

UPDATING JAZZ

by Clement Semmler*

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Jazz has never been a 'popular' music. It is true, of course, that from time to time popular music has had strong jazz elements. There was the Charleston music of the 1920s; the swing music of the late '30s and '40s, for which, in its popular acceptance someone like Glenn Miller was probably better known than Benny Goodman (who was its chief architect so to speak); and, in recent years rock and soul music have exhibited undoubted blues elements.



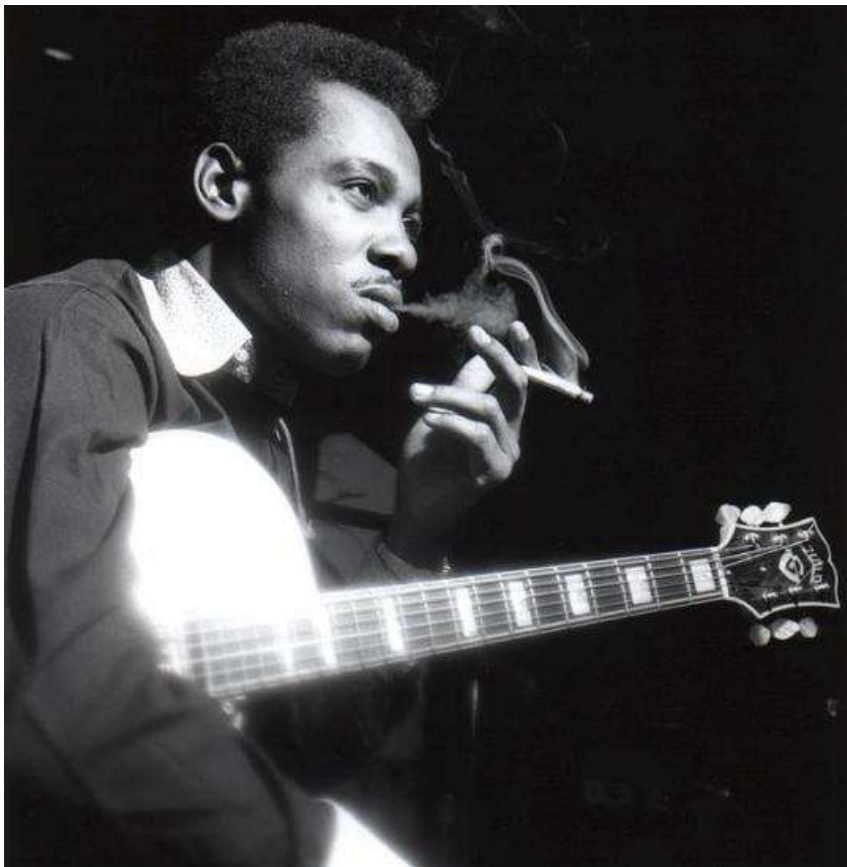
In the swing era someone like Glenn Miller (left) was probably better known than Benny Goodman (below), who was its chief architect so to speak...



** Clement Semmler joined the ABC as a young man in 1942, thus beginning an illustrious career that saw him rise to the position of deputy general manager. On the way he popularised jazz music programs on radio, becoming one of Australia's foremost authorities on the music, and writing on many subjects, including jazz, for The Bulletin.*

There is a curious corollary to the relationship between jazz and pop music. Back in the 1930s the popular songs of the day were part of the repertoire of the small jazz groups – tunes like *Tea for Two*, *Who, I know that you know*, *Lady Be Good*, *My Melancholy Baby*. Even in the 1940s in the big band jazz or swing era arrangements of popular songs were so called 'standards' in repertoires: one recalls Jimmy Dorsey's *Tangerine*, Les Brown's *I've Got My Love to Keep Me Warm*, Glenn Miller's *I've Got a Gal in Kalamazoo* and so on.

But modern pop songs don't suit the improvising habits of jazz musicians. There just are not enough harmonic changes per mile, so to speak, and the ones that do occur are so determinedly triadic that the kind of extension jazz players insist on would destroy the character of the piece. One result is that, if anything, there tends to be a widening of the formal gap between pop and jazz. And even at the best of times the average pop music enthusiast wouldn't know who Thelonious Monk, Lester Young, Harry Edison or Vic Dickenson were, even if he fell over them. But he would be more likely to know such a jazzman as the guitarist George Benson who has in recent years developed a rock or "funky" sound.



The average pop music enthusiast wouldn't know who Thelonious Monk, Lester Young, Harry Edison or Vic Dickenson were, even if he fell over them; he would be more likely to know such a jazzman as the guitarist George Benson (above), who has in recent years developed a rock or "funky" sound.

On the other hand jazz is generally much better known now than it was 20 or 30 years ago. In those days the aficionados had to seek out the haunts where jazz was played. Often you came upon these oases by word of mouth. I remember in 1955 a barman at Eddie Condon's in New York telling me not to miss Doc Haugherty's Jazz Bar in San Francisco*. Here in this delightful grotto where you could listen as long as you drank, I came upon Earl Hines with a trio including Darnell Howard — Hines playing that trumpet style piano just as he had done in those vintage QRS solos of the late 1920s, now very much collectors' items. I recall on that particular visit that the intermission pianist was none other than Meade Lux Lewis whose *Honky Tonk Train Blues* was the first jazz record I ever bought, back in the 1930s. Lewis was by now as wide as he was tall; his buttocks spilled over both sides of the piano stool. But he still played the most fantastic boogie-woogie piano, beginning with a quiet theme and working up to a shattering climax of pounded eighth notes in the bass and intricate cross rhythms with the right hand.



