

DOUBLY GIFTED

The Annual Bell Jazz Lecture, 2008



ILLUSTRATION BOB BAIRD

John Pochée
The Sixteenth Annual Bell Jazz Lecture
Delivered 13 September 2008
Waverley Library



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ISBN 978-0-9757142-4-9

Published by and printed at Waverley Library
32-48 Denison Street, Bondi Junction 2022

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Introduction

Here again the Doubly Gifted Committee presents the Bell Jazz Lecture for the sixteenth year. The Bell Lecture was initiated by the late Harry Stein to honour the contribution given to Australian jazz by our best loved and most appreciated jazzman Graeme Bell.

Thanks to Waverley Library and to the Friends of Waverley Library, each year we present a prominent and experienced member of Australia's jazz community to bring to us their particular view of jazz.

This year the Lecture is given by John Pochée, the President of the Professional Musicians Association and a most respected member of the Australian jazz community. John began his working career in the field of journalism but abandoned that career to pursue a career in music in the mid 1950s and from that time onwards proved himself to be a major force in jazz.

The list of musicians who have worked with John and under John's guidance is endless. Every major musician in the jazz field has at some time been guided by his expertise and enthusiasm and we are fortunate to have that experience presented to us this year. The Lecture title in itself displays his great sense of humour which will certainly be an entertaining and informative part of his presentation.

Kate Dunbar
Doubly Gifted Committee

Note: The printed 2007 Lecture, given by Bill Boldiston, should have been presented as the fifteenth in this series



John Pochée

John Pochée began playing jazz in Sydney in 1956 and has had a colourful and diverse career leading and playing in some of Australia's most important bands in many parts of the world. Awards have included The Australian Jazz Critics Award in 1990 and '92, five Arias, five 'MO' Awards and election to the Roll of Honour at the Monsalvat Jazz Festival in 1996. In 2006 he was awarded The Graeme Bell Hall Of Fame Career Achievement Award at The Australian Jazz Awards. In 2007 he was nominated for the APRA Award for Long Term Contribution to the Advancement of Australian Music. He has twice been invited to perform at the Chicago Jazz Festival, in 1997 and 2004 as well as The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

For 16 years he combined his jazz career with being Musical Director of the Award winning vocal group, The Four Kinsmen with performances in Las Vegas, Miami and eight tours of the U.S.A. He was also personal drummer for Shirley Bassey on two six week tours of Australia and New Zealand in 1969 and '70.

John has been described as having an original style that is immediately recognisable and warmly Australian. He has served on several jazz committees for many years. A life member of the Musicians' Union, he was elected President of the Professional Musicians' Club in 2006. He continues to lead the ten-piece ensemble Ten Part Invention, playing exclusively the works of Australian composers, which has been at the forefront of Australian jazz for 22 years with only two changes of personnel.



Graeme Bell

The Doubly Gifted Committee and Waverley Library have named this lecture series on jazz, the Bell Jazz Lectures, in honour of Graeme Bell's outstanding contribution to jazz in Australia and abroad over the last fifty years. He is an outstanding pianist, excellent band leader and composer of note. Graeme is also a talented artist who has exhibited in the Doubly Gifted exhibitions of visual art works by jazz musicians, as well as contributing to other exhibitions.

Things ain't what they used to be

Thank you Bill for your warm introduction, and thank you all for coming along.

Well, things ain't what they used to be and they never will be again. In fact, personally, I think we have seen the best of it all. I don't have any great axe to grind about the changes that have occurred in music since I began playing, exactly 52 years ago, except the fact that all the venues have disappeared and gambling has replaced entertainment, but I'll no doubt find a couple of other things to grumble about as I put down this little discourse. I have had a very colourful and diverse career and thought it might be interesting to look back, reminisce, give my opinion on a couple of things and enjoy a couple of stories with you all.

