



**MONASH** University

***Martin Jackson and The Melbourne Jazz Cooperative; how they  
influenced the Melbourne modern jazz scene.***

*Benjamin David Delves  
BA, Bmus, GradDipMus (Monash)*

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## **Abstract**

This thesis primarily investigates the *Melbourne Jazz Cooperative* (MJC) from the years 1982 to 1993. However, it begins by documenting the history of Martin Jackson, founder and chairman of the MJC, and ends with the history of the MJC from 1982 to 1993. This thesis presents a case study of how an individual functions in a modern arts organization and describes how the individual navigates, through interaction with funding bodies and artists, the beneficial outcomes that such organisations can provide and the problems they face in contemporary Australia.

The study argues that acknowledging the benefits of the arts to society and of arts organizations themselves is more necessary than ever in contemporary Australia where public perception of the arts is conflicted and misunderstood and funding support for the arts is highly unstable. The thesis argues through the case study example, that the MJC made curatorial decisions that provided support and opportunities for Australian jazz musicians to meet each other, to meet international artists, and also how it provided avenues for cultural transmission and exchange that enabled an even greater number and range of performances for these musicians.

The research component of the thesis employed unstructured interviews with Martin Jackson, along with historical method corresponding to Bruno Nettl's 'fifth stage' of ethnomusicology (Nettl 2005). This research reveals, for example, that Martin Jackson

had to sacrifice his own musical development and artistic career to fulfill specialized roles in the MJC because there was no funding available for expert assistance.

This thesis concludes that, in order to fully benefit artists and the community at large, arts organizations must be supported by expertise of specialists in the fields of Arts Administration. Without this support, the artists themselves must contribute too much of their time to administrative work at the expense of their art.

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## **Declaration**

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

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## Introduction

Jazz is widely recognised as one of America's unique and original art forms. As a result, most jazz research focuses on American jazz history. Since jazz's origins and main protagonists were American, the scholarship that derives from these institutions predominantly focuses on American contributions to the development of jazz and the sociological issues faced by American jazz musicians in America. Whilst jazz has developed in unique ways in the jazz diaspora, academic scholarship has only broadened into the development of jazz outside of America comparatively recently (within the last 20 years). In Australia, this level of academic research is still in its infancy.

The abundance of American jazz texts and resources over represent the American experience of jazz, and largely ignores the entirely different Australian jazz experience. For example, American Jazz educator Jamey Aebersold's, whose play-along records are a ubiquitous resource for jazz musicians to practice playing along to, and the Aebersold *Summer Jazz Workshops* from 1979 were one of the main jazz educational resources in Melbourne until the Victorian College of the Arts officially started its classes in improvisation in 1983. Contemporary academic texts such as those of Monson (1996) and Berliner (1994) are also built upon over 40 years of American academic jazz research. Not only this, but the canonical tunes that jazz musicians learn, known as the 'Standards', are largely written by American composers and are themselves steeped in American cultural references and history.

On the other hand, the importance of the American experience in jazz cannot be ignored. American history and sociological issues are important topics to cover in a musical genre that began and spread from America to the world. The ability to converse from a common position with musicians in other countries is a practical necessity for professional musicians. However, an awareness of the origins, influences, and ultimately the significance of local musicians, can only create a deeper understanding and inform the musician's ability to play music that is more meaningful in a local context.

Melbourne's modern jazz history has been largely transmitted amongst musicians in the form of an oral history, through anecdotes from instrumental teachers, professional musicians, and peers. And although Melbourne's jazz history is rich and varied there is little academic research or investigation into the development and influences of its modern jazz scene.. Authors such as Bruce Johnson (2000), John Whiteoak (1998) and Roger Dean (1992, 2005) represent the majority of jazz research in Australia and their texts are the foundations of this new field of Australian academic jazz research. The research in this thesis aims to fill some of the gaps in the history of Melbourne's jazz scene by presenting the history of the *Melbourne Jazz Cooperative*, one of the longest running and influential jazz presenting organisations in Australia.

This thesis contributes to this growing body of new knowledge in a way similar to that of George Lewis' *A power stronger than itself: the AACM and American*

*experimental music* (2008). Lewis' research asserts a history that is unrecognised by the dominant discourse surrounding creative music in America. Through researching the contributions to experimental music in America by members of the *Association for the Advancement of Creative Music* (AACM), Lewis uncovered a history that had been undocumented yet immensely important to not only the local jazz scene in Chicago but experimental music worldwide. Similarly, the contribution of Australian jazz musicians, who have produced original modern jazz and jazz inspired music, has not been part of the dominant discourse in jazz. Australian modern jazz musicians' contributions have gone largely undocumented and their influences, local, national, and global have been unexplored. It is important to begin to redress this as:

*"... knowing where we come from musically and culturally as Australians in jazz might help us understand and grapple with some of the problems that face contemporary jazz communities and individual jazz players today, and especially women in jazz."* (Whiteoak 2003, p19)

Whiteoak (2003) argues that situating Melbourne jazz socially and historically through exploring and documenting the local history of jazz can help musicians to greater interact with their music. The need to create a 'home' by situating Australian modern jazz socially and musicologically within both the context of original Australian music and the wider world of jazz is therefore important. Situating Australian jazz addresses the homelessness implied by decontextualised culture (Whiteoak 1996, p.

xiv) and it further mitigates the problem of Australian jazz being seen as merely a pastiche or pale reflection of American jazz (Whiteoak 2003, p19).

The importance of modern jazz to Australia's history can then be more fully appreciated through demonstrating the validity of modern jazz to Australia's historical and musical output. Australia's international musical reputation, and Australia's cultural cringe, the theory of an internalised inferiority complex, requiring validation by international standards, can be addressed through recognising the contributions of modern jazz to original Australian music and content. The contribution of this thesis to the academic oeuvre is valuable in academically 'qualifying' local jazz history and validating the importance of modern jazz and its perception as an art form in the greater music community.

## Problem statement

This thesis addresses a deficiency of research and an unconsolidated nature of documentation of the development of the jazz scene in Melbourne during the 1980s. This problem arose as jazz texts that became available at an academic level predominantly focused on American developments in jazz and the approaches of American musicians to improvisation. As evidence, a library search nets multiple biographies of eminent American musicians, such as Louis Armstrong and Miles Davis. Similarly, most educational texts look at the influences, technical developments, and approaches of American players to both their instruments and to jazz. Although there are autobiographies of some of the more famous Australian jazz musicians (Sedergreen 2007, Sangster 1988, Bell and Mitchell 1988) their numbers are few in comparison to their American counterparts. Suffice it to say, research into these areas in Australia is lacking.

When Australian research ventures into contemporary developments of the jazz scene in Melbourne, the beginnings and influences of jazz organisations are generally outside the scope of these texts, and they primarily focus on individual musicians rather than how these construct and work within their own 'art worlds' (Becker 2008). The existence of a jazz scene in Melbourne that has developed significantly over the past 30 or so years has been recognised by both Williams (1981) and Rechniewksi (2008). However, there has not been any substantial research or documentation of this

development. Further compounding the problem is the fact that Melbourne has long been associated with traditional, or 'trad', jazz, as Adrian Jackson notes:

*"Modern jazz is still virtually 'underground' in this city [Melbourne] where the use of the term 'jazz' presumes the prefix 'trad'."* - Adrian Jackson (Jazz - Jan/Feb 1981 p33)

The works of Bruce Johnson (2000) and John Whiteoak (1996) cover a wide range of Australian jazz and music history and touch briefly upon modern jazz history in Melbourne. Whiteoak's *Playing Ad-Lib* (1996) is specifically about individual musicians in Melbourne, and its focus is from 1936 to 1970 stopping well short of the development of jazz in Melbourne during the 1980's. Slowly, however, there have been more recent publications that delve into the history of modern jazz in Melbourne, such as David James' (2014) book on the history of *Bennetts Lane Jazz Club* covers a period from roughly 1993 until its publication in 2015. All of these works focus strongly on the individuals involved in creating and making music, and the influence of institutions such as the MJC and how an individual can function within such an institution is lacking. Therefore, there is a gap in the history of jazz research in Melbourne from 1970 to 1993, that may be addressed through changing focus from the role of individual artists to how an individual artist may function both with and within constructed art worlds such as the Australia Council for the Arts, promoting organisations such as the MJC, and tertiary educational institutions (Becker 2008).

## Aim

The *Melbourne Jazz Cooperative* (MJC) is a worthy subject of investigation as the institutionalisation of jazz in Melbourne, such as the creation of the MJC, played a significant role in the presentation of jazz music in early 1980s in Melbourne. The effects such an organisation would have on the personal life of Martin Jackson and the larger influence it would have in how jazz music was presented in Melbourne provided interesting avenues of investigation.

This thesis aims to present a case study of the contribution of Martin Jackson and the *Melbourne Jazz Cooperative* to the development and institutionalisation of the jazz scene in Melbourne. **Further**, Investigating Martin Jackson's personal history within jazz music in Melbourne before the MJC continues to open up avenues of inquiry that would not have been evident if the focus of research was exclusively on the MJC. This also allows us to paint a picture of how individuals function within an institutionalised artistic scene, and is later discussed through the works of Becker (2008) and Lewis(2008).

This thesis will redress the historical bias of 'trad' jazz in Melbourne and the dominance American jazz history and development, so that we may begin to "*see our jazz as the 'authentic' outcome of a distinctive cultural history, rather than as 'music imperfectly modeled on some distant source material'*" (Whiteoak, 2003) and thus contribute new knowledge to the field.

## Scope

The scope of this thesis is to fill some of the gaps in the field of modern jazz research in Melbourne. David James (2014) investigates the beginnings of the *Bennetts Lane Jazz Club* in Melbourne and therefore this thesis does not extend beyond the early 1990s. Further, the works of Whiteoak (1994, 2008, 1998, 1996) and Johnson (1998, 2006, 2008, 1996, 1992) largely cover the history of Melbourne and Australian jazz until the late 1970s. A history of the MJC would fill a vast portion of the Australian jazz narrative from 1983 to beginning of the MJC's relationship with Bennetts Lane.

To further limit the scope of research only a single aspect of modern jazz history in Melbourne was considered. In order to providing a more conclusive and direct outcome this thesis investigates only the history of Martin Jackson and the *Melbourne Jazz Cooperative*, in line with the hypothesis laid out in the aim. Although there are many contributing factors as to why the contemporary jazz scene grew in Melbourne during the 1980s, such as the foundation of the undergraduate improvisation course at the Victorian College of the Arts, this thesis investigates only one aspect of the modern jazz scene in Melbourne.

The history of Martin Jackson and the *Melbourne Jazz Cooperative* offered avenues for exploration, as discussed later in the Methodology chapter, which allow for unique insights into both the history and the sociological aspects of the modern jazz

community in 1980s. It was a rare opportunity to take advantage of the fact that Martin Jackson, the founder and driving force behind the *Melbourne Jazz Cooperative*, is still an active participant in the jazz community in Melbourne. Although the history of Brian Brown and the Victorian College of the Arts was an equally important and worthwhile topic to investigate, Brian was not available to be interviewed due to ill health and passed away in 2013 (Gould, 2013).

## **Overview of Chapters**

This thesis contributes to original knowledge in a variety of ways through investigating and documenting a single aspect of the emergence of the contemporary jazz scene in Melbourne during the 1980s. The early chapters in this thesis uncover and discuss some of the practical and sociological issues that affect the jazz scene in Melbourne today in order to historically and socially situate the later case study.

## **Background History of Jazz in Australia**

The research of Australian jazz academics and historians Bruce Johnson and John Whiteoak is discussed to demonstrate the nuances of Australian jazz history and the varied perspectives of its researchers. This then allows a contribution to creating a fuller and more intricate picture of the discourse surrounding Australian jazz. This chapter also situates the research presented in this thesis in the context of Australian jazz histories.

Next a history of the physical locations, such as venues and educational institutions, and the interaction of students and musicians that helped sustain and influence development within Australian jazz. Finally, to round out the overall picture of jazz in Australia, a history of Arts funding in Australia is presented. Arts funding has been confusing and inconsistent due to the different approaches of successive governments. Eventually moving towards a decentralized patronage model in the early

1980s, this constantly changing funding environment has affected the development of jazz and improvised music in Australia. This is important to understand as the MJC survives through government funding from the Australia Council and (until recently) Arts Victoria. Australia Council research has shown how jazz is viewed in Australia and how the amount of funding is justified. These reports from the Australia Council also show the confusion around the public perception of jazz and where jazz, and further where art, fits in Australian society. This is relevant as it outlines public perception of jazz and improvised music, issues of participation and public acceptance, the changing nature of art in Australia, and why organisations like the MJC, who have managed to build a consistent relationship with venues and consistently premiere new original works, are important.

## **Methodology**

The research methodology and choice of techniques and frameworks used in this thesis are discussed later in this chapter. The choice of in-depth interviews and other research methodologies, including both qualitative and quantitative strategies, are also justified in this chapter. This chapter shows how this thesis is related to works that employ similar methodologies which then situates this research in the greater fields of ethnomusicology and music research (Nettle, 2005).

## **Literature review**

The literature review situates this thesis within the greater field of Australian jazz history, sociology and musicology, to demonstrate this thesis' contribution to new knowledge. This is achieved by showing how this thesis builds upon the research of Howard Becker, Bruce Johnson, and John Whiteoak. This thesis aims to present a jazz history that is not a part of the dominant discourse in modern jazz methodologies of Monson (1996) and Berliner (1994) which through their near universal adoption represent the dominance of American based jazz discourse. Consequently this thesis owes a debt to George Lewis (2008) whose history of the AACM has a similar goal of broadening the dominant discourse through highlighting to contribution of African Americans to creative music, not just jazz.

## **The History of Martin and the MJC**

Here is presented the main historical narrative, researched through in-depth interviews, combined with newspaper articles, reviews, flyers and other resources to verify dates as closely as possible. This narrative is a case study that outlines one person's perspective and recollections, specifically Martin Jackson's. This chapter also provides an insight into the Melbourne modern jazz scene.

## **Discussion**

The discussion chapter presents and discusses the major research findings of this thesis. Namely, how the research relates to the hypothesis laid out in the aims and

how this has influenced the findings of this thesis. This chapter situates the findings in the greater context of jazz history and musicology studies in Australia.

## **Conclusion**

The conclusion brings together all the results of the previous chapters and links them to the original aims of this thesis. This chapter demonstrates how this thesis contributes to new knowledge in the field, where this research fits in the field of modern jazz research in Australia, and future areas for research that could build upon the findings of this thesis.

## Methodology

“... the likelihood that we have succeeded in measuring what we intended to measure can be improved by using a variety of observational techniques” (Labovitz and Hagedon 1971, in Spratt 2003 p239).