*Meade Lux Lewis whose “Honky Tonk Train Blues “ was the first jazz record Semmler ever bought, back in the 1930s...
PHOTO COURTESY A PICTORIAL HISTORY OF JAZZ*

**Editor’s note, writing in 2023: Semmler may well be in error here, and could be referring to Doc Dougherty (sometimes spelt Daugherty), who played clarinet and sax, led a hot dance band and later a swing orchestra, and co-composed the hit popular song “I’m Confessin’ (That I Love You).” After retiring, he opened Club Hangover at 729 Bush Street in San Francisco in 1949. See next page for a photograph of Dougherty.*



*Doc Daugherty and the hatcheck girl Maria Cuthbertson, outside Club Hangover...
PHOTO COURTESY THE GREAT JAZZ REVIVAL*

All over the Western world jazz enthusiasts would similarly seek out spots where jazz was played —whether in Paris, Copenhagen, Berlin, Amsterdam or London. These places were passwords handed along the international jazz grapevine. Some of the best American jazz musicians frequently visited Europe —like Armstrong, Ellington, Lionel Hampton, Ben Webster and a host of others; a few even settled there permanently, as did the clarinet player Mezz Mezzrow, the pianist Joe Turner and the saxophonist Don Byas.

But there was plenty of jazz lend-lease from the European side too. Hugues Panassié, one of the best early writers on jazz, was a Frenchman who became equally well-known in the USA; so did the British jazz writers and organizers Spike Hughes and Leonard Feather and the pianists George Shearing and Marian Page who had married jazz trumpet player Jimmy McPartland and became famous in her own right.

Incidentally, one of the earlier and best of British jazz pianists — almost forgotten now — but who had Australian connections, was Arthur Young. He came to Australia in the 1950s as part of a light piano duo on a concert tour with Mary McLeod. He stayed here, performed frequently for the ABC, and for a short time ran the Mountain Inn on Mount Wellington in Hobart. When he chose to play jazz he was

truly magnificent; he had recorded some memorable tracks with small English groups including Tommy McQuater, Danny Polo and others. His duets with Reginald Forsythe are now collectors' items. His jazz settings of some of Shakespeare's songs -- *Blow, Blow, Thou Winter Wind* and *It Was a Lover and His Lass* are classics; they have become part of the repertoire of that splendid English jazz singer Cleo Laine who needs no introduction to Australian jazz enthusiasts.

British jazz was influenced early in the piece by American jazzmen. As far back as the mid-1920s, a young Cambridge undergraduate, Fred Elizalde, persuaded the Savoy Hotel to let him bring in a jazz band. Elizalde, who had opted out of academic studies for a career in jazz music, was Filipino of Spanish extraction. He imported the American trumpeter, Chelsea Qualey, and the saxophonists Bobby Davis and Adrian Rollini, modelling his band on Red Nichols' Five Pennies. Not long after this, in the early 1930s, the BBC imported the famous American jazzman Benny Carter to play with, and arrange for, its Dance Band.



Fred Elizalde, who was Filipino of Spanish extraction, who opted out of academic studies for a career in jazz music: he persuaded the Savoy Hotel to let him bring in a jazz band...

Some time ago the BBC issued a 40-record set of early jazz in England, taken from its musical archives. It is a revelation to listen to the work of musicians like the trombonists George Chisholm and Lew Davis (equal to the best I have heard in jazz), the trumpet of Tommy McQuater, and the clarinet of Danny Polo (another American expatriate in London), Sid Phillips and others, in small bands led by Spike Hughes,

Elizalde, Nat Gonella. Then there were the early big bands of Bert Ambrose, Ray Noble, and Lew Stone, which played big band jazz or swing as well as dance music, followed in later years by the exciting bands of Ted Heath and especially of Ken 'Snakehips' Johnson with his talented clarinetist, Carl Barriteau. This entire band of West Indians resident in England was tragically killed during the London blitz when a German bomb scored a direct hit on the Cafe De Paris where they were playing.



The clarinetist Carl Barriteau, pictured in 1955, a member of the Ken 'Snakehips' Johnson band, composed of West Indians resident in England. Barriteau survived the German bomb which scored a direct hit on the Cafe De Paris during the London blitz, and later came to live in Australia...

In later years in the London scene were the small jazz groups, mainly trad, of Humphrey Lyttelton, Johnny Dankworth, Ken Colyer, Chris Barber, Sandy Brown, Kenny Baker, Alex Welsh and the rest. Which brings me to Ronnie Scott and his famous jazz club. Scott is a fine saxophonist who played in transatlantic ship bands immediately after the last War. This brought him into touch with New York jazz and its musicians and he became well enough known to be accepted in the jazz scene there.

In 1959 Scott came back to England and opened one of the best jazz spots in the world. It is a model of what a jazz club should be — arranged in the form of an intimate auditorium with tiered seating and tables for meals and drinks. The acoustics are beyond praise, and it is deservedly the Mecca of every jazz enthusiast who comes to London.



