USSR which, in retrospect, appears to have been an astonishing achievement that has never been fully appreciated within Australia. Daly had wanted a first-class jazz player in the saxophone section, so at the last moment offered the first tenor chair to Buddle.

Arrangements were hurriedly made, and Errol Buddle left Australia with the Daly-Wilson Big Band. They stayed overnight in Tokyo, and the next evening they were in Moscow. It was something of a whirlwind for Buddle. Things had moved so quickly that he hadn’t completely tidied up his affairs. From Moscow he wrote to his startled father in Adelaide, letting him know of the trip, and paid his milk and bread bills with cheques from Moscow.

Over three weeks in Russia Daly-Wilson played some 20 concerts, all of which were sold out. “The band was an incredible success,” says Errol. “It was an unforgettable experience, the trip of a lifetime really. I still look back on it with awe, that we even went there. The band really should have made front-page news when we got back to Australia, because of the reception we got. It must have helped Russian-Australian relations. We had a lot of Russian officials in the audience in Moscow — Government people, high army officers, high-ranking Navy officers.”

The ABC sent a film crew to cover the event, but when the film finally made it to television some months later, it was somewhat downgraded — shown well out of peak viewing time, late at night.



The US trombonist Frank Rosolino: in Las Vegas, he came in to hear the Daly-Wilson Big Band, and was fascinated with the trombone section Bob McIvor, Herbie Cannon, Ed Wilson and Peter Scott...

The Daly-Wilson Big Band went on through London — where their expected engagements at Ronnie Scott's club had fallen through — and on to the United States, where they did a number of performances. Buddle remembers that, in Las Vegas, a number of leading American jazz musicians came in to hear the group, including the trombonist Frank Rosolino, whom Buddle had played with in a rehearsal band in the early 50s in Canada.

"I remember Rosolino was quite fascinated with the trombone section — Bob McIvor, Herbie Cannon, Ed Wilson and Peter Scott," says Errol. "He stood there all night and just listened to the band. He was knocked out with Peter Scott's playing on bass trombone."

After the Daly-Wilson tour, it was back to the Rocks Push, where Errol Buddle played well into 1977 until the job folded. Meanwhile, an important fillip to Buddle's career was to come. The Nolan-Buddle Quartet had recorded an LP for M7 Records called *The Odd Couple*, and enjoyed a good relationship with the record company. One day the manager Ron Hurst phoned up Buddle and mentioned that there was a new Australian film *Picnic At Hanging Rock*, and was there any music in it, which might lend itself to a jazz version?

"Col and I went out to the Chatswood movie theatre on a Wednesday afternoon, amongst all the ladies, and saw this movie," says Errol. "We came out of it thinking that there was just nothing in the movie you could make a hit tune out of."

At least, that's what they thought. Ron Hurst, however, was persistent. He insisted that Buddle listen to the movie soundtrack, which had been taken from an LP by the Rumanian musician Gheorghe Zamfir. "I took the album home and found this one track", says Errol. "I cut a few bars out of it here and there, virtually re-wrote the melody, and put it into four-four time. We recorded this as a single, and within a few weeks after it was released, it became a hit".



The Rumanian pan flute player Gheorghe Zamfir...

"John Laws was the first to play it. In fact I happened to be listening — I don't know why — and I heard him actually play it, twice in a row. He said at the time that this was going to be a hit, and it was." Certainly the *Theme From Picnic At Hanging Rock* captured the imagination of the middle-of-the-road listening public: They bought the record in droves. M7 Records (now Powderworks Records) estimates that it has sold between 30,000 and 40,000 copies, and is still selling.

During the 1970s, Errol Buddle was also featured on many of John Sangster's LPs, in the company of other leading Australian jazz musicians. Sangster, who regards Buddle as "the

boss tenor in Australian jazz”, first met him in Melbourne in the late 1940s, and they played together often at the El Rocco during the 1960s, after Sangster moved to Sydney.

“Sangster is an excellent composer; very original, with quite a unique approach”, says Buddle. “There is a lot of Ellington influence in his writing, but in the way he seems to combine it, there is a definite Australian flavour to his music. There is no-one who composes like him really.”



John Sangster (left) with musicians in the recording studio (L-R) Don Burrows, Col Loughnan, Errol Buddle & Roy Ainsworth... PHOTO CREDIT PETER SINCLAIR

“Sangster’s sessions are a lot of fun — very relaxing, free and easy. But there is one thing about his sessions: you’ve got to make sure the first take is a good one, because that’s the one he usually accepts. I remember telling him I played a wrong note half-way through the first take, and Sangster’s reply was, ‘Oh yeah, but that sounds even better than what I wrote.’ There’s only one John Sangster. He’s delightful to work for on a session.”