This chapter associates the methodologies used in this thesis clearly alongside those used by researchers such as George E. Lewis and Howard Becker and later argues that an unstructured, or in-depth, interview style would offer the greatest avenues of exploration with the best chance of results. Whilst not adhering strictly to any singular methodological approach, the research of this thesis falls under the umbrella of Bruno Nettl’s fifth stage of ethnomusicological research, which ascribes the use of multiple approaches to make a specialised contribution (Nettl, 2005). Nettl’s fifth stage endeavors to answer specific questions or make a specialised contribution rather than document and explain a whole system. For a comparison, Nettl places the work of A. Jihad Racy (1976) in *The history of the record industry in Cairo and its impact on classical music early in the twentieth century* as part of his ‘fifth stage’ (Nettl 2005, p143). This thesis shares many similarities in methodology and aim to Racy’s work.

Because of an ‘embarrassment of resources’, modern research methodologies can cross multiple modes of inquiry as there are so many paradigms, methodologies, and canonical texts onto which researchers can attach their research (Denzin and Lincoln 2000, p20). A more modern, thorough, and multilayered approach is achieved

by placing the data in a cultural context and through the use of cross-genre and multiple methodologies (Le Compte & Preissle, 1993 in Denzil and Lincoln, p25). This modern approach, which “addresses the fuller range of musical experience” (Pressing 1995, p250), is the basis of the methodology used in this thesis. Exemplifying this approach is sociologist Howard Becker and his works including the updated treatise *Art Worlds* (2008), his texts on sociological methodology (1958, 1963, 1967, 1970) and his explorations of academic writing (2007); these works are highly influential to this thesis.

The framework presented by Becker in *Art Worlds* describes the physical composition of an arts scene, be it painting, literature or music, by investigating the interaction of the people involved in the production, distribution, criticism, pedagogy, and any other tasks that eventually contribute to the production of a work of art. Becker’s *Art Worlds* framework is also used by Simon Frith (1996) and Paul Lopes (2002) and because this approach focuses on the personal interactions between individuals it forms a large amount of the methodology used in this thesis.

Because the boundaries of different ‘art worlds’ (as defined by Becker) often overlap, and are constantly evolving, shifting, and changing, the focus on how individuals work within a scene rather than working against abstract boundaries becomes the strength of Becker’s approach (Becker 2008, p300). This sets Becker in opposition to the works of Pierre Bourdieu, who uses a framework based on power dynamics within an inflexible ‘field’, and can be viewed as a force such as gravity. In

other words, Becker's focus is on individuals and their complex and often messy relationships, and Bourdieu's focus is on the boundaries defined by power dynamics.

There are many parallels with the approach taken by George E. Lewis in his history of the *Association for the Advancement of Creative Music* (AACM) titled *A Power Stronger than Itself* (2008) and the approaches used in this thesis. Both aim to portray a distinctive cultural history that is unrecognised by larger cultural forces. Lewis argues that the AACM's role in early experimental music has been sidelined by the academic focus on European contributions and how this downplayed the contributions of African Americans which further inflamed racial relations (Lewis 2008 pXIII). Lewis redresses the marginalisation of the African American contribution to experimental music through the development of the AACM and showing how it has a unique cultural history that is not a pastiche of western experimental music (2008 pXXXII).

## Data Collection

The qualitative methodology used in this thesis is based upon un-structured interviews with the subject, Martin Jackson, and more quantifiable data collection in terms of articles, advertisements, and flyers regarding the MJC. These multiple avenues of inquiry are similar to the lines of inquiry discussed by Pressing (1995), Denzin and Lincoln (2000), and Becker (2008, 1958, 1963, 1967, 1970).

The data collected in this thesis is largely qualitative in that it “involves the collection of more detailed and descriptive information on smaller groups of people” (Spratt 2003, p235). Typically qualitative research methods include interviews and participant observation, and these interviews can be structured with a pre-determined list of questions or can be unstructured or ‘in-depth’. This thesis makes greater use of the second interview style as the subject is encouraged to follow topics and trains of thought at their own leisure which is more useful in uncovering not only how the subject experiences their world, but previously unexplored avenues for investigation.

Spratt observes that “Qualitative... research involves attempts to understand the meanings that people bring to their environment, and is often descriptive. They see the distance between researcher and ‘subject’ as undermining good research” (Spratt 2003, p247). This non-neutrality is discussed in depth by Howard Becker in *Whose Side Are We On?* (1967), where he argues that it is not possible to be neutral as an observer and that the personal biases of the researcher affect the study, sometimes to large extents.

Spratt agrees, noting that “Each person brings a set of knowledge and experience to each situation. It is only through our knowledge and experience that we are able to understand the world around us” (Spratt 2003, p248). As such, this thesis acknowledges the researcher’s personal biases and involvement in the Melbourne jazz scene and that this has further influenced the choice of research methodologies.

### **The Interview Process**

The subject of this thesis, Martin Jackson, was initially approached through email by the author. It must be acknowledged, however that the Author is an active musician in the Melbourne jazz scene and has had prior interaction with Martin Jackson through playing at an MJC concert. This ‘participant observation’ allowed for the interviewer to share common experiences with the subject, and perhaps encourage deeper and more nuanced answers throughout the interview process.

Ethics approval was then applied for with the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC), and was approved. As part of the approval Martin Jackson was given the opportunity to review and offer corrections on the history narrative of this thesis, although the author was able to make final decisions as to what to include in the narrative and how to present the narrative.

The interviews with Martin Jackson followed the ‘unstructured’ methodology mentioned above. There were no pre-determined questions and the topics explored in

the interviews were allowed to follow the paths that the subject determined. The interviews themselves lasted between 2 and 3 hours per session, of which there were 6 sessions in total. The interviews were conducted at Martin Jackson's residence, usually during the middle of the day. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed by the author and this transcription formed the basis of the narrative presented later.

A narrative form was chosen as the best way to present the history of Martin Jackson and the MJC, as opposed to presenting the data in a way that was more objective, because the narrative form makes clear that there is a story to be told. Due to the interview techniques used it is largely the subject's story that is being told and voice that is being heard, although with editing from the Author. The choice to present in a narrative also removes attempts to remove any judgment as to the actions or intentions of the subject from the Author. Whilst the choice of narrative form is meant to convey that the account of the events is that of Martin Jackson, it also suggests that the account, like any ethnographic account, is subjective and contains some of the authors own biases and interpretation.

## Literature Review

The thesis differs from other works about jazz in Melbourne, in that it explores the development of the contemporary jazz scene in the 1980s, which remains undocumented in academia. It aims to provide an history of Martin Jackson and the MJC, along with its influence in the construction of the modern jazz scene in Melbourne. This thesis owes a methodological and interpretive debt to Howard Beckers' *Art Worlds* (2008), George Lewis' *A Power Stronger than Itself* (2008). It also uses the broader sociological approaches of Becker (1958, 1963, 1970, 1998) and builds upon the ethnographic works of Monson (1996) and Berliner (1994), whilst focusing on historical areas that do not represent the dominant discourse in jazz. This thesis contributes to the Australian jazz discourse began by historians Bruce Johnson (1993) and John Whiteoak (1998). In other respects this research has benefited from the critique of Mark Isaac (2003) in which he questions the role of the jazz co-ordinating program, a point of view which this thesis does not intend to match. What this thesis does is to present a perspective on the role of Martin Jackson and the MJC in the Melbourne modern jazz scene in a more focused and nuanced way. Through a consistently maintained approach that borrows from a tapestry of historical and ethnographic frameworks, a greater attention to the role of discourse, and with a fuller sense of the range of individuals involved in the early contemporary jazz scene in Melbourne, this thesis builds on the work of Johnson and Whiteoak in redressing the marginalisation of local

contributions and the personal experiences of local musicians, to contributed to new knowledge by building a distinctly Australian jazz history.

## **Background History of Jazz in Australia**

Placing this thesis in the wider history of Australian jazz, through exploring some of the major issues in Australian jazz history and research itself, is crucial for this thesis' aim to view Australian jazz history as having its own distinct authenticity. Therefore, this chapter presents background history of Australian jazz that situates the research of this thesis in a historical and social context.

Beginning with a discussion of the works of two leading Australian jazz historians, Bruce Johnson and John Whiteoak, this chapter explores how they have begun to redress the problem of the American bias in Australian jazz research. Johnson has attempted to tackle this issue by arguing, for example, that jazz was used in Australia as primarily a musical expression of modernity (2006). He compares this to the American experience of jazz and offers it as an example of one way in which rethinking Australian jazz history from a distinctly Australian perspective can offer new interpretations. Whiteoak (1998) explores Australian jazz history through the concept of decontextualisation, the use and dissemination of artefacts without their initial cultural context, and explores how this makes Australian jazz distinct from American. Johnson and Whiteoak show how, by viewing Australian jazz history from non-American perspectives, we can begin to see Australian identity in the jazz history and remove Australian jazz from being seen as pastiche.

This chapter continues its investigation of the history of early Melbourne jazz by looking at venues and organizations that presented jazz in Melbourne. Music organisations and venues are important in both physically and socially situating jazz in Melbourne. They do this by offering a consistent place for jazz musicians and enthusiasts to congregate, discuss, and disseminate musical ideas. Further, by performing jazz in venues that also offered 'serious' music, or what is more often perceived as serious music such as opera, chamber, choral and classical music, venues influenced how jazz music was perceived. This exploration is important as the history of the MJC demonstrates the need for supportive venues as they are critical to the development of the jazz musicians craft. A venue that consistently supports an art form creates a home, physically, socially, and metaphysically, and any interruptions to consistency create uncertainty and lose audience.

Following this is a brief history of tertiary jazz courses and a discussion as to how they were important to the development of jazz in Australia and how they contributed to the growth of modern jazz in Melbourne in the 1980s. The formalisation of jazz education in Melbourne provided opportunities for students to develop and learn from their peers in the field, which increased the number of students interested in attending live jazz performances. These institutions provided an academic endorsement for modern jazz music that is similar to the legitimisation sought by African American creative musicians in the AACM (Lewis 2008, p. x).

Concluding this chapter is a review of the support structures provided by local, state and national governments of Australia and their influence. This mostly focuses on the Australia Council for the Arts, the main funding body for the Arts in Australia and the body that initially provided funding to the MJC. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion based on statistics that provide a context for the growth of the music industry, and more importantly the modern jazz scene in Melbourne, from the 1970s to the 1990s.

## **The history and complexity of jazz in Australia**

Contrasting some interpretations of the early history of jazz in Australia by Australian historians with the emergence of jazz in America demonstrates the uniqueness of Australian jazz history whilst providing the background of Australian jazz which in turn offers context for the history of the Melbourne Jazz Cooperative (MJC).

The complexity of jazz history in Australia is tied to the dominance of American academic texts. Those by Gabbard (1995), Monson (1996), and Berliner (1994), offer ethnographic methodology that focuses on American jazz history. However, historians of Australian jazz have argued for the importance of using methodology based in Australian narrative and mythology and have investigated jazz from perspectives that acknowledges the unique influence of jazz in Australian history (Johnson 2008, 2006, 1993, 2000, Whiteoak 1998, 1994, 2001, Bisset 1979). The following demonstrates how Australian jazz historians have presented historical interpretations, through jazz, that offer unique perspectives on Australian history.

Johnson (2008) argues that in the 1920s and '30s culturally conservative Australians were resistant to the modernist music of composers such as Schönberg and Stravinsky but engaged visually with the aesthetics of modernity, as defined by Baudelaire, visually through architecture and aurally through the music of jazz. Australia's engagement with modernism was peculiarly influenced by cultural conservatism and modernism's perceived city domain as opposed to the still

overwhelming rural narrative of Australia. Johnson argues that Australia appeared to interact selectively with modernisation, and jazz music was the “soundtrack of modernisation” (Johnson 2008 p115). Comparatively, America engaged with modernity through a fuller range of arts, including art music, jazz, architecture, advertising, commercialism, fine arts, graphic design and philosophy (Appel Jr 2004). Johnson further argues that jazz was not the primary means of America’s aural interaction, as in Australia, as Western Art music in America completely engaged in the developments of styles such as serialism, twelve tone composition, and minimalism (Johnson 2000 p259).

Whiteoak (1992) provides the concept of decontextualisation as a way to understand the nature of jazz in Australia. He argues that the decontextualised nature of Australia is a large part of the reason the Australian experience is different to that of America and Europe (Whiteoak 1992, p294). Decontextualisation posits that cultural artefacts, such as sheet music and recordings, could arrive in Australia through a range of mediums. These mediums, such as the post, overseas travel, visiting troops, and recording imports were often delayed and interrupted and their integration into local culture would lack much of the original cultural context that originally situated these artefacts. Hence musicians could often only learn from the limited number of available recordings and this selectivity, devoid of context, influenced the local sound.

The large periods of dormancy in receiving recordings from America, such as during World War II, meant that it appeared to Australian musicians that earlier jazz and Bebop were two distinct musical styles that created a musical and cultural divide in America, when the relationship between the two was more of a progression (Johnson 1992). Due to this decontextualisation of recordings, bebop in Australia was seen as a reaction against the conservative nature of 'trad' jazz. As such, some Australian players adopted bebop as a more modern style that they associated with progress. However, in America there was a much more linear progression and a more complex history between the two styles without the perceived bipartisanism.

## Venues and Organisations

Physical locations play a large part in the discourse surrounding jazz through legitimising the music and providing a place where musicians can play music to critical audiences. Playing in a theatre, a domain usually reserved for 'high' art, would change the discourse surrounding jazz. Similarly, playing jazz in a pub encouraged the opposite, or lowbrow, interpretation and discourse about jazz. Thus one way location influences the legitimization of differing musical styles is when the music is presented in a venue where other already accepted legitimate art forms are presented. Lastly, providing a location to play, where a musician could develop their skills in front of an audience, was important in allowing modern jazz music to develop in a social context (Johnson 1998 p42).

In the 1930s one such location was the *Fawkner Park Swing Club* in Melbourne which provided a place where improvising jazz musicians could play modern styles without fear of losing dance patrons. Later in 1948, thanks to the club, jazz as a 'listening music' had sufficient followers to survive without dance patronage (Whiteoak 2008, p. 41). The progression of jazz music from dancing to listening in a single venue was significant as it demonstrated the need for a consistent space for musicians to play, where they could showcase new innovations and test their improvisation skills in order for the music to develop. By providing a space where a receptive audience could gather to both dance and interact with other patrons, clubs like *Fawkner Park Swing Club* allowed for the shift from dance music to listening music.

This was more than simply a shift between modes of audience participation. Further social and philosophical implications became apparent with new ways of interacting and using jazz music. Jazz music, which featured long improvised choruses, was no longer dance music and was listened to whilst sitting down, in the same way as classical music. The similar modes of consumption of jazz and classical would in turn question notions of 'high art' that are still being argued (Frith 1987, 1998, Holm-Hudson 1996) and this continues to have larger implications for the complexity of arts funding in Australia.