A shot of Ronnie Scott's jazz club in London, with the American singer Ernestine Anderson performing. The pianist is Stan Tracey... PHOTO COURTESY REEL ART

I have heard here some of the best jazzmen and singers in the world: Stan Getz, Thelonious Monk, Buddy de Franco, that witty and talented singer Blossom Dearie (who made her name here), Cleo Laine — and, on one memorable occasion, the big band of Buddy Rich. He really ran hot that night. I've always maintained that this band at its best was the equal of any in jazz, including Basie and Goodman. In fact, if there's ever been a better big band sound than Rich's of 1956-57, when it included Harry Edison on trumpet, Frank Rosolino on trombone and Jimmy Rowles at piano (as in their recording of *Blues for Basie* on the Metro label), I'd like to hear it. This night at Scott's, with Rich playing like a demon, the band really brought the house down.

Rich, laconic, saturnine, gum-chewing, is a remarkable character who has played drums since he was a boy of five. The late Dick Freeman, who used to be on drums with Frank Coughlan's band at the Sydney Trocadero, told me that he remembered seeing Rich on tour as the boy wonder drummer "Traps" in Sydney in the mid-1920s. Rich stayed 18 months in Australia and his act was a crowd-stopper at Sydney's old Tivoli Theatre for many months. Freeman himself was quite an identity in early Australian jazz and dance music; in his last year he worked as a commissionaire in the ABC and often reminisced with me about his early experiences. When many musicians had been swallowed up by Man-power in the last War, Freeman had formed an all-girl dance band in 1942 which played with great success as the Trocadero.



Dick Freeman, who used to be on drums with Frank Coughlan's band at the Sydney Trocadero...

Which brings me, anyhow, to Australian jazz — and I suppose the average Australian only became aware of jazz in the late 1940s, although, as I have recounted in a previous article in this journal, there were coteries of jazz enthusiasts and musicians all over Australia during the 1930s. Much of the thrust of the greater recognition of jazz came from Graeme Bell's band. Graeme, his brother Roger, Ade Monsborough and the nucleus of the band had been playing as a group since the late 1930s and were the leading spirits in what might have been called the Melbourne underground jazz scene.



L-R, bassist Dieter Vogt, trombonist Ken Herron, pianist Graeme Bell, UK trumpeter Humphrey Lyttelton in Sydney, 1978... PHOTO CREDIT NORM LINEHAN

It was the success of the band's overseas tour in 1947-48 which caught the imagination of the Australian public. The Bell band went abroad to play at the World Youth Festival in Prague in 1947 and later toured the Continent and England. I had not heard them till I bought some marvellous jazz tracks they had recorded in 1946 for Columbia's two-and-sixpenny label Regal-Zonophone: *That Woodbourne Strut*, *The Lizard*, *South*, *Smokey Mokes* and others. At any rate, aware of the Bells' success in Europe I niggled away at the ABC's General Manager, Charles Moses, for a concert tour for the Bells when they returned to Australia. I was at that time Assistant Controller of Programmes, but holding a brief for Light Entertainment in the absence of a director for that department, which fact gave me a little leverage. The ABC's Concert Department was up till that time pretty conservative, not to say snooty about its touring artists; it was largely classical or nothing; the only exceptions were 'popular' tenors like Richard Tauber.

But I won the day — and the Bells went on tour in 1948. It was a great breakthrough for Australian jazz. They confounded the critics, and especially the pessimistic ABC concert moguls, with smashing successes wherever they went. I well remember an agitated Con Charlton (the father of Michael and Tony of TV fame), then ABC Manager in Victoria, ringing Charles Moses in great excitement to tell him that at the Bells' concert at the Melbourne Town Hall the patrons had stood and what was more, danced in the aisles. No wonder Charlton was incoherent. Such a happening at an ABC concert was unheard of, nay, undreamt of!

But as I said, it was a breakthrough. Some years later, on a visit to New York, I heard at Birdland (then a leading jazz spot), on the same bill as the Marian McPartland Trio, the Australian Jazz Quintet, which included three musicians I had known well in my South Australian days when I was presenting jazz on the ABC. They were Jack Brokensha, a dynamo of energy who had been percussionist with the South Australian Symphony Orchestra, had then turned to the vibraphone and jazz and was now the moving spirit behind the Quintet; the pianist Bryce Rohde whom I had taught English at the Unley High School; and Errol Buddle, a South Australian country boy who came to Adelaide and was inspired to take up the tenor saxophone after hearing Bobby Limb, then one of Adelaide's leading jazzmen. So here in New York it was a great re-union, with a group of Australian unknowns who had made good in the toughest jazz competition in the world.



The three Australians in the Australian Jazz Quintet are in the front, L-R, Bryce Rohde, Errol Buddle & Jack Brokensha; behind are the two Americans, L-R, Ed Gaston & Dick Healey... PHOTO COURTESY LEE BUDDLE

After some memorable after-hours sessions, I talked the quintet boys into coming back to Australia for a concert tour for the ABC. They had just signed a contract with Bethlehem Records and I brought some of their records back with me as advance publicity. They, like the Bells, were a great success on the ABC concert circuit. I believe that Rohde's subsequent work (he now lives in California) has proved him to be one of the most imaginative jazz pianists Australia has produced.



Bryce Rohde: his subsequent work (he now lives in California) has proved him to be one of the most imaginative jazz pianists Australia has produced... PHOTO COURTESY BRUCE CALE

Thinking back on the early days of jazz in this country when it struggled so hard for recognition, the present day flourishing of the idiom seems almost miraculous. Now we have jazz musicians of undisputed international calibre; Don Burrows and George Golla have toured South America; Bob Barnard and his band have made American and Asian tours; the Brian Brown quartet have toured Scandinavia.

