WORKING MUSICIANS

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FREMANTLE ARTS CENTRE PRESS

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Introduction
I

The text for this book came out of 1985 'Art and Working Life' project funded by the (then) Literature and Community Arts Boards of the Australia Council, and the Western Australian Arts Council (now Department for the Arts).

In the original project a writer and photographer worked together amongst the membership of the Perth Branch of the Musicians' Union to produce a statement about the 'lives of working musicians in Perth'. The funding allowed for six months' wages. A series of articles with photographs were published in *Music Maker* magazine and then the photographer and I parted company.

Stephen Smith, whose photographs accompany this text, came into the project at a point at which I had completed my research and was writing a first draft. He started with some limited funds left over from the grant and has pursued the project ever since. He was instrumental in getting the Fremantle Arts Centre Press interested in publishing. He set out to find the images which could complement the words of the musicians which make up the substantial body of this text, and in this sense the book is his work.

There are more than nine hundred members of the Musicians' Union in Western Australia. In Perth, on any night of the week and particularly at weekends, you can take your pick of live music from reggae and rock and roll to classical, with everything else in between. The brief from the union was to work amongst its members and write a story about thier working lives. How was this to be done?

In the beginning I adopted an *ad hoc* approach. I spent a couple of months going out to see musicians at work in their workplaces. I went to pubs, rehearsal rooms, concert halls and more pubs. I gained strong impressions of the remarkable diversity of music in Perth. I sat in on the rehearsals for a production of *Die Fledermaus* by the W.A. Arts Orchestra, watching the process from beginning to end. I conducted 'preliminary interviews' with the five principal players in the orchestra and several other musicians. From the transcripts of these interviews I set out to derive a methodology which arose from the ways in which they told me their stories. I wanted to know if there was some kind of generalised structure to the 'working life' of a musician.

I devised a questionnaire of some forty or fifty questions which I circulated by post to musicians who agreed to be interviewed. I spent four months gathering seventy or more hours of taped interviews from which the text of this book is derived. As far as possible I have tried to allow the musicians to speak for themselves, but these are edited rather than verbatim transcripts.

What makes a musician? What do they do? How do they feel about what they do? What are some of the experiences which stick in their minds?

At first glance, most musical lives originate in some formative early experience. The basic motor skills required to play an instrument are only learnt by endless repetition. Theoretical knowledge must be tied to a somatic ability to instantly articulate musical thought through the action of fingers upon keys, strings or buttons; breath upon diaphram; mouth upon reed or mouthpiece; feet upon pedals. This ability, generally, must be gained by the age of ten or fifteen, at which time a decision is made to pursue music either as a vocation or avocation. There then follows a period of training or preparation; a 'break' into semi-professional or professional playing; then a settling into musical work with its various hopes, fears, successes, failures, co-operation and disputes.

These are some common aspects of the *lives* of musicians. But what of the *working* life? What constitutes the daily work of a musician?

To a degree it is possible to generalise. Most musicians do some or all of the following things in a day's work: 'maintenance' practice (keeping up motor skills); learning and practising new material alone; learning and practising new material with other musicians; rehearsing with fellow musicians; setting up for performances (or 'gigs'); rehearsing in the performance situation to get used to the acoustics; performing; packing up from performances; unwinding after the event (allowing jangled nerves to calm).

We considered whether to structure the book around the notion of 'A day in the life of...' It was impossible because there is such a range of work experiences.

The term 'musician' or 'working musician' applies to a diverse group of people, occupying a wide range of social positions. It is possible, however, to distinguish between two broad groups of people: the salaried players, and the rest. In Perth, the vast majority of salaried musicians are in the orchestras. At the time of researching, there were two orchestras in Perth: the Western Australian Symphony Orchestra, and the Western Australian Arts Orchestra. Since then they have amalgamated, making a group of approximately 80 to 100 musicians in Perth who are on salaries, with paid leave, superannuation, an industrial award and all the other trappings of 'public servants' (including the sense of alienation generated by working for a large bureaucratic organization). Apart from a small handful of players in restaurants, night clubs and theatres, the rest of the membership of the Union are casual workers, self-employed, teachers, or 'part-time professional' with a regular 'day job' to keep them and their families clothed, fed and housed.