As rock and roll became more popular interest in modern jazz declined, separate from the overall decline in all styles of jazz, until the mid 1950s when local saxophonist Brian Brown featured regularly at Horst Liepolts *Jazz Centre 44* in St Kilda, Melbourne. Brown emerges here as a polarising yet driving figure during this time playing a style of hard bop that was generally seen to oppose the cool or West Coast bop style adopted in Melbourne at this time (Whiteoak 2008, p.39). Later, Brown would be known for his unflinching philosophy of striving to create uniquely Australian music, using approaches that were no longer tied to American innovations (Clare 1995, p133). In the late 1960s and early 1970s, after *Jazz Centre 44* had closed, the *Prospect Hill Hotel* provided a venue through which Brown would experiment with rhythmic innovations, odd time signatures and electronic music. Brown would later present jazz at

*The Commune* in Fitzroy and continue his philosophy of attempting to create distinctly Australian music (Clare 1995 p148).

The 1970s was a time of consolidation in the organisation and presentation of experimental and new music in Melbourne with such organisations and venues as the *New Music Centre*, *NIAGGRA* (*New Improvisers Action Group for Gnostic and Rhythmic Awareness*), *The North Melbourne Commune* and *The Clifton Hill Community Music Centre*. The *New Music Centre* was an example of the importance of performance spaces to the continuing development of non-mainstream music (Fox 2002 p31). The Centre failed to gain a permit for their Hosier Lane premises to operate as a music venue in 1973, as the application was opposed by the *Melbourne Theatre Company* and the *Masonic Club*, which resulted in the collapse of *The New Music Centre* (ibid). The demise of the venue left musicians without a place to perform, stunting the development of experimental and progressive works.

Howard Becker's concept of the 'Maverick' in the arts helps to explain just why venues were so important in helping to develop art scenes. Becker argues that;

*"Mavericks typically have such difficulties realizing their works or ... getting them to audiences and critics. They succeed, when they do, by circumventing the need for art*

*world institutions. They may, for instance, create their own organizations to replace those which will not work with them.*" (Becker 2008, p235)

Many experimental, electronic, and jazz musicians in the 1970s and onwards found this to be true. In fact, limited 'art world institutions' and performance opportunities may have led to greater interaction between different Melbourne music 'scenes' as musicians sought out places to play and premier new works to receptive audiences. Significant interaction, both musically and philosophically, between musicians of different backgrounds and genres within Melbourne were facilitated by promoting organisations and through performances in venues that circumvented traditional art world institutions. Musicians such as Jeremy Kellock and Bruce Woodcock who came from jazz backgrounds and moved into free improvisation (Fox 2002, p29), and later on musicians such as Jeff Pressing who was originally involved in experimental music, could be found working closely with varied organisations throughout the 1980s to create performance opportunities as mavericks must.

## Tertiary Courses

*“The jazz scene in Melbourne would probably be much smaller if it were not for the jazz courses run by the Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne University and the Victorian Jazz Club. Much of the success of these courses is due to the tutors being musicians working on the local scene...”* (Derek Leather, The AGE. October 13 1989.)

Codification of jazz and consolidation of jazz pedagogy in the United States had begun as early as 1932. Australian composer and experimental musician Percy Grainger accepted a year’s appointment as the Chair of the New York University Music Department in 1932 and introduced jazz music to the syllabus. In a lecture given on 25 October 1932 Grainger even invited Duke Ellington and his band to provide live musical demonstration and to introduce aspects of jazz improvisation and jazz phrasing in contrast to an orchestral score. Grainger’s course was the earliest recorded that involved jazz studies, and he found that the university was largely unreceptive to his ideas (Rexroth 2005, pp 77-78). Despite this rocky start, tertiary institutions throughout the rest of the century introduced jazz studies and dedicated jazz performance courses.

Problems arise in the areas of pedagogy, analysis, and philosophy of jazz music, mainly due to jazz performance and theory being taught by tertiary music departments amongst the more established classical music courses (Monson 1996 p.3). These problems include the use of western art music analysis and categories to assess jazz music, which fail to incorporate into their frameworks the social aspects of jazz music

(Monson 1996, p192). Jazz discourse is still considered highly contentious as it grapples with terminology and categories adapted from western academia (Gabbard et al 1995, Johnson 1993, Dean 2010). Jazz studies have found a home in American tertiary courses, yet considering that Percy Grainger was one of the first to introduce jazz studies in America, Australian tertiary jazz education has lagged far behind.

It was not until 1973 that the first tertiary jazz courses began in Australia. Howie Smith was the inaugural head of Australia's first jazz course at the New South Wales Conservatory. The course was started mostly due to the efforts of Don Burrows, but Burrows declined the position of head of jazz studies. Howie Smith came on the recommendation of vibraphonist Gary Burton (Clare 1995 p143). The jazz studies course at the NSW Conservatory was further helped by the opening of a new performance venue, *The Basement* in Sydney, which afforded students of the new course a place to hear jazz, play jazz and hone their performance skills. Through *The Basement*, jazz students were afforded a place to play and interact with their peers and teachers, often on a level playing field. Whiteoak (2008, p44) argues that this new generation of musicians emerging during the time of the conservatories did not follow the previous generations notions of popular music's inferiority to jazz, and their influences came from many new or previously unexplored fields

The Victorian College of the Arts (VCA) in Melbourne began offering individual classes in improvisation in 1978. These classes were taught by Brian Brown until a full

improvisation course was finalised in 1983 and Brown was assigned as the inaugural head of the course. The differences between the NSW Conservatory and the VCA, and hence the modern jazz of NSW and Melbourne, could mostly be distinguished by the personal views of Howie Smith at the NSW Conservatory and Brian Brown at the VCA. Both figures offered different and often opposing views on jazz, pedagogy, and the direction of music in Australia. Smith represented a distinctly American based approach to formalised jazz pedagogy which contrasted with Brian Brown's goals of creating a uniquely Australian and personal approach to improvisation.

## The Australia Council for the Arts

*“if we bothered only about the very best, we would shut our galleries eleven months out of the year ... and publish many fewer books. But if we did that we would never have the facilities ready for those worth bothering about when they did appear (because we never know when someone not worth bothering about will suddenly become worth bothering about), for you cannot maintain those organizations with such sporadic use” (Becker 2008, p231)*

The changes that occurred at the Australia Council for the Arts during the 1970s and 1980s brought Australian society’s underlying assumptions about art to the foreground. During this time the Australia Council was undergoing a change in direction, rhetoric, and ways of evaluating ‘success’ and ‘worth’ in the arts, brought about by decentralised patronage. Decentralised patronage is the idea that community arts, rather than large arts companies, should receive a larger percentage of funding for the arts (Rowse 1985). Funding for well established companies such as Opera Australia, and various Symphony Orchestras, was diverted towards community funded projects that involved more people. However, these well established companies now began to receive funding directly from the government bypassing the Australia Council, and although there were some critics who saw this diversion of funds and the support of community arts as an attack on ‘high’ art to the benefit of ‘lower’ forms (Rowse 1985 p1). Yet all this achieved was to actively highlight some of our nation’s romantic ideals

about excellence in art and art in society (Rowse 1985 p1). As 'excellence' has the hidden implication of 'excellence in western art music' this discourse continues to be a problematic for the Australia Council as long as their goal is to promote excellence in the arts (Gallasch 2005, Hawkins 1991).

The Australia Council was strongly criticised for its own uncritical adoption of the modernist categories of 'high' and 'low' art, the criteria of 'excellence', and the perceived need for justifying Australia's place in the arts through overseas international recognition, all leading to greater public confusion about what exactly the arts meant to Australians (Rowse 1985, Johnson 1993, 1995, Hawkins 1991, Throsby and Hollister 2003 p79). Further comparisons to overseas art scenes, and international recognition, became a measure for artistic value. Australia's constant striving for international recognition, across a range of industries, continued to highlight Australia's inferiority complex and confusion about the arts (Rowse 1985 p33, Johnson 1996 p41).

## Growth in the Arts

The MJC began in 1982 during a peak time of growth for arts organisations in Australia. From 1970 to 1991 there was a 400% increase in the number of arts-related organisations (Bennet 2007, p138). Of these organisations, 48 were formed in the period between 1982 and 1991 (Guldberg 2000, p83). Guldberg attributes much of the growth in the arts sector during the 30 years from 1968 to 1998 to the influences of a culturally diverse population, post-Vietnam war immigration, and participation in youth and minority rights (Guldberg 2000, p85).

However, contrary to the amount of growth in this time, support for individual musicians was widely perceived as being unavailable. In 1982 there were approximately 25,000 professional artists (full and part time), of which 38.7% were musicians, and one third of these felt that training opportunities were inadequate and half believed that they were unable to take advantage of opportunities due to financial constraints (Throsby 1983). This is compounded by the fact that in 1981-82 almost 2000 applications were received for Australia Council funding and only 27% of these were successful. Studies during this time, such as *The Artist in Australia Today* (Throsby 1983), *When Are You Going to Get a Real Job?* (Throsby and Mills 1989) and *But What Do you Do for a Living?* (Throsby and Thompson 1994) began to identify the neglect of individual artists as a category (Guldberg 2000 p2).

Australia Council's lack of support for new initiatives and minority arts was in opposition to the invaluable contributions of Australia's diverse population (Gallasch 2005, Hawkins 1991). The inability of the Australia Council to better support minority arts was acknowledged in reports commissioned by the Australia Council itself (Throsby and Mills 1989, Throsby and Thompson 1994, Throsby 1983).

These statistics show that during the period of growth from the 1980s onwards, individual musicians still struggled to access funding and that by 1995 this still had not improved. Roger Dean notes that from 1995 to 2005 very few jazz musicians made a living from jazz, and few groups performed more than once per month (Dean 2005, p162). Confusion about Australia Council policy was still evident in that few jazz musicians made well-prepared applications for funding (Dean 2005, p164). Jazz music still receives only a small proportion of Australia Council funding from the music board, but counts in its numbers roughly the same number of musicians as classical music (Johnson 2000, p171).

## The History of Martin Jackson and the MJC

### Martin Jackson

From an early age music was a consistent part of the Jackson family's life. Martin grew up learning the piano, at the insistence of his mother who was herself an accomplished classically-trained pianist. A piano in the house was still a relatively rare commodity and this afforded his neighbour Stephen McIntyre, who later taught at the VCA and had an international concert career, the opportunity to practice on the Jackson's piano and contribute to the Jackson family's ever present musical influence. Unfortunately, like many good middle-class Australians, Martin quit piano lessons in his mid-teens to play sports.

Martin's interest in music still remained despite the absence of a music program at Marcellin College, like many schools of this era. Martin's involvement in music was mostly limited to attending rock concerts by Australian groups such as *Spectrum* and *King Harvest* and international groups such as *Led Zeppelin* and *Deep Purple*. However, his interest in other styles of music meant that occasionally Martin saw different concerts such as Indian classical musician Ali Akbhar Khan at the *Dallas Brooks Hall*, and he once skipped school to see a Gamelan Orchestra at *Monash University* after seeing an advertisement for it in the newspaper.

In September 1971, Martin and his younger brother Adrian were taken by their father to Dallas Brooks Hall to see the *The Giants of Jazz* featuring Art Blakey, Dizzy Gillespie, Thelonious Monk, Sonny Stitt (who was delayed in Tokyo because of Australian Visa concerns over his arrest record but made it in time to play in Melbourne), Kai Winding and Al McKibbon. *The Giants of Jazz* toured the Australian cities of Sydney, Adelaide, Perth, and Melbourne where they were supported by the Preservation Hall Jazz Band, with Jaki Byard playing piano in the intermission. *The Giants of Jazz* had an impressionable effect on the young brothers and Martin and Adrian became so engrossed in jazz music that they used all their pocket money to buy jazz records.

Martin and Adrian differed slightly in their jazz listening tastes, Martin became more obsessed with the avant-garde musicians such as Archie Shepp, Pharoah Sanders, Steve Lacy and Cecil Taylor whilst Adrian was interested more in the 'straight ahead' music of Count Basie, Duke Ellington and Sonny Rollins. Adrian began to see jazz performances by local Melbourne musicians and would always try to convince Martin to come along, but was unsuccessful. Martin would sit around home listening to the posthumously released *Transition (1970)* or *Sun Ship (1971)* by John Coltrane and think 'Why would I go and hear local jazz when I can listen to this stuff?'. Martin had previously attended live jazz in Melbourne but had failed to identify with the music and continued to prefer the American modern jazz recordings that were easily available to listen to at home.

Given their taste for the different streams of modern jazz Martin now recognises the irony in that it was Adrian who first attended the performances of local saxophonist and experimentalist Brian Brown. Eventually, through Adrian's persistence, Martin became a regular at Brian Brown's performances and the music of Brian Brown kindled a realisation in Martin that there was "something special about hearing live music ... " and that there was something special about the chemistry between the musicians, the audiences, and the act of creating live music.

Brian Brown's attitude towards composing and improvising in an Australian context influenced not only Martin's musical development, but many of the musicians who came into contact with Brian throughout the years. The musical interaction of the members of Brian's group during performances informed Martin's concept of how a band should function as a whole rather than as a platform for a single soloist. Brian's group would also have guest players, who were not core members of the group, which helped to keep the music fresh and spontaneous. Martin drew a parallel between how Brian organised his performances and how John Coltrane always strived to play something new, which is demonstrated through the many different recordings of the jazz standard *My Favourite Things*, night after night with a different approach or direction. Martin was inspired by the way that Brian approached music from a uniquely personal perspective and constantly strove to produce meaningful original music. Brian's influence was apparent through the direction and goals for Martin's later group *Odwala* (named as

such because Martin misspelled the *Art Ensemble of Chicago* theme *Odwalla*) and the artistic direction Martin steered the Melbourne Jazz Cooperative in the late 1980s.

Martin's interest in music led him, through night school during year 12, to continue his musical education by completing a subject in the 'History and Analysis of Music'. After graduating high school, Martin decided that he wanted to do something in music but was still unsure of which direction to take. Martin's father insisted that he had to attend university and Martin enrolled at the University of Melbourne. Quickly Martin became discouraged by the University's music course which consisted of early music and classical music history and theory. Martin's enrolment at the University of Melbourne was short lived as he transferred his enrolment to Monash University. There were not many options for someone who wanted to learn modern music in a tertiary environment but at Monash Martin was able to study more contemporary composers such as Bartok and Stravinsky. Martin also had the opportunity at Monash to study non-western traditional music such as Indonesian Gamelan.

At the end of his first year at Monash, Martin decided that he needed to start playing an instrument so that he could play the music that he loved. As Martin's favourite artists were John Coltrane and Pharoah Sanders he settled on the soprano saxophone. Martin did not know very much about the saxophone so he approached Clements Music Shop. Clements music was a fixture around town, there was a large room above the shop that later became restaurant/bar in the 1990s, but was at earlier

times a venue known as *The Downbeat Club* for jazz performances in the late 1950s and 60s. Bob Clements had a record label named *Jazzart* which eventually released over forty-two 78rpms and three LPs (Brown 2010, p8). The Clements brothers also ran the Downbeat concerts at the Melbourne Town Hall which featured jazz played mostly in the 'traditional' jazz style. The encouragement given by the older generation, such as Bob Clements, to the younger generation upon discovering their interest in jazz was an important way in which the jazz community was supported and grown. Martin benefited directly from Bobs encouragement and support.