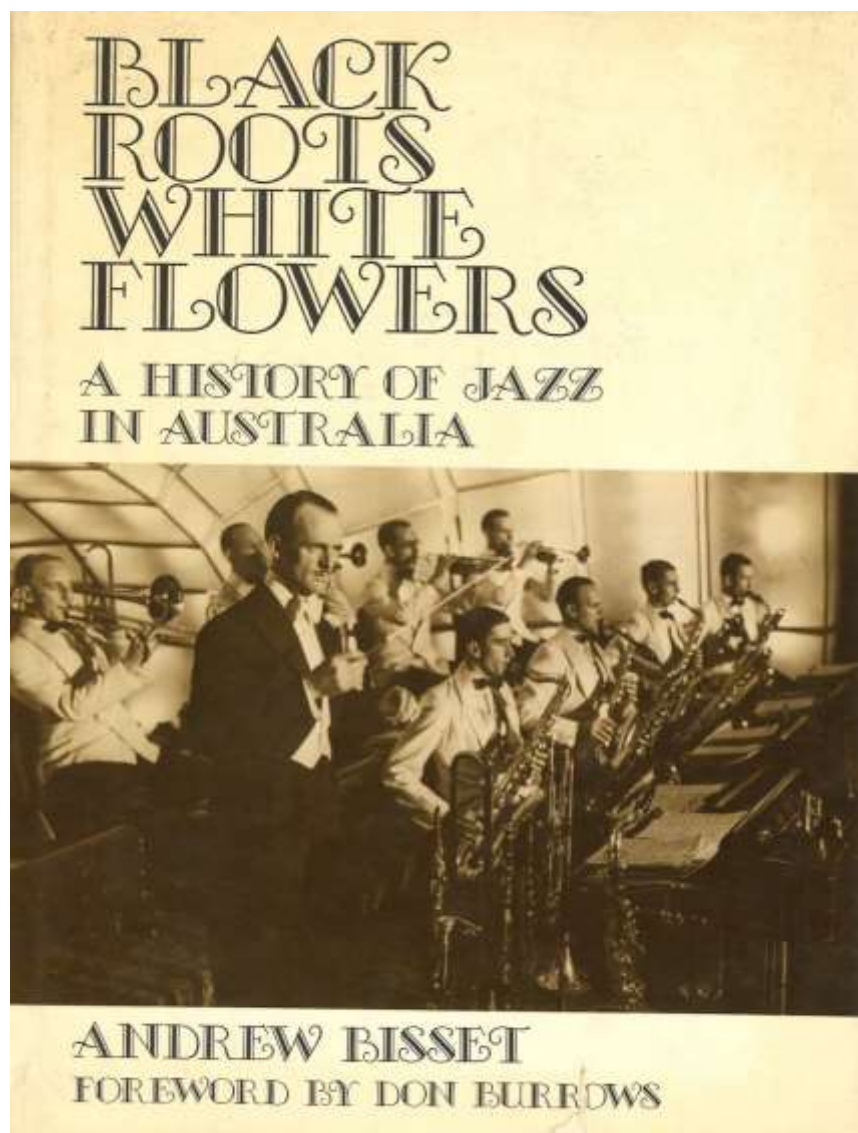
This jazz renaissance owes much to radio jazz commentators like Ellis Blain, Ron Wills and Alan Saunders, followed by Kym Bonython, Eric Child — the doyen — Arch McKirdy and Ian Neil (a prodigious worker for jazz with the flourishing NSW-based Jazz Action Society and a member of the Music Board of the Australia Council). Other influences have included the setting up by the NSW Conservatorium of Music of a section for jazz studies and especially in the early 70s the courageous if unfortunately financially unprofitable jazz entrepreneuring of Kym Bonython which enabled musicians and laymen alike to hear in the flesh some of the greatest jazz performers in the world, among them Brubeck, Garner, Herbie Mann, Earl Hines, Monk and the Ellington and Basie bands.



Kym Bonython (centre) pictured here with Duke Ellington (left) and the South Australian governor Sir Richard Harrison (right) in 1970...

So the time has been ripe for some time now for an historian of Australian jazz to come along — and Andrew Bisset's book* has been worth waiting for.

**Black Roots White Flowers, by Andrew Bisset, Golden Press, 1979*



It is not only an extraordinarily comprehensive and well-researched book about the development of jazz in this country; it is notable because he takes a positive stance that a particular jazz sound has emerged in this country:

.. jazz as played in this country [is] distinct from jazz played elsewhere and recognizable as "Australian". It is a spirited, uninhibited, uncontrived, guileless excitement which comes out most strongly in the vigorous ensemble sound. Often it is heard more in front lines with two reeds than two trumpets. The Australian sound is more readily distinguishable in tradition than in modern bands.

He pursues his thesis by arguing that Australian jazz has developed in two streams — one from the professional dance bands whose origins go back to the 1920s, and the other springing from the upsurge of traditional jazz in the late 1930s and early 1940s. Mr Bisset's account of the early dance band scene in Australia makes nostalgic reading for those old enough to remember the heyday of the big dance bands in Sydney and Melbourne — and the names of Jim Davidson, Frank Coughlan, Abe

Romaine, Cecil Fraser (in Melbourne) and Harry Boake-Smith (in Adelaide), who were, I suppose, the pioneers of this music. Mr Bisset is as well-informed on the details of their careers and achievements as he is generous in his praise of them. Nor does he forget the name of J C Bendrodt — a Canadian ex-flier, actor, boxer, dancer and lumberjack, who had come to Australia in the World War I years and became the most important entrepreneur in the Australian dance world.



