AUSTRALIAN JAZZ HISTORY: A COMPREHENSIVE OVERVIEW

by John Whiteoak & Bruce Johnson*

[The following is the 'Jazz' entry in the Currency Companion to Music and Dance in Australia, published in 2003. John Whiteoak and Aline Scott-Maxwell were General Editors.]

The most prominent strand in the early history of Australian jazz is American influence on Australia popular music in the 1920s—the jazz age. Professional musicians 'jazzed'— jazzed up—popular music in keeping with Australian interpretations of the exuberance and excitement of entertainment fashions in the jazz age. African—American elements in early Australian jazz largely represented a long tradition of highly mediated African—American influence on popular music and dance, which blackface minstrels brought here in the 185os. Black American jazz held little interest or esthetic appeal for Australians until the 193os. Yet in the 1920s even the vaguest report that jazz music and dancing were somehow 'Negroid' in origin imbued them with appealing exoticism and an exciting aura of social, musical and terpsichorean transgression. Opponents of jazz—age music and dance occasionally cited these same misunderstood African—American origins as evidence of musical crudity, offensiveness and social undesirability. The Melbourne *Age*, for instance, claimed on 7 July 1926 that jazz was 'an imported vogue of sheer barbarism a direct expression of the Negroid spirit'.

Self-aware jazz followings, based on performance and appreciation of the less diluted styles of jazz for their intrinsic musical and expressive merit, emerged gradually in Australia. Jazz clubs, jazz societies and jazz periodicals were just beginning to represent these followings at the end of the 1930s. From then the Australian jazz movement has been configured by polarisation of varying intensity between a strongly organised, amateur—based following for traditional jazz and a diffuse but increasingly influential and broad—based following for modern styles of jazz. The jazz movement is widespread throughout Australia today, but Sydney and Melbourne, the largest cities, have always been the primary centres of activity and development.

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Vaudeville act

References to jazz first appeared in Australian entertainment journals in 1918, in the form of reports of a 'new American craze'—the jazz band. A comic vaudeville act called Australia's First Jazz Band performed at Fullers' National Theatre in Sydney in June 1918 and then went on tour. This was an ensemble of experienced ragtime instrumentalists with a ragtime singer, Belle Sylvia, who was replaced in Melbourne by Mabelle Morgan. There was special emphasis on loud, showy drumming, novelty sound effects and clownish body movements to music. The ragtime content of the act, including 'ragging' (improvisation), accentuated a fact noted in the Sydney magazine *Theatre* of 2 December 1918—the new American craze was 'an extension of ragtime'.

Vocal and instrumental ragtime music and performance practice in Tin Pan Alley style entered Australian popular music just before 1900 and by the 1910s 'ragtime' was synonymous with modern American popular music and dance.

With the onset of the jazz dancing craze in late 1919 'jazz' quickly became the prevailing term for modern popular music. Musical distinctions between ragtime and jazz—or ragging and jazzing—were not clearly defined in Australia, however. The terms were often used synonymously until about 1923. From a musical viewpoint, 1918—23 can be seen as a ragtime—to—jazz transition period.

Local and imported jazz acts remained popular on the Australian vaudeville and revue stage throughout the 1920s. Early acts included Rees and O'Neil, multi—instrumentalists, in late 1918 and the American Boys Jazz Band and the Linn, Cowen and Davis Trio in 1920. An Australian comedy act along the lines of Australia's First Jazz Band appeared on the Fullers' circuit in 1923 as Linn Smith's Royal Jazz Band

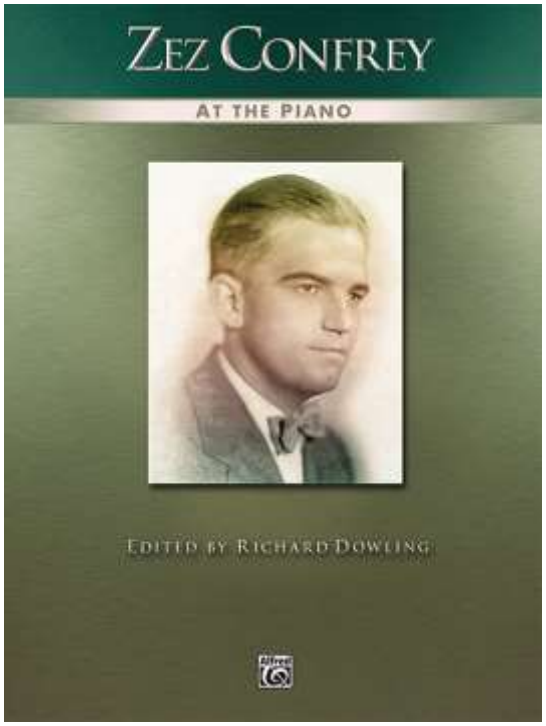
Bert Ralton's Havana Band in November, 1924. Ralton (reeds) is fifth from the left... PHOTO COURTESY MIKE SUTCLIFFE OXFORD COMPANION TO AUSTRALIAN JAZZ

and later in revue as the Hell's Bells Jazz Band. From 1923 many overseas jazz—band acts appeared on the Tivoli variety circuit. They included Bert Ralton's Havana Band in 1923; the Ingenues all-women orchestra and Harvey Ball and his Virginians in 1927; and Sonny Clay's Plantation Orchestra, an African—American 'coloured revue'

The Ingenues all-women orchestra in 1928: one of many overseas jazz band acts appearing on the Tivoli variety circuit... PHOTO COURTESY SWEETHEARTS OF RHYTHM... Below is Sonny Clay's Plantation Orchestra, an African—American 'coloured revue' band...

band, in 1928. None of these visiting acts except the Plantation Orchestra showed how improvised jazz was played by leading African—American bands in the USA. Ralton's band was described after its appearance at the Tivoli Theatre in Melbourne

as a ‘real jazz band’ that ‘rags the classics brazenly, but not brassily …’ The popularity of touring novelty jazz acts like the Ingenues and the Six Brown Brothers, a saxophone clown band, resulted in the formation of similar Australian acts. Australian disc and piano—roll recordings of popular music from the 1920s reveal complex ways in which jazz or persistent ragtime influence was integrated into various current forms of musical entertainment. The ‘novelty’ jazz piano-playing style of Zez Confrey—an extension of novelty ragtime—became popular with Australian orchestral and solo pianists about 1922. In a recording of the dance number *Freshie* in 1926 the dance—palais pianist Harry White embellishes his solo in Confrey’s novelty jazz style.



Dance—orchestra or piano arrangements that ‘jazzed the classics’ were popular and in 1923 Herschel Henlere, a visiting vaudeville stage pianist, recorded a medley called *Mocking the classics* on a Mastertouch piano roll in Sydney. Rhapsodic—style jazz piano is heard on *When the real thing comes your way*, recorded in 1929 by the popular self—accompanied vocalist Jack Lumsdaine. In the same year Vine and Russell, Tivoli comedians, recorded a ludicrous send—up of jazz singing, *Boo-pee-pee-doop*, and George Sorlie introduced hillbilly yodelling into a ragtime hit of nearly two decades before when he recorded *Ragging the baby to sleep*.

Social dancing booms

The seminal event in the history of jazz as popular music in Australia, however, was the boom in social dancing after the First World War. This boom coincided with the introduction of jazz—age ballroom dances such as the jazz foxtrot, the jazz waltz and, later, the shimmy, the Blues, the Charleston, the black bottom and others. New or refurbished ballrooms were referred to as ‘jazz palais’ in the jazz age, a ball became a

'jazz frivol' and modern—style dancing was commonly called 'jazzing'. Dance bands accordingly began to be called jazz bands. A band that wanted to fully exploit the jazz dancing craze advertised itself as a 'jazz orchestra' or 'jazz band' and adopted at least some of the instrumentation and performance characteristics that the public and entertainment entrepreneurs had begun to associate with jazz. Initially the main requirement for a 'real jazz band' was a drummer with an interesting collection of 'jazz'—percussion instruments capable of producing what Melbourne's *Graphic of Australia* described on 3 March 1920 as a 'riot of. . . jazz discordance'. By the beginning of the 1920s the old—style string orchestras—which included brass, clarinets and flutes—were adapting to the modern American dance—band instrumentation required to play up—to—date commercial dance arrangements. Any Australian band that played marginally syncopated song hits like *Felix kept walking*, *Freckles* or *Allah's holiday* was believed to play 'jazz'. However, a new—style palais or cabaret jazz band with, say, trumpet, trombone, saxophones (doubling on clarinets), piano, tenor banjo, tuba or string bass, drums and perhaps a fiddle could approximate the sound of the latest American Tin Pan Alley jazz hits on record just by playing commercial arrangements of them.

Symphonic jazz

The jazz model wanted by successful dance entrepreneurs and adopted by leading jazz orchestras in dance palais, cabarets and radio studios—like the Statics on 3LO Melbourne and the 2FC Orchestra in Sydney—was neither the early collectively improvised black jazz of New Orleans or 1920s Chicago nor New York developments of this style. Instead, they adopted a jazz—band model attributed to Art Hickman, the

The Art Hickman Orchestra in 1919: the jazz band model which pioneered the modern dance orchestra…

white San Francisco dance orchestra leader who is generally acknowledged as one of the pioneers of the modern dance orchestra. The then novel features of his orchestra included the addition of a saxophone section and a style of orchestration that allowed for some interplay between brass and reed sections, and places where individual players could express themselves as reading or improvising soloists. This was the basis of the 'symphonic' style of jazz developed by the Paul Whiteman Orchestra and others in the USA, which became popular here in the 1920s.

The American Paul Whiteman: his Orchestra developed the 'symphonic' style of jazz which became popular in Australia in the 1920s...

The Hickman model influenced a broader shift in arranging of commercial popular music to include jazz—age instrumentation and more emphasis on syncopation and other idiomatic characteristics of jazz. Lionel Corrick, Fred Hall, Maurice Guttridge and other Australians gained modest local reputations as commercial jazz—style arrangers. But all palais orchestra leaders needed some ability in arranging or rearranging to 'jazz up' the often abysmally unchallenging stock arrangements offered by Australian music houses.