Perhaps most importantly however was the out of tune soprano saxophone purchased from Clements, the only instrument that he could afford at the time, gave Martin the opportunity to begin to play jazz. Martin took his new soprano saxophone and enrolled in saxophone lessons with Larry Keen Senior at Music Junction in Camberwell. Keen pointed out that Martin's new soprano saxophone was badly out of tune and would have to be repaired before it could be properly played. By the time the saxophone was overhauled Martin made the decision to move onto to lessons with Brian Brown. Brian then organised for Martin to purchase a Yamaha soprano saxophone at a reduced price. The access to advice and support from the music community, especially from established and respected musicians, such as Brian Brown, was so important as Martin might have given up early on because of his poor quality instrument.

During his 3<sup>rd</sup> year at Monash University, Martin became serious about studying jazz and improvised music. Martin would spend most of his spare time practicing the saxophone and during his lessons with Brian Brown they would focus on originality and personal expression in music, two areas which would be emblematic of the pedagogy and aesthetic of Brian's career. Martin and Brian would spend hours discussing the philosophies and aesthetics of music and these discussions eventually became the focus of the lessons, perhaps as Martin recalls, to the detriment of learning the technical aspects of the saxophone.

In 1978 the increasing demands of Brian's job as head of the improvisation course at the Victorian College of the Arts meant that he no longer had time to teach private students. Consequently Martin's lessons with Brian stopped and Martin started learning jazz with local pianist Bob Sedergreen who continues to have a reputation as both a teacher and a mentor to young jazz students. Martin recalls Bob's lessons as both inspiring and occasionally chaotic, as Bob was looking after his young sons Mal and Steve (who would later become respected jazz musicians in their own right) during the school holidays and was often running out of the lesson to yell at the boys to stop them arguing and fighting. Bob's lasting influence to Martin's life was to introduce him to another young musician who was interested in the same music as Martin. Bob introduced Martin to a young pianist named Jamie Fielding and very quickly Martin and Jamie formed a band and began rehearsing.

In December of 1978 Martin packed up his saxophone and left Australia to travel to the United States. Martin had enrolled in the *Creative Music Studio* in Woodstock, New York State where he attended a week long workshop with the *Art Ensemble of Chicago*. The Art Ensemble is a group that emanated from the *Association for the Advancement of Creative Musician*, the AACM, and continue to be a renowned group that is known for its music, stagecraft, and its dedication to black music and education. Martin was able to spend all day in workshops with many of his heroes over this week, although he believed that he “did huge damage to Australia’s reputation” because of the self taught nature of his saxophone technique. After the workshops finished Martin spent his remaining nights hearing his jazz idols perform in New York City.

Martin’s sole motivation for travelling to America was for the opportunity to see and experience firsthand the music and culture he had only read about previously. The New York jazz scene was incredibly healthy and Martin was able to attend, on average, three concerts a night. On any night of the week Martin could see musicians such as *The Cecil Taylor Unit*, *The Sun Ra Arkestra*, Henry Threadgill, Sam Rivers, Dave Holland, *The World Saxophone Quartet*, and Don Cherry. These were some of the best jazz musicians and groups in the world at the time.

As a voracious consumer of all jazz related literature, Martin learned during his New York trip that not everything written in *Downbeat* was necessarily true or representative of the American jazz scene and that there was a marketing and

promotional side to a lot of the stories and persona of jazz musicians. Martins initial perception of jazz, perceived through marketing and magazines, is representative of the arguments of authenticity and fetishisation of the exotic that is present in many cultures that play jazz outside of the United States. This is also why recognising Australia's authenticity and singular jazz history is important, as it is not tied to the idea of 'authenticity' American jazz history.

The unique experience of attending the performances of groups such as Sun Ra and the *Art Ensemble of Chicago* made a positive impression on Martin. Both Sun Ra and the Art Ensemble had a large theatrical appeal to their shows which highlighted the importance of attending live music, and being part of the audience, rather than being an individual consumer of recordings. Martin came to understand that there are aspects to a performance that can only be experienced by being in the audience. The conducting style of Sun Ra added to the visual impact of the band and the chaos and interaction of the performers was more apparent than with any other score based music or recording. Through performance, the audience is invited to be a part of the creative process.

Whilst in the United States Martin learned that many independent and local record labels and jazz musicians had set up a label to produce their own records for sale and distribution rather than relying upon large record companies. These companies were often completely uninterested in such small distribution and niche audiences. Martin discovered artist-run jazz labels, clubs, and venues in New York such as *Ali's*

*Alley* in Soho, which was Rashid Ali's club, and Sam Rivers' *Studio Rivbea*. These artist-run ventures contributed to the vibrancy and health of the jazz scene through providing performance opportunities, recording and publishing outlets, and support and validation for musicians.

When Martin returned to Australia from New York he began to discuss the concept of an artist-run independent record label focusing on jazz with Brian Brown, Tony Gould, and Tony's longtime musical collaborator Keith Hounslow. With financial backing arranged by Tony and Keith, from Martin and Adrian Jackson, and from friends such as Chris Welch, they started a label called *AIJA* (Australian Independent Jazz Artists). *AIJA* produced two albums by Tony and Keith's duo *McJad*, Brian Brown's album *Bells Make Me Sing* (1979), and an album by Queensland band *Quasar* who had produced their own album *Man Coda 1981*, but used the *AIJA* label for publishing. *AIJA* was the direct result of Martin witnessing the success of artist run ventures in New York and recognising how such initiatives could address the lack of support and opportunities that faced modern jazz musicians in Melbourne. Martin reasoned that through *AIJA*, or a similar initiative, he could increase his own performance opportunities which would help his own playing as well as strengthening the local scene in Melbourne.

Although Martin provided the idea and the impetus for *AIJA*, once the idea took off the other members of the label began to seek out opportunities that contributed to the growth of the label. Keith Hounslow organised the first albums to be pressed at

Astor Records and the members then quickly organised two album launches. The first Album launch was in Melbourne at *The MET* in McKillop Lane and the second was in Sydney at *The Australian Music Centre*.

Despite the enthusiasm of the members, *AJJA* was short lived. Many factors influenced the short life of the label but escalating studio costs and increasing difficulties in recouping the cost of the albums were primary and led to the label producing only four albums. The necessary business, promotional skills, and personal time allowances needed to successfully run a business were not part of the members' skill sets at the outset of the venture and this directly impacted the viability of the label.

However short *AJJA*'s existence may have been, the members proved that it was possible for jazz musicians to play, present and record their music in the same way as more mainstream genres, such as pop, and even more well funded genres, such as classical and opera. It was not a sustainable organization, given the capability and capacity of the members at the time. *AJJA* demonstrated the viability of artist-run initiatives in Melbourne, but also demonstrated the need for specialised skills to run such an organisation. Eventually *AJJA* was re-established many years later and produced albums such as the critically acclaimed album *Jamie Fielding's Notes from the Underground* (1998).

After completing his Bachelor of Arts at Monash University, Martin completed a Diploma of Education at the University of Melbourne in 1979. Still enthusiastic about jazz as ever, Martin took a year off after studying to focus on his playing. Martin, Jamie Fielding, and a few other acquaintances, would jam for hours every day at Jamie's house. Their initial musical interests, and repertoire, were confined mostly to modal compositions in the vein of Miles Davis, John Coltrane and Ornette Coleman. With their repertoire of six pieces, Martin and Jamie began to seek out opportunities to play to live audiences. Through connections they had made in the scene, Martin and Jamie's group *Odwala* began to have the occasional opportunity to play live concerts. One of their first public performances was as a support band in the *3PBS-FM Music Theatre* series in 1980.

From 1978 to 1981 one of the only continuous modern jazz gigs in Melbourne was Brian Browns regular Sunday night at *The Commune* in Fitzroy. Brian started to allow *Odwala* to play in place of his group as Brian's time was becoming increasingly divided between teaching at the VCA and his own musical career. These performance opportunities afforded *Odwala* the opportunity to develop their sound as a group through musical experimentation and exploration in front of an audience. This development, experimentation, and exploration in a live setting would later inform Martin's decisions in the MJC as he knew that increasing performance opportunities benefited both jazz groups and the local scene through regular performances.

In 1979, on a trip to Sydney to experience some interstate music, Martin met reputable Australian jazz producer and promoter Horst Liepolt who started the clubs *Jazz Centre 44* in Melbourne and, later in the 1980s, *Lush Life* and *Sweet Basil* in New York. Horst introduced Martin to Greg Quigley, of the Australian Jazz Foundation, who was helping Horst to present the *Art Ensemble of Chicago* in Melbourne after they were initially brought out for the *Sydney Festival* by Horst. Quigley asked Martin to run the promotions and publicity for the 1980 *Melbourne International Jazz Festival* at the Dallas Brooks Hall in January, featuring the *Art Ensemble of Chicago*, the Abdullah Ibrahim Quintet, and the David Liebman Quintet with John Scofield and Terumasa Hino. The publicity for the Art Ensemble played up the theatrical nature of the group and used pictures of Joseph Jarman in full headdress and war paint.

Martin gained further promotions and publicity experience in the arts through his association with Greg Quigley by helping with the 1979 *Summer Jazz Clinics* in Melbourne and Sydney (Myers, 1981 p40). The *Australian Jazz Foundation* (AJF) received Australia Council funding to run the clinics and brought out artists such as Jamey Aebersold, Johnny Griffin, Miroslav Vitous, Woody Shaw, and Freddie Hubbard. Attendance declined significantly after the 1982 event and a number of people were never paid for their work signifying the end of the clinics (Myers in Jazz, 1982 p1-2).

Promoting and organising the *Summer Jazz Workshops* from 1979 to 1982 was a way for Martin to slowly develop the business and promotional skills that he found were

absent from the *AJJA* venture. The workshops themselves were also a way for relationships to form between local and prominent international jazz musicians. The workshops acted as a conduit for the transmission and development of ideas between the Americans and the Australians. Furthering the idea of transmission, in 1982 Martin persuaded Quigley to let the Miroslav Vitous Quartet of John Surman, John Taylor, Miroslav Vitous, and Jon Christensen run their own program based on their own original European-styled music which exposed the Australians to a much wider variety of modern jazz that was itself outside of the American experience. Musicians travelled from interstate to attend these workshops and this facilitated the meeting of musicians, such as between Sydney musician Sandy Evans and Melbourne musician Jamie Fielding who later worked together in the band *Women and Children First*. Evans and Fieldings later collaboration was just one of many that demonstrated the direct benefits of the workshops.

Between promotional tasks and helping to chaperone touring musicians, Martin and Jamie continued to play wherever and whenever they could. Martin and Jamies group *Odwala* had already played at a few venues but unfortunately none of these venues were long lasting. The performance opportunities included the *Universal Theatre* in Victoria Street Fitzroy, *The MET* (which was underneath *Discurio* record store in McKillop St in the Melbourne CBD) and occasionally filling in for Brian Brown at *The Commune* when Brian was unable to play due to his other teaching commitments.

*The MET* was owned by Tim Mann, whose family who also owned *Discurio* and the record label *Score*. The Mann family were influential in the development of modern jazz in Melbourne because of their support through both *The MET* and through *Score*. Although *Score* released mainly classical music, Brian Brown's debut E.P. album *Wildflowers (1984)* was released through *Score*, as was an E.P. by Australian tenor and Aboriginal Activist Harold Blair for which Brian did the arrangements. Despite *The MET* eventually being sold and turned into a Pancake Parlour restaurant, the venue was important in both *Odwala's* development as a band and Martin's development as a promoter and musician. The concerts that Martin saw at *The MET* included the three night residency of the David Liebman Quintet.

Martin had successfully helped to plan and promote the album launches for two *AJJA* records at *The MET* featuring Brian Brown's group and *McJad*, he was asked to organise a series of three concerts at *The MET* in 1982. Martin included local and interstate musicians such as Mark Simmonds' *Space Society Orchestra*, Brian Brown and Bob Sedergreen, and Tony Gould and Steve Hadley, in the program. Continuing his mission to find as many opportunities to play, Martin organized *Odwala*, along with a different guest musician each time, to provide the opening set for each of the Sunday afternoon concerts.

One of the reasons Martin was able to spend a lot of his time organising and promoting concerts was because he worked at his older brother's shop. Because there

were not many walk-in customers, and Martin had access to the phone and a lot of spare downtime at work, he spent many of his work hours organising and promoting jazz concerts. This is representative of the amount of effort this work takes, and demonstrates how much Martin had to sacrifice without being directly paid or supported for his tasks.

In 1982 Martin organised and promoted three concerts at *The MET* in McKillop Street in Melbourne's CBD under the name *Gurawilla Music Association*, a name chosen to make the concert series appear more formal. Tenor saxophonist Mark Simmonds, who spent months in Melbourne working in *The Rocky Horror Show*, had encouraged Martin's musical and promotional endeavours, and talked about the idea of musicians working together in a co-operative fashion. Simmonds' *Space Society Orchestra* was the first gig at *The MET* on March 28<sup>th</sup> 1982. This was followed by the Brian Brown/Bob Sedergreen duo on April 25<sup>th</sup> and the Tony Gould/Steve Hadley duo on May 30<sup>th</sup>. All three concerts were supported by *Odwala* and featured a different guest performer each time.

Martin focused the programming of the initial concert series at *The MET* on small groups, which he believed reflected the ethos of the Melbourne modern jazz scene at the time. A similar approach to the presentation and organisation of concerts would also

be continued later in the MJC series that began at the RMIT *Glasshouse* in 1983. There is a clear line of development in promoting and organising concerts from what Martin had learned from *The MET* and other venues to what he put in place later at the RMIT *Glasshouse*.

As Martin was forced to move from *The MET* because of its closer, his next step was to organise a concert with *McJad*, who were joined by bassist Barry Buckley and drummer Ted Vining for most numbers, at the *Prince of Wales* Hotel in St Kilda on a Sunday afternoon. The audience turnout for the concert was dismal and many issues led to the failure of this concert including that lack of an acoustic piano at the venue and the changing of venues from *The MET* to the *Prince of Wales*. A venue change meant losing audience who were used to *The MET* and having to build up an entirely new audience.

As the modern jazz scene in Melbourne grew, so did the networking opportunities and chances for musical exposure. Melbourne State College was still hosting the Jamey Aebersold *Summer Jazz Clinics* (Jazz Magazine January 1981 p15), the third of which occurred in January 1981. Later that year in March the Victorian College of the Arts hosted the *Old and New Dreams* masterclasses with American jazz legends Don Cherry, Ed Blackwell, Charlie Haden and Dewey Redman. The late entrepreneur and saxophonist Barry Veith, who had previously worked as a partner with Greg Quigley in the 1979 Aebersold clinics had organised the *Old and New Dreams* tour of concerts and

workshops, giving Australians an opportunity to hear some of the most renowned international jazz artists of that time. Veith, however, was incredibly ambitious and decided to tour the *New York Jazz Giants* at the same time as *Old and New Dreams* and was effectively competing with himself for audiences. The result was that Veith's tours went bankrupt and were unable to be completed. Fortunately for the Melbourne jazz scene this was not before Don Cherry had the opportunity to take workshops at the VCA on 14 and 15 March (Jazz Magazine, March 1981). Although Martin was not involved in the promotional and organising aspects of the *Old and New Dreams* tour, he was able to meet and socialise with Don Cherry, Ed Blackwell and Charlie Haden, and at one stage they all shared dinner together at Martin's parents home. This is an example of the many opportunities that Martin's work in promotions and the connections afforded him, and provided the motivation for him to continue much of his unpaid promotional work.