No-one forces musicians to be musicians. The frequent complaint that 'no-one understands how hard we work, or even that we don't need to be paid,' disguises a truth about music: musicians *love* performing. Many musicians might wish to engage you in passionate debate about the creativity required by their 'art'. Others might point out that it is only really composers who 'create' music: musicians are in fact at best, skilled interpreters, at worst, technicians, automata for producing the correct notes. For some, it is a vocation, for others an avocation; for some a job, for others a chore. For all, there are moments at least, of passion.

The Musicians' Union is a Federal union with state branches. By law any person who earns money from playing music is entitled to join the union. This has not always been the case. Prior to the establishment of the Federal union there were a variety of State organisations. Western Australia had the Professional Musicians' Association which saw itself as a guardian of musical standards and accepted members on the basis of their musicianship. At the beginning of this century such a position was relatively easy to enforce because the same musicians who did orchestral work also played in dance bands and they were all well-trained.

The arrival of the jazz era was the first step toward the diversification of the music business. In Sydney there was a major split between the jazz musicians and the 'legit' musicians. The jazz musos were barred from joining the Sydney Musicians' Union in 1919 and had to set up their own headquarters in the pub across the road. Eventually the split was healed and the jazz musos were allowed into the union but the animosity between the two groups remained. Except in some cases of musicians working as employees, there is no compulsion on jazz or rock and roll musicians to join the union and many still do not do so because they see the union as irrelevant to them.

Perth has always been different because of its isolation and the relative smallness of its orchestras. For years the State Secretary of the union was Harry Bluck, a jazz pianist. When Harry retired he was replaced by Peter Woodward. An anonymous letter sent to all members of the union at the time described Woodward as a 'communist ratbag' and called upon members to nominate a 'non-politcal' musician to the post. In the event he was elected unopposed, and was re-elected unopposed in 1987.

Under Woodward the Perth Branch of the union has taken an activist, progressive (some would say subversive) role in promoting the interests of its members. The Branch negotiated a State award (the first of its kind in Australia) for musicians who work as employees. Whilst unsuccessful in its attempts to exert influence on the Federal branch of the union with regard to the salaries of the W.A.S.O. players, the Branch has taken an active role in disputes between the orchestral players and their respective managements. Perth was the only branch of the union to make a submission to the Tribe Enquiry into Orchestral Resources in Australia. The Branch employed a Research Officer for two years to investigate the impact of new technology on musicians, which resulted, amongst other things, in a detailed submission to the Broadcasting Tribunal Enquiry into the third commercial Television license. It has sponsored Jazz and Rock and Roll co-ordinators who have encouraged many rock and roll, jazz and pop musicians to joint the union. The Branch runs a very active booking agency for its members and a benevolent fund to help musicians who fall on hard times. It ventured into publishing by placing its newsletter in a commercial magazine (*Music Maker*, an arrangement subsequently dropped for financial reasons), and sponsored the Art and Working Life project under which this book was written.

Woodward grew up in the bush, where he became interested in folk music, singing around the campfires at night. The seeds of a future Musicians' Union secretary were sown under the West Australian night sky as 'Woodie' sang with his mates. I have chosen to start this 'oral history' with some of Woodward's story, in his own words.

John Robinson

II

'I went to W.A.I.T. to do a geophysics degree because out in the bush everybody who were getting their arses kicked were workers and everybody that were kicking their arses were geophysicists. I decided it was about time I started kicking arses rather than getting mine kicked.

I got arrested one day out at W.A.I.T. I had a bit of a dispute with the coppers about putting yellow stickers on students' cars and I ended up in gaol. The Student Guild came and bailed me out so I started to develop a political interest in things of a left nature. That was the ideological thing that I could match to my own personal working experience. I never did very well academically in the end because I developed a greater interest in politics.

I started working for the Union in 1974. At that time Harry Bluck was the secretary of the Union. The people in the rock and roll business were dissatisfied with the role of the Union as they perceived it and they wanted an organiser. The rock committee offered me the job and I started working as a part-time organiser.

I used to have a big red beard and a kangaroo dog. I sometimes wore a big fur coat. I had long hair and a black cap with a red star on it and I started gettting out into the rock and roll area.

I separated from my wife in 1975 and just spent more and more time working for the Union. I became a sort of advocate for the Union. I cleaned up my image a bit and when Harry retired I stood for election for secretary. An attempt was made to smear me and get up another candidate but nothing came of it and I was elected unopposed.