Jazz—palais musicians had to play in all the popular dance music styles of the day. The syncopated foxtrots and one—steps identified today's jazz tunes in Tin Pan Alley style were only part of an evening's program. Waltzes, for example, were particularly popular. However, the ability to play Tin Pan Alley arrangements with up—to—date rhythmic interpretation, new improvisatory embellishment practices such as 'novelty jazz breaks' or 'blues effects', or mutes and other contemporary timbral effects began to gain importance. By 1923, moreover, imported recordings, piano rolls, resident American jazz specialists and visiting American jazz—palais orchestras were making the public more familiar with the sound of white jazz as played in the USA.

Two overseas jazz—palais orchestras reached Australia in 1923—Frank Ellis and his Californians and Bert Ralton's Havana Band. Both Ralton and Ellis had been

members of the Art Hickman Orchestra, and the Ellis band promoted itself in Australia as ‘Art Hickman’s original combination’ and ‘one of the World’s oldest and most famous dance bands’. The Australian trombonist Frank Coughlan recalls that their trumpet, trombone and saxophones ‘played together in a particular rhythmic style, which really made people dance. … Ellis demonstrated for all time how to

Frank Ellis and his Californians: one of the overseas jazz palais orchestras which reached Australia in 1923…

The Australian Frank Coughlan: he recalls that their trumpet, trombone and saxophones played together in a particular rhythmic style, which really made people dance… PHOTO COURTESY OXFORD COMPANION TO AUSTRALIAN JAZZ

swing a piano in a dance band… Their influence on dance music was tremendous, introducing correct vibrato for saxophones and trombones, drumming for rhythm instead of noise, swinging bass on piano, pizzicato bass, and featuring of artists.' Coughlan was among Australians who gained invaluable playing experience in American—led orchestras during late 1920s. Approximately 13 overseas bands reached Australia between 1923 and 1928. Major Australian palais, cabaret and radio—studio jazz orchestras were modelled on the sophisticated lines of the Ellis or Ralton bands or Ray Tellier's San Francisco Orchestra, which arrived in 1925.

At the end of the 1920s the terms 'jazz band' and 'jazz orchestra' were still being used for any band that played relatively up—to—date popular music. A photograph of Hall's Jazz Orchestra of Gippsland, Victoria, in *Australasian Band and Orchestra News* of 26 July 1928 shows a conservatively dressed, unhappy—looking ensemble about to play a one—step on violin, saxophone, banjo, a basic drum kit and a piano. Their music is certainly to have been a far cry from 1920s white or black American jazz as it is known today.

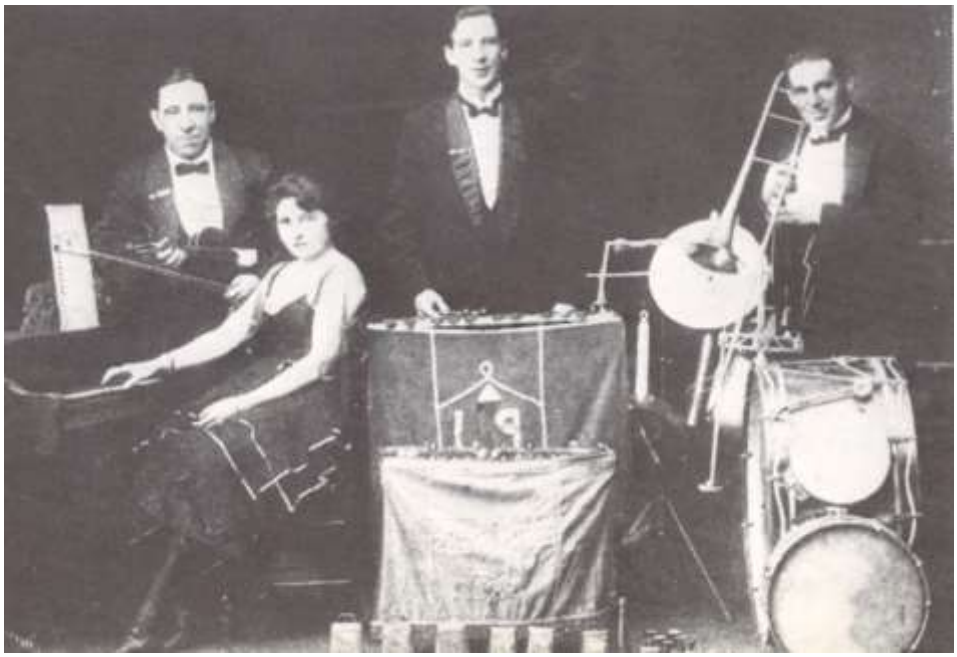
Markers of modernity

What was called jazz music in the 1920s was implicated in a larger postwar questioning of cultural traditions, particularly in alliance with mass media such as film and the press, and emancipatory social movements that expressed themselves in such breaches of Edwardian decorum as short dresses, American slang and immodest, energetic dancing. Some who were anxious to proclaim their up-to-date cultural position invoked jazz and related African—American styles of music as markers of modernity. Sydney's fashionable bohemia celebrated to the sound of Tin Pan Alley jazz at Artists' Balls in the early 1920s. 'Jazz' denoted modernity in dancing, colour, paining, decor, costumes and lifestyle.

Flappers in the 1920s: the flapper was the archetypal jazz identity of the 1920s …

Jazz also became the predominant music of women's emancipation. The archetypal jazz identity of the 1920s was the flapper, most immediately recognisable in the abandoned, expansive Charleston, the quintessential dance of the jazz age. The moral panic about jazz was largely generated by its powerful connection with emancipated female sexuality, particularly expressed through 'jazzing' (jazz dancing). The 'jazzing' flapper was expressing modernity as much as any jazz musician. At the same time she was contributing to the expansion of women's public roles.

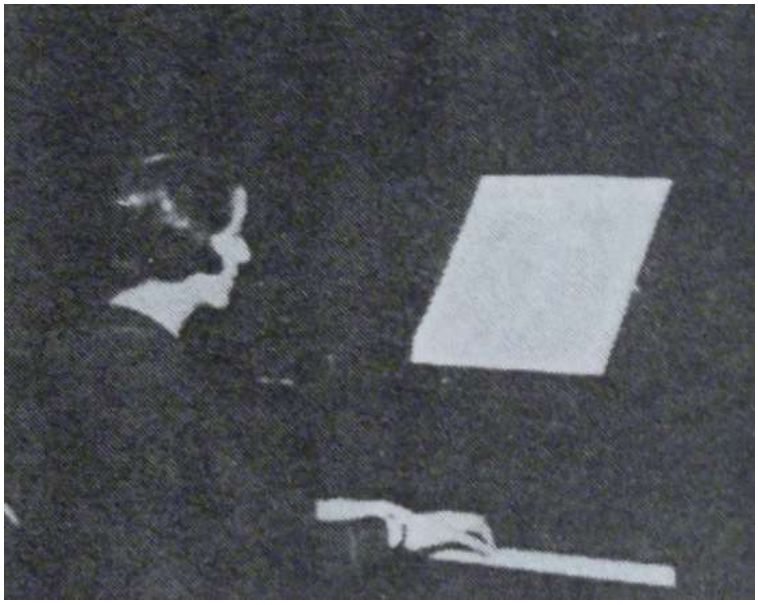
Women were also sometimes prominent as jazz instrumentalists. Nellie McEwan's Jazz Orchestra of 1919 was one of the first major palais jazz orchestras in Melbourne.



The Nellie McEwen Quartet in 1919: one of the first major palais jazz orchestras in Melbourne… PHOTO COURTESY BLACK ROOTS WHITE FLOWERS

Edith and Laurel Pardey recorded jazz on piano rolls for the Mastertouch company years before the first studio recording of Australian jazz was made. Numerous recordings of the late 1920s and later testify to the brilliant and expressive jazz accompaniments of the Parlophone studio pianist Beryl Newell. Prominent all—women show bands and jazz—playing female instrumentalists of the jazz age and later have been described by the music historian Kay Dreyfus. Until the end of the 1920s many women improvised ragtime and jazz as pianists accompanying silent films.

The fading of the jazz age at the end of the 1920s coincided with the onset of the Great Depression and severe unemployment among orchestral musicians because of the demise of silent—cinema orchestras and vaudeville or more general cost—cutting. The orchestral musicians who were not culled by the contraction of the popular entertainment industry began to bring themselves much more into line with the trends in overseas music that most appealed to Australian popular taste. The



Parlophone studio pianist Beryl Newell: responsible for brilliant and expressive jazz accompaniments…

syncopated popular music that the public had called jazz in the 1920s was now just an everyday element of radio, cabaret, dance—palais or stage music. In 1931 it began to be called 'modern rhythmic music' or 'modern rhythm music' instead of 'jazz'. On 14 August 1932 a ten—piece band led by Jim Davidson successfully staged what was

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

praised at the end of the decade as the ‘first rhythm concert ever held’. The verb ‘swing’ began to be used to define ways of playing popular music with modern rhythmic interpretation or improvising or embellishing in the jazz idiom. These ways of playing were also described as ‘hot’. ‘Jazzing’, the previous term for embellishing, syncopating or otherwise jazzing—up popular music, was now outdated and rarely used.

Many leading professional musicians began to supplement their income by teaching modern rhythm style on their instruments. Modern—rhythm piano schools were established, such as the Jack Woods and Len Langford schools, where countless students learned how to improvise a full swinging ‘jazz bass’ and spontaneously embellish basic commercial piano arrangements of popular song tunes. The popular—music industry periodical established in 1932 as *Australian Dance Band News* published numerous instructive articles by leading Australian dance stylists on every aspect of jazz improvisation, embellishment, rhythmic interpretation, sectional work, use of effects, harmony, arranging and showmanship. Typical titles were ‘The value of vibrato’ in 1932; ‘Mutes and effects’ and ‘Slapping the bass’ in 1933; ‘Embellishment and filling up’, ‘Trombone tricks’, ‘Rhythmic style trumpet playing’, ‘Swing the guitar’, ‘Recipe for hot style’ and ‘Playing the piano the modern way: with swing’ in 1934; and ‘Short cuts and suggestions on extemporising’ in i936.