Through promoting jazz music Martin gained many advantages that would not have been available to him so early in his playing career, such as meeting musicians and being included in the worldwide modern jazz scene. Through meeting international musicians of a high calibre and associating with them on a personal level Martin was able to form relationships that provided him insights into the international musicians' approach to their art and gave him the opportunity to discuss the Australian approach to jazz.

## Jamie Fielding and new genres

Exploring genres outside of contemporary jazz was not merely a commercial endeavour. Although some bands like *Pyramid* enjoyed commercial success through exploring genres outside of modern jazz such as fusion music, there were other reasons to branch out from modern jazz. Jamie Fielding, Martin's friend and close musical collaborator, exemplified the search for a connection in music beyond the commercial and the technical. Jamie was involved in many different projects such as *Odwala*, *Transwaste*, *The Green Man Trio*, and *Women and Children first*, examples of which can all be found on the Jamie Fielding album *Notes from the Underground* released by *AJJA* records in 1998.

Jamie's search for more social relevance in music led him further and further away from jazz, when as a result of this exploration he eventually stopped playing jazz altogether around 1984 (*Notes from the Underground*, Martin Jackson 1998). This move away from jazz was because Jamie wanted to play music that was relevant not only to his peers but also reflected and responded to many of the social changes happening in the 1980s such as an increase in conservatism, both politically and socially. Jamie had always had an interest in experimental music and listened to experimental jazz pioneers such as Albert Ayler. This sense of experimentation and exploration led Jamie, and others, to use drugs as a way to push the boundaries of music.

Jamie formed the group *Transwaste*, along with guitarist Michael Sheridan and drummer Peter Jones and others, as a way to express ideas of freedom. Built upon a mutual exploration and experimentation of music styles *Transwaste* was sometimes described as industrial rock and other times as post-punk noise and the result was a quest for freedom, both musical and personal. As the 1980s became more conservative bands such as *Transwaste* became a musical response to these conservative trends.

After Jamie relocated from Melbourne to Sydney to continue his exploration of experimental, electro-rock and post-punk noise music Martin continued to explore modern jazz in Melbourne, incorporating local pianist Jex Sarhelaat into *Odwala* in Jamie's absence. At this stage Martin and Jamie's musical progressions had moved in completely opposite directions. Martin continued to explore the jazz tradition whilst Jamie explored music that actively transgressed the common rules of harmony. Whilst some may see Jamie's musical progression and categorise him as a 'genre hopper', Martin counters that Jamie's elusiveness could be better read as a steady trajectory, a constant seeking of personal musical expression and a quest to play music that was socially relevant to his peers (Jackson 1998).

## The beginning of the MJC

*“before people can organise themselves as a world explicitly justified by making objects or events defined as art, they need sufficient political and economic freedom to do that, and not all societies provide it”* (Becker 2008, p39)

The idea behind the *Melbourne Jazz Cooperative* (MJC) was related to NSW’s *Keys Music Association* (Keys), which “did not wait for the established venues to discover them, but organised their own events.” (Clare, 1995 p161). Original Keys member Chris Abrahams said that “we tried to model ourselves on the musician’s cooperatives in the black ghettos” such as the AACM (Abrahams in Clare, 1995 p161). Keys was provided with funding from the Australia Council in 1979 (Myers, 1981 p41), but actually began earlier. Mark Simmonds notes in an interview with Martin Jackson that Keys was formed in 1973 but it did not perform or receive funding for a long time (Martin Jackson in Jazz 1982, p17).

Richard Letts, Director of the Music Board on the Australia Council in 1982, thought the Australian jazz scene could be better developed through more coordination and funding. Letts set out to achieve this through the *National Jazz Coordination* program, of which Mark Isaacs says: “in the mid-1980s the jazz co-ordination programs breathed life into a non-existent contemporary jazz scene in Sydney and Melbourne” (Isaacs 2003, p2). Letts himself had been a jazz pianist, a band leader, and had lived in

America where he obtained his PhD from the University of California. Letts had previously worked in America in the arts scene and recognised the need that Australia had for coordination and support in the jazz scene, which he could offer in his role on the Australia Council.

The Jazz coordination program began in early 1983 and Eric Myers was both the first New South Wales jazz coordinator as well as the National Jazz Coordinator (Colyer, Sunday Press Magazine June 19<sup>th</sup> 1983, p29) and Paula Langlands was Victoria's first jazz coordinator. Eric Myers and Adrian Jackson, Martins older brother, had come to know each other through Myers role as the editor of *Jazz: The Australian Contemporary Music Magazine* and Adrians role as a critic for both *The Age* magazine and *Jazz: The Australian Contemporary Music Magazine* (Jazz December 1981 p36).

As part of his brief as National Jazz Coordinator Myers was searching for ways to support modern jazz in the different states and, under Richard Letts' direction, wanted to diversify the styles of music they were supporting. Increasing support for modern jazz in Melbourne fit both the briefs of Letts and Myers for many reasons. As Adrian Jackson observed:

*“unlike Sydney, Melbourne’s modern jazz scene continues to suffer from a scarcity of venues in which musicians can develop their ideas in front of an audience”*  
(Adrian Jackson, weekender January 28<sup>th</sup> 1983).

Melbourne was also known in the 1980s as a primarily traditional jazz city and modern jazz seemed to need all the support it could get. To fulfil his part of the brief, Myers eventually contacted Martin Jackson and suggested that he submit a grant application to the Australia Council's *Performing Arts Board* to apply for government support to continue to promote modern jazz concerts in Melbourne.

Martin, when compiling his grant application to the Australia Council wanted to incorporate and promote the social aspect of the modern jazz scene, which is what he saw as the spirit of modern jazz music at the time. Therefore on the application for the organisation he proposed would support and promote modern jazz in Melbourne Martin choose the name *The Melbourne Jazz Cooperative* (MJC). The 'cooperative' part of the *Melbourne Jazz Cooperative* is a misnomer in a legal and business sense, as Martin discovered later when tried to formalise the MJC and discovered that an incorporated association could not be a cooperative. The name was intended to reflect the social aspect of modern jazz and the interactive nature of performing improvised music together.

Although the MJC aimed to promote the social nature of modern jazz music the MJC itself was not led by a group of musicians as the 'cooperative' suggests. Martin was unable to find like-minded people who were interested in dedicating the time needed to form and run a promoting organisation focused on modern jazz. Although

Martin originally put his friends and fellow musicians Barry Buckley and Jamie Fielding on the grant application, and both were signatories on the MJC bank account, the MJC was almost entirely run by Martin. Jamie left Melbourne within a year of the initial MJC concerts, and Barry had a demanding full time career running his dental laboratory and did not have time to be involved with the MJC formally.

Once funding was announced for the inaugural season of MJC concerts began the search for a venue. He had heard about the construction of a new theatre at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT), on Swanston St in the heart of Melbourne and Martin approached the RMIT student council and applied to rent the theatre. There were concerns about whether or not the theatre would actually be ready in time for the inaugural concert but with very little choice Martin went ahead with the RMIT *Glasshouse*, as it was to become known.

All that was left was for Martin to find a group to play the inaugural concert. Martin had heard that pianist Paul Grabowsky, who was based in Germany at the time, was on a short visit home to Melbourne. Martin contacted Grabowsky and was able to book him to play the inaugural MJC concert, on Sunday January 30<sup>th</sup> 1983, along with Garry Costello on bass and Allan Browne on drums. Martin's own group *Odwala* supported the Brown/Costello/Grabowsky trio at the inaugural concert which drew up to 140 people in the audience. Although Adrian Jackson was critical of *Odwala's*

performance, “A tighter program, or briefer solos from the saxophonists, would have made *Odwala*’s set more satisfying” the afternoon was a success (Jackson 1983, p29).

The Browne/Costello/Grabowsky trio, which began because of the MJC, stayed together after the inaugural MJC concert and would eventually win two ARIA awards (Jackson, *Jazz magazine* March/April 1983). The establishment of a long lasting and critically acclaimed trio is evidence of the successful support offered by the MJC and becomes evidence of the positive role that an organisation such as the MJC could play in developing worldclass music. Adrian Jackson also commented in his ‘Reports from ... Melbourne’ column in *Jazz Magazine* that “the most rewarding activity has been the monthly concerts at RMIT” (Jackson in *Jazz Magazine* 1983) further validating the results that the MJC accomplished in promoting local modern jazz.

One of Martin’s only musical benefits for putting in the work of running the MJC was the opportunity to play regular concerts. *Odwala*, which was comprised of Martin Jackson on saxophones, Jamie Fielding on piano (until his move to Sydney), Barry Buckley on bass, and Keith Pereira on drums, played the support sets for the first three years of MJC programming. These regular performances provided *Odwala* an invaluable opportunity to develop their group sound in front of an audience, which has always been an important part of a jazz musician’s development. In an effort to maintain audience interest, Martin planned for *Odwala* to have a different guest artist during the first three months of programming. As a result, saxophonist Andrew Brown, vocalist

Anastasia Aspeling, trombonist Steve Miller, and trumpeter Ian Orr, all made guest appearances in the first three concerts with *Odwala*. This concert format lasted for three years, but was eventually changed due to criticism.

Although the concert format which had *Odwala* play the first set of every event may have been perceived as self-serving but Martin countered this criticism with the observation that amongst *Odwala*'s peers at the time there were not many organised groups of musicians, despite the fact that there were many modern jazz players. As the MJC was created to promote modern jazz, which Martin felt was not receiving adequate support or exposure, fusion or rock bands were not considered for MJC concerts even if they featured jazz players. This further limited the number of bands that were considered for an MJC concert, and thus the idea that there were not many organised modern jazz groups at this time was possibly valid.

The success of the MJC's Sunday concert series can be attributed to many things. One is that there were not many other Sunday afternoon concerts, let alone jazz concerts, at the time. Furthermore, the RMIT Theatre itself was large, had good acoustics, and held up to 200 seated concert goers. The theatre provided a concert setting similar to ones in which small chamber concerts are performed, which helped to legitimise the music being presented as 'serious' music. Presenting jazz music in a concert setting changed the dynamic of how this music was consumed by audiences. Jazz in this venue became serious music to be listened to whilst sitting down quietly,

reminiscent of the way that classical music is consumed. Modern jazz music was now also legitimised and validated as an art form through being funded by the national government, just as classical music and opera were. This shift in dynamic is confirmed by later observations from industry insiders the manager of *Macy's* at *Her Majesty's Hotel* notes that “people have become sick of the sort of scene where they're standing in crowded rooms having their ears blasted out. They're interested in a more sophisticated style of entertainment” and the manager at the *Limerick Arts* comments on the changing nature of jazz music in that “we've moved, and so has the audience, towards mainstream and modern bands, because most of the trad bands in town are sounding old and tired” (Adrian Jackson, weekender 1<sup>st</sup> June 1984).

## **Martin Jackson, Adrian Jackson, and the Media.**

Adrian Jackson's role in helping to establish the modern jazz scene in Melbourne cannot be understated. Adrian had started writing for *The Age* newspaper a few years before the MJC started and he also had a jazz column in *The Age's Weekender* section. In the jazz column Adrian often wrote about the highlights of the coming week and gave his recommendations of groups and performances that audiences should attend. Adrian used this column to promote upcoming events and attempted to create a modern jazz audience rather than follow the more traditional route of reviewing concerts after they had been performed. Although Adrian's columns and features were sometimes brief or irregular he was able to gradually inform a larger readership about upcoming events.

Adrian mentioned wrote about most of the MJC concerts in his columns and in the first year of the MJC concert series he sometimes wrote large features and interviews with artists performing in the MJC concert series such as Bruce Cale (Jackson, *The Age* Sept 20<sup>th</sup>, 1983), *The Benders* (Jackson, *Weekender* October 28<sup>th</sup>, 1983), and Bernie McGann (*The Sun*, April 21<sup>st</sup> 1983 p39). There may be an argument for a case of conflict of interest as Martin and Adrian are brothers, however Adrian and Martin both loved modern jazz, if not exactly the same styles, and to give weight to this criticism would be an insult to Adrian's journalistic integrity. Martin believes that "it wasn't like [Adrian] was writing up something as a favour, he generally saw things in a similar taste (sic) to me". Martin agrees this because the MJC did not benefit financially from any coverage that it received from Adrian's articles. Continuing

this line of argument Martin counters that the MJC is a not-for-profit organisation and he was not receiving a wage from running the MJC at this time. Martin believes the only true beneficiary was the jazz scene as a whole. Further countering any argument for conflict of interest, Adrian was often quite critical towards Martin, such as in this example from 1985 when Adrian says that *Odwala's* set was “marred by an over-long soprano sax solo” by Martin (Adrian Jackson, *The Age* May 28<sup>th</sup> 1985) and again in 1985, Adrian notes “the worst set I heard in the festival. The *Melbourne Jazz Cooperative* ensemble, led by Martin Jackson ... that was obviously under rehearsed” (Jackson, *Jazz Magazine*. Winter/Spring 1985).

## The MJC from 1983 to 1993

The inaugural 1983 MJC concert season consisted of monthly concerts over the 12 months featuring many players who became well recognised figures in both the Australian jazz scene and the wider Australian music scene. These players included ARIA award winners such as the Brown/Costello/Grabowsky trio, Order of Australia recipient Tony Gould, and internationally acclaimed musicians such as Bernie McGann, Lloyd Swanton and Chris Abraham. The following 1984 season was similar in format to the 1983 season in that the MJC presented another 12 concerts on the last Sunday of each month at the RMIT *Glasshouse*. The list of performers was equally as illustrious and included, from New South Wales, Sandy Evans' group *Women and Children First*, and international expatriate artists Mike Nock and Ken Schroeder, and German pianist Joachim Kuhn.

During 1983 and 1984 there were a significant proportion of expatriate musicians who were either visiting or returning to Australia after periods of study and performance overseas. Studying overseas was, and still is, an enticing opportunity for Australian jazz musicians and a number of local musicians left Australia to study and play overseas. Mike Nock, who was originally from New Zealand, had moved to New York in 1961 and Paul Grabowsky was also performing and studying in Europe. Ken Schroeder, who also relocated to Europe to begin studying with Herb Geller which thanks to a grant from the

Music Board of the Australia Council. Mike Nock notes the importance of this interaction between international musicians:

*“Greater interaction between Australia and New Zealand is something I’ve always hoped for ... it would be very beneficial for the players and audiences in both countries”* (Adrian Jackson, *The Age*, April 6<sup>th</sup> 1984).