I'm not sure, but possibly I am the musician that has had the most to do with modern or contemporary jazz that has been invited to speak here. Just to make a couple of things clear, my tastes and playing experiences are, and have never been, restricted to innovative material. However, it is the area that I am most associated with and have always wanted to contribute to advancing Australian jazz to the point where it has an identifiable sound compared to the rest of the world. With my bands I have tried to encourage composers within the groups to write original material and get away from the Great American Songbook, although I love that too and play in plenty of situations where it all gets a run as well. I have a pretty good knowledge of most of those songs and they get plenty of play from my collection at home.

Throughout the history of Australian jazz there has been much original material written that is of a very high standard. In fact I was reading an article by well known Chicago author and jazz critic, John Litweiler the other day which was declaring in no uncertain terms that Dave Dallwitz's 'Ern Malley Suite', should immediately be made available by Swaggie on CD. It was an article that was having a general look at jazz throughout the world. Other Australians got an honourable mention as well, including Sandy Evans for her 'Testimony' suite and compliments were made of Bernie McGann in the same sentence as Lee Konitz. The John Pochée- led Ten Part Invention was mentioned along with another couple of international bands as being some of the good things to come along since 1990. Along with the great impression many of our younger players are making throughout the world, this is most gratifying. However, it appears that the U.S.A. is having a difficult time with venues to present jazz the same as we are. Apparently there is no longer a venue that regularly takes touring bands in Chicago as the Jazz Showcase did, although there are many festivals held successfully. He also says this situation is worse in smaller cities and that most musicians he knows in Chicago have day jobs. A bit depressing I feel. Jokes like 'What's the difference between a jazz musician and a pizza?' with the tag being 'A pizza can feed a family of four', whilst funny, are also tragic.

Now, to get back to my playing and listening tastes, if we must put styles in boxes, I have played Traditional, Swing, BeBop, Free, Modern, Avant Garde, Contemporary and possibly other styles of jazz that are unclassifiable. I've played with Ray Price, Mike Hallam, Bob Barnard, Bob Henderson, John McCarthy, Geoff Bull, Dick Hughes and many other traditional stylists. I feel silly when asked what type of jazz I play and am forced to say 'Modern, but I've been playing it for 50 years!'

Not long before we lost the great John Sangster I played a gig with him at Randwick Labour Club when they had their jazz program on Friday nights. John and I had not played together for decades but he loved our group Ten Part Invention and had stated in his book that I was one of his favourite drummers, so I knew it was going to be an enjoyable night. On piano was the wonderful Chris Tapperell and the rhythm section was Jonathan Zwartz and myself.

Now Jonathan and I were the alternate rhythm section in Bernie McGann's Trio whenever Lloyd Swanton was not available and had recently returned from a tour of Canada and Europe so we were in fine form together. An unlikely line-up some people might think. That night was one of the most special nights in my career. Suffice to say it was full of surprises, beautiful grooves that we got going and we were all ecstatic, hugs all around and a wonderful feeling of elation. Whenever I saw Chris from that day he never failed to start off raving about it. Well, what box do we put that music in? I think it would have to be in the box of GOOD MUSIC! Of course, as is the way with nights like that, it was the only Friday gig the soundman never recorded. The only person who ever asked me if it was recorded was John Brignell who sadly has passed on. Maybe he's discussing it with John and Chris as I write this.

Last year I went to hear The Bridge City Jazz Band at the Ashfield Catholic Club and was having a drink and dinner when someone asked what I was doing there. I explained that I like all types of jazz and was enjoying the evening. I also heard a little bit of this band at Redfern RSL a few months ago before I went to see Sonny Rollins. I laughingly mentioned the fact that my attendance had been questioned at Ashfield to Jim Morrell and he and I agreed that good music was good music. And so it all was, from The Bridge City Band to Sonny's.

Therefore I agree with Geoff Bull who said, "What's in a name?"