I started playing in folk clubs in about 1976. I became known as a solo blues performer, playing the old-style 20's and 30's blues and singing. It is funny because I started out fancying myself as a player but seemed to get a reputation more as a singer of that old-style blues.

I worked in a duo for a while and then we formed a band called the Ten-Cent Shooters. We worked the Loaded Dog and Clancy's Tavern, they were our two big nights of the week. I think we still hold the record at the Loaded Dog for the most money ever taken over the bar in one night.

That band split up some years ago and now I mostly play in a duo. I don't have time to play much and I don't play at home at all. I just do the odd gig which I enjoy to do.

As far as the industrial side of the working conditions of musicians goes there are some

legal problems that we have in relation to the fact that industrial legislation doesn't sit well on the shoulders of the music industry and that is a serious impediment now and historically to getting protection of musicians' working conditions before the established industrial tribunal. It's always been a terrible problem for the members of this Union.

Those legal issues have got very widespread ramifications into areas such as workers' compensation and a national superannuation scheme if one comes up. We always have one leg in and one leg out of the industrial system due to the legal niceties of the jurisdiction of the Industrial Commission. The Union has to sometimes assume the responsibilities of a union and sometimes act as if it were a guild and do the same sorts of things that a guild would do to enforce peoples' rights in contract.

Allied to that is the issue of technology and the overseas, chiefly American and British, control of our entertainment industry and the cultural tastes of our community. In Australia the dissemination of entertainment by technological means has created a very narrow view of the world and very narrow cultural expectation amongst people as to what constitutes acceptable entertainment. I am as much of a Marxist as I have ever been and I believe this is because the control of the media is subject to commercial and not social considerations. They programme it at the lowest common denominator of peoples' desires and that has now reached the stage where people have had created in them the expectation of what they are going to see by way of entertainment and anything that doesn't conform to that is heavily disadvantaged, like jazz and folk and non-mainstream sorts of performance, plus the terrible impact of things like video and disco.

Fifty years ago if you wanted to hear music you had to see a musician. People forget that you could never hear any music unless there was a musician actually standing there doing it. Now everybody is bombarded by music all the time. It has in some ways devalued the occupation of musician and more than that it has created in musicians a need to climb onto the very bandwagon of technological dissemination which has taken their jobs away from them. Its almost like people working in a factory to build robots that are going to do the job of building other robots.

The thing that concerns me most as an official of this Union is a lack of cultural diversity. What the Union has to do now is get into areas of public policy rather than trying to solve

things at the grass roots level out on the job because the influences at work are larger.

We need to see the development of an effective Community Arts Programme in Australia and start to re-value live entertainment and to try and offset this narrow cultural expectation amongst people. We need changes of public policy in relation to broadcasting and television to force them to be more socially responsible. We need protection. Every industry in Australia has some protection except ours. It is cheaper to dump thousands and thousands of overseas records on the Australian market than it is to make local records.

The worst thing about it is that these are not issues that are generally appreciated by musicians. They are too busy trying to survive in a narrower and narrower opportunity market and they are being forced to comply with demands that artistically many of them find unacceptable.

Culturally we are like the 52nd state of the United States. We have to provide people with a more diverse range of experiences which they will want to reflect in some sort of live situation. People have got to be encouraged to get out from in front of television sets and get into watching some sort of live performance. I believe that it is a valid cultural experience to which people ought to be subjected and in the long-term continued exposure to technological entertainment is alienating. It is an alienating activity taken alone. In my view it is not culturally or socially desirable. It creates a whole society alienated from each other because they are all sitting in front of the television set at night.'

Peter Woodward
Musicians' Union Secretary

GETTING STARTED

I grew up with music in the house. We always had the ABC radio on, even when I was a little kid. I hardly heard any pop music till I was a teenager. There was a piano in the house and I had piano lessons from the age of eight onwards and I took up the viola at the age of fourteen and I did the two instruments together for a while. I got into some really good master classes with an excellent teacher in Melbourne and developed a real interest in string playing and got involved with youth orchestras.

I went overseas with the Melbourne Youth Orchestra in 1977, to London and Berlin. When I finished high school I went to the Victorian College of the Arts. Toward the end of my first year I got some casual work in the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and from then on I worked both at the college and in the M.S.O. It meant that I did a diploma and not a degree course but the orchestral experience I got was well worth that sacrifice. You just couldn't attend degree subjects and be working a thirty-hour week in the M.S.O.