Transmission of musical information from varied sources supports the development and refinement of local artistic scenes. The influx of new ideas and concepts helps artists to not only stay current and non-homogenised but allows an arts scene the opportunity to be avant-garde or cutting edge. Constantly developing and evolving repertoires encouraged musicians to be innovative and through this process they create interesting and diverse compositions and improvisational styles. This international development and communication however is facilitated more easily by major arts organisations that have already established the pathways and connections to enable musicians to stay in touch with each other and perform in different states and countries. Although the MJC was unable to offer grants or reimbursements for travel it did provide musicians who were already planning to be in Melbourne an opportunity to perform and provided the contacts needed to form groups for performances. The MJC offered local musicians who had travelled, learned and developed new sounds, a place in which to play and disseminate what they had learned, as well as a place for international musicians to perform and share their knowledge with the locals.

In 1985 the MJC's operating costs were increasing and the three thousand dollars that the Australia Council was providing each year was becoming insufficient to make ends meet. This meant that Martin was unable to sustain the costs of the monthly concerts at the RMIT *Glasshouse* and was forced to consider moving the concert series. Mike Hancock, whom Martin had previously known from *The Limerick Arms*, had started a venue named *Chez Jazz*. Because of the success of a previous series of Australia Day concerts Martin had promoted Mike persuaded Martin to leave the *Glasshouse* and move the MJC concert series to *Chez Jazz*.

The move to *Chez Jazz* was ill fated. The first and only concert the MJC promoted at *Chez Jazz* on April 28<sup>th</sup> 1985 was with the group *Oasis*, supported as usual by *Odwala*. And although attendance numbers were not recorded, Martin remembers the crowd being disastrous with only 20 paying audience members. On top of the dismal audience, Richard Letts, director of the Music Board of the Australia Council, was in attendance at the *Oasis* concert and told Martin that the MJC had to stop using *Odwala* as the only support band and Letts further made this a stipulation for the MJC's next years grant. Although *Odwala* would continue to play support sets for the rest of 1985, as Martin was still unpaid at this point one of his main reasons for dedicating so much time and energy into the MJC was removed.

Mike Hancock decided to break his lease after the *Oasis* concert and move out of *Chez Jazz* which forced Martin to move the MJC concerts back to the *Glasshouse*. Subsequently, the scheduled May 1985 concert of Serge Ermoll and *Odwala* was performed at RMIT *Glasshouse*. Because of the venue changes, from the *Glasshouse* to *Chez Jazz* and back again, Martin began to notice that it was harder to get a consistent audience. The shifting of venues had lost much of the MJC's audience and focus.

Despite knowing that changing venues once again would upset audience numbers, the *Glasshouse* was still too expensive as a weekly venue for the MJC's financial constraints, and the MJC changed venues again in 1986. The new venue was *The Hothouse Jazz Club*, named after the Tadd Dameron bebop tune, on Little Collins Street in Melbourne, which Martin had been managing for a time before moving the MJC concerts there. Originally known as *The Lower Deck Jazz Club* and situated in the back room of *The Reef Restaurant*, the club had been founded by American expatriate Dave Wolf, partner of the American vocalist Mona Richardson. The *Lower Deck* originally ran for three months with regular artists Judy Jacques and Brian Brown who mainly played modern jazz . However, the *Lower Deck* was struggling financially and was on the verge of closing down when Martin stepped in to become the club manager.

Martin changed the name to the *Hothouse* and ended up managing and booking groups at the club for two years. As Martin was, at this stage, already working directly

as the promoter for the *Hothouse* booking jazz acts for different nights of the week it seemed like the logical place to move the MJC Sunday Concert Series. The *Hothouse* was initially open on Friday and Saturday nights but with the MJC Sunday Concert Series the *Hothouse* was able to expand to four nights a week, greatly increasing the amount of jazz that Melbourne had to offer. One could argue that the MJC was underwriting a venue that Martin was already involved in, but on the other hand by using the *Hothouse* the MJC did not have to pay any rent. Martin says “it was not like I was making anything, or the club was making anything out of it. It’s just the facilities were there ... a reasonable piano ... a baby grand ... and there was a sound system”. Again this argument may have been viable if Martin was receiving a wage from the MJC at this point, but he was still far from earning any money himself through the MJC.

In the 1986 season two concerts were held at the RMIT *Glasshouse*. Paul Grabowsky’s solo concert on July 27<sup>th</sup> and Bernie McGann’s concert on September 28<sup>th</sup> were promoted at the *Glasshouse* as Martin thought the venue was a more appropriate concert setting that reflected the introspective and serious nature of these two musicians. The remaining ten concerts of the season were held at the *Hothouse*.

Even though Martin was booking nights at the *Hothouse* he still was not being paid. Further, because of the *Reef Restaurant* owner John Sinner’s financial record no one would rent sound and music equipment to him so the piano and amplification equipment were rented under Martin’s name. Besides managing the *Hothouse* and the

MJC, Martin continued to work as a casual teacher to make ends meet as he had completed his teaching degree years earlier. Martin recalls this as a busy and divided time and that he could only maintain his lifestyle because he was young and single. The fact that Martin wasn't able to receive a minimum income through music, whether playing or promoting, highlights more about the continued viability of the music scene in Australia and the value that Australians ascribes to music, than it does about anything else. Despite receiving government support, Martin could only maintain the MJC because he was young and willing to make sacrifices in his own life for the music that he loved. If he had to rely on an income from the MJC then in all likelihood the MJC would have closed its doors after the first year and the Melbourne modern jazz scene would have been the poorer for it. When the *Reef Restaurant* eventually went bankrupt in 1987 the venue was sold. The new owner retained the *Hothouse* as a jazz club but decided that Martin's help was not needed to book acts. Despite hosting big draw-cards such as Wilbur Wilde, Jane Clifton, and Vince Jones, the *Hothouse* closed forcing the MJC to once again search for new venues.

Throughout the 1986 to 1988 seasons the MJC used a range of different venues as the Glasshouse was still too prohibitively expensive to use regularly. The venues used throughout these next years were the *Hothouse* (mostly in 1986 before it collapsed), *Melba Hall* (in 1987 because they had a full Steinway grand piano for the Mike Nock solo concert on March 8<sup>th</sup>), *The CUB Club*, RMIT *Glasshouse Theatre*, *The*

*Tankerville Arms, The Universal Theatre, The Church of Christ in Acland St in St Kilda, The Reef Jazz Club, and The Limerick Arms.*

Martin found throughout 1986 to 1988 that it was incredibly difficult to promote the concept of a regular series of concerts across multiple venues because the lack of regularity confused and dissuaded audiences. If the MJC continuously presented concerts at the Glasshouse, which the MJC could not afford, it would have had more opportunity through consistency of presentation to build audience momentum. If audiences know that they can find a certain genre of music at one venue then there is more chance of 'drop ins' and increased likelihood of building audiences. If the venues are scattered and change regularly then it is likely that only those were already looking for this genre of music would know where concerts are being held.

Factors that influenced the use of multiple venues were greater economic pressures and funding restrictions to the MJC, and the lack of stability and affordability of venues. The choice of venues was also decided upon in terms of suitability to the music being presented. *Melba Hall* was used for Mike Nock's solo performance because it had a Steinway grand piano and because the venue itself recalled and instilled in audiences a way of listening that was akin to classical music. In other words the intended seriousness of the music and performance was reflected by the choice of performance space. The changing mode of consumption of modern jazz music began to dictate the ways in which it could be presented but this would be a double-edged sword

as modern jazz musicians simultaneously wanted to be accessible in terms of audience numbers and serious in terms of musical perception.

In 1988 the MJC began a series of festival called the *A-Live* music festivals, these were events distinct from the similarly named MJC *A-live* weekly concert series. The *A-Live* festivals were organised as a way to counter the ‘trad jazz’ bias of the *Montsalvat Jazz Festival* and continued for a number of years. In a letter to Mike Nock in 1990, Martin writes that he thinks the *Montsalvat Jazz Festival* was cheap and flakey “when it comes to non-traditional players” and that if Martin were to book Mike Nock at *Montsalvat* he would not receive a fair pay cheque (Jackson, 1990).

Eventually in 1991 the *Montsalvat Jazz Festival* changed its programming and became more concerned with supporting modern jazz. Subsequently there was no longer a need for the MJC to host the *A-Live* festival as both the *A-Live* festival and *Monstalvat* were now premiering modern jazz at the same time and the logistical problems of musicians travelling to the MJC festival after playing at *Montsalvat* became untenable. Through the MJC’s *A-Live* festival the *Monstalvat Jazz Festival* began to support modern jazz and modern jazz artists. Because of *Monstalvat*’s continued involvement in modern jazz the MJC was able to abandon the *A-Live* festival and focus their resources into new ventures that supported and promoted modern jazz in different avenues.

In 1989 and 1990 the MJC were able to offer a more stabilised program at the Doncaster Gallery with a monthly series of concerts entitled the *Sunday Twilight Series*. In 1989 this series comprised of seven concerts and in 1990 the series expanded to eight concerts. In conjunction with the *Twilight Series* the MJC also ran the *A-Live* jazz festival at the *Limerick Arms* on Australia Day weekend featuring many of the most exciting performers of modern jazz including Paul Grabowsky, Tony Gould, Keith Hounslow, Brian Brown, and groups such as *Mistaken Identity*, *Musiikki Oy*, *Onaje*, *Jump Monk*, and *Tibetan Dixie*.

From 1989 to 1990 the jazz scene in Melbourne and the attitudes towards modern jazz can be represented in two comments. The comments represented both the fact that there was now an established modern jazz scene and that the continued to struggle for audience attendance and support. Adrian Jackson remarks that “Jazz may not be the most lucrative business in Melbourne; but it is alive and kicking” and that in regards to the year of jazz in 1990 “as in every year or the last decade or so, there were probably more forward steps than setbacks ... jazz in Melbourne is certainly in much better health than it was a decade ago”(Jackson, *The Age*, 4 January 1991 *Melbourne jazz is on sound footing after a busy year*). These comments acknowledge that audience reception of modern jazz was still an issue and that despite this, the hard work of people like Martin Jackson was making a difference.

In 1991 the MJC received an increase in funding and was able to introduce, alongside the series of monthly concerts at the *Doncaster Gallery*, a new series of weekly concerts entitled the *A-Live* concert series. From Martin's 1991 Press Release:

*"In spite of the so-called 'jazz boom' of the past few years ... the 'real' jazz groups are performing less than ever ... to redress this problem, the Melbourne Jazz Co-operative applied to Federal and State funding to assist with the presentation of an on-going weekly series, which would give local groups an opportunity to perform over consecutive weeks in a month period"* (Jackson, 1991).

The *A-Live* series was held at the *Limerick Arms Hotel* and the format of the *A-Live* concert series provided a single modern jazz group the opportunity to develop their sound in front of an audience over a monthly residency. The *A-Live* concert series at the *Limerick Arms* began in 1991 and ran right up until the beginning of 1993, with the occasional concert at other venues such as *Robert Blackwood Hall*, *Life Cafe*, *Rig 272*, *Dr Jazz*, *The Gershwin Room* at the *Esplanade Hotel*, and *Melba Hall* as individual concert situations dictated. The stability of venue helped to attract audiences and allowed musicians to develop as groups during their monthly residency.

In 1992 the MJC ended the *Doncaster Gallery Twilight Series* but continued to present the MJC weekly series at the *Limerick Arms*. The concert format at the *Limerick Arms* had now moved away from a monthly residency style arrangement, with the goal

of a band developing a sound through consistent performance, to a new group performing every week. The change in format, whilst moving away from group development, provided audiences with greater variety and interest and provided local musicians with a greater chance to create interstate and international relationships. The format change also meant a higher quality of performer as they did not have the luxury of a whole month to develop group dynamics and sound, the group had to sound good from the start. This change in format reflects the development of the local scene over the past years and increased the quality of local musicians. It also shows how the interstate and international transfer of musical knowledge and increased competition had created a scene that could boast some of the strongest modern jazz players in the world.

Despite the appeal of a stable venue the costs of using the *Limerick Arms* began to cause the MJC financial stress. The *Limerick Arms* charged \$100 for a sound technician and \$50 for the hire of the sound system. These costs meant that most of the time the sound technician would make more money than any individual in the group performing. The MJC would always take an entry fee on the door and pay the musicians each the union rate, so if the entry fee was insufficient to cover the wage for the musicians then the MJC would pay the difference, thus guaranteeing a fair wage for the musicians. If there were any profit to be made on the entry fee this would be distributed to the musicians as well. Hence, unless there was a huge crowd at the *Limerick Arms* the sound technician would make more money than a member of the band. The

*Limerick Arms* was also slowly moving away from jazz towards a more commercially viable option and the opening *Bennetts Lane Jazz Club* in November 1992 signaled the end for jazz at the *Limerick Arms*.

## Conflict and other organisations

During the 1980s the MJC was not the only promoting organisation on the jazz scene. The *Melbourne Improvisers Association* (MIA) was created in 1987, a year in which Adrian Jackson claims that “the quantity and quality of jazz activity in Melbourne has expanded ... [although] there is still room for things to improve for jazz players and listeners” (Jackson, 21 Jan 1988, *The Age* “there’s still room for improvement”). The MIA originally had a goal “to present jazz away from venues where the band’s function is to assist bar sales” (ibid.) and received some funding from the Australia Council to present concerts. Up until 1993 the MIA and MJC also occasionally co-produced and co-promoted concerts and events such as the *What’s Cookin?* Festival in 1992. The MIA changed strategic direction once saxophonist Craig Dickerson took over management of the MIA.

The *Jazz Action Society* (JAS) was another presenting organisation that ran for a short while in the early 1980s. However the JAS was in financial trouble because of poor attendance at gigs. As the JAS were using the *Prince of Wales* band room, which was a very large capacity room, the concerts seemed almost empty with only an audience of 30 people. The perception of low attendance caused by the large room negatively affected future performances. Martin Jackson and Jamie Fielding performed just one gig for the *Jazz Action Society* at the *Prince of Wales*, which turned out to be the *Jazz Action Society’s* last gig.

## **The MJC and *Bennetts Lane Jazz Club***

In 1992 Michael Tortoni, former bass player with the rock band *Taste*, opened *Bennetts Lane Jazz Club* (Discover the lane, 2013). Bands were originally paid a fixed rate per show but Michael quickly realised that this financial model would not last long as audience numbers could not sustain this cost. Initially *Bennetts* had two bands each night on Friday and Saturday and the bands would play until 2am. The late nights at *Bennetts* usually saw Jex Saarhelat's trio or Dale Barlow playing until the end of the 3am license. This created a culture where *Bennetts* became a late night place for musicians to meet and jam, promoting transmission of music and ideas. As a private promoter Martin also brought out other acts to *Bennetts* such as Sheila Jordan, Billie Harper, John Stubblefield and Cindy Blackman. These high profile acts helped to establish the reputation of *Bennetts Lane* as a place where world-class jazz could be heard.