I first began to love jazz as a boy, as my mother, Valerie and sister, Shirley were jazz fans. We had a wind-up gramophone with several jazz records as well as many of the novelty 78's that were popular in the very late '40's. Who could ever forget Spike Jones, Crazy Otto, The Two Black Crows, and Phil Harris's 'Smoke, Smoke, Smoke that Cigarette.' My mother's collection also included Joe Daniels and his Hotshots, Frank Sinatra of course, Tommy Dorsey, Artie Shaw, Woody Herman, Stan Kenton and a green plastic 78 of the Port Jackson

Jazz Band that would shed green plastic all over the needle, which was like a nail. She also had 'The Golden Wedding' and some of Bob Crosby's Bobcats. I especially remember 'March of The Bobcats' and many of the Glenn Miller records which I could sing along with including all of the solos, in a horribly out of tune voice at an early age. When Bill McColl presented his concerts with all the local musicians in the early '50's, my mother and sister were always there and I used to lay awake waiting for them to come home and tell me what happened and who did what. What colour suit Edwin Duff was wearing, what Norm Erskine sang and all the gossip. They were huge fans of Les Welch and Larry Stellar and we always listened to Les Welsh's program on the wireless while my mother knitted and kept saying annoyingly, 'knit one, pearl two.'

In fact, I still have a flyer for one of these concerts, autographed on the back by Les, Frank Marcy, Larry Stellar and Edwin Duff. I travelled from Ashfield on the train to meet them at J. Stanley Johnstone's in George Street one Saturday morning where they were promoting a forthcoming concert. I had just turned 10, so it was 1950. The concert, held at the Assembly Hall was called 'Music for Moderns' promoted by 'Your 2UW Platter Pilot Lyal Richardson'. It was advertised as Australia's greatest all-star line-up with Jack Allan playing piano and leading. His son is a close friend of mine to this day. The rest of the band were, of course, Errol Buddle, ...if I may pause here for a moment... just looking back through my books on Australian jazz, practically every big band photograph has Errol sitting in the saxophone section, except the all girl band in 1938. Others included Keith Silver, Ken Flannery, Frank Marcy, Jimmy White, Billy Weston, Reg Robinson, Don Andrews, Joni Mason and Allan Geddes. I'm only kidding Errol, you are a National Treasure.

Of course my father did not share our enthusiasm for any music, so generally went to work, came home, talked about dead bodies and finally went to bed. During the depression, my father had a part time job as a motor mechanic at W. N. Bull, a firm of undertakers in Newtown. He had wanted to be a doctor and became very friendly with the owner, Dr. Bull and sometimes drank after work with a few doctors. Gradually, he gained a small amount of medical knowledge and become a bit of a quack, diagnosing what was wrong with the various kids in the neighbourhood who got sick and he gained the nickname 'Doc'. At the rear of the main building was a large building with a fleet of cars and a coffin workshop upstairs. It is all still there to this day. Gradually my father gained various skills including engraving the nameplates on the coffins in that beautiful old English writing. He became an undertaker's assistant, directing funerals and was eventually taught embalming by Dr. Bull.

Not that he was a gloomy man, the entire staff were a great bunch of practical jokers and I always remember the slogan he used to say to my sister and I, 'W.N. Bull for faster and funnier funerals!' Nevertheless, they took their job very

seriously and were, and I'm sure still are, a highly reputable company with the highest standards. They all thought he was a very funny man although my mother didn't think he was funny at all.

My mother had heaps of lovely relatives that we often visited, but none were musical, but on my father's side of the family, some of my aunts and cousins had a trio that worked professionally and my cousins Merea and Joy had very distinguished careers in the Arts...I was not aware of this although I did hear the trio at the family gatherings when I was very young. I have only found them again in recent times as we lost touch with that side of the family and sadly I wasn't in time to meet my cousin Joy, an acclaimed Shakespearian actress who has been described as a 'naturally brilliant singer, composer, writer and pianist'. She also appeared on the Channel 9 series 'People In Conflict'.

My aunty that had the trio had a cylinder player that many of you possibly have never heard of. It was some device that you put a record that was shaped like a cylinder in and it played some early songs. I was possibly only 7 or 8 but I can still remember what the songs sounded like. Norm Erskine could always be rendered helpless by my doing the impression for him. The two songs I do remember were 'Hey Little Hen!' and 'When You're Up To Your Neck In Hot Water, Be Like The Kettle And Sing'.