J C Bendrodt, who became the most important entrepreneur in the Australian dance world, is pictured here dancing with his future wife Peggy Dawes... PHOTO COURTESY PINTEREST

Jim Davidson certainly put Australian dance band music on the map and he is probably the most notable figure in the history of Australian musical entertainment. He was born of humble parentage in the Sydney working-class suburb of Balmain. He learned to play the drums in a house band at Lever Brothers where he worked, and he formed a cabaret band in the 1930s. He broke into the big time when

Bendrodt heard his band and invited him to the Palais Royal, Bendrodt's and Sydney's most famous ballroom. Davidson built his band up to ten pieces — unheard of in those days — yet as the author notes ". . . neither Davidson nor Bendrodt knew that Benny Goodman was going to initiate the swing era in a couple of years, yet here was Davidson enlarging his band to ten, and more when he could afford it, because that is what his musical sense told him to do."



The Jim Davidson band in 1933, L-R, Davidson, Pete Cantrell (with clarinet), Frank McLaughlin, Chick Donovan, Gordon Rawlinson (piano), Alan Barr (guitar), Orm Wills (bass, standing at back), John Warren (vocal), Tom Stephenson (banjo/trombone), Jim Gussey, Ray Tarrant, Dud Cantrell...PHOTO COURTESY MIKE SUTCLIFFE OXFORD COMPANION TO AUSTRALIAN JAZZ

Davidson made big band jazz records in the 1930s which were far ahead of their time (*42nd Street*, made in 1933, is a notable example) and equal to what some of the best American bands were to record in that decade. He went from strength to strength when he was invited to lead the ABC Dance Band in 1935. Davidson enlisted in the second World War, eventually becoming Lieutenant-Colonel in charge of Australian Army Entertainment, and after the war went to the BBC where he had a most distinguished career as an entertainment administrator. He returned to Australia in the 1960s; he now lives in retirement at Bowral where I often see and chat with him — his fund of information about dance music and jazz all over the world is almost inexhaustible. He gave Andrew Bisset much help in the latter's excellent account of the early days of Australian development towards a jazz idiom.

Coughlan, like Davidson, was a great name in Sydney dance music in the early days. He was as inspiring a leader of his famous Trocadero band as he was as a musician. The author comments: "His sax playing was good, his trumpet was beautiful, but his trombone was thrilling. He played in a way that made you want to play trombone too. He could be as rough as guts or as smooth as Dorsey on *Song of India*. He was an all-rounder but his heart lay with traditional jazz."



Frank Coughlan: as inspiring a leader of his famous Trocadero band as he was as a musician...PHOTO COURTESY THE AUSTRALIAN

From Davidson and Coughlan the stream of big band jazz ran through to latter-day band leaders and identities like Jim Gussey, Frank Thorn, Bob Gibson and others to the Brian May and Daly-Wilson big bands of the present day with their undoubted influence on the Australian jazz idiom. But it is important to mention that the great leap forward of Australian big band jazz or swing got tremendous momentum from

the visit of Artie Shaw's Navy Band to Australia during the last War. Its impact on local jazz musicians is entertainingly recounted by Mr Bisset:

When the Shaw band reached town the word spread quickly amongst musicians. In Melbourne, Splinter Reeves rushed into Suttons music store where the musicians congregated, almost incoherent with excitement. Most of Shaw's concerts were for American servicemen only; so Blott, Hyde and the rest sensibly scrambled along to the US Army Public Relations Office, showed their union cards and got in. Sydney musicians took more devious routes. Duke Farrell got into the concert by hanging around until he met an American servicewoman who would take him. The only one of the teenagers in Don Burrows' crowd who succeeded was Arthur "Yank" Christian who was a member of the Navy League and put his uniform on and conned his way in. Burrows stood outside in the alley and listened. Wally Norman gained admission by applying a pair of boltcutters to the back door of the Trocadero.



The Artie Shaw Navy Band at The Trocadero in 1943... PHOTO COURTESY MIKE SUTCLIFFE & JAZZ MAGAZINE

The big band influence on the emergence of an Australian jazz sound was, one might say, a professional one. The raw material of it, the stuff of Mr Bisset's second stream, was largely amateur, since jazzmen of the early 1940s were dedicated musicians who played largely for the pleasure of it - "... a new and separate community of amateurs and semi-professionals dedicated to one type of music, and their aims, their stories and their heroes were different. They succeeded in creating their own scene."

I am glad that Mr Bisset gives pride of place among these veterans of Australian traditional jazz to Graeme Bell — that inimitable evergreen of the local jazz scene, the success of whose band I have already mentioned. What is most important however is to note the influence of the Bell band on the English jazz scene, as recorded by the author:

The Bell band made an enormous impression in Britain which was on the verge of its own traditional jazz revival. They found many young bands making a sincere effort to play jazz but which were stuck with an overly intellectual approach to it. The Bells were like a breath of fresh air. "Jazz for dancing" was their philosophy. They opened their own club in the West End one night per week and the police asked them to open twice a week because patrons were clogging up the footpath. Australian traditional jazz made an impact on London's cultural scene long before the artists Nolan, Boyd, Percival and Tucker became expatriates there. The Bells gave impetus to British amateur bands, especially Humphrey Lyttelton's, and formed a public for live jazz. Acker Bilk was influenced by Pixie Roberts' clarinet style. The Australians were a lesson in proper presentation and showmanship, their individual style pointed up the traps of shameless copying from old records, and they were one of the rare bands to feature their own compositions.