When I finished college I decided I didn't just want to keep working on a casual basis, that I really wanted to learn from someone who was a soloist and playing chamber music primarily. I went to New York to study with a lady called Lillian Fuchs. I found out about her because she wrote quite a lot of music for viola and I really liked the pieces that she wrote. I was in New York for a couple of years and did a post-graduate diploma at the Manhattan School of Music.

I went over there on a student visa and did hardly any work because one of the things I found with my time in Melbourne was that studying and working meant you couldn't devote your time to studying properly. The work scene in Australia on viola is so full that even from an early age you were rushing from one rehearsal to the next. There's a shortage of violas in amateur orchestras, youth orchestras and professional orchestras right throughout the country which means that once you get to any sort of level at all you're involved with these groups.

Going to New York was about curiosity I suppose; a feeling that I hadn't reached my potential yet and that I wouldn't reach it by staying in Australia. The kind of thing I needed was to hear players that were a thousand times better than me on a regular basis and I wouldn't get that in Australia.

It wasn't because I thought I would make a career as a soloist because there are very few viola soloists full time but I'd never want to be ashamed of my playing. That applies whatever orchestra I am playing in. I wouldn't want to cringe every time I play. It's for my own satisfaction really.

Helen Pitcher
Violist

There was no music in my family at all but I sang quite well and a schoolteacher picked that up and started giving me some help with singing lessons. My first experience of listening to music was also at primary school where a teacher brought in some old records of popular classics on the piano. Piano was finally the instrument I was to become proficient on so I think that was quite significant.

There was nothing in my background that would have helped me to get started in music, music wasn't listened to in the house or anything like that so this had quite an effect on me.

After nagging my parents for about two years to start piano lessons they finally relented and let me do some music study for a year but when I went to secondary school I was told I had to stop all that and get on with some serious academic work — maths and science — so I stopped playing the piano for three years.

It wasn't until I was fourteen that I started again. This was the result of me pressuring my parents that this was really what I wanted to do. They had reservations about it because they didn't think it was really much of a career. They were concerned as to whether I would be able to earn a living. Being a working-class family it wasn't part of their scenario. They didn't envisage a daughter becoming a concert pianist. Nothing could be further from their imagination. They did think in terms of teaching being quite a respectable job so it was on that basis they decided to support me in this and to get to music college.

They bought a piano that cost about twenty dollars. It was just horrendous. At school there were two grand pianos in the school hall. I used to turn up at half past seven in the morning with the cleaners mopping up around me and practice. I used to do the same after school. Fortunately nobody seemed to know that was going on or take much interest. So I really lived at school. I had very little music so I used the school library and the public library. When I left home to go to college I had three books of music, one of which was a school prize.