In the early '50's, after school, I used to go to Rumpus Room, Teen Time and the Teenage Club at 2UW where Bobby Limb played. My mother took me to see J.C. Heard and The Red Norvo Trio. I became fascinated with this music and would come home from school, play all the records and tap away with a pair of chopsticks on the phone book. Although I hadn't decided I wanted to play, I just loved all the music. Gradually I saw Ray Price at the Ashfield Town Hall and used to go with my mates to hear The Zenith Jazz Band around Hurlstone Park. I remember there were two brothers, the Ford brothers and Bill told me he played with that band. It must have been him that always said to me with great encouragement, "Get away kid!"

To the Stadium where I saw Buddy Rich, various pop stars with all the top Sydney musicians and the unforgettable Louis Armstrong Band .I saved up my pocket money for weeks to see Louis. Then I saw Lionel Hampton and Stan Kenton and a lot of the Lee Gordon shows.

I love the story that a certain Sydney saxophone player confirmed with me at one of our get-togethers recently. He was playing tenor saxophone in the Lionel Hampton Band shows at the Sydney Stadium in the mid '50's. His wife dropped him off there and arranged to pick him up after their two shows. When she drove off he realised he had forgotten to take the saxophone from the boot. Of course, in those days there were no mobile phones and there were huge crowds milling about, buying tickets and queuing up to get in. He was due to go on shortly after

and there was no way to get the saxophone in time. He ran into the dressing room and announced his dilemma to the rest of the band. Amongst the key players Lionel had brought with him, was another saxophonist, a woman, I think named Elsie Smith. When she heard what had happened, she offered to let him play her tenor saxophone while she played alto or some such arrangement. Everything went fine and he left the Stadium straight after the shows and met up with his wife at the arranged spot. He explained to her what had happened and they drove home. When he got inside in the light, suddenly his wife became very upset with him and I'm not exactly sure what transpired at that point, but when he looked in the mirror, he saw why. There was lipstick all over his lips, which had obviously been all over the reed on Elsie's saxophone. It must have taken a great deal of explaining to restore peace.

Around 1955, on Sunday nights, my father would go to bed early, and my mother would give me some money, sneak me out of the house and tell me to take the train to Wynyard Station and walk down George Street to the Ironworkers building. There I would go upstairs to hear the John Bamford Band, with all the top players with Jimmy Shaw on drums. The first night I went, I sat on the tiered seating on the side of the band where I could see Jimmy clearly. During the evening the band played a piece by Stan Kenton, which was very exciting and they built up to a crescendo until the drums had a big fill. Jim was in full sight until very suddenly, the drums stopped, and I heard him call out to the Lord at the top of his voice, "Jeezuz Christ !!!" His foot had gone straight through the bass drum. Until I got to know him a few years later, I always thought that Jimmy Shaw was a highly religious man.

After those days I used to go down to the Club Eleven, usually at the State Ballroom where I met Dave Levy who was already playing some piano, as his father was a saxophonist and had a dance band. We heard Billy Benham, Terry Wilkinson, Colin Bates, Freddy Logan, Dave Owens and all sorts of top people. To Phyllis Bates Ballroom with Wilco and I remember Johnny Blevins and their theme song was a piece called "High on an Open Mike" which was always very exciting.

Dave and I hung out together and jammed at his family home at La Pouse trying to emulate some of Dave Brubeck's music. I desperately wanted a pair of horn rim glasses to be like Mr Brubeck. When I had an eye test and was told I had above average vision, I was shattered. I had bought my first set of drums from a truck driver named Ted Dalton, who loved jazz. It was an old Olympic set that had one head on the toms and two strange cymbal stands sticking out from the bass drum. It was my 16th birthday and he sold them to me for £45. I was working as a copy boy on the Sydney Sun earning £4/8/- a week, so he just told me to come around and give him £4 each month. He would always play me Duke Ellington records and often stuffed the money back in my top pocket when I was leaving. After I paid them off, I never saw him again.