The Bell band in 1947. Back row L-R, Ade Monsbourgh, Roger Bell, Lou Silbereisen., Russ Murphy. Front row L-R, Pixie Roberts, Jack Varney, Graeme Bell...
PHOTO COURTESY NIGEL BUESST COLLECTION

Tony Newstead, a splendid trumpet player, led another notable Melbourne jazz group in the 1940s —he later became a senior Telecom administrator. In Hobart, even earlier, Tom Pickering, later to become the Parliamentary Librarian, led a fine band, aided by Cedric Pearce. The band, I am glad to say, is still going strong and has recorded prolifically. In Adelaide, in the same period, there was Dave Dallwitz's Southern Jazz Group. Dallwitz, a painter of note and former lecturer in art, remains one of Australia's most formidable jazz influences — more particularly now as a composer; his jazz suites in recent years like *Ned Kelly* and *Riverboat Days* represent, like John Sangster's music, the high watermark of local jazz composition.



Tony Newstead (left) a splendid Melbourne trumpet player, later became a senior Telecom administrator, while clarinetist Tom Pickering (below), pictured with the American vocalist Billy Banks, later became the Parliamentary Librarian in Hobart, Tasmania...



This stream of Australian jazz grew to river-like proportions in the early 1950s with the success of bands beginning to play in pubs and clubs, especially in Sydney. Here Frank Johnson's Fabulous Dixielanders and the Port Jackson Jazz Band were foremost. I remember well the latter group at the Macquarie Hotel in Woolloomooloo — perhaps Sydney's first successful pub jazz venture — with such stalwarts as Ken Flannery on trumpet, Dick Hughes on piano and Ray Price on banjo. Hughes with his jazz journalism and Price taking jazz to the schools, are among our foremost present-day jazz apostles.



A quartet somewhat like the group described in the previous paragraph by Clem Semmler: L-R, Ray Price (banjo), John McCarthy (clarinet), John Sangster (trumpet), Dick Hughes (piano)...

Modern day Australian jazz, emerging from the traditional sound, has reached its apotheosis in such groups as the Brian Brown Quartet, the Judy Bailey Quartet, and especially Galapagos Duck (the name is a Spike Milligan invention) and the Bob Barnard Band. The Duck (as it is affectionately known to the tens of thousands who have flocked to hear it at the Sydney Basement nightspot) is felicitously described by Mr Bisset as neither aggressively traditional nor self-consciously modern; appealing to a generation that has grown up with rock, has become tired of it but does not wish to discard it entirely. The band "symbolizes the merging together of the previously distinct modern and traditional jazz scenes, and the maturity of their audience which would accept such a union."

As for the Barnards, Bob (trumpet) and his brother Len (drums) have been around for a long time; their first band, the South City Stompers, goes back to the late 1940s. Its home ground was the Mentone Surf Lifesaving Club, and as I write this, I hear on the radio the sad news of the death of Graham 'Smacka' Fitzgibbon, who was the "chirpy and rollicking vocalist" (as Mr Bisset puts it) of the Barnard band in the Mentone days, and played the banjo with tremendous verve. 'Smacka' was an uninhibited jazz character; his father owned a Rolls-Royce car which 'Smacka' contrived to have hired out to any bunch of impecunious jazz musicians who wished to make an impression by arriving at a jazz gig in style.



The Len Barnard Famous Jazz Band in 1949 with 'Smacka' Fitzgibbon on banjo. L-R, Len (piano) Bill Fredrickson (bass), Fitzgibbon, Tich Bray (clarinet), Bob Barnard (cornet or trumpet), Fred Whitworth (drums), Doc Willis (trombone)...PHOTO COURTESY LORETTA BARNARD

As for the present Bob Barnard band, my own view is that it is the best jazz group playing in Australia today and I heartily concur with Mr Bisset's assessment that ". . . Bob Barnard is one of the best traditional-mainstream trumpeters in the world today. He exhibits a flowing melodic line and a wealth of fresh ideas, and he has an in-built metronome which can swing a band regardless of what they are playing. He ranges widely and masterfully across the chord and the register of his instrument with a tone that varies from a surly half-valve growl to a majestic honeyed brilliance."

The other great influence in the traditional jazz stream which Mr Bisset rightly stresses as cardinal (in a publicity sense especially) in the coming of age of Australian

jazz, is the Australian Jazz Conventions, at which most of the bands I have mentioned have come together each year. The Convention began in 1946, in Melbourne with the bands of Bell, Newstead, Dallwitz and Pickering participating; it is now the highlight of the Australian jazz calendar. It is the occasion when Australia's best jazz groups and musicians come together, plus the true believers, for a week or two of uninhibited yet creative jazz playing and jazz comradeship. The venues have included all Australian capital cities, not to mention the NSW town of Cootamundra (the Cootamundra Jazz Band takes its place in Australian jazz history too).



Ray Price with his quartet in the 50s, left rear Col Nolan, then clockwise, Price, John Sangster, Pat Rose...