Sweet music from England

In the early 1930s the Australian dancing and listening public developed a liking for ‘sweet’ dance music. This was sedately syncopated, understated English dance—band music, which contrasted with the ‘hotter’ white or black American jazz. Ray Noble’s popular orchestra, which many Australians heard on record, often played in the

The English band leader Ray Noble: his popular orchestra often played in the sweet style later called sweet swing…

sweet style later called sweet swing. A craze for unsyncopated ‘old—time’ dance music began about 1934. Radio and dance—palais bands had to try to accommodate this craze or lose patronage to small specialist old—time dance venues. The tango and the rumba also gained popularity with listeners and social dancers at this time.

The introduction of the microphone into dance bands from 1933 greatly increased the prominence of popular vocalists, or crooners, and amplified crooning quickly became an important strand of performance of jazz—inflected popular music in the dance palais and on radio. The popularity of crooners, tango music, old—time dance music, ‘sweet—style’ music, Hawaiian—style music, hillbilly music, and various other competing forms of popular music greatly diminished the opportunities for instrumental musicians to ‘swing it’, play ‘hot’, or play hot jazz arrangements by white or black Americans. These arrangements could often be purchased here, or they could be transcribed directly from recordings, as discussed by Dutchy Turner, a trombonist and arranger, in ‘Arranging from a record’ in *Australian Music Maker* of 1 June 1934.

Almost from the beginning of the jazz age there were talented Australian professional musicians whose command of the jazz idiom, as they understood it, was comparable with that of visiting or resident white American ‘jazz specialists’. By the end of the jazz age of the 1920s they included trombonists like Coughlan and Turner, trumpet players like George Dobson, reed players like Harry Danslow and Ern Pettifer, pianists like Reg Lewis and Abe Walters, and drummers like Jim Davidson and

Drummer Jim Davidson: one of many talented Australian professional musicians whose command of the jazz idiom, as they understood it, was comparable with that of visiting or resident white American jazz specialists… PHOTO COURTESY JACK MITCHELL

Benny Featherstone. These players privately studied the latest jazz on record— which included black jazz by the 1930s—and enjoyed their rare opportunities to play arranged and improvised hot jazz in commercial venues or radio studios. However, it was not until the closing years of the 1930s— the swing-music era — that the Australian public began to listen more seriously to music arranged and improvised in hot jazz style.

Drummer Benny Featherstone: another whose command of the jazz idiom was comparable with that of visiting or resident white American jazz specialists…
PHOTO COURTESY MIKE SUTCLIFFE OXFORD COMPANION TO AUSTRALIAN JAZZ

Virtuosity and showmanship

A craze for a new genre of jazz called swing music became a national phenomenon in the USA about 1930, although its formal musical devices, such as 'riffing', had already evolved, notably in Kansas City. Compared with 1920s hot jazz in the USA, swing music was marked by more solo improvisation and virtuosity, a shift from 2/4 time to 4/4 and much emphasis on solo drumming and showmanship. Guitar amplification gave band guitarists the opportunity to perform as soloists. In small and large bands, scored or memorised sectional riffing—brief motifs often played in call and response between brass and reeds—became a formulaic foil for solo improvisation and 'star' crooners or vocal units. In highly drilled swing bands musicians performed choreographed movements synchronised to their rhythm and sectional interplay. The increasing complexity of routines—the ordering of reed and brass interplay, solo and *tutti* sections—and reed and brass voicings in swing music relied greatly on the creativity of jazz arrangers.

The Australian public's interest in swing music was signalled in 1933 by the popularity of a record coupling two Harry Warren numbers from the current film *42nd Street*— the title-song and *Shuffle off to Buffalo* — in which Jim Davidson's band foreshadowed later swing-band style. By 1936 various styles of black and white

American dance music previously known as hot dance music or hot rhythm music were gaining popularity, and they began to be referred to collectively as swing music or just ‘swing’. The more subdued or ‘sweeter’ examples of this music began to be called sweet swing.

Swing music in Australia followed the American models. Its adoption was often accompanied by confusion, however, and some definition was, of course, lost in the translation to Australian conditions. For reasons of economy, Australian dance bands that played swing music were usually much smaller than their leading American counterparts. Swing-music models greatly admired by Australian musicians in the late 1930s included black American bands such as the Duke Ellington Orchestra, the Cab Calloway Orchestra and the Teddy Wilson Orchestra, and white American bands such as the Benny Goodman Orchestra and Goodman’s small ensembles, the Tommy Dorsey Orchestra and, later, the Glenn Miller Orchestra.

There was also modest but growing interest in the style known as Dixieland, which, as played by Bob Crosby’s Bobcats and others in the USA, revived the 1920s Chicago style of collectively improvised jazz but with swing-music influences. Australian bandleaders such as Coughlan and Davidson sometimes formed Dixieland units within their orchestras to play brackets of Dixieland music.

American bandleader Bob Crosby: reviving the 1920s Chicago style of collectively improvised jazz but with swing-music influences…

Swing at the Trocadero

The much-publicised opening of the Trocadero ballroom in Sydney in 1936 helped to identify the city, the venue and Coughlan with swing music, and swing music with dancing. When Coughlan's 15—piece orchestra played swing music or other hot jazz arrangements the dancers often crowded around the band dais to watch and listen to the band and sway to the sound. Later in 1936 Coughlan introduced weekly Swyngphonic Concerts at the Trocadero. Here his musicians could play more of the swing—music arrangements they personally preferred, and improvise, or 'jam' freely without concern for the varied tastes of dancers. A Swyngphonic Concerts recording from May 1937 of *It don't mean a thing if it ain't got that swing*, with the versatile crooner and scat singer Barbara James, amply demonstrates the surprising precision, punch, style and virtuosity of Coughlan's band playing swing music.

The brass and sax sections of Frank Coughlan's Trocadero Orchestra, Sydney 1936. L-R, Geoff 'Dutchy' Turner (trombone), John Robertson (trumpet), Coughlan (trombone, trumpet), George Dobson (trumpet), Lyn Miller (trumpet). Saxes: Keith Atkinson)(tenor), Jack Moore (alto), Colin Bergerson (alto), Frank Ellery (baritone)…PHOTO COURTESY BLACK ROOTS WHITE FLOWERS

The fashion for dance bands that could play hot or sweet swing music as part of their dance—palais and radio programs spread quickly. Jim Davidson's ABC Dance Orchestra made national tours from March 1937 and inspired the formation of comparable bands. Other ensembles that were reputed for the hot or sweet swing music in their repertory included those led by Dudley Cantrell, Tom Davidson, Dick Freeman, Don Rankin, Jack Spooner, Theo Walters, Jay Whidden and, from 1940,

Versatile crooner and scat singer Barbara James…

Bob Gibson's band, Melbourne, 1947. Back row L-R, Alan 'Chan' Redding (sax, flute, clarinet), Bobby Limb (tenor, clarinet), Bob Tough (tenor, clarinet, flute), Keith McDonald (trombone), Bob Trenberth (trumpet), Bob Storey (alto, clarinet), 'Pappy' McGlade (trombone), Alan Hill (trumpet). Front row L-R, Gibson (clarinet, alto), Keith Cerchi (drums), Alf Gardiner (bass), Fred Thomas (trumpet), Jack Wilson (guitar), Ken Weate (clarinet, baritone), Charlie Thompson (trumpet, trombone), Bob 'Beetles' Young (piano), Pam Corrigan (vocals)… PHOTO COURTESY BLACK ROOTS WHITE FLOWERS

Bob Gibson. These bands often moved among Sydney, Melbourne and other cities as contracts ended and engagements beckoned.

Many professionals preferred to retain their identity as leading dance or light orchestra musicians, not as 'jazz' musicians. Some, such as George Dobson and his associates, even saw the jazz that began to be performed at unpaid jam sessions in swing clubs as too undisciplined and amateurish. In 1938 the Australian Musicians' Union unanimously resolved rule 88, preventing members from taking part in unpaid jam sessions without written permission. Others, like Coughlan, became passionately devoted to swing music, both as a style and as a vehicle for personal creative expression. He wrote in 1939 of 'the performance of a swing artist. He is and must be creative, not [a] purveyor of ready made tunes, not even an improviser or embellisher of them. Just as the scene inspired or was the medium of expression for the painter, so is the melody or harmonic structure [of swing music] a vehicle for the whole individual outpourings of the swing man'. He was in fact expressing the ethos of what is now known as modern jazz: jazz music as a vehicle for individual artistic expression.

In the previous year the Sydney Swing Club—of which Coughlan was president—published the first and only edition of a swing—music annual called *Jam*. It is an impressive philosophical, historical and technical survey of swing music. Erudite articles on black American, white American, and Australian jazz effectively convey almost worshipful esteem of jazz and its current idols. The inclusion of 'hepster's dictionary' provided Australians with a translation of the picturesque 'jive' talk of black jazz musicians.

Bob Tough: improvising chorus after chorus to relaxed and unrehearsed small-band swing-music backing… PHOTO COURTESY MRS ERN TOUGH OXFORD COMPANION TO AUSTRALIAN JAZZ

The enthusiasm with which numerous swing clubs were established between 1935 and 1939 indicates rapid growth of public interest in jazz from its hottest to its most watered—down forms. These clubs were mostly forums for listening to recorded or live jazz. Swing—club jam sessions with live jazz, such as those at Fawkner Park on Sundays in Melbourne gave players like the saxophonist Bob Tough and the trumpeter and multi—instrumentalist Benny Featherstone the chance to improvise chorus after chorus to relaxed and unrehearsed small-band swing-music backing, and to collectively improvise final choruses. This new concept of relaxed, informal jam sessions and jamming—terms that only reached Australia in the swing era—helped to establish a basis for Australian jazz culture. The jam session shifted the emphasis from jazz for dancing to jazz for playing and intent listening. The jam session invited amateur participation, and talented young players could gain essential experience and reputation in the jazz styles of their choice without necessarily committing themselves fully, if at all, to the culture and career of the professional dance musician. Jazz enthusiasts no longer had to hang around a dance palais to hear their local jazz heroes play perhaps only three improvised choruses in an entire evening.