Martin was working as a private promotor at *Bennetts Lane* in 1993, whilst maintaining his job to book acts at *Doctor Jazz* at the *Townhouse Hotel* in Carlton on a wage of \$200 per week plus a bonus based on turnover. Martin believes that this was one of the only times in his life that he was able to make a profit from promoting jazz music. *Doctor Jazz* regularly featured Vince Jones and James Morrison, as well as international artists such the *World Saxophone Quartet*, and Joe Pass. The MJC also presented concerts at *Doctor Jazz*, with some of the most memorable being a double

bill of the late British pianist Stan Tracey, in a trio with American bassist Ed Schuller and Niko Schauble, and the Paul Grabowsky Sextet.

The owners of *Doctor Jazz* were a wealthy family who had lost thousands of dollars on the club before Martin was able to get them back to a point of breaking even. Martin enjoyed working for the family but the *Doctor Jazz* venture eventually failed as the family was guarantor on a bank loan for someone who went bankrupt. The bank recalled the loan from the family and repossessed the hotel in 1992. The loss of the club forced Martin to find a new venue for the MJC. Martin discussed with Michael Tortoni the possibility of using *Bennetts Lane* as a venue for MJC concerts. Michael and Martin came to an agreement and Martin soon began promoting MJC concerts at *Bennetts Lane*.

The MJC started its *A-Live* series on a Sunday at the new *Bennetts Lane Jazz Club* at the end of January 1993 on the Australia Day Long weekend, exactly ten years after the MJC first started promoting concerts. The relationship between *Bennetts* and the MJC has been mutually beneficial. The MJC provided some of the highlights which first enticed patrons into *Bennetts*, such as the Mike Nock Quartet, Bernie McGann, and *The Necks* over three nights in 1997. The MJC also acted as a siphon, or talent scout, for new and emerging jazz musicians. If groups performed well on an MJC night, both musically and in terms of drawing an audience, they were able to approach *Bennetts* independently of the MJC to organise their own concerts. The MJC provided

opportunities for many different groups and individual musicians that they may not have received otherwise.

In 1998 the MJC started scheduling its concert series on a Tuesday night at *Bennetts*, a night on which the club was usually shut. This meant that now the club could open and present jazz on every single night of the week. By taking a traditionally quiet and therefore less commercially successful night, such as a Tuesday or Sunday, the MJC allowed *Bennetts* to book more financially successful groups on the busier nights of the week. This arrangement allowed *Bennetts* to turn a profit on the busier nights and still continue to operate on the less financially viable nights. The arrangement also allowed for the musicians playing an MJC night to be paid a guaranteed fee for their performance, as a door deal for musicians is usually risky due to the possibility of a small attendance. As the MJC is run to benefit musicians, the decision to run the concerts on traditionally quiet nights benefited everyone in the modern jazz community. This arrangement continued to run up to the closure on *Bennetts Lane* in June 2015. Martin notes that *Bennetts* was “such a well run venture”, that if he could not personally attend every MJC concert, which became increasingly difficult with his other responsibilities, the staff would be able to collect the ticket money and set up the room.

As demonstrated by the succession of clubs the MJC used in the 1980s, venue longevity is the exception not the rule. Stability and longevity cannot be taken for granted and when *Bennetts* closes its doors in June 2015, finding new venues will again

be a real issue for the MJC (Puvanenthiran, 2014). Although a new Bennetts Lane jazz club will be opening, it will be run by a new consortium with no guarantee of a continued relationship with the MJC (Dwyer, 2015). The MJC will have to establish a new concert series in a new venue without the infrastructure that *Bennetts* has provided. Starting over creates all the same problems that the MJC experienced when shifting venues from the *Glasshouse* to *Chez Jazz* or the *HotHouse*. Despite having learned how to better handle this change from having changing venues so many times, the inevitable problem of promoting a new venue and confusing audiences is not something that can be addressed so easily.

## **Jazz Coordination**

The Jazz Coordination program that played a large part in creating the modern jazz scene in Melbourne has failed several times. Isaacs (2003) argues that when a scene no longer needs a jazz co-ordination program it is a sign of a thriving scene, however when the Jazz Coordination program in Victoria finally shut down the roles undertaken by the coordinator were incorporated into the MJC. Thereby all but continuing the coordination duties under a different umbrella organisation and proving that the coordination program was always needed.

These roles included publishing a bi-monthly MJC brochure that provided information about not only MJC events but many other Melbourne jazz events, jazz news, information about grant applications and deadlines, visiting artists, workshops with musicians, and contact information for state and national representatives in the arts. The MJC received a further \$4000 for 'jazz advocacy' to incorporate these new activities; however, this was far less than the cost of the jazz coordinator role and with essentially the same amount of responsibilities.

Martin was able to successfully incorporate the new jazz advocacy role into his duties at the MJC as he had experience as the Victorian Jazz Coordinator. Martin was the Victorian Jazz Coordinator for six months before one of the many times the position was defunded. After Martin's short stint as coordinator the program was once again established with a committee that was made up with a majority of trad players. This

committee eventually performed so poorly that the Australia Council asked the committee to return the funding, which was an unprecedented move. A few years after this disastrous event Martin was part of the new Victorian Jazz Development program which replaced the Jazz Coordinators program. This was position funded for a day a week until the National Jazz Coordination program was cut and the roles that Martin assumed were incorporated into the MJC.

## Overseas and interstate Musicians

The MJC provided one of the only ways for returning expatriate musicians to present and disseminate music that they had studied and learned overseas. For example, musicians such as Paul Grabowsky, Bruce Cale, and Jeff Pressing all presented MJC concerts during the 1980s after periods of living and studying overseas. The MJC concurrently provided a venue where potentially new influences and ideas from overseas could be absorbed by local musicians. New influences and the transmission of ideas were one possible way that music in Melbourne could be kept from being stagnant. Exchange of musical ideas was one possible way to continue to progress new and interesting music and to keep the direction of influence bipartisan.

Interstate bands provided something new to for local musicians and audiences to see in the early 1980s. Larger audiences would attend these concerts because they were seeing and hearing something new, interesting, and informative as well as entertaining. The MJC presented Groups from Sydney such as *The Benders* who played in Melbourne in 1984, and featured players who would eventually forge national and worldwide reputations. *Benders* members Lloyd Swanton and Chris Abrahams, along with drummer Tony Buck, would form one of Australia's most successful improvising groups *The Necks*. *The Benders* had a large impact on Melbourne musicians because they were such a technically impressive band. Martin remembers being impressed by Andrew Gander, Chris Abrahams, Lloyd Swanton and Jason

Morphett who he thought were all on a superior level to the Melbourne players at the time.

The MJC, counter similar organisations like the *Sydney Improvised Music Association* (SIMA) who only presented a small number of Melbourne artists, was always open to promoting interstate artists. In its first year of operation the MJC promoted four interstate bands, *Great White Noise* and *The Benders* from Sydney, as well as *Schmoe & Co* from Adelaide and *Mark Simmonds Space Society Orchestra* from Sydney, out of a total of twelve concerts. Many from Sydney had an idea of superiority placing Sydney at the apex of the Australian jazz hierarchy. For example this strange and contradictory quote by Eric Myers helps to encapsulate some of the ways in which many from Sydney assumed superiority:

*“[As] a Sydneysider [who] is not intimately acquainted with jazz in other areas of Australia ... One thing is clear, however: Sydney is the New York of Australia ...”* (Myers, 1981, *Jazz Magazine* p41)

This is an unfortunate choice of words as Eric Myers was the National Jazz Coordinator for many years.

The idea that interstate groups should not be promoted because the best musicians already reside and play regularly in your local scene fosters insularity and

stifles development. To counter this mentality Martin tried to ensure collaboration with interstate artists that would significantly improved the output of the Victorian jazz scene. The MJC was always open to the possibility for any interstate performers to play in Melbourne. The MJC organized concerts by interstate musicians that were often in a new context and with new collaborations with Melbourne players. This was a significant difference between the way that Martin and the MJC approached developing the local jazz scene and the way that SIMA approached similar growth.

By setting up interstate musicians to collaborate and play with local players, the MJC aided in the cross-fertilisation of musical ideas and concepts between the states and created stronger social and interpersonal bonds between the players. Not only was there a transmission of ideas and music between the states but also between genres as demonstrated by both Bruce Cale and Jeff Pressing who bridged gaps between the genres of jazz, classical, and world music.

## **The financial and personal cost of running the MJC**

There is very little financial motivation for Martin to continue running the MJC. Financially, Martin would have been in a much more secure position than he is now if he had chosen to work as a full time high school music teacher. It is only recently, as Martin has gotten older, that he has considered one of the primary reasons for his lack of financial security was his lifelong devotion to the MJC. Two issues have caused this financial situation. Firstly; Martin has never pushed for a salary increase for himself, and secondly; the MJC has been contractually bound to pay musicians union rates. Musician's rates have increased every year but the grant money has stayed the same, so rather than cut performances from the budget, Martin has not increased his own salary so that musicians can always be paid a fair rate for their work.

For the first ten years of the MJC Martin promoted jazz in Victoria without taking payment for his work. When Lee McIver retired from his position as the Victorian Jazz Coordinator he suggested to Arts Victoria that they would be better off putting the funding for the Victorian Jazz Coordinator position into the MJC and that Martin should finally receive a wage. Arts Victoria stipulated that some of this funding increase would go towards a part time position within the MJC, whether this was Martin or someone new.

The opportunities that the MJC afforded Martin to play the music he loved was the motivation that kept him running the organisation. In the early 1980s there was a

scarcity of gigs and the MJC provided one way in which Martin's band *Odwala*, and later other bands such as *Jump Monk*, could play and develop their sound to eventually become well established bands. Martin was keen on fostering any personal opportunities to develop as a musician through playing more concerts to live audiences. There was no consideration at this early stage, or perhaps even any recognition, of the toll that the many hours spent organising these concerts would impact upon Martin's personal practice routine and ability to play his instrument.

The contradiction is that Martin got into promoting modern jazz to improve his own playing, but eventually spent so much time on the promotional side that it reduced his ability to play. As the bureaucratic demands of the MJC became greater Martin found himself falling further and further away from playing modern jazz to the point that he eventually struggled to find the time to practice. Now the only opportunity Martin has to play the saxophone is through his teaching work with students.

## Running of the MJC

Through the interview process with Martin Jackson, some of the funding and operational issues within the MJC became apparent. These issues only revealed themselves as a result of the in-depth interview process and mainly arise from financial side of the MJC and the personal sacrifice of Martin Jackson in running the MJC and form a large part of the conclusions of this thesis.

Should Martin retire from his position at the MJC it would be almost impossible to find someone to take over at his current remuneration level. If the MJC were to hire a professional arts administrator they would essentially lose half of their budget in paying a professionals wage. For example in 2009 SIMA placed an advertisement to hire an Administration and Development Officer for two days a week at \$18,000 to \$22,000 per year which would have been a large portion of the roughly \$37,000 the MJC received at the time from the Australia Council.

As the sole manager of the MJC, Martin has developed arts management and administration skills on the job through trial and error. Specialist Arts Management degrees are offered by many Universities such as Deakin University, RMIT, Western Australia Academy of the Performing Arts, and the University of Melbourne. A tertiary qualified arts manager would have formal training and skills in financial management and growth that could be focused on operating an arts organisation such as the MJC. Yet because there was never a budget to hire someone with these specialised skills,

Martin has had to learn these skills on the job and this has occupied so much of Martin's time and resources he has essentially stopped playing modern jazz, the reason he started the MJC in the first place.

On top of the demanding task of learning bookkeeping and administration, the areas that an Administration and Development Officer would look after, there have been other personal and financial hurdles over the years. To keep things running smoothly, with the minimum amount of fuss and time available, Martin has neglected to pay himself workcover and superannuation, instead classifying himself as a consultant to reduce the impact on time, money, and to increase the number of concerts the MJC could offer. Audits are also a time consuming annual obligation and must always be completed before the MJC is able to apply for the next year's grants. Martin often neglected his own tax return until after the MJC's Audits, tax returns, financial statements, acquittals, and reports were completed.

Martin's skills as a musician and promoter, familiar with the intricate cultural and social workings of the Australian jazz scene, were enough to establish the MJC as a major voice for modern jazz in the early 1980s. However the MJC's need for funding from the Australia Council and Arts Victoria increased the accounting and management skills required to manage an arts promoting group, skills which Martin had to learn. These days it is no longer necessary for the employees of such organisations to be involved in the creation of the music they are promoting.

*“A ‘world’ as I understand it ... consists of real people who are trying to get things done, largely by getting other people to do things that will assist them in their project.”*

(Becker 2008, p379)

Much of the specialised work needed to run a promoting organisation such as the MJC was provided by local artists with the required skill sets. Saxophonists Adam Simmons did the MJC accounting on MYOB, Tim Wilson managed the MJC website, and Anton Dellecca provided the graphic design for the MJC brochures. The work provided by these musicians was paid for however they only charged ‘mates rates’ rather than full commercial rates. However, the generosity of individual musicians could not be relied on year after year as this is an unsustainable business model that eventually alienates those providing the services once they sense any obligation to provide their services. This highlights just how untenable much of the MJC’s funding situation is, as the MJC relied upon volunteers and could not sustain itself if it was to operate 100% as a business, which is what economic rationalism and the funding model from the Australia Council requires.

*“every art, then, rests of an extensive division of labor. That is obviously true in the case of the performing arts.”* (Becker 2008, p13)

With a limited amount of money to promote concerts it has been a hard task for Martin to get people involved at a volunteer level within the MJC. Partly this is because the MJC has a policy that musicians would only be offered one gig a year as a band, and thus offering very little real benefit in joining the MJC as a volunteer. Contrary to the MJC, volunteer musicians that were involved in the larger festivals such as the *Melbourne Fringe Jazz Festival* or the now-defunct *Half Bent* festival would get more performance opportunities because of their level of direct input in the organisation of the festivals. Similarly, musicians volunteer for the *Melbourne International Jazz Festival* because there are direct benefits such as becoming a minder for an international artists or free festival passes that would usually equate to hundreds of dollars. Because the MJC is a small organisation that tries to spread its services in an equitable manner, there is little opportunity for volunteers to experience similar benefits.

Martin describes the MJC as a benevolent dictatorship that has developed due to the lessons learned from the MIA and Jazz coordination collapses. As discussed in the *Jazz Coordination* section of the previous chapter, the Jazz Coordination program was dominated by committee members with a trad jazz bias and the MIA was similarly taken over by a committee that pushed a single agenda. In the case of the Jazz Coordination program originally Martin suggested a low joining fee of \$5 so that more people could be involved and the process would be more democratic. Instead a large amount of trad jazz focused people joined and took over, and subverted the whole Jazz Coordination program which eventually led to a loss of funding.