Proudly I set them up in the lounge room where we then had a radiogram. When my father came home, he was speechless! From that point, I would come home from school and play along with all the records until he came home. The man next door would say to me "Whoever told you, you could play them?" in disbelief. Many other people repeated this in the ensuing years.

Undeterred, I pressed on. Having no idea what I was doing, which resulted in me playing left handed on a right-handed set-up, which baffles people to this day. I just wanted to make the sounds I was hearing and be part of the music. Having previously seen J.C. Heard and Buddy Rich, I had no desire to try to emulate them. When I did play, after a while I decided that what I wanted to do was have an identifiable sound. This just evolved over the years, rather than me trying to sound different. I played a bit with some local young guys and imagined I was all sorts of people. I never studied the drums and developed all sorts of bad habits, which defied everything conventional. However, I found a way of playing and holding the sticks that eventually worked for me.

David Levy and I started to go to the Criterion Hotel on Friday nights to hear 'The Judge' Peter Piercy, Johnny Ceeney on drums and the great Merv Acheson. What a sound he had on the tenor. Over the years I got to know him quite well and jammed with him now and then. In the jazz magazine 'Music Maker' in later years he wrote The Merv Acheson Story in serial form and my favourite line that I often chuckle about was, "I have always hated trees and flowers... give me neon signs and concrete buildings anytime." Merv thought that all parks should be concreted. When he was in and out of hospital near the end of his life there was a benefit held for him at Balmain RSL which featured several bands and Bernie McGann, Bob Gebert, Cliff Barnett and I played a set to pay our respects. Merv arrived and made a hilarious speech that I've always regretted was not taped. It was something about women that wore big hats, who visited men in hospital and fussed over them. Merv said they'd already killed off their husbands and were looking for another victim. My sister once visited him in hospital and asked how he was. He was a bit disgruntled and complained about a group of medical students who had just been in to see him. The conversation went like this:

My sister: "What did they want to know Merv?"

Merv: "They want to know how much I drink each day"

My sister: "What did you tell them?"

Merv: "Oh, about a dozen bottles of beer...and a couple of bottles of Scotch".

My sister: "What did they say to that Merv?"

Merv: "They fled!" and then added in disgust, "Those young doctors, they don't know anything about everyday living!!"

Anyway, David and I started a jam session at the Mocambo in Newtown, on various nights where we met up with Bernie McGann, John Speight, Sid

Edwards, Laurie Bennett and many other wonderful players. These times have been written about a lot in recent years. The Mocambo was basically a coffee lounge and restaurant that was unlicensed and situated in two shops that had a big archway connecting the two rooms. In the second room, at one point, the band played opposite the arch and a small dance floor was put in that almost extended to the other room. One night, Dave Levy, Bernie McGann and myself were playing when someone told us that two professionals were coming in. They turned out to be Gus Merzi and this was my first encounter with Joe Be-Bop Lane, who became a close friend, teacher and the person who instilled all his spirit for jazz into my very soul. Over the years, I have met many eccentrics in jazz, but Joe took the prize and on this night he sat in on drums. The drum kit, which belonged to one of the owners was not very well anchored and as Joe attempted all the latest Be-Bop patterns with his right foot, the drum began to move forward. In the heat of the performance, Joe's solution was to move everything in the kit forward to keep up with the bass drum. By the time the piece finished, Joe was on the other side of the room.

We started to watch all our heroes at the El Rocco on Sundays, Frank Smith, Don Burrows, Terry Wilkinson, John Sangster, Errol Buddle, and so many others and as the jazz program expanded, we had the opportunity to often play there over the club's history. I went to the jazz convention at the Railway Institute in Sydney in 1958. I can't remember who I saw but I heard I had a great time.