Playing for Americans

The swing—music movement faltered at the beginning of the Second World War, when many leading players enlisted for active service or in entertainment units. However, the entry of the USA into the war and the consequent influx of American servicemen, including jazz musicians, gave new impetus to swing, Dixieland, boogie-woogie and other styles. In districts where American servicemen were numerous bands and ballrooms, cabarets and other nightspots had to provide the hotter dance

During the war many young musicians, like the saxophonist Bobby Limb in Adelaide (above) were rapidly promoted to fill places left by enlisting professionals... *PHOTO © RON FALSON ARCHIVE*

music that they required, especially for jitterbugging. During the war many young musicians, like the saxophonist Bobby Limb in Adelaide and the clarinetist Don Burrows in Sydney, were rapidly promoted to fill places left by enlisting professionals and they had accelerated jazz apprenticeships. Women also became more prominent in jazz when all—women show bands were formed for venues like the Trocadero.

Don Burrows : another musician during the War to be rapidly promoted to fill places left by enlisting professionals… *PHOTO © RON FALSON ARCHIVE*

Because of a ban on recording by the American Federation of Musicians in the USA and a shortage of records in Australia during the war, intimations of new developments in jazz were confined mainly to personal contacts and V-discs, which were records intended for the American armed forces only. However, 1943 brought a celebrated American swing orchestra led by the virtuoso clarinetist Artie Shaw to Australia as US Navy Band 501. The tour was intended for the American forces but Australian service personnel and various resourceful musicians gained entry to the band's concerts and dances. The power, precision and solo playing of this full—blown swing—music band with four trumpets, five saxophones, three trombones and a large rhythm section were a revelation and a lasting inspiration to Australians who heard it or enthusiastic reports about it. A jazz critic reported in *Tempo* of July—August 1943 that as a soloist Shaw 'seemed to have an unlimited fund of ideas and the music just pours out in a never ending stream'.

Artie Shaw (on left, clarinet) at 118th US General Hospital, Herne Bay, Sydney, 1943… *PHOTO CREDIT ERNEST BOWEN*

Reviving collective improvisation

By the beginning of the war there was a small but dedicated 'back to the roots of jazz' movement devoted to appreciation and revival of collectively improvised jazz, a style that had only been adopted here on a tiny scale in the 1920s and as Dixieland in dance—palais programs in the 1930s. The Melbourne University Rhythm Club, established in 1937, was an important early centre for the embryonic traditional—jazz movement.

Graeme Bell: a central figure in the embryonic traditional—jazz movement…

A central figure in this movement was Graeme Bell, leader of Graeme Bell's Dixieland Jazz Band. He explained in 1946 that 'When I use the word "jazz" I am not referring to [solo improvisation backed by a rhythm section], but to collectively improvised jazz in the negro idiom which is the only music which should be and usually is today referred to as "jazz"'. This proposal exemplified a major philosophical demarcation that had already emerged in Australian jazz. On one side were the modern styles of jazz that displayed the virtuosity and creativity of improvising soloists like Shaw, or Australian counterparts like the Melbourne saxophonist Bob Tough. On the other side were styles that were seen to embody the grassroots expression of early black jazz. A social and musical fault line between technically progressive modernists and back—to—the—roots, mostly amateur traditionalists has run through Australian jazz to the present day, but there has been far too much overlap and exchange to call it a split.

The years from 1946 to 1950 were among the most momentous in Australian jazz. The traditional—jazz movement became well established after the success of the first Australian Jazz Convention in Melbourne in December 1946 and a national ABC tour by Bell's band after its acclaimed 1947—48 European tour. Other prominent traditional jazz bands established by then included the Southern Jazz Group in Adelaide, Frank Johnson's Fabulous Dixielanders in Melbourne and the Port

Frank Johnson's Fabulous Dixielanders when they won the 3AW Battle of the Bands, April 13, 1949, Melbourne Town Hall. L-R, Geoff Kitchen (clarinet), Jack Connelly (bass), Johnson (trumpet), Geoff Bland (piano), Warwick 'Wocka' Dyer (trombone), Bill Tope (banjo), Wes Brown (drums)... PHOTO COURTESY BLACK ROOTS WHITE FLOWERS

Jackson Jazz Band in Sydney. It is often argued that an audibly Australian style of traditional jazz emerged at that time. Some commentators refer to the 'larrikin' - brash and swaggering—sound of Frank Johnson's Fabulous Dixielanders, as heard on tracks like *Big Chief Battle Axe*, recorded for Jazzart in 1949.

The Port Jackson Jazz Band in the late 50s, L-R, John McCarthy (clarinet), Dick Hughes (piano), Ken Flannery (trumpet), Ray Price (guitar), John Sangster (drums), Harry Harman (bass)... PHOTO COURTESY BLACK ROOTS WHITE FLOWERS

Challenged by bebop

Traditional jazz at that time was not seen as technically challenging and younger professionals with an interest in jazz increasingly sought stimulation elsewhere. Bebop presented the technical and theoretical challenges that they were seeking. Also known as bop and rebop, bebop emerged in the USA in the early 1940s in the work of black American jazz musicians such as Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker. It was a revolutionary style, developed from implications in the work of progressive swing musicians. Bebop soloists, playing at fast tempi, invented what were regarded as dissonant melodic lines and disjunct phrasing over chromatically altered and extended chords. Bebop also introduced unprecedented complexity of rhythm, into which the drummer and the pianist freely interjected off-beat rhythmic patterns. Wally Norman, a Sydney jazz journalist and trumpeter described bebop recordings by Parker, Gillespie and others in *Music Maker* of 20 August 1946. He observed accurately that in bebop: 'The tempo is usually very fast, with four beat bass predominating in the rhythm section, drums on open hi—hat all the way and piano playing short sustained chords every two bars or so. ... One typical phrase consists of a triple[t] starting a run of quavers that goes on for eight bars or so, ending on two

Bebop soloists such as Charlie Parker (left) and Dizzy Gillespie (right) playing at fast tempi, invented what were regarded as dissonant melodic lines and disjunct phrasing over chromatically altered and extended chords… PHOTO COURTESY PINTEREST

quavers that sound like tile word "Bebop".' Bebop began to influence Australian jazz soon after this, when tracks such as the Gillespie band's *A night in Tunisia* and *Old man rebop* were released here. Many jazz musicians were deeply impressed by this new sound.

Wally Norman (trumpet) in the Roosevelt restaurant, Sydney, in 1944… PHOTO COURTESY MIKE SUTCLIFFE OXFORD COMPANION TO AUSTRALIAN JAZZ

In their attempts to adopt the bebop style these Australian musicians, who described themselves as 'boppers', generally grafted bebop characteristics onto various familiar swing—music styles. These included the progressive small—group styles of 'Count' Basic, Nat 'King' Cole, Benny Goodman, John Kirby and others, whose bands all featured extended solo improvisation by all or most members. Australian bebop instrumentation often differed from the classic Parker—Gillespie model. Australian bands tended to feature a tenor instead of alto saxophone. One of the most influential bands, the Jack Brokensha Quartet was led by Brokensha on vibraphone.

Jack Brokensha (centre) on vibraphone. On the right is the singer Edwin Duff. Others are probably Ron Loughhead (piano, on left), and Ken Lester (bass)... PHOTO COURTESY SYDNEY MORNING HERALD

At another level 'bebop' became a generic term for all styles of jazz that Australians thought were very modern. Even boogie—woogie as played by slick modern—sounding ensembles like the Ron Gowans Fivette in Sydney was called bebop. Errol Buddle, saxophonist with the Brokensha band, had much success with his boogie—style composition *Buddle's bebop boogie*, recorded in 1948. The music of progressive swing bands in Stan Kenton style, like the Fred Thomas Orchestra in Melbourne and the Ralph Mallen Orchestra in Sydney, was also described as bebop.

The most interesting and developed examples of Australian bebop—style synthesis are several impressionistic tracks, including *Cherokee* and *I've got my love to keep me warm*, recorded in January 1950 by a Melbourne bebop group led by the classically trained pianist and composer Don Banks. Prominent bebop groups of the period 1947—50 were Bobby Limb's All Star Septette, the Don Banks Boptet and Splinter Reeves's Splintette in Melbourne, and Ron Falson's Beboppers and various groups led by Wally Norman in Sydney. The Jack Brokensha Quartet came to Melbourne from Adelaide in 1947 as the Rockettes and later moved among the

eastern states. It recorded an intriguing version of *Waltzing Matilda* with the bebop vocalist Edwin Duff in July 1949.

Don Banks's Boptet circa 1946 with L-R, Lin Challen (bass), Banks (piano), Charlie Blott (drums), Splinter Reeves (clarinet), Doug Beck (?) (guitar)... PHOTO COURTESY OXFORD COMPANION TO AUSTRALIAN JAZZ

In Melbourne especially there was a strong tendency towards what *Tempo* in September 1947 called 'a new melodic form of Bebop, played at danceable tempi'. At the end of 1949 a Sydney writer noted that while bebop had been 'a controversial subject in this country it has now become an established fact, and while there are comparatively few musicians who play in an out—and—out Bop style, the Bop influence may be noticed in the style of practically every modern musician in this town'. Enthusiasm for and experiment with bebop, as such, began to recede by 1950 and even technical discussions on bebop that had appeared in *Music Maker* and *Tempo* in the late 1940s ceased. The original bebop of Parker, Gillespie and comparable figures, which had inspired the Australian bebop movement several years before, was difficult to dance to. It was also too harmonically advanced and unmelodic to be appreciated by the ballroom, nightclub, restaurant or coffee—lounge patrons who had accepted other forms of jazz. A downturn in the music industry at the end of the 1940s placed even more pressure on boppers and other modernists to make their music more acceptable to the general public.