In late 1977, Errol Buddle began playing at the Soup Plus restaurant in Sydney (where he still works) and began thinking about going overseas again to study in the US. He made an application to the Australia Council for a study grant (which was successful) and left for the States in March 1978.

As he planned to stay on under his own steam after the three months study period, he felt it would be a good idea to have another LP to his credit, under his own name. So came about *Buddles Doubles*, an extraordinary LP on which Buddle played soprano, alto, tenor and baritone saxes, flute, oboe, bassoon, clarinet and percussion. The tunes on the LP were arranged by George Brodbeck for various combinations of reed instruments, but all the section work was achieved through Buddle’s brilliant ability at over-dubbing. On one track *Intimacy Of The Blues*, he overdubbed 14 tracks. The LP has been described by Eric Child as “a tour de force of brilliant playing, technical expertise and sheer dedication by one of Australia’s finest reed players.”



The multi-instrumentalist: on Buddles Doubles, Buddle played soprano, alto, tenor and baritone saxes, flute, oboe, bassoon, clarinet and percussion...

Back in the United States in 1978, Errol Buddle stayed away from Australia for 15 months in all. In Los Angeles he took lessons from Russell Cheever, one of the busiest studio musicians in LA, recently retired, and also leader of the classical group, the Hollywood Saxophone Quartet. Also, he studied with Gene Cipriano, the leading oboe and cor anglais player in the Los Angeles session industry.

Buddle played with a number of rehearsal bands and did various sessions while in Los Angeles, including some for the group Sea Wind. He toyed with the idea of staying in the USA and securing legal resident status — in order to work freely — but did not follow it up. Meanwhile he went to Detroit and stayed for a week with his old AJQ colleague Jack Brokensha.

Buddle also visited New York, and went on to Europe for some time. In June 1979 he was back in Australia, and took up again his old job at the Soup Plus, on Wednesdays and Saturdays. Predictably, he was also back into the top studio work: the Mike Walsh Show, You're A Star and innumerable others, plus many recording sessions for the new generation of Australian films.

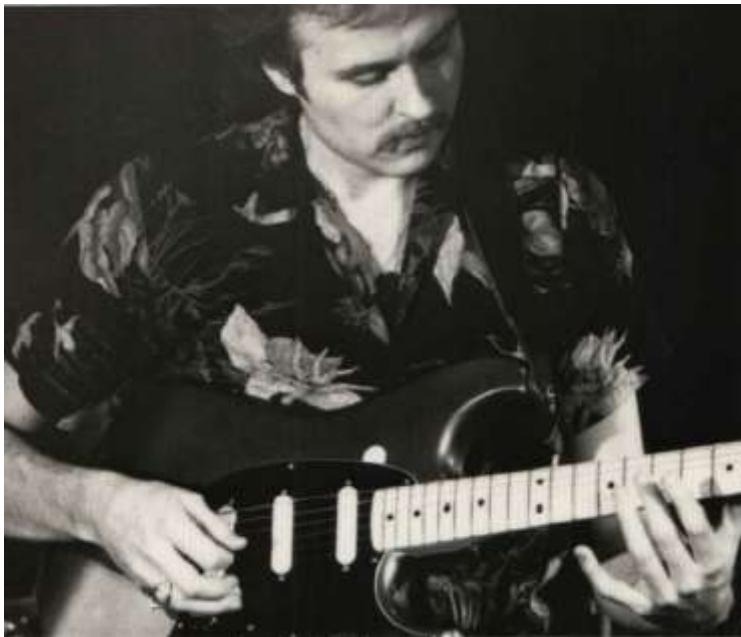
These days Errol Buddle is excited by the new generation of young jazz musicians. "There is a pretty healthy sort of scene going now", he says. "There are a lot of good players now, some exceptional players. I think the jazz course at the Con has had a lot to do with that." In particular, he is excited by his own band, which includes a number of Sydney's outstanding

young players: Mark Isaacs (keyboards), Phil Scorgie (bass), Dean Kerr (guitar), Sunil De Silva (percussion) and Mark Riley (drums).



The drummer Rodney Ford: another young musician playing with the new Errol Buddle Sextet... PHOTO CREDIT PETER SINCLAIR

Asked how it was like, running a band of young musicians, Errol Buddle replied: "It's very stimulating. I don't really care what age they are, they're such good musicians really. I haven't struck keenness like theirs for a long time. I can remember keen players when my generation were teenagers, also in later years occasionally, but I've never struck five other guys so keen."



The guitarist Dean Kerr, a member of the new Errol Buddle Sextet: Buddle doesn't really care what age they are... "they're such good musicians really. I haven't struck keenness like theirs for a long time..." PHOTO CREDIT PETER SINCLAIR