

THE YOUNG NORTHSIDE TRIUMPHS IN MONTEREY

by Andrew L Urban*

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Young Northside Big Band 1979. Trumpets: L-R, Robyn Mackay, Glenn Mulvogue, Nicki Matthews (Menziess), Eric Brown. Trombones, Karl Winter, Mary Bousfield, Scott Kardash, Paul Matthews. Saxes: Chris Frater, Beverly Jan, Trevor Griffin, David Bridle, Michael Burgess. Drums: Andrew Gander Bass: Peter Sneesby Guitar: Tim Rollinson Piano: Jay Stewart, Michael Brown

Australia's first ever representatives at the prestigious Monterey Jazz Festival, the Young Northside Big Band, made a triumphant debut in America last month, exciting the 7,000-strong audience to a standing ovation — the only big band to receive that honour other than the Buddy Rich Big Band. Johnny Speight, the band's musical director, told *Encore* on their return late last month that he was very pleased and pleasantly surprised by the overwhelming reaction, and said that following comments from one of the senior organisers of the Festival, the band can expect to be invited back for next year's event.

The Monterey Festival attracts the biggest names in jazz: as well as Buddy Rich, there was Woody Herman, Stan Getz, Dizzy Gillespie, and many others whose names are very much a part of jazz history. These artists all play at Monterey for the sheer enjoyment of it. Moneys raised during the three-day festival goes to support music schools.

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Dave Pell — the man credited with starting the West Coast sound in jazz — was having a late supper after the Sunday appearance of the Young Northside Big Band, when Johnny and some of the band members walked into the little cafe. In a stage whisper, Pell grumbled (smilingly) under his breath; "Bloody foreign band — coming into America and teaching us how to swing . . ." His enthusiasm was echoed by senior festival organiser Jimmy Lyons, who back-announced the band and gave them a big personal rap.



Jazz promoter Horst Liepolt (left) who went to Monterey with the band, talks to American saxophonist, bandleader and record producer Dave Pell (right): "Bloody foreign band — coming into America and teaching us how to swing..." PHOTO CREDIT JOHN SPEIGHT COURTESY ENCORE MAGAZINE



Members of the Young Northside Big Band relaxing after their performance at Monterey... PHOTO CREDIT JOHN SPEIGHT COURTESY ENCORE MAGAZINE

The most often-heard comment about the band's playing was that they should not change their first-class swing format. The band was slotted in for half an hour on the closing day of the festival, Sunday, to follow the amazing Californian High School All Stars, who had Clark Terry in a guest trumpet chair, and Woody Herman conducting. Johnny Speight was understandably nervous at having to follow such a combination, but when at the end of their set the crowd jumped to their feet, he — and the rest of the band — were stunned.

For the first time in the 22-year history of Monterey, the standing ovation was echoed backstage by the other musicians performing, who were watching the action on a giant video screen. They raised their glasses to drink "to the Aussies".



Trombone player James Morrison sleeps off the excitement, while tenor saxophonist David Bridle is very much awake... PHOTO CREDIT JOHN SPEIGHT COURTESY ENCORE MAGAZINE

There will no doubt be many similar shouts heard back home. And the replica of their programme will be soon recorded for Horst Liepolt on the 44 label. The live performance was taped by the festival organisers for FM radio stations in America, and a mono copy of that recording sits in the band's library — complete with applause, and the sound of a standing ovation at America's foremost jazz festival.