Bop for the people

Overseas reports of the development of simpler, more melodic modern jazz called 'bop for the people' began to reach Australia by 1950. In the early 1950s the Melbourne entrepreneur Bob ('king of bop') Crawford began to present 'bop for the people' concerts to large audiences. The restrained, or 'cool', modern—jazz sound of bands like the Charlie Ventura Septet and the George Shearing Quintet also began to

directly influence Australian modern jazz. Names like the Jimmy Allen's Cooltones, the Les Patching Shearing Group and Lee Gallagher's 'Cool' Quintette appeared on concert programs. The program for the April 1953 *Downbeat* concert declared that Charlie Blott was 'right in the vanguard when the banner of "cool" jazz is raised…' In 1955 the Australian Jazz Quartet (later Quintet), which included Brokensha and Buddle, began a remarkably successful four—year tour of the USA. It had a distinctively cool ensemble sound, including voicings based on vibraphone, flute, and bassoon.

The original Australian Jazz Quartet: Bryce Rohde (at the piano) then, clockwise, Errol Buddle, Dick Healey, Jack Brokensha: it had a distinctively cool ensemble sound…
PHOTO COURTESY ERROL BUDDLE

Jazz concerts had begun in t947 and become an institution with the Battle of the Bands series in the Sydney Town Hall in 1948. These were followed by comparable concerts in other states, such as the Battle of the Bands concerts at Wirths' Olympia in Melbourne. The remarkable growth of jazz concerts, which usually presented both traditional and modern styles, coincided with a decline in the younger generation's support for conventional dance halls as places of entertainment. The jazz—concert era continued into the 1950s, and Bob Clemens's Downbeat series in Melbourne continued from 1953 until the 1960s. Later in the 1950s a general decline of public interest in jazz concerts was accelerated by the movement of jazz supporters into a new phase of life in which they established careers and families. Long—playing records and television served their increasingly domestic recreation.

In Sydney, where bebop stood out less sharply from the broader jazz movement of the late 1940s, the jazz concerts maintained a public forum for progressive small bands and big bands that had absorbed aspects of the style. Many of the musicians involved in this phase made a transition to the jazz boom of the early 1960s. In Melbourne, however, there was a much sharper discontinuity after the first phase of bebop. Bands led by early Melbourne boppers such as Charlie Blott, Teddy Preston, Splinter Reeves and especially Bruce Clarke appeared from time to time in the early

Melbourne guitarist Bruce Clarke…

1950s. Some new small and large progressive bands also appeared briefly, but these were often created specifically for a concert or concert series, like the Big Downbeat Band that appeared at Downbeat concerts. Well—established Melbourne professionals like Clarke and Eddie Oxley led polished bebop ensembles on the ABC's *Thursday Night Swing Club* radio program. In 1954 Clarke produced an album of his bebop group playing polished, restrained—or cool—modern jazz, which was released

in the USA to modest acclaim. As in Sydney, various leading progressives slipped out of the public gaze in the late 1950s to play on television or in recording studios, nightclubs and restaurants, or to undertake teaching, arranging and other bread—and—butter work.

The modest Australian following for 'cool' jazz coincided with a division in American modern jazz in the 1950s between followers of restrained and introspective styles called 'cool' or 'West Coast' bebop and the more ecstatic, polyrhythmic and primarily black styles of modern jazz that became known as hard bop. Australian adoption of hard bop, however, was delayed by the event that essentially sidelined all jazz as modern popular music - the introduction of rock-and-roll music and dancing in 1955. This was partly precipitated by the screening of *The blackboard jungle* with a soundtrack featuring Bill Haley and his Comets playing *Rock around the clock* with its then startlingly foregrounded electric guitar break.

Bob Bertles (alto sax) on stage with rock 'n' roll singer Johnny O'Keefe: an established jazz musician who found he could easily cross over into rock if he wished... *PHOTO © RON FALSON ARCHIVE*

Rock—and—roll had been foreshadowed in Australia by the immense popularity of boogie-woogie as solo piano, piano and vocal, or band and vocal music. This was often in blues form with an unrelenting beat - quasi rhythm-and-blues music. The bodgie and widgie youth cult also strongly identified with boogie—woogie as music for jitterbug and jive dancing before rock-and-roll made jazz seem like an anachronism, especially after the 1957 tour of Bill Haley and his Comets and Little Richard. Rock—and—roll ultimately deprived many jazz musicians of dance and concert work. Yet established jazz musicians like the saxophonist Bob Bertles found they could easily cross over into rock if they wished and many of the next generation of jazz players grew up with appreciation of at least some form of rock.

Traditional jazz fared a little better than modern jazz in the 1950s, even though players frequently defected to the modernist camp. The movement remained centred on well—known and loved music with fairly stable musical conventions and a strong amateur organisation with an annual jazz convention. It was also much less reliant on the fortunes of the music industry, as fewer traditional—jazz players depended on music—making for their livelihood. It gained strength with the foundation of the Sydney Jazz Club in 1953, the Adelaide Jazz Society in 1954, the Canberra Jazz Club in 1957 and the Melbourne Jazz Club in 1958.

Jazz followers divided

The growth of jazz clubs and a vogue, especially in Melbourne, for what became known as casual dances foreshadowed the trad boom, which reached its peak in the early 1960s. Trad was based on a style of traditional jazz imported from England, where it was promoted by bandleaders like Kenny Ball and Acker Bilk. The boom also benefited modern jazz by generating recordings, performance opportunities, television programs and films that were about jazz or had a jazz soundtrack. Jazz followers became even more sharply divided into traditional and modern camps, but they tended to share aversion to rock-and-roll, which now assumed much of the

Trad was based on a style of traditional jazz imported from England, where it was promoted by bandleaders like Kenny Ball and Acker Bilk (pictured above)...

cultural odium earlier borne by jazz. This was accentuated along class lines as modern and traditional jazz became music of the expanding undergraduate population and the beat cult, with connections reflected in such ventures as ‘poetry and jazz’ from 1960 or modern jazz at the Jazz Art Gallery in Melbourne in 1963.

As a major youth fashion, the trad boom was slightly diluted by the folk—music movement around 1963 and it was ended abruptly by the fully electrified rock of The Beatles, who toured Australia in 1964. The traditional—jazz movement had benefited from some exciting new bands in the trad era, such as the Red Onion Jazz Band and the Yarra Yarra Jazz Band. Yet the image of straw hats, striped shirts and fun in the

Two exciting new Melbourne bands in the trad era: the Red Onion Jazz Band (above) and the Yarra Yarra Jazz Band (below)... PHOTO COURTESY ALLAN BROWNE & NIGEL BUESST OXFORD COMPANION TO AUSTRALIAN JAZZ

beer garden cost traditional jazz much of its aura of intellectualism, artistic seriousness and integrity, especially by comparison with the seriousness of avant—garde modern jazz. Unlike modern jazz, traditional jazz has never quite regained its trad—era status as youth music in Australia.

Cool influences from USA

By the 1960s Australian modern jazz was influenced by the cool, or West Coast, sound of bands like those led by Dave Brubeck, Gerry Mulligan, Shorty Rogers and George Shearing. Brubeck and Shearing both toured Australia in 1960. The sound was often tightly structured with uncluttered drumming and complex voicings, and sometimes classical—music inflections, as in the chamber jazz of the Modern Jazz Quartet. The alto saxophone playing of Paul Desmond with the Dave Brubeck Quartet was the epitome of cool jazz expression. The Australian jazz writer John Clare has observed that West Coast jazz was often a 'soft—edged pastel—toned music'.

Bryce Rohde's group, 1959, L-R, Ed Gaston (bass), Colin Bailey (drums), George Golla (guitar), Rohde (piano): a quartet with a distinctively cool sound…

In 1959 Bryce Rohde, formerly pianist of the Australian Jazz Quintet, formed a Sydney quartet, including the acclaimed guitarist George Colla, with a distinctively cool sound. Cool jazz—whether the avant—garde cool of the Rohde band or just any modern jazz played cool and restrained—was perceived to be intellectual, hip and ambient. Cool jazz was also ideal for small dining and dancing venues and from 1964 it coincided with a vogue for slick, laid-back *bossa nova* music.

The famous shot of the Brian Brown Quintet performing in Jazz Centre 44, L-R, David Martin (piano), Brown (tenor sax), Keith Hounslow (trumpet), Barry Buckley (bass), Stewart Speer (drums): they defied the cool trend by drawing on the hard bop of Art Blakey, Sonny Rollins and others…

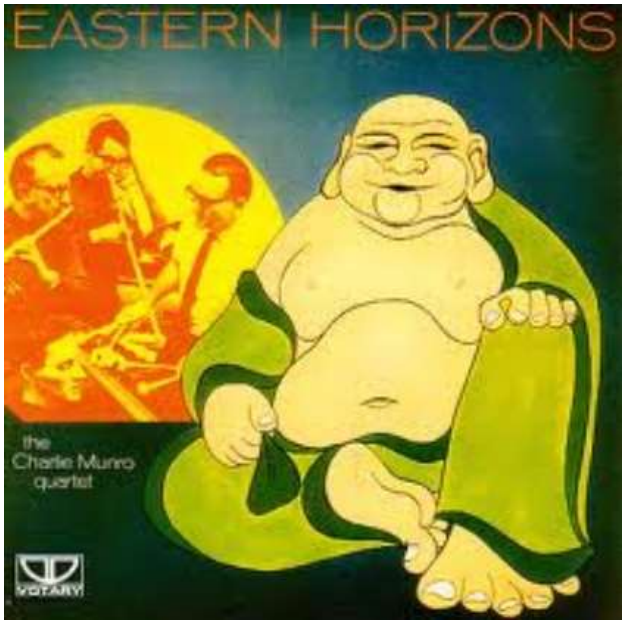
From 1957 groups led by Brian Brown at Jazz Centre 44 in Melbourne defied the cool trend by drawing on the hard bop of Art Blakey, Sonny Rollins and others. More modern players became attracted to this earthier, back—to—the—roots African—American style and by the early 1960s followers of cool jazz and hard bop were mildly polarised, but there were also many players who liked both styles. In Sydney, cool jazz could be heard at the Sky Lounge, where Don Burrows led his Australian All—Stars, including Golla. At the El Rocco jazz cellar, the older players tended to favour cool jazz while the younger players often preferred hard bop. There was also interest in early bop among hard—bop followers.