In the present Australian jazz scene the two streams of which Mr Bisset writes are effectively bridged by a school of Australian jazzmen ranking with the best that international jazz can offer. It is not a claim made lightly. Don Burrows and George Golla are in world class and so is Bryce Rohde, much sought after in current American recording groups. In the same bridging category I would include Judy Bailey and her quartet; she is a pianist of astonishing range and quality. Reverting to Burrows — he is supreme, I think, in present Australian jazz; as the author writes, his versatility "... has won him the admiration of traditional musicians and the open acceptance of young modern players." With him, the bridge across the two streams of Australian jazz is complete — though there is one musician who for a particular reason occupies an important place in that edifice, and that is the pianist Col Nolan because he has fused together elements of rock and soul music in which his

background is the most experienced of all Australian jazz musicians. I regard Nolan as the most dynamic keyboard artist in Australian jazz today — equally at home on the conventional piano or on its modern electronic equivalent, where, particularly, his virtuosity is astounding.



Col Nolan: the most dynamic keyboard artist in Australian jazz today ...

PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN

Recently in the town of Bowral in the Southern Highlands south of Sydney there took place an open air jazz concert in an idyllic countryside location, in which Burrows, Golla, the Judy Bailey Quartet, Galapagos Duck (with Nolan at electric piano), and the Bob Barnard Band participated. I mention it not only because it was a superb demonstration of modern Australian jazz, but because, as an annual event, and because of its unique location, it could easily become the Australian equivalent of Jazz at Monterey or Jazz at Newport. Thousands of jazz enthusiasts, seated in the natural amphitheatre of the famous Bong Bong Racecourse, were transported to a fever pitch of excitement, when, with Nolan and Judy Bailey dictating the tempo as a duo-piano act, all the groups merged in a tremendous jam session.

Before leaving Mr Bisset's book — without carping, since it is a book of extraordinary merit — one would wish that he had given more positive and particular credit to the role of the ABC in making the Australian public jazz-conscious through its excellent jazz comperes down the years; the pioneer efforts of Ron Wills, both in the recording

and radio fields, and later of Eric Child, deserved much greater amplification. And certainly the yeoman work of that indefatigable archivist of Australian jazz, Neville Sherburn, with his "Swaggie" label (accomplished at considerable financial sacrifice) deserves much more than the paltry few lines given him. One could compile one's list of omissions: that brilliant and versatile English pianist, Arthur Young, who spent a number of years in Australia in the 1950s and stimulated the Australian jazz scene; the blues singer Linda George, whose recording, with the Melbourne group Plant, of the Billie Holiday classic, *Fine and Mellow*, is, without any qualification, the best bit of jazz singing by an Australian artist that I have ever heard.



Linda George: her recording of the Billie Holiday classic "Fine and Mellow" is the best bit of jazz singing by an Australian artist that I have ever heard...

But none of this* detracts from the achievement of Mr Bisset's book which deserves its place in the library of every jazz lover in this country.

*not even his attribution of a "blue" in Law at Oxford to that celebrated jazz collector and personality, William H Miller!

But Australian jazz is after all the microcosm of the international scene I have already touched upon. And in this larger perspective James Lincoln Collier's* is, I believe, the best book on jazz that has appeared in the 50 or 60 years the music has taken to get under way. For him, it is a universal art:

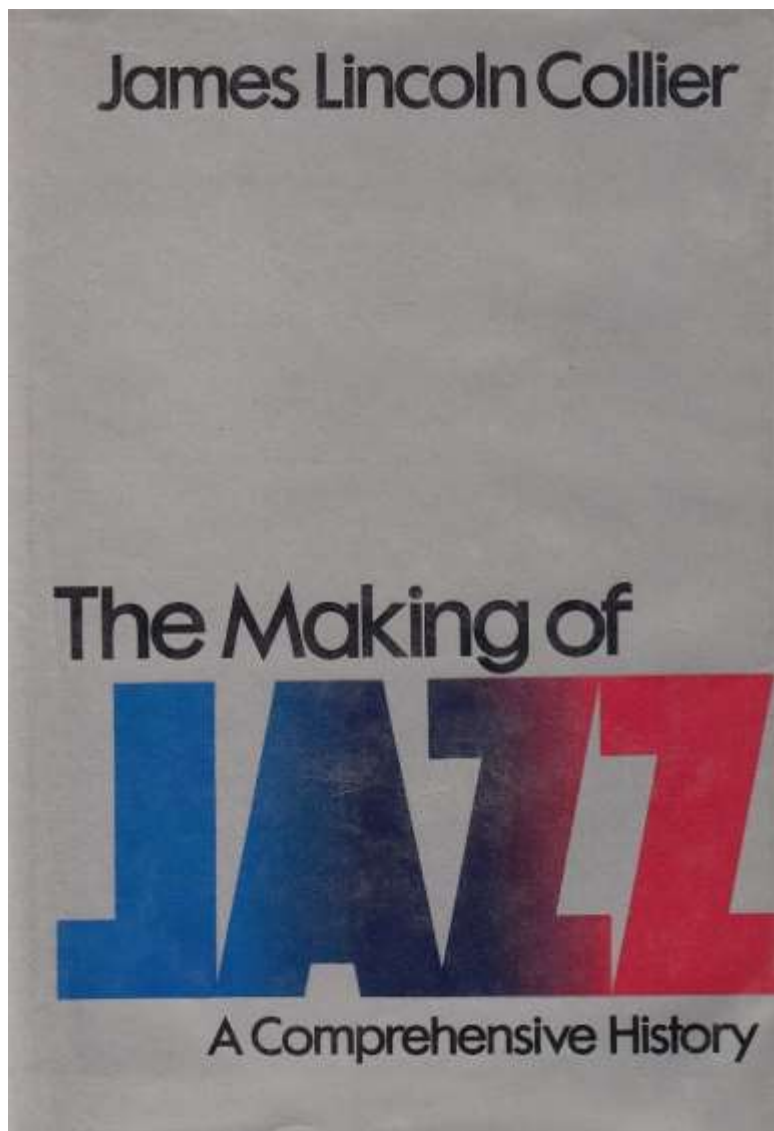
. . . jazz has captured the attention of millions of people across the face of the world. For many of these people, both musicians and listeners, it is a central fact of their existences, one of the main ingredients of their emotional lives . . . It is a music furthermore that is now attracting its fourth generation of players, young men and women who hope to spend their lives working in it. And it seems to me that any medium that has inspired so much love over so much of the world for so many generations is worth writing about seriously.