I joined the Union and worked on the cruise ship, The Kanimbla. I had met the great character and drummer, Mick Fowler at the Mocambo as his mother lived nearby. Mick was also on the ship as a stoker in the engine room and we had many adventures together in various ports. The ship went to Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth and back again to Brisbane, Townsville, Hayman Island and Cairns. As Joe Lane had gone to Melbourne, I called some people and somehow found him at the Mokaris Coffee Lounge in Elsternwick. He was singing with Freddy Wilson and Gerry Gardiner on bass. There were no drums so I sat in on bongos that Joe had. The movie 'On the Beach' was being made in Melbourne and who should walk in with her maid and the hotel manager but Ava Gardner. They had been playing tennis and had stopped in for a coffee. She loved music, and as hard as it is to believe, she was totally bored in Melbourne and I suppose the movie being about the end of the world didn't help. It ended up a big party and jam session back at Joe's 'til dawn and at one stage she sat on my lap massaging my swollen fingers after I had played the bongos continually for some time. To this day I can close my eyes and still feel her impression. An unforgettable memory.

The next few years I moved around a lot, hitch-hiking up and down between Sydney and Melbourne, where I worked in speakeasies that served illegal liquor which was usually cheap brandy served in coffee cups. If the red light came on,

they rushed around pouring real coffee into the cups. That's how I paid my dues with all the young lions from '59 to '62. Alan Turnbull always says that that brandy is what made all his hair fall out. Some of the gangsters would come in some nights and tell us they were having a party when we finished. This was at the Club Birdland, in St. Kilda. All those gigs were 6 nights a week, 9 until 3am and paid 25 quid a week. When we would ask where the party was, they would say "Your place!" which would mean it was always at Joe Lane's famous habitat, 'Muttering Lodge', whether we liked it or not. I would always be singled out to accompany them to the sly grog places to buy the bottles. Later on those places were machine-gunned and one was firebombed.

In 1962, Birdland had a great trio with Dave MacRae, Rudy Van Egmond on bass and myself on drums. Lots of players would come in to jam, like Chuck Yates, Keith Stirling and Graeme Lyall. Dave, Rudy and I rented a house in Elwood and it was party time most nights. In those days we figured if you weren't living on the edge you were taking up too much room.

One night we took the night off to play on one of Bob Clemens' jazz concerts at the Melbourne Town Hall. Rudy and I had girlfriends to take, but as David didn't have a regular girlfriend we arranged a blind date for him. A lot of friends accompanied us and we got set for a big party when we got home. The first half of the concert was The Melbourne New Orleans Jazz Band and Paul Marks Blue Four, followed by The Len Barnard Jazz Band incorporating the Ade Monsborough Trio then the John Pochée Trio and ended with Keith Hounslow and the 431 Jazz Band before interval. Ike 'King' Cole, Nat's brother, was appearing at The Embers Nightclub and was the star of the show that night.

We stopped off for supper and a few drinks on the way home after the show. The girl we had arranged for David had a few drinks and turned out to be quite mad, but she was the life of the party and took over, with David withdrawing to one side. I seem to remember her name was Jan. By the time we got back to our house, 'Eldorado', we were all in high spirits except David who was sulking in front of the gas fire that was fitted into the wall. As we always did at the beginning of every party, we set fire to a saucer of 'Old Spice' that would burst into flame and we all started chanting some stupid ritual that would always signify the start of the festivities.

David took no part in this and just sat there staring into the gas fire. However, Jan was right into the spirit of things and began to divest herself of her raiments. As each article of apparel was flung to one side we were all chanting and yelling "Take it off!" or some other ridiculous call and she was being very obliging. It was a mixed crowd not just us blokes. David stared deeper into the gas fire and

put one foot up against the wall beside it and tried to look as if he couldn't care less. Now she was naked from the waist up and a huge cry came from the crowd for her to go even further. As she danced with gay abandon slowly the last garment was being lowered and the room filled with excitement. Suddenly there was a huge scream and as we all turned and looked around, David had decided to take a small peek and the toe of his shoe had slid slowly into the top of the gas fire. As he was wearing crepe soles, his shoe burst into flames. I remember the upper part separating from the crepe sole exposing his toes and the flames grew more intense. We all threw the contents of our glasses onto his foot extinguishing the flames and leaving a horrible burnt smell. David disappeared with Jan and that was the last we saw of him that night. He returned the next day with a limp and explained that Jan had taken him home and put butter on his foot. He did have a big smile on his face though.