El Rocco, under the management of Arthur James, was the most significant Sydney venue for modern jazz of all types from the late 1950s until 1969. Important venues in Melbourne included Birdland, the Downbeat Club, The Embers, the Fat Black Pussycat and Jazz Centre 44. Most were gone or were in decline as modern—jazz

venues by late 1964. The Cellar in Adelaide was important until the mid—1960s but Brisbane, Hobart, Perth and other cities lacked a comparable focal point for modern jazz.

El Rocco, under the management of Arthur James (above) was the most significant Sydney venue for modern jazz of all types from the late 1950s until 1969…

Progressives like Brown and the saxophonist Heinz Mendelson in Melbourne, and Rohde and the reeds player and cellist Charlie Munro in Sydney, began to explore modal jazz concepts in composing and arranging and in freeing their improvisation from older melodic and harmonic conventions. Bands like the Barry McKimm—Heinz Mendelson Quartet at the Fat Black Pussy Cat in 1963 modelled their music on



Charlie Munro's expansive exploration of Indian, Arab and Japanese music on his album Eastern Horizons (1967) is probably the outstanding musical gesture in Australian modern jazz of the 1960s…

the free jazz of Ornette Coleman, Don Ellis and others in the USA. McKimm, Brown, Munro, the Sydney vibraphonist John Sangster and others engaged in much more diverse jazz experiments, including entirely free improvisation, improvisation to tape loops, graphic scoring, experimental film screening and exploration of non—Western musical principles. Munro's expansive exploration of Indian, Arab and Japanese music on his album *Eastern Horizons* (1967) is probably the outstanding musical gesture in Australian modern jazz of the 1960s. A few players, including McKimm, made a full transition from experimental jazz to improvised experimental 'concert—hall' music. The late 1950s and 1960s produced many modern players who have continued to refine their jazz playing up to the present day—like the pianist Tony Gould, the saxophonist Bernie McGann and the drummer Ted Vining.

The late 1950s and 1960s produced many modern players who have continued to refine their jazz playing up to the present day—like the pianist Tony Gould (above), and the alto saxophonist Bernie McGann (below)…

Drummer Ted Vining: another product of the late 1950s and 1960s who has continued to refine his jazz playing up to the present day… PHOTO COURTESY ROGER BEILBY

Challenges from rock

By the end of the 1960s modern jazz was struggling for relevance in a popular music scene that was producing serious, talented improvising instrumentalists in psychedelic rock and other progressive rock. The extended improvisations of a progressive band like Tully in Sydney or Spectrum in Melbourne were listened to with the intentness previously accorded to modern jazz. The vocabulary of popular music had expanded immensely. Sophisticated amplification, electronically produced and modified sound and new playing techniques associated with the use of electronics became integral to modern popular—music expression. Rock drumming became more complex, demanding and virtuosic, with many new rhythms and styles, such as Motown, to be accommodated. These developments also appealed to progressive jazz drummers.

At the same time, the boundaries between jazz and rock were blurring through the influences of overseas jazz—rock big bands and smaller avant—garde jazz—rock fusion bands. The latter included the five—piece Mahavishnu Orchestra led by the British guitarist John McLaughlin and the Miles Davis band, which had conferred compelling authority on modal—based jazz—rock fusion through its landmark 1969 album *Bitches brew*. Two American jazz—rock big bands, Chicago and Blood, Sweat and Tears, were major influences on the development of Australian jazz—rock big bands. Early jazz—rock big bands of the Blood, Sweat and Tears type— a jazz band wind section allied to a rock rhythm section—included Heart ‘n’ Soul and Kush, formed in Melbourne in 1967 and 1971 respectively, and the Southern Contemporary Rock Assembly, formed in Sydney in 1971. The Paul Young Big Band, the 22—piece John Santos Band and others followed later in the I970s. Today the virtuoso multi—instrumentalist James Morrison leads his James Morrison Funk Band in Sydney, and

Santos—now John Montesante—leads Grand Wazoo, a Melbourne soul—funk band of 15 players, including African Americans.

The artwork for Miles Davis's album Bitches Brew: this album conferred compelling authority on modal—based jazz—rock fusion in 1969…

Eclectic fusion

The Sydney production of the rock musical *Hair*, which opened in 1969, also gave impetus to the fusion of jazz and rock. Sangster and other jazz musicians augmented the Tully band for this production. Galapagos Duck, a Sydney jazz band active from 1971, became widely popular for its eclectic fusion of styles, including pop. Crossfire, a six—piece jazz—rock fusion band formed in Sydney in the mid-1970s, achieved

Crossfire in 1982, L-R, Greg Lyon (bass), Jim Kelly (guitar), Mark Reilly (drums), Tony Buchanan (saxophones), Ian Bloxsom (percussion), Mick Kenny (keyboards)…

international success with original music by the keyboard player Mick Kenny and the guitarist Jim Kelly. Pyramid, a Melbourne jazz—rock fusion band formed in 1978, played original compositions by its keyboard player, David Hirschfelder. Pyramid performed to acclaim at the Montreux Jazz Festival in Switzerland in July 1983 but disbanded soon after returning to Australia. From the late 1970s the small-group jazz—rock fusion style—sometimes called jazz—funk or acid jazz—became a permanent feature of Australian jazz. It remains popular with many young academy—trained players as it allows them to improvise freely over a tight, fashionable rhythmic 'groove'.

The Melbourne quartet Pyramid in the early 80s, L-R, David Hirschfelder (keyboards), David Jones (drums), Bob Venier (trumpet, flugelhorn), Roger McLachlan (electric bass)...

The modern—jazz movement had lost momentum in the late 1960s, when many players moved to whatever restaurant, hotel, club or other work was available. The sound of modern jazz, especially cool jazz, had also acquired respectability among the older generation. Leading players like Burrows and the saxophonist Graemc Lyall in Sydney were able to move their bands into upmarket venues such as the Wentworth Hotel Supper Club or the Flight Deck Lounge at Forrestville. Jazz now shared the improvised—music field with progressive rock and a small but intense experimental—music movement beyond jazz. Another improvisatory form, electric and acoustic blues music, gained a strong following from the early 1970s in association with rock and folk music. By the end of the 1970s post—punk experimental rock, especially in inner Melbourne, was yet another competing genre

of improvisatory popular music. The popularity of disco music from the late 1970s dealt a blow to live performance, including jazz.

Underground resurgence

Yet the 1970s also brought some resurgence of progressive modern jazz as an underground form of music. In 1974 the jazz writer Stan Van Hooft reported on avant—garde jazz experiments by Brian Brown's band at the Commune in Melbourne. In Sydney, from 1973 The Basement at Circular Quay was a centre for progressive and experimental jazz comparable to El Rocco. The first dedicated contemporary jazz journal, *Jazz Down Under*, was founded in September—October 1974 in direct association with The Basement. Horst Liepolt, a driving force for modern jazz since he founded Jazz Centre 44 in 1957, promoted jazz for The Basement. He founded the 44 Records label in 1974 to present progressive Australian jazz, and he organised numerous events at The Basement, including Music is an Open Sky festivals in 1975 and 1976. More than 20 groups are reported to have performed at the first festival, in which more than 90 per cent of the music was original.

The promoter Horst Liepolt (left) pictured here with Dizzy Gillespie in New York in the early 80s: a driving force for modern jazz since he founded Jazz Centre 44 in Melbourne in 1957, he promoted jazz for The Basement in Sydney…

Among the most progressive bands that played at The Basement was Jazz Co—Op. It included the saxophonist and pianist Roger Frampton, formerly of the experimental—music ensemble Teletopa, and Phil Treloar who became renowned for his exploratory, textural approach to percussion—playing. Serge Ermoll, a Russian immigrant and karate expert, led Free Kata, a remarkably uncompromising, spontaneous free—jazz ensemble that based its improvisation on the principle of 'free' or spontaneous kata movements in karate. Other highlights of progressive jazz

Pianist Roger Frampton (above) was a member of one of the most progressive bands that played at The Basement, Jazz Co—Op…

at The Basement included visits by Brian Brown's experimental quintet from Melbourne. It included the avant—garde percussionist Duré Dara in addition to the progressive jazz drummer Ted Vining and the bassist David Tolley, who had begun to explore electronics in improvisation.

Prominent, if less progressive, modern-jazz groups of this period included the Judy Bailey Quartet, the Don Burrows Quintet, the Allan Lee Quartet, the Col Nolan Quartet, and John Pochée's The Last Straw with its aggressive hard—bop to free—jazz sound. All states had venues where modern jazz, often mixed with Latin—American music, could he heard, but guides for the 1970s published in *Jazz Down Under* show that venues for traditional jazz far outnumbered those described as 'mainstream' (swing to bop) or 'modern' (bop to avant garde). In 1975 the Australian Jazz Convention rescinded its 'traditional jazz only' policy and extended an invitation to modern groups.

