

## OPEN SEASON ON PAUL GRABOWSKY

by Eric Myers

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On March 17, 1997, the morning after the jazz program *As hard to define as love* was shown on ABC-TV as part of *Access All Areas*, Paul Grabowsky, commissioning editor, ABC-TV arts & entertainment, received from me a short note which read: "Congratulations, Paul on last night - a beautiful program on jazz."

I felt compelled to send Paul this fax because the program was a terrific one. I hope he enjoyed this small amount of positive feedback from a minor figure in the jazz world because, soon after, he was to receive some crushingly negative feedback from a couple of pretty heavy media figures. On March 31, 1997, it looked as if it was open season on Paul Grabowsky.

Firstly, on that day there was an attack on him and the *Access All Areas* program from the award-winning music critic Bruce Elder in the *Sydney Morning Herald*. This was the most trenchant put-down of any musical enterprise that I think I've ever read in the newspapers.



*Music critic Bruce Elder: Access All Areas a meandering and meaningless shambles, he says... PHOTO COURTESY FACEBOOK*

Under the heading "Exercises in inanity", Elder described *Access All Areas* as a "tawdry little exercise in self-indulgence." "Featuring some of the most pretentious direction yet seen in television (watch in amazement as camera angles are employed which are notable only for the fact that they have no logic whatsoever), it contains

interviews of breathtaking banality strung together with such apparent randomness that you would need to be lobotomised to see any coherent or thematic unity."

Elder said that the series served up "snippets of music... occasional and pointless vox pop, and Paul Grabowsky and Jaslyn Hall demonstrating, in most instances, that they are totally out of their depth. The result is a meandering and meaningless shambles which serves only to confuse its audience and to discredit the performers."

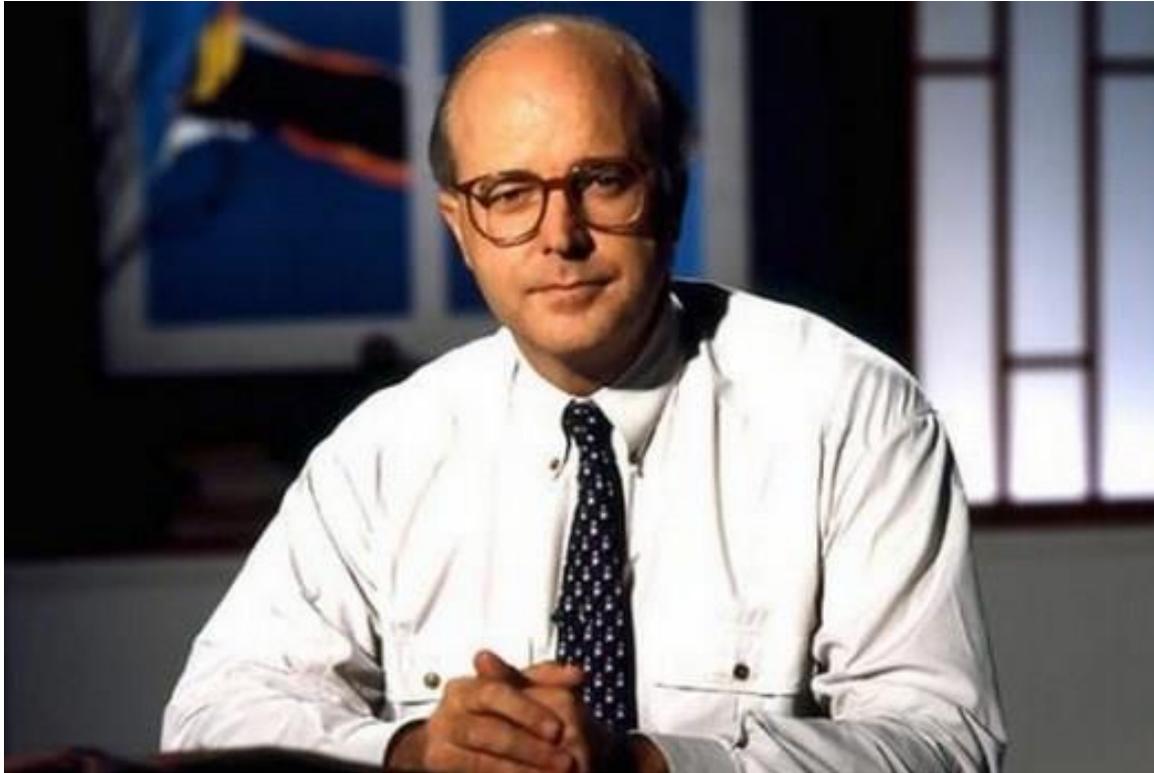


*Grabowsky (above) and Jaslyn Hall (below) demonstrating, in most instances, that they are totally out of their depth, according to Bruce Elder...*



This was "a near-perfect example of how intellectually sloppy and self-serving the ABC can be." Elder went on. "Someone must be held accountable for this program," he concluded, "and they should explain themselves to everyone working in ABC TV." Phew!

Also on March 31, the ABC's own Stuart Littlemore in his program *Mediawatch* put the boot into Paul Grabowsky and AAA, referring to "dissembling at a very high level". The level of vitriol in Littlemore's commentary was remarkable, even for Littlemore.



*Stuart Littlemore of Mediawatch: you see far too much of Grabowsky...*

"Grabowsky indulged himself by conceiving and fronting the program *Access All Areas*", said Littlemore. "One of the sillier post-modern conceits of the *Access All Areas* style is that you see far too much of Grabowsky: Grabowsky with interviewee; Grabowsky and interviewee with camera crew in shot..." Littlemore then went on to reveal that two of the apparently intimate interviews that Grabowsky had done (with Neil Finn and Simone Young) were faked. The interviews were done by someone else, he said, and Grabowsky edited himself in later.

This had all the signs of an embarrassing exposé of Grabowsky. until Paul's explanation was published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on April 2, 1997. Graciously admitting that Littlemore's allegations were true, Paul pointed out that over 300 interviews were done for *Access All Areas*, and he was unable to do the Finn and Young interviews himself: in one case he was on tour in India with the Australian Art Orchestra, and in the other case he was in hospital with peritonitis.

"Littlemore had my side of the story and chose not to run with it." Paul Grabowsky said. "I don't know why."