I think this program, that the great Melbourne drummer, Allan Browne sent up to me from the archives a couple of years ago, will interest you all. It is from the next Bob Clemens concert a few months after the one I just talked about. I will state exactly what it says...

Bob Clemens and Frank Johnson present...

At the MELBOURNE TOWN HALL, TUESDAY, APRIL 10TH 1962
FROM 7PM.....

SNY CHAMBERS' BAYSIDE JAZZ BAND, MAX COLLIE'S JAZZ
KINGS, JOHN POCHEE TRIO, JOHN TUCKER MELBOURNE
QUARTET, THE MOONSHINE FIVE (in person), KENN JONES'
MAINSTREAM CREW with Powerhouse Music, SNY CHAMBERS'
BAYSIDE JAZZ BAND and Judy Durham. ...Interval.

GRAEME BELL ORIGINAL AUSTRALIAN JAZZ BAND

....Graeme flies from Sydney, each Tuesday, per T.A.A. ...the Friendly Way.
(And then it says ...) Miss KATE DUNBAR and the Frank Traynor JAZZ
PREACHERS.

After a gig in Tasmania for a few weeks to open their first nightclub, I returned to Melbourne and then off to Surfers Paradise for a year with a jazz trio that played for a show including the Bee Gees, who were 12 and 14 yrs.old. A few years later, when we were all back in Sydney and I played for them a few times again, they announced they were going back to England to try their luck. I confirmed to all and sundry that in England, "they'll never get anywhere, those lads." So, if you want to know if anybody will make it in show business, don't hesitate to ask my opinion!

Back to Sydney, the El Rocco with David Levy, Bryce Rohde and Bruce Cale. Lots of experimenting with free form, jazz and poetry etc. back to Surfers, Brisbane and then in '64 to Melbourne again to join Bernie McGann, Dave MacRae and Andy Brown at a club practically opposite The Embers, called The

Fat Black Pussycat. It was a five night a week jazz club that served coffee only. Patrons paid a small cover charge. We called ourselves 'The Heads' for various reasons and the publicity photo out the front of the club featured a picture of us which showed only the back of our heads. We had brown double-breasted suits made, lived together and rehearsed most days at the club. It was a great band and a great time. I remember many of the Ray Charles Band members coming in to jam with us with the Raeletts cheering them on some nights.

Well folks, after six months there, we all went back to Sydney and after The Heads with the addition of Bob Bertles and Joe Lane performed at the Katoomba Jazz Festival, I joined the Don Burrows Quartet for a brief period, when John Sangster became unavailable. We had George Golla, Ed Gaston, Don and myself and a guest each week. Sometimes, it was (you guessed it) Errol Buddle. A couple of years ago Jack Mitchell gave me a CD from the Katoomba concert that had been taped. It had two of our tracks as well as a half a track of Joe singing 'S'wonderful' before the tape ran out.

So that's what motivated me, how I got started, and basically, parts of the first ten years of what has been an exciting, sometimes financially rewarding and sometimes not, but wonderful career which I hope to continue for a while yet.

How I miss the old Musician's Club in Griff House in Pitt St. where we went after our gigs .The camaraderie, the characters, the great friendships, the total madness fun and frivolity. On Saturdays, we all took turns putting on a band for our peers between 1 and 4am. Some of us went to a great deal of trouble to make sure it was good with interesting material. On the door was a great little bloke named Cyril who defended entrance to the club if you weren't a member with every means he had. Wayne and Warren Ford drove him mad as they were identical and only one was a member. I don't think he ever did work it out.

