

OBITUARY: MADDY YOUNG 1972-1997

by Eric Myers

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Members of the Sydney jazz community were shocked and saddened at the news that the 25-year-old guitarist Madeleine (Maddy) Young took her own life on November 10, 1997. Hundreds attended her funeral service at Northern Suburbs Crematorium, Sydney, on November 14.

How could a young woman, who seemed so blessed with beauty and talent, and who played the guitar like a dream, commit suicide? Those who knew her well say that she was seriously ill for many years with manic depression. Maddy's mother Roslyn told the *Daily Telegraph* (12/11/97) that her daughter had "courageously fought her depressions" over the years.



Maddy Young: a struggle for her to survive... depression is like a cancer...

“It was really a struggle for her to survive,” she said. “Maddy suffered badly. She had five severe episodes over the past few years and had been hospitalised three times. But depression is like a cancer. If you’re off the right medication you can’t control it.”

Maddy Young took up the guitar at the age of seven, when her mother decided she should learn an instrument. Maddy was quoted in the *Sun-Herald* in 1995: “I wanted to play piano but we couldn’t afford it, and it wouldn’t have fitted into the flat, so we chose the guitar.” She began on classical guitar and studied at the Conservatorium High School in Sydney. She received the Associate Diploma in Classical Guitar in 1988.

After hearing Tony Barnard’s group All Hat Jazz at the Unity Hall in Balmain, jazz took hold of her. She later credited in particular the guitarists George Golla and the late Ike Isaacs for turning her on to jazz guitar. In 1992 she received the Associate Diploma in Jazz Studies from the Sydney Conservatorium of Music.

I first heard Maddy play at a private party where she was part of the Keith Hounslow Trio in early 1995 (which I described in an article on her in *JazzChord*, Jun/Jul, 1995). I then wrote: “She played guitar like a veteran, with such nonchalant control of the instrument, producing lines of such beauty, so resonant of the jazz tradition, that you tended to think ‘this is the real thing’.”



Maddy Young’s bassist Rolf Stuebe (left), who also died tragically. He is pictured here with the pianist John Harkins...PHOTO CREDIT JASON CAMPBELL

Soon after I attended the launch of the CD by her trio, *Live At Kiama 95*, on May 29, 1995 at the Strawberry Hills. The CD featured Rolf Stuebe (bass) - who also subsequently died tragically - and John Morrison (drums). John Clare, writing in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, described the CD as “a very convincing demonstration that there is still plenty of vitality in the small-amp jazz guitar idiom.” He went on, “Madeleine Young is so good that she deserves a better recorded sound than this DAT job, but this mixture of jazz standards and originals leaves no doubt as to her talent.”

Maddy occasionally came to my office, for one reason or another. She was always flying, and full of nervous energy. I was struck by how seriously she took the business side of music. She had completed a six-weeks course at the Sydney Business Enterprise Centre as part of the New Enterprise Incentive Scheme. Also, I noted that, despite her youth, she had adopted something of a 'mother hen' role for the community of jazz guitarists in Sydney.

When a number of local guitarists - including herself, Dave Colton and Peter Zografakis - got together to meet with the visiting UK guitarist Martin Taylor, Maddy took the initiative and organised a one-day bash for professional guitar players. The first one happened on December 22, 1994 at her place in the inner-city suburb of Zetland. The second one - called the Autumn Guitar Party - took place on April 10, 1995. She told me that she intended this to be a seasonal event.

At Maddy's funeral, the musicians who provided the music were Ron Philpott (electric bass); Roger Frampton (electric piano); Gordon Rytmeister & John Bartram (drums); Grahame Conlon (guitar); Don Rader (flugelhorn); and Jason Morphett (tenor saxophone). Joe Lane sang two tunes, *How Little We Know* and *I'll Get By*; Maddy's brother Micky sang her composition *Discovery*. Her infectious instrumental bossa nova *Flying*, dedicated to her mother Roslyn, was also played by the band, along with some jazz standards.



Emcee at Maddy's funeral service Ron Philpott...PHOTO COURTESY JUDY BAILEY

Ron Philpott, who acted as the emcee for the funeral service, made the very apt comment that Maddy "was some guitar player", and that he had advised many of his students to go and hear her whenever she was playing, not only because of her clean, mature solos, but also for her sympathetic and supportive comping. Behind another soloist, said Ron, Maddy never got in the way.

Maddy Young is survived by her mother Roslyn, and brother Micky.