Lobbying for funds

Jazz action societies and similar organisations were established throughout Australia in the 1970s to promote 'mainstream to modern' jazz and lobby for funds. They have remained central to Australian jazz. The Jazz Action Society of NSW was founded in 1974 and by 1986 there were about 12 jazz action societies. The 1998 *Australian Jazz Directory* listed only six jazz action societies as such, several of which promoted all styles of jazz, but other jazz societies were also listed. The present-day Melbourne Jazz Cooperative was established to promote modern jazz in 1982, about two years after the collapse of the Jazz Action Society of Victoria. The Sydney Improvised Music Association (SIMA), formed in 1984, is subsidised by the NSW Ministry of the Arts and the Australia Council 'to facilitate the performance and recording of

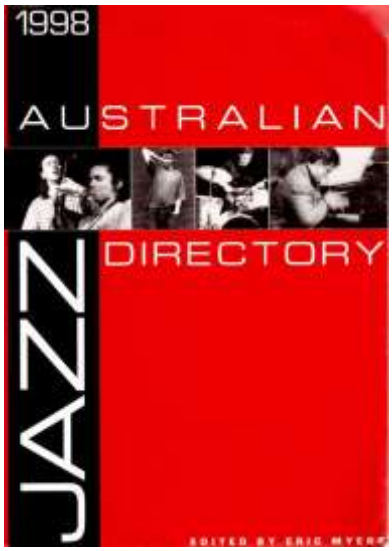
contemporary jazz and improvised music'. The president and artistic director of SIMA, Peter Rechniewski has been its driving force since its foundation.

Peter Rechniewski: president and artistic director of SIMA, he has been its driving force since its foundation…

The main jazz promotional and lobbying organisation since the early 1980s has been the National Jazz Development Program, with links to the Jazz Co—ordination Association of NSW. The latter was set up in 1983 with Australia Council government subsidy, later supplemented by the NSW Arts Ministry. Eric Myers, who was editor of *Jazz* magazine from 1981 until its final issue in 1986, has been NSW jazz coordinator since 1983 and national jazz coordinator since 1987. Myers was founding editor of the bimonthly journal *JazzChord*, through which the Jazz Co—ordination

Jazz Co-ordinator Eric Myers, speaking at a function in the company of the then NSW Government's Minister for the Arts, Peter Collins…

Association of NSW disseminated information to the jazz community and provided a national platform for debate from 1993. The NSW association, which became the model for jazz coordination associations in the other states, published the *Australian Jazz Directory* in 1994 and 1998. Initiatives by jazz coordination associations in co-operation with various relevant sectors of the jazz community have established invaluable assets for development of Australian jazz. These include SIMA, the Wangaratta Festival of Jazz from 1990 and, through two members of its executive committee, the Australian Jazz Archive at ScreenSound Australia in Canberra.



The cover of the 1998 Australian Jazz Directory, published by the NSW jazz co-ordination association…

Another central development in the 1970s was the introduction of tertiary jazz—studies courses. In 1973 a part—time jazz studies program was established at the NSW State Conservatorium of Music in Sydney. Howie Smith, an influential

The American Howie Smith: he headed the part—time jazz studies program at the NSW State Conservatorium of Music in Sydney program until 1975…

American reeds virtuoso and co—founder of the Jazz Co-Op ensemble, headed the program until 1975. It became a full—time program under Don Burrows in 1980. Numerous similar performance—based programs have since been established in tertiary institutions throughout Australia. In Melbourne, Brian Brown established a jazz studies course at the Victorian College of the Arts in 1980. Like the Sydney conservatorium it has produced several generations of accomplished players. By

Don Burrows (above): he took over the Conservatorium jazz studies program in Sydney when it became full-time in 1980… Brian Brown (below) in Melbourne encouraged many students and graduates to move beyond American jazz models to other concepts in improvisatory music…

calling the program improvisational studies and stressing the importance of finding one's 'personal voice', Brown, who retired in 1998, encouraged many students and graduates to move beyond American jazz models to other concepts in improvisatory music, including jazz— 'world music' and jazz—classical fusion. His own exploratory approach to the jazz idiom over three or four decades has also been inspirational. Jeff Pressing, an American jazz pianist, musicologist and composer, presented a rigorous and influential jazz research course at La Trobe University in Melbourne from 1976 until the early 1990s; it produced the first Australian PhDs in jazz studies.

Criticism has often been levelled at Australian jazz studies programs for failing to offer a grounding in pre-bop performance styles. High levels of training and technique in bop and post-bop styles have generally been considered the prerequisite for a professional career, despite the sustained popularity of early styles like traditional jazz. Some complain that an over—emphasis on technical achievement in bop and post bop—styles leads students to aspire to bland international models of virtuosity.

Over the last two decades women, such as the Sydney saxophonist Sandy Evans, have increasingly established themselves as authoritative instrumentalists in fields that had been regarded as men's domains. This shift has been accompanied by a more supportive environment for earlier jazz women like the pianist Judy Bailey and the vocalists Kerrie Biddell and Judy Jacques. A Women in Jazz Festival was held in Sydney in 1982 and women-and—jazz workshops were held at the Victorian College of the Arts in 1983 and 1984. Evans joined the saxophone section of the Sydney experimental fusion band Great White Noise with Dianne Spence in 1982. The next year she formed her own band, Women and Children First, which toured nationally

Sydney's Sandy Evans: an authoritative instrumentalist in a field that had been regarded as a men's domain... *PHOTO CREDIT ROGER MITCHELL*

in 1985. Since then she has been one of the most musically adventurous and sought—after performers in Australian jazz. Numerous comparable distinctive talents have swelled the ranks of female jazz performers and bandleaders from the late 1980s. Present—day platforms specifically for women in jazz include the annual Melbourne Women's Jazz Festival.

Determined radicals

Modern jazz has remained a significant strand of popular music in Australia since the 1970s despite the growth and proliferation of popular styles, including hip hop, 'world' music and electronic dance music. The first wave of young players trained in jazz—studies programs emerged in the 1980s. A wave of young players distinguished by determined radicalism also emerged at that time. Building upon the increasingly pervasive consolidation of contemporary jazz grammar, they drew upon developments in the jazz avant garde and elements of expressionist pop culture. The development of 'alternative' sites of expressiveness, such as the advent of community FM radio, inexpensive recording technology and opportunities, and increasingly viable sub-cultural performance venues, provided public platforms that had not been available to like—minded forerunners. From 1979 a Sydney coterie of these players became known as the Keys Music Association (KMA). Many of the major figures in the contemporary scene emerged from it.

The Benders at the Palace Hotel, Darlinghurst, in 1985. L-R, Jason Morphett (reeds), Lloyd Swanton (bass), Chris Abrahams (piano), Andrew Gander (drums).

In venues like the Paradise Jazz Cellar, members of the sometimes subsidised KMA performed in various small groups or as one large ensemble. The Benders and Mark Simmonds's Freeboppers were the more stable KMA ensembles. The Freeboppers (with personnel changes) remain a dynamic force in contemporary jazz. Three former KMA members, the pianist Chris Abrahams, the bassist Lloyd Swanton and the drummer Tony Buck, today comprise Australia's most successful experimental jazz—popular fusion band, The Necks.

Sydney trio The Necks, L-R, Chris Abrahams, Lloyd Swanton, Tony Buck: Australia's most successful experimental jazz—popular fusion band…

The Melbourne band Odwala, founded by the saxophonist Martin Jackson and the pianist Jamie Fielding about 1981, was also influenced by the post-hop avant—garde jazz of Coltrane, Sanders and others but was less concerned with creating original music than KMA. Other prominent Melbourne bands in the early 1980s were Onaje—which, like Odwala, still performs—and Pyramid.

The Melbourne quartet Onaje in 1991, L-R, Richard Miller, Geoff Kluke, Allan Browne, Bob Sedergreen…

SINCE 1985

by John Whiteoak

After the demise of the KMA cooperative, the establishment of the Sydney Improvised Music Association in the mid—1980s provided a broader platform for progressive jazz in Sydney, beginning with its State of the Art concert series in the 1985 Festival of Sydney. From 1986 the association focused more on presenting regular programs in commercial venues, such as the Strawberry Hills Hotel from 1989 until 1998. Many of the most interesting progressive bands and performers to have emerged in Sydney since 1985 are indebted to the Sydney Improvised Music Association's support of progressive jazz and other improvised music, commercially viable or otherwise. Before 1990 they included John Pochée's Ten Part Invention, an ensemble with a rich, variegated sound, formed in 1986 to perform original Australian compositions; Sandy Evans's Clarion Fracture Zone, a renowned jazz and 'world music' fusion band; and Phil Treloar's Feeling to Thought, based on a creative approach to ensemble improvisation that Treloar calls 'collective autonomy'.

Ten Part Invention in the early noughties, L-R, Steve Elphick, Bob Bertles, Bernie McGann, Sandy Evans, Paul McNamara (seated in front of Evans), Ken James, Miroslav Bukovsky (seated), John Pochée, Warwick Alder, James Greening…

The Melbourne Jazz Cooperative has presented monthly concerts of contemporary jazz in Melbourne from 1983. From 1986 the Limerick Arms Hotel in South Melbourne was a particularly important venue for bands like Onaje, the Funk band, Wilbur Wilde's Blowout, WJAZ, and the Paul Grabowsky Trio and Quartet. The latter, with Grabowsky on piano, Gary Costello on bass, Allan Browne on drums, Ian

Paul Grabowsky Quintet, L-R, Grabowsky, Gary Costello, Ian Chaplin, Shelley Scown, Allan Browne: the most sophisticated, virtuosic and fluidly cohesive modern jazz playing heard in Melbourne to that time…

Chaplin on saxophone, and the vocalist Shelley Scown, presented what was probably the most sophisticated, virtuosic and fluidly cohesive modern jazz playing heard in Melbourne to that time. The impressively creative Chaplin gained his grounding in Musiikki Oy, a free—jazz band of young players whom the veteran drummer Ted Vining fostered at Brisbane's Jazz Spot by 1983. Musiikki Oy became a prominent avant-garde band in Melbourne after Vining returned there in the late 1980s, and it is still led by him. Another strand of jazz materialised when Peter Milley formed the Cairo Club Orchestra in Melbourne in 1984. This is one of various Australian twenties—revival orchestras, which perform the arranged jazz that dance orchestras played in the 1920s and 1930s, with the original instrumentation.