I had a trio at The Mandarin Club, which I brought Chuck Yates up from Melbourne for. It was seven nights a week, 9pm until 2am and 9pm until 3am on weekends. We played jazz and a bit of Latin for dancing. The club was just that one room downstairs and it was the greatest seething mass of corruption I have ever seen .The boxing crowd, the racing crowd, the police, the politicians, the gangsters, the drag-queens, the entertainers, musicians, celebrities from everywhere. Everyone stayed up in those days. It was a time of great social change with the musical 'Hair' coming out and people walking on stage naked. Free love! We all drank on at the Musician's Club and then over the road to the Greek Club in the alley opposite. Ouzo was drunk in great quantities. No one went to bed early because most of society took 'purple hearts' which meant sleep wasn't necessary. After two years of that, we went back to The El Rocco for a while and then two years at Chequers nightclub playing for all the big stars.

Then I did lots of shows and a couple of tours with Shirley Bassey and played lots of jazz with the Judy Bailey Quartet. We registered to play at the 1975 Jazz Convention, the first at which modernists were encouraged to enter. It was a nice idea, but only three or four modern groups played. However, Dick Hughes wrote in *Jazz Australia* that one of the most impressive solos played was by myself on drums with The Judy Bailey Quartet. Thank you Dick. In 1974 I also started our band The Last Straw, which went from 1974 to 1999. Later on we started the Bernie McGann Trio in '83, Ten Part Invention in '86 and The Engine Room with Roger Frampton in '88. Lots of travel all over the world with these groups, two trips to Russia, the opportunity to record much more often and a great time. The Bernie McGann Trio also performed at the Chicago Jazz Festival and did a short tour of the USA in 1997.

Finally I had a breakdown in '98 and didn't play for 6 months. Sadly, we lost Roger Frampton, to a brain tumour at the beginning of 2000. Ten Part Invention still toured to the USA, and the McGann Trio to Europe and the UK in 2004.

A couple of my opinions before I go, Louis Armstrong was the greatest jazz musician who ever lived. The Miles Davis of the 50's and 60's is my personal hero and my favourite singers are Dinah Washington, Sarah Vaughn and Carmen McRae. My favourite drummer in earlier jazz is Big Sid Catlett and later, 'Philly' Joe Jones.

Although I am still working on new material with Ten Part Invention, I find that I have become more interested in earlier styles and do a bit of reading and listening to things that I have perhaps neglected or not listened enough to. We can't avoid death, taxes or change. There is no need to be resentful or angry that music has moved into areas we may not care for. If we all liked the same thing it would be a boring world. Simply listen to what you like, or are prepared to listen to, to see if you might like it. I like music that reaches my heart and soul. I may go and listen to bands and not care for the result, but at least I consider it.

In our Conservatoriums, there is no history of Australian jazz taught, unless it comes from individual teachers using their own initiative. With the exception of Bill Boldiston's excellent, recently published work, "Sydney's Jazz and other joys of its Vintage Years", Australian jazz history books are practically impossible to find – long out of print ... and just about everything and everybody who have furthered their art here are not known by our young jazz students. Some care about this and have sought out recordings and showed interest but I would think that it never occurs to a majority. Some think jazz began when they did!

Of course, the great ones shine through and their knowledge and expertise have made them some of the best of the young players and composers in the world. It is widely accepted now, even by overseas critics, that the best, most innovative and recognisable improvisers amongst young musicians are coming from this

country. I share Graeme Bell's, Paul Grabowsky, and Mike Nock's opinion that a lot of this is to do with our lifestyle and environment. The education available now is at a level we never thought would be available in this country. I must also point out, that our young players are wonderfully mannered, respectful and focussed.

We learnt to perfect swinging in the old strip clubs. If you didn't get 'Night Train' grooving and the bumps and grinds feeling good for those girls, you got hit over the head with a drink tray. You learnt to swing really quickly in those days. Forget about worrying about the future of mainstream music, or any other genre, there will always be music we want to hear, as long as there are people to play it and an audience who want to listen to it. It might just be a lot harder to find because unfortunately...things ain't what they used to be.

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*The Committee also wishes to acknowledge the assistance
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