

# THE AUSTRALIAN

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## Perth's great jazz musician answered the clarion call of jazz



*Keith Hounslow has died at 91... PHOTO COURTESY THE AUSTRALIAN*

### **OBITUARY: KEITH HOUNSLOW**

Trumpeter. Born Perth, September 19, 1928. Died Bunyip, February 14, 2020, aged 91.

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### **ERIC MYERS**

A great jazz musician, Keith Hounslow never learnt to read music, and only had a primitive awareness of chords and related scales. Yet he was active in Australian jazz for more than 60 years, achieving a level of brilliance rivalled by only a handful of this country's most distinguished musicians.

As a youngster in Perth whose father had bought him a trumpet he liked swing, which he heard on the radio, and was attracted to American trumpeters Bix Beiderbecke, Louis Armstrong and Muggsy Spanier. Jazz musicians in Perth were then few and far between, but Hounslow worked with a band called the West Side Jazz Group.

He had been playing for about two years when, at 19, he arrived in Melbourne on Christmas Eve 1947 to attend the second Australian Jazz Convention. He was the only representative from Perth. Two trumpeters, Roger Bell and Ade Monsbourgh, were then in Czechoslovakia on their ground-breaking tour with the Graeme Bell band. Frank Johnson and a fledgling 19-year-old John Sangster were still in Melbourne to fly the flag but, according to Dick Hughes, Hounslow was “undoubtedly the new star at the second convention”.



*This historic shot was taken during a street parade at the second Australian Jazz Convention in 1947. Hounslow is seated in the front on cornet. To the left of him is a young Dick Hughes, who wrote that Hounslow was “undoubtedly the new star at the second convention”. To the right is Bruce Gray on clarinet. On the far left, with his hand on hip, is a young John Sangster. Bob Wright is on sousaphone and, standing in the centre, is Dave Dallwitz on trombone...PHOTO COURTESY NIGEL BUESST COLLECTION*

Within a year, the doyen of Australian jazz critics, William H Miller, had voted Hounslow the best trumpeter in Australia.

Hounslow moved to Melbourne permanently in 1948, becoming part of a bohemian sub-culture connected with rebellious movements in painting, poetry and jazz. He formed Keith Hounslow’s Jazz Hounds which worked as a dance band in Melbourne halls.



*In Melbourne's bohemian sub-culture soon after Hounslow's arrival in Melbourne: He is pictured here on the left, with John Sangster in a shot taken at Alan Watson's mansion; these two men were the same age... PHOTO COURTESY SANGSTER'S BOOK SEEING THE RAFTERS*

A milestone was the visit in 1949 of the 42-year-old former Duke Ellington cornetist Rex Stewart, who became a father figure to Hounslow. Stewart toured with the Graeme Bell band, with Hounslow as "baggage boy". He was close to Stewart and his companion Ruth Hansen, and accompanied them when they moved to Sydney for Stewart's subsequent performances.



*Clovelly Surf Club, Sydney, 1949, L-R, Rex Stewart, Johnny McCarthy, Ron Falson, Keith Hounslow, Johnny Edgecombe... PHOTO © RON FALSON ARCHIVE*

As a non-reading musician Hounslow was uninterested in the commercial work that sustained many jazz musicians, but when a genuine improvising musician was required, he was first call. He relocated to Adelaide in 1950-51 to perform with the composer/pianist/trombonist Dave Dallwitz's re-formed Southern Jazz Group. Their recordings in 1951 prompted perceptive critic Bruce Clunies-Ross to praise Hounslow's "very individual genius as an improviser", and describe him as "Australia's most brilliantly original jazz instrumentalist."



*Adelaide Town Hall, 1950, L-R, Dave Dallwitz (piano), Hounslow (trumpet), Jim McKenzie (drums), Doc Willis (trombone)... PHOTO COURTESY ODE TO A JAZZ RUMPLED OVERCOAT*

Back in Melbourne, Hounslow had a six-month stint with Frank Coughlan's dance band at the Melbourne Trocadero. In common with many Melbourne players at the time, however, a "day job" was necessary. In the 50s he began working in the Melbourne office of advertising agency J Walter Thompson, and built a successful career outside music.

In 1954 he married Valerie McDermott and three children were to come along. With a family to support, he was glad to be making good money in advertising. He was an excellent documentary filmmaker and at the Chicago Documentary Film Festival in 1962 won a director's award for best foreign film on Shell Co Australia.



*Hounslow, holding his award from the 1962 Chicago Documentary Film Festival... PHOTO COURTESY ODE TO A JAZZ RUMPLED OVERCOAT*

In the mid-50s the saxophonist Brian Brown turned Hounslow on to modern musicians, among them Miles Davis and Chet Baker. Hounslow, who loved what he heard, became part of Brown's quintet which revolutionised Melbourne jazz at Horst Liepolt's club Jazz Centre 44. Others involved were pianist David Martin, bassist Barry Buckley and drummer Stewart Speer. Virtually overnight, Hounslow had emerged as a modernist, playing bop in a fully developed style.



*In the fifties, L-R, Hounslow (trumpet), John Grunden (bass), Brian Brown (tenor sax)... PHOTO COURTESY ODE TO A JAZZ RUMPLED OVERCOAT*

On the home front, Valerie and Keith, believing they were unable to have children, adopted a boy, Nicholas, in 1963 (who died in 2014), followed by the birth of their own two children Simon in 1965 and Sophy in 1967. Valerie and Keith separated in 1984 and Hounslow moved to Sydney. There he was joined by his new partner Kerrie Thorp; they remained together for 33 years until Kerrie's death in 2017.



*Kerrie Thorp: together with Keith for 33 years... PHOTO COURTESY ODE TO A JAZZ RUMPLED OVERCOAT*



*McJad performing in Mumbai, India, in 1982, L-R, Tony Gould on piano, Keith Hounslow on pocket trumpet... PHOTO CREDIT FIROZE MISTRY COURTESY JAZZ MAGAZINE*

Hounslow performed duets in the mid-70s with Melbourne's Tony Gould, a bank clerk who played piano on the side. In McJad (Melbourne Contemporary Jazz Art Duo) they pioneered free improvisation many years before The Necks became known for this genre. "It always has to be a special type of pianist for me," Hounslow once said, "and I've found that in Tony, a beautiful musician. We absolutely just play and don't even have to talk about it. It's magic."

Before his move to Sydney, Hounslow revisited traditional jazz with Frank Traynor's Jazz Preachers in Melbourne and, once in Sydney, formed a brilliant mainstream quintet Keith Hounslow's Jazzmakers that toured prolifically for Musica Viva.



*Keith Hounslow's Jazzmakers at Burnie Townhouse, Tasmania, in May, 1987: L-R, Grahame Conlon (guitar), Hounslow (flugelhorn), Jimmy Shaw (drums), Dieter Vogt (bass) ...PHOTO COURTESY VIKTOR ZAPPNER*

At his aged care unit in Bunyip, outside Melbourne, Hounslow died peacefully, listening to jazz, with his surviving children Sophy and Simon at his bedside.