The MJC now has a board made up of members of the local modern jazz community but is not particularly democratic as only the board has voting rights. Anyone can join the MJC as a member without voting rights, and the MJC relies to a large extent on membership fees to support the running of the MJC. The voting limitations were put in place to protect against a take-over bid, such as the ones that happened within the Jazz Coordination program.

The MJC would continue to run if it ever lost its government funding. The structure of the MJC would be in the same format, although it would be unable to guarantee pay for musicians for each gig. This is in stark contrast to opera and orchestra companies throughout the country whose entire structure and livelihood would be changed dramatically if they were no longer funded through the government. The MJC is ultimately supported by the musicians themselves who have few outlets for their music and creativity and who must create their own opportunities to perform.

Contrary to these large companies, which are completely supported through Arts patronage, the MJC has a history of being able to change and adapt. Yet, as the MJC has developed in this environment, it has struggled to change into an arts business as funding models require, as it has necessarily retained much of its grassroots style campaigning and organization in order to survive changes and funding cuts. Ultimately, the MJC has survived to this point through the dedication of Martin Jackson.

## Curatorial aspects of the MJC

*“Wherever an art world exists, it defines the boundaries of acceptable art, recognizing those who produce the work it can assimilate as artists entitled to full membership, and denying membership and its benefits to those whose work it cannot assimilate”* (Becker 2008, p226)

The MJC's curatorial choices and the basis for selection of concerts reveal much about the organisation itself, and of the modern jazz scene in Melbourne. To an extent, merely being in a position to make curatorial choices lends credence to the argument that the MJC is a cultural gatekeeper. Many of the choices made by the MJC are purely pragmatic however and in many aspects the gatekeeper role can be seen as an undesirable consequence of the necessary choices that any arts organisation must make.

Becker argues that “some members of a society can control the application of the honorific term art, so not everyone is in a position to have the advantages associated with it” (Becker 2008, p37) and this could certainly be applied to Martin in his role at the MJC. However, the curatorial decisions that Martin makes are not so simple. Curatorial decisions that the MJC must consider can include many facets such as whether certain artists need the encouragement that a performance of an MJC concert can offer, often these are young and emerging artists. Other times decisions have been made to help

struggling musicians, who for example may have cleaned themselves up after an addiction problem, or a lengthy period of absence from the jazz scene. Lastly the MJC does not offer concerts to those who it sees as already having enough playing opportunities. For example, when Steve Sedergreen was programming concerts at *Dizzy's Jazz Club* in Richmond he was would be playing there weekly and as a result Steve would rarely receive an MJC gig. Another example is Andy Sugg who had a regular night at the *Cape Lounge* on Brunswick St and might miss out on an MJC concert because of his regular playing opportunities. Martin tried "to slice the pie as equitably as possible by taking all the factors into account" with the MJC but he recognises that there is "always going to be somebody who is disgruntled". With only a limited number of concerts the MJC can present each year, there will always be significant jazz musicians, some who have had grants from the Australian Council or Arts Victoria, that do not make the cut for one reason or another. Martin argues that "[this] tells you the there was enough depth in the program, because some of those people missed out".

Aside from attempting to be equitable, there are other curatorial considerations that the MJC must consider. The MJC believes they have to continually introduce playing opportunities for new and young musicians so that the MJC, and modern jazz music in Melbourne, can stay musically relevant. This becomes difficult as the number of performances grow and because of the larger amount of new graduates and skilled young musicians coming from the tertiary jazz courses at places like Monash University

and the Victorian College of the Arts. These days there is a much larger pool of musicians vying for a piece of the 'performance equity', and this is compounded by the fact that older jazz musician continue to play until they cannot physically do so anymore. However, it is important to continually point out that the MJC's curatorial decisions are not based on profit.

On the other hand, the prestige imparted, and the cultural cachet of being in the scene that is implied by an MJC concert exacerbates the idea that the MJC is a cultural gatekeeper. This is supported by Howard Becker in *Outsiders* (1963), Robert Stebbins in *The jazz community* (1964), and further argued by Whiteoak in that the jazz musician is a 'deviant, and musical elitist, "pitted against the norms of society and the clients or 'squares' (mostly he) is forced to play for to make a living" (Whiteoak 2003, p24). Therefore by supporting a niche market, and being one of the limited number of organisations that support this market the MJC is necessarily a cultural gatekeeper.

If a musician has not played an MJC concert in a while there are also inevitably questions as to the reasons for the absence. Very rarely the answers offered are that certain artists have enough concerts already and usually the conclusion is that they either are not good enough as a musician, do not play the right music, or are not a part of the 'scene', which furthers the argument for cultural gatekeeping.

## Discussion

Throughout this thesis the research has unearthed the history of the MJC. The research has revealed how Martin Jackson began his journey as a young musician with a love of modern jazz and how he found that to increase his performance opportunities, and to become a better saxophone player, he had to become what Becker (2008, p235) calls a 'maverick' with a need to start creating his own performance opportunities. As Martin increased his involvement in the promoting side of modern jazz in Melbourne he gradually became less involved in producing and playing the music that initially inspired him to start promoting. Through investigating Martin Jackson's history, and not solely the history of the MJC's, this ironic and ultimately discouraging cycle was revealed. Those who started organisations to encourage, promote, and create performance opportunities in their chosen fields would likely not possess the skills needed to grow such an arts organization. The same lines of investigation revealed that support for arts organisations, especially when they are making a transition towards becoming more commercial and self-sustainable, was not readily available.

This thesis has also found that the MJC worked within existing support structures of the Australia Council, Arts Victoria, and other organisations, and greatly influenced the way in which jazz music was presented in Melbourne. Anecdotally the positive effect of the MJC on the Melbourne modern jazz scene is supported by the experience of some of Melbourne's more established players:

*“[The MJC] encourages musicians from all around the country to come to Melbourne because of the scene, lots of talent in improvised and contemporary music in Melbourne and the jazz coop is at the centre of it.” Allan Browne (The Age, 2013 “Jazz Coop Lures Musos to Melbourne”)*

*“Lots of different acts, don’t have the same thing twice, spots for original and new groups, other musicians go to coop gigs, part of being a community.” Tamara murphy (ibid, 2013.)*

*“The MJC has been a lifebuoy in a sea of funding cuts, musician misrepresentation and of venues [and] club owners with agendas” Barney McAll (ibid, 2013).*

*“I’m quite certain I wouldn’t be the musician I am without the MJC” Andrea Keller (ibid, 2013).*

More quantifiably, however, the growth of the MJC program is evidence that it has been able to influence the way in which jazz music in Melbourne was presented and through its curatorial role has been able to offer musicians performance opportunities that may have been non-existent beforehand. The argument that the MJC has positively impacted the growth of modern jazz in Melbourne is supported by data from the promotional material, such as flyers and concert programmes, uncovered during

investigation. This evidence that demonstrates that the amount of concerts the MJC promoted each year increased from 12 concerts in 1983 and 1984. In 1993 the agreement between the MJC and Bennetts meant that Bennetts opened for an additional night to incorporate the MJC concerts, increasing the overall amount of modern jazz played in Melbourne, and this meant that by 1993 the amount of MJC concerts had increased to nearly a concert per week.

Lastly, the MJC has created social opportunities for musicians to hear, collaborate, and disseminate ideas with local, interstate, and international musicians. Many of these opportunities would not have happened without the MJC and are a vital part in creating a vibrant scene.

*“Greater interaction between Australia and New Zealand is something I’ve always hoped for ... it would be very beneficial for the players and audiences in both countries”* (Adrian Jackson, *The Age*, 6 April 1984).

## **How the research supports the hypothesis.**

The hypothesis that the *Melbourne Jazz Cooperative* (MJC) was able to work with existing organisations and funding bodies to positively influence the way the contemporary jazz scene is supported throughout this thesis is supported by the data. The data shows that as the MJC has grown, so has the Melbourne jazz scene, through providing opportunities for musicians to play and develop their craft. As the MJC has increased the amount of concerts it presented each year, new events such as *Wangaratta Jazz Festival*, *The Melbourne International Jazz Festival*, *The Melbourne Womens' Jazz Festival*, *The Half Bent Festival*, and the *Montsalvat Jazz Festival* have all concurrently arisen, attesting to the increasing vibrancy of the Melbourne jazz scene. To link the emergence of these new festivals directly to the influence of the MJC however would be another subject for investigation.

The MJC has also supported the development of young and emerging jazz artists, as well as the continued development of more established artists. By fostering collaborations from interstate and overseas artists, the MJC has supported the dissemination of ideas and knowledge through the modern jazz scene in Melbourne. The MJC has also supported collaborations, or in some cases directly influenced and created collaborations for groups that have gone on to become nationally recognised, such as the Browne/Costello/Grabowsky group.

However, what this thesis has found, over and above documenting the history of Martin Jackson and the MJC, was that the financial, funding, management and curatorial issues of running an arts organisation in Australia could negatively impact the individuals who chose to instigate and maintain the organisation in the first place. It has highlighted the lack of support for arts organisations that are undertaking a transition from a position of relying on the support of government to one of becoming a commercially self-sustaining business. Arts organisations such as the MJC, could not afford to pay its staff a competitive wage to ensure the organisations, and the arts scenes, longevity. The need for professional arts management expertise became evident as the years went on, and effectively Martin had to learn these skills on the job, to the detriment of his development as a musician. The initial lack of professional arts management skills were also evident when Martin Jackson, Tony Gould, and Keith Hounslow started the *AJJA* record label and discovered they were unable to continue as they lacked both the time required to dedicate to running the business and the required skill set.

This thesis has shown how the ethnographic work of Becker (2008) can be applied to gain an understanding of how an individual artist can function within an arts scene. Many of the aspects of the MJC can be understood in the 'art worlds' framework that Becker has described and Becker's concept of a 'maverick' is particularly pertinent in a niche scene like the Melbourne modern jazz scene, and this is also supported by the work of Whiteoak (2003). The history of the creation of the MJC shows how

'mavericks' create organisations to support their work when no existing opportunities are adequate. Reiterating the concept from an earlier chapter on 'Venues and Organisations';

*"Mavericks typically have such difficulties realizing their works or ... getting them to audiences and critics. They succeed, when they do, by circumventing the need for art world institutions. They may, for instance, create their own organizations to replace those which will not work with them." (Becker 2008, p235)*

The persistence and longevity of the MJC, and the passion and dedication of jazz musicians to seek out venues and develop the scene shows hope for the future of modern jazz in Melbourne.

## Conclusion

To contribute to new knowledge in the field this thesis has researched the history of Martin Jackson and the Melbourne Jazz Cooperative, an area of Australian jazz history that has been previously undocumented. This has been achieved through using research methodologies based upon in-depth unstructured interviews and frameworks for understanding arts communities based upon the work of Howard Becker (2008). Participant observation, situated in Nettl's work on research methodologies (2005), also formed part of the interpretation of events and conclusions, as the Author is an active musician in the Melbourne jazz scene, and to suggest that there is no Author bias would be insulting to the reader. To support the quantitative data, qualitative data such as concert numbers, articles, flyers, programs, and reviews were collected adding to the tapestry of methodologies used. Also included in this thesis is a background history on Jazz in Australia that supports the conclusions of Australian historians Bruce Johnson and John Whiteoak that Australian jazz has a distinctive cultural history that needs to be viewed through its own cultural lens and that is far from a pale mimicry of American jazz and jazz history.

Finally, this thesis presents an account of how an individual artist can function within an arts world, and how they can simultaneously be influenced by, and influence this arts world simultaneously. The conclusion that funding and support models for organisations such as the MJC should be reconsidered, as support is lacking for the

development of business skills that allow organisations to survive and become 'economically rational' when funding is reduced or cut, shows how individual artists are influenced by economic and organisational factors of an arts world. The curatorial choices displayed by an individual artist running an arts organization, such as the MJC, show how they can influence the art world in return.

## **Main Findings**

The main findings in this thesis demonstrate how an individual artist, Martin Jackson, functioned within the art world of the Melbourne jazz scene during the 1980's. This thesis shows how an individual artist was able to build an organisation through negotiating with arts funding bodies, to increase his own performance opportunities. However, Martins personal artistic goals were negatively influenced by the economic realities of maintaining the Melbourne Jazz Cooperative.

Despite receiving increases in funding from the Australia Council and from Arts Victoria, the MJC budget was largely spent on promoting and presenting concerts rather than on internal administrative and development costs. Martin was not paid any remuneration until much later in the MJC's history and he personally sacrificed much of his time and personal musical development to ensure that the MJC always paid the musicians the proper rates. Instead of employing a full time arts management professional, Martin continued to manage the MJC himself which kept the administrative costs down, as employing a professional would have had drastically cut the budget for

concerts. There was little support for organisations like the MJC who needed to make the transition to a self-sustaining organization. The MJC needed to dedicate time and money in developing its management back office, or in hiring a professional to do these jobs, so that the organisations could better support the arts in the future, but was unable to do so because it devoted its budget to presenting music. There was no support and planning for the growth, sustainability, or stability of organisations such as the MJC as funding was only for the immediate year's concerts.

Lastly, this thesis supports the research of John Whiteoak (2003) that Australian jazz has a distinctive cultural history that is far from a pastiche of American jazz. Australias jazz history should be examined through the lens of Australian culture rather than compared to American developments. These changes in perspective need to be supported at all levels of institutional learning as it informs both Melbournes, and Australias, music making.

## **Future areas of research**

There are three main areas of future research that can build upon the research conducted in this thesis. These are:

### **1. The history of Melbourne Jazz Cooperative post-1993.**

The scope of this thesis was limited so as to be able to obtain results, yet more research into the MJC would be beneficial. Particularly now that Arts Victoria has removed its funding and with the closure of Bennetts Lane in 2015, as this is a very turbulent time for the MJC.

### **2. The history of tertiary institutions in Melbourne and how they influenced the development of local modern jazz music.**

The 1980s were a time of great development and growth in jazz in Melbourne and it was not only the MJC that encouraged this growth. Tertiary institutions such as the Victorian College of the Arts played a part in establishing the jazz community, and the work of Brian Brown, both inside and outside of the VCA, would be a worthy subject of further study. Further, contemporary universities could better incorporate the Australian experience of jazz, rather than rely upon the American developments as a basis for their courses.

### **3. How funding bodies could better support the long term and ongoing stability of arts organisations.**

One of the main findings of this thesis was the personal sacrifice of time and financial security that Martin made to ensure that the MJC was able to support musicians in Melbourne to the highest degree. Research could be conducted into how to better support organisations such as the MJC so that personal sacrifice of this level need not be made in order to support fellow musicians. Martin has sacrificed, on top of everything else, his musicianship which was his passion that established the MJC.

#### **Final Words**

Despite all the hurdles and financial issues raised in this thesis, the MJC has survived and will continue to survive and support the modern jazz community in Melbourne. Howard Becker provides a succinct summary:

*“... the history of art deals with innovators and innovations that won organizational victories, succeeding in creating around themselves the apparatus of an art world, mobilizing enough people to cooperate in regular ways that sustained and furthered their idea” (Becker 2008, p301)*

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