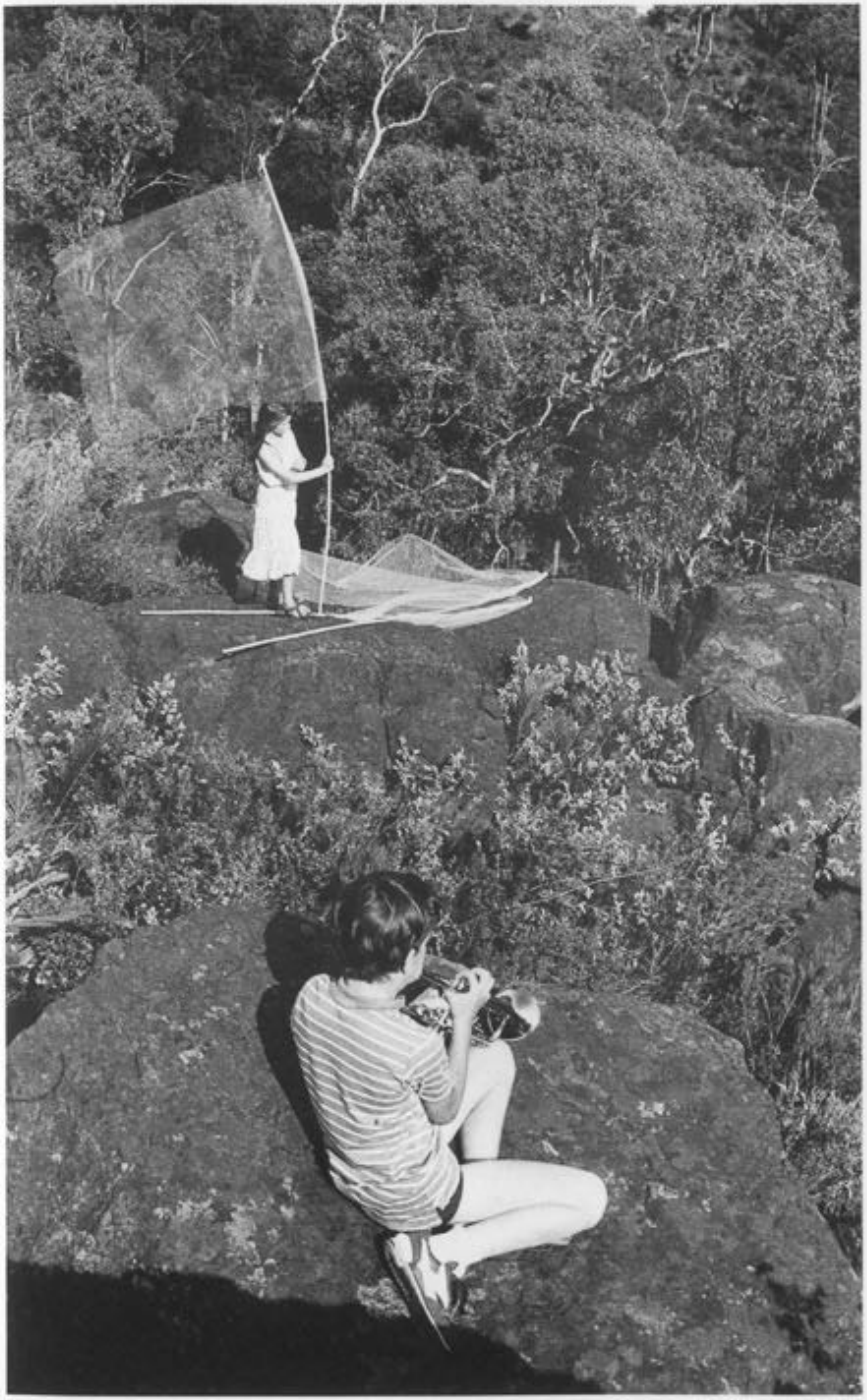
I went to the Royal Manchester College of Music and that was a hell of a shock because I arrived there and saw them all in their Laura Ashley frocks and little patent shoes and suddenly realised I was another planet from these people. I don't think I realised the conflicts that were going to come up in my life as a result of this different background. I was very naive: I really thought everyone was there because they loved music.

People tended to come from upper-middle-class homes with plenty of money. Whereas I would spend my long vacation working in a supermarket or something they would be off to the Salzburg Festival in Europe and gadding around doing further study and obviously enriching their own musical experiences which was a valuable and necessary part of college life I simply didn't have access to.

The class thing really hit me like a sledgehammer. I didn't have any trouble at all with the standard of work. In fact, I did very well with the academic side of things. Socially I found it much more difficult to assimilate. I found myself in conflict with the staff a lot of the time because they had very different values to me, different ideas about where money came from. Things like earning a living from music were never discussed. It was just assumed you had a private income or parents who would keep you afloat until you could earn a crust for yourself.

I didn't have the social connections that other people were able to rely upon to get work. I earned most of my money when I was a student as a teacher. I gave private piano lessons and then when long holidays came I went into other things: I worked as a cinema usherette, sold ice creams, waitressing; various unskilled jobs you could pick up during the holidays.

Su Lloyd
Pianist/Teacher



My parents discovered I had a natural ability on piano at three. From age three till age twelve I didn't have the opportunity of playing because they couldn't afford a piano. The only access I had to a piano was my friend's parents that were down the block, about a mile down the road; they had a piano in their basement, an old upright. I used to go and bother them and play it. That was when they discovered I had the ability. I went downstairs never having had a lesson and just started playing with two hands which was amazing. But they did nothing about it.

When I was fifteen years old at high school I got with a bunch of guys who asked me to play in their band. They gave me a little Nomad organ to play, one of the first portable organs. We did some high school dances and parties and different things. The year that I started in the business was the year the Righteous Brothers released 'You've Lost That Loving Feeling', that was 1966. We played strictly rock and roll, everything that was current and of course stuff from the late fifties and early sixties.