James Lincoln Collier, pictured in 1983...

To read this book is verily to complete one's jazz education. Mr Collier describes the origins of the music; its spread throughout the world (even in Russia there are flourishing and enthusiastic jazz groups and audiences); and he analyses the character and performance of every jazz player of note in America and Europe. (It would be useless chauvinism to complain that Australian jazz is largely ignored, and indeed to do so would miss the purpose of the book, but gratifyingly there are a couple of references to Graeme Bell and his band.)

**The Making of Jazz*, by James Lincoln Collier: Granada Publishing, 1978.



It is a fascinating chronicle — from the remarkable success of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band to the equally remarkable story of the founding of the Quintet of the Hot Club of France by Hugues Panassié in Paris, through Armstrong and His Hot Five and Bessie Smith and the great blues singers and Jelly Roll Morton (who claimed to have invented it all) and the great Negro bands of Luis Russell, Fletcher Henderson and Duke Ellington, to the swing era of Goodman, the Dorseys and Glenn Miller to the founders and practitioners of the New Music — Ornette Coleman, Cecil Taylor and John Coltrane (" . . . he has directly shaped a whole generation of musicians, not only in jazz but in rock and the various fusion musics that have appeared in the 1970s").

One can savour the pages of this book almost as one does playing one's favourite jazz tracks. There was Billie Holiday, that greatest of jazz singers, " . . . when this stunning woman sang 'My Man don't love me/Treats me awful mean', she could freeze audiences in their seats"; there was, and still is, Benny Goodman — and Mr Collier is the first writer I know to expound the perfect truth of Goodman as a jazz artist: . . .

We misunderstand Goodman; we tend to see him as one of the major modernists of his time, somebody who had left the old behind and was moving towards the new. Yet, in truth, Goodman's entire manner of playing is filled with the sound of New Orleans. He is, far more than many of the players who have been labeled as being in the old tradition — as for example many of Ellington's soloists — a player of the old school . . . What has fooled us is Goodman's musicianship. Few jazz players of his time, and not many since, are as technically adept as Goodman. His intonation is excellent, his tone warm and full and completely under his control, his lower register rich, and his dexterity quick enough to allow him to play faster than most musicians of his time.



Benny Goodman: his entire manner of playing is filled with the sound of New Orleans...

There was Jack Teagarden, and the clear fact of Mr Collier's unequivocal statement, "The astonishing fact is that he was the leading and virtually the only white male singer in jazz . . . Had he never played trombone, Teagarden would have earned a place in jazz history for his singing." — a judgement that any other jazz critic, though agreeing, would hardly have dared to make.



Jack Teagarden: had he never played trombone, he would have earned a place in jazz history for his singing... PHOTO COURTESY A PICTORIAL HISTORY OF JAZZ

There is Thelonious Monk, and I well remember hearing him in the flesh for the first time at the Village Vanguard in New York in the early 1960s. He was scheduled to appear at ten o'clock; the place was full and everybody sat over drinks, waiting for the great man to appear. Eleven o'clock came, still no Monk, until about half an hour later he sauntered on to the small stage, very sharply dressed, and began idly to finger a few notes on the piano. There were no catcalls, no jeers, no signs of impatience whatsoever. Just anticipation. Then he began to play as only Monk can. It was spell-binding; one of the greatest jazz experiences one could have. Mr Collier admits he is *sui generis*. His style is spare to the extreme, he simply lays out a few notes for exposure with absolutely no comment.

Adding to the effect of grave simplicity this gives his work is his tendency to play farther and farther behind the beat and to leave large gaps of space between notes. He is not, however, a sketcher in the sense that John Lewis sometimes is; his line is too firm and positive to give the effect of sketching. He is instead making skeletons. He is indicating shapes not by suggestion, as the sketcher does, but by stripping away the flesh to the bare bones.



Thelonious Monk: spell-binding; one of the greatest jazz experiences one could have...

These are but a few of the fascinating judgements that Mr Collier makes in the 500-odd pages of his book. It is a milestone of jazz in 1979 that there has become available to us not only a richly satisfying history of jazz in Australia, but also, in Mr Collier's book, easily the best book on jazz yet written, so that no jazz enthusiast in this country, possessing these two books, could be anything but well versed in his preoccupation with this music.

All photographs are by Norman Linehan, who has been photographing jazz musicians since 1946. Norm Linehan's "Australian Jazz Picture Book" will be published by Murray and Child in May, 1980.