Over the 1990s the Australian jazz scene became one of the most interesting and diverse in the world. A survey in the late 1990s noted about 60 jazz clubs and societies, about 120 jazz festivals, more than 140 jazz broadcasters and more than 1,250 'significant ensembles' covering a remarkable range of styles. Bebop remains a historical touchstone and signifier of jazz virtuosity, or 'chops', for modern players but many of the bands surveyed have absorbed other influences. Outside influences on Australian jazz date from the adoption of Latin—American styles in the 1930s and subsequently there were various explorations of non—Western music, such as Charlie Munro's 1967 *Eastern horizon*s project and Jeff Pressing's World Rhythm Band of the early 1980s, revived in 2000. Multiculturalism, the contributions of musicians with non—Anglophone backgrounds to Australian jazz, overseas tours by

Australian jazz musicians, and increased awareness of the cultures of neighbouring countries have accelerated the trend towards cultural fusion.

Prominent among the numerous bands currently influenced by 'world music' are Clarion Fracture Zone, Dale Barlow's Wizards of Oz and Miroslav Bukovsky's Wanderlust in Sydney; Musiikki Oy, the Australian Art Orchestra established by Paul Grabowsky, Niko Schauble's Tibetan Dixie, Bob Sedergreen's Son of Art Attack and Brian Brown's Flight in Melbourne. The most ambitious and compelling more recent

Two Sydney bands influenced by world music, Clarion Fracture Zone (above), L-R, Lloyd Swanton, Alister Spence, Tony Gorman, Toby Hall, Sandy Evans... and Wanderlust (below), on far left Miroslav Bukovsky, then clockwise Fabian Hevia, Carl Orr, Alister Spence, Adam Armstrong, James Greening (seated)...

example of fusion of jazz and non—Western music was the Australian Art Orchestra's collaboration with Balinese musicians in a *wayang* project, *The Theft of Sita*, in the 2000 Adelaide Festival of Arts, the 2000 Melbourne Festival and (in a music—ensemble version) the Wangaratta Festival of Jazz to much acclaim.

The Australian Art Orchestra's Theft of Sita album cover: an ambitious and compelling example of fusion of jazz and non—Western music…

Turntablists in bands

Fusion of jazz with rock and pop now takes numerous forms. Some jazz bands include turntablists, and Seahorse Radio in Fremantle (WA) describes itself as a 'hard—core punk jazz band'. Some prominent bands are jazz bands to the jazz community but often have a wider popular—music following. The Necks, for example, has a strong following in the electronic dance—music scene for the electronically processed and mixed compact—disc versions of its improvisations. The Melbourne jazz pianist Joe Chindamo is internationally acclaimed for his unique improvising on and arranging of pop, rock and jazz standards.

Melbourne pianist Joe Chindamo: internationally acclaimed for his unique improvising on and arranging of pop, rock and jazz standards….

In many cases jazz and classical fusion is the result of bands such as the Mike Nock Trio or individual players drawing on a wide range of influences, including classical music. In other cases, such as Artisans Workshop directed by Elliott Dalgleish, Roger Dean's AustraLYSIS or David Tolley's That, the performers are reputable jazz players engaged in creating contemporary improvised music. The Australian Art Orchestra often engages in overt fusion and juxtaposition of jazz and classical music, and the prominent Sydney jazz and classical pianist—composer Mark Isaacs explicitly endeavours to fuse jazz and classical music.

Mike Nock Trio, L-R, Brett Hirst (double bass), Nock (keyboards), James Waples (drums): drawing on a wide range of influences, including classical music…

The range of Australian improvised music now associated with the label 'jazz' seriously overstretches the term. The achievements of the Sydney Improvised Music Association and improvisation studies at the Victorian College of the Arts demonstrate the potential of adopting an inclusive term like improvised or improvisatory music. In the summer 2000 issue of *JazzChord* Tim Stevens, a Melbourne jazz pianist and scholar with a wide appreciation of styles, discussed his problems with the term 'jazz' and commended the use of 'improvised music' as 'brave, but very sensible'. Grabowsky stated bluntly in the 1994 book *Jim McLeod's Jazztrack* that it was a 'philosophical error' to back away from 'jazz'. The complexity and potential difficulties of this encroaching issue are exemplified by the fact that the ABC excluded jazz entrants from its Improvisatory Music Festival contest in 1999

because jazz improvisation was considered to be a 'heritage style' and insufficiently contemporary or 'new'.

Melbourne pianist Tim Stevens: having problems with the term 'jazz', he commended the use of 'improvised music'... *PHOTO CREDIT ROGER MITCHELL*

Yet anyone who has visited the Wangaratta Festival of Jazz, the Australian Jazz Convention, the Sydney Improvised Music Association's Side—On Café, Bennett's Lane in Melbourne or other jazz venues around Australia, will hear for themselves that jazz is about much more than just 'improvising' or breaking new ground. At the 2000 Wangaratta festival, for example, progressive bands like Blue Poles, Ishish, Loops, New Blood and the Tim Wilson Trio played with sufficient jazz intent—drive, swing or subtle or overt references to the jazz idiom—to show their strong

The cornetist Bob Barnard: acknowledging that many of Australia's finest and most popular players inhabit the stylistic mainstream...PHOTO COURTESY NATIONAL LIBRARY OF AUSTRALIA

identification with the jazz tradition. Yet the festival organisers acknowledged that many of Australia's finest and most popular players inhabit the stylistic mainstream by presenting Don Burrows and a similarly revered mainstream artist, the cornetist Bob Barnard. The fact that the saxophonists Sandy Evans and Fiona Burnett and the pianist Andrea Keller were the only female instrumentalists to appear indicated that women could be better represented in Australian jazz.

Traditional jazz was well represented at this festival by the Creole Bells, the Louisiana Shakers, the New Wolverines and the Society Syncopators. However, the vibrant musical, social and historical ambience of Australian traditional—jazz culture is best experienced at the Australian Jazz Convention, an annual social and musical affirmation of belief in what many followers now like to call classic jazz. The Australian traditional—jazz movement is greatly enriched by its longevity and the remarkable resilience of revered pioneers like Graeme Bell and Ade Monsbourgh,

Graeme Bell (above) and Ade Monsbourgh (below): in 2003 both still playing strongly…MONSBOURGH PHOTO CREDIT BRENDON KELSON

who are still playing strongly. The movement still attracts younger players but the overall aging of its followers and its lack of a foothold in jazz—studies programs is a growing concern for the future. Tension between the traditional and modern movements erupts occasionally, especially in Victoria. There was a highly publicised example in 1997 when it became financially unviable to stage the Montsalvat Jazz Festival because the Marvellous Melbourne Jazz Festival, based on traditional jazz and funded by the Melbourne City Council, was scheduled for the same weekend.

Because jazz falls between popular music and musical art, the jazz lobby sees it as often having borne the brunt of discrimination by arts—funding bodies in favour of better—established art forms like opera and symphonic music. Lobbying by individuals, the National Jazz Alliance and more localised organisations like the Melbourne Jazz Cooperative and the Sydney Improvised Music Association, has reduced this type of discrimination but continuing Australia Council support for national jazz development is not assured.

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JAZZ CLUBS

by Bruce Johnson

Up to 60 clubs, operating in every state and territory, signalled the diversity and vigour of the jazz—club movement in the late 1990s. It began in the early 1930s, when modern—music or rhythm clubs began to proliferate. Clubs that focused on jazz frequently operated in conjunction with radio stations and magazines like *Australian Music Maker* and *Dance Band News*. Among the earliest was the 2uw Swing Music Club. This evolved into the influential Sydney Swing Club, which met for the first time on 16 January 1936 and survived until the mid—1950s. Notwithstanding this club's longevity, and the reported formation of a Rhythm Club in Sydney in 1948, this early phase of the jazz—club movement had passed its zenith by the end of the Second World War. Melbourne's 3AW Swing Club, founded in 1937, was apparently in abeyance as early as 1940.

A shift of interest began when the first club devoted to traditional jazz, the Melbourne University Rhythm Club, was founded in June 1937. Its committee included Ade Monsbourgh, who was associated with the brothers Graeme and Roger

Roger Bell (left) and his brother Graeme Bell: on the committee of the Melbourne University Rhythm Club…

Bell in a succession of similar enterprises. Notable was the Uptown Club, formed by Graeme Bell's band on 29 June 1946. It was an extension of the Eureka Hot Jazz Club, which had been founded, in November 1941 by the Eureka Youth League, the youth wing of the Communist Party of Australia. The traditional—jazz clubs projected a powerful, even aggressive sense of identity and the movement spread nationally. Early examples were the Newcastle Hot Jazz Club and the Adelaide Jazz Lovers' Society, both founded in 1941. The intermittent Brisbane Swing Club, founded in 1941, was revived as the Brisbane Hot Jazz Society in 1947. In Melbourne successive clubs sustained the movement, notably the Southern Jazz Society of 1949—58, the Melbourne Jazz Club of 1958—67 and the Victorian Jazz Club, founded in 1968 and still flourishing.

The oldest club is the Sydney Jazz Club, founded in 1953 to provide a venue for the Paramount Jazz Band. Traditional-jazz Clubs peaked during the early 1960s, and the survivors have often had to reassess their function as audiences age and new musical politics emerges.

Since bebop became known in Australia in 1947 there have been clubs devoted to the more contemporary jazz styles. The first may have been the Modern Music Society, founded in Melbourne in 1947. A stylistic shift in jazz clubs began with the formation of the Jazz Action Society of NSW in 1974. Jazz action societies have been established in capital cities and provincial towns throughout the country. They are not formally affiliated but they energise the jazz community in lobbying private and public bodies, particularly for funding and publicity. The path they have opened has been followed by increasingly progressive and adventurous interests, notably the Sydney Improvised Music Association, which has been crucial in the development of contemporary jazz and its audiences.

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The above two articles by Bruce Johnson are on the internet as one piece titled "The Sydney Jazz Club—10 years on" at this link https://www.ericmyersjazz.com/essays-14.

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