Shortly after that I formed my own band which was a jazz trio. It was piano, drums and trumpet. We did weekend gigs. We were all busy. I was going to college at the time and working full-time. I have always worked very hard but music has always taken up a good thirty to fifty percent of my time.

I graduated from University with a degree in music teaching. The only course that was for performing was for conductors and I just didn't want to be a conductor. I wanted to perform. After two years of teaching I left it and do not intend to go back.

Ric Stern
Entertainer

I started out when I was ten years old, in stomps and clubs and things like that. All I can remember is that I heard music from when I was born and I always sang along. Music just seemed to be the obvious thing to do. It was like I had no choice. That was the way to express myself better than any other way.

I was really good at school but I lost interest completely once I got into music. I distinctly remember going to my mother when I was twelve and telling her that this was what I was going to do for the rest of my life. She thought I was joking, but I am still going...

Steve Tallis
Singer/Songwriter/Entrepreneur

When I was nine I started with a private teacher. Then I went to the convent and had a good teacher there. I think one of the things I value about my time at the convent was that the nun always encouraged my little efforts at composition. Although she never gave any critical comments she always encouraged me, she admired the efforts and that was great. That helped a lot.

My parents also allowed me the freedom to experiment and feel very uninhibited about being creative. I was lucky not to get my knuckles cracked with a knobbly stick for playing wrong notes so I made playing heaps of wrong notes an important part: having the freedom to improvise and be creative. A lot of people have been denied that, they got it knocked out of them very early.

Jeff Carroll
Pianist/Composer/Arranger

I began like a lot of kids, required to go along to lessons and I did that at the ages of seven and eight. I started learning the banjo mandolin and I went for lessons for I suppose two years. That's the only formal instruction I've had. It was very practical. I learned enough to play and read sheet music. I was able to play on the mandolin stuff like Repaz Band and Strauss Waltzes.

I continued playing the mandolin for my own interest for many years until I was about sixteen, when I became more interested in trying to master the guitar. I studied a Tex Morton Home Study course which I pursued on and off for a couple of years, more like a hobby than a formal course of study.

I enjoyed playing the guitar, even though my fingers weren't big enough to handle the fret board, and I enjoyed playing the mandolin too. I went in for little local concerts, played at church socials or old lady's homes and things like that. I played through church groups a lot with an accompanist on piano. I played a lot of marches and popular tunes at the time like April Showers and On Mockingbird Hill.

My brother came home one day from high school with a euphonium from the Salvation Army. Knowing music, I soon learned the correspondence between a note and how to play it on the instrument so I learned how to play the euphonium. I went into teacher training and I had to give a singing lesson. I needed a melody instrument and I couldn't take the euphonium to the lesson. My grandmother had bought me a trumpet, a terrible old thing. On the Thursday I picked it up and on the Friday I gave the lesson. I used the trumpet as the melody instrument and that was more appropriate than the banjo and I suppose it was a challenge so I did it. I've been a trumpeter ever since.

I've always had a split personality. Sometimes I'm a teacher who plays music, sometimes I'm a musician who teaches in the daytime. Sometimes that split personality causes all sorts of problems, all sorts of interesting conflicts and dilemmas.

Murray Swain
Trumpeter/Arranger/Band leader

Well, from the beginning, from approximately the age of fourteen I learned to play mouth organ from my father and shortly after that we formed a mouth organ band amongst the students at school. I left school at fifteen and we used to go to the dances once a week. That was all you could afford because those days you earned approximately thirteen and fourpence a week. We used to go to Riley's Hall dance where Verna and Lola King used to play in a little band.

One night there a chap came along and played a clarinet. I don't know who he was to this day but I thought 'That's it for me, that's my instrument, that's what I'm going to get stuck into'. I found out I could buy a clarinet for the sum of about fifteen pounds. It was in a hock shop actually and I pleaded with this bloke and he cut it down to ten pounds and I thought 'Now, how am I going to earn this sort of money to buy it on time-payment?' I started mowing lawns with a hand-mower for a shilling a lawn which was hard work at that and together with what I could scrape out of the thirteen and four I was earning working for Michelides Tobacco Company I paid for the bloody clarinet.

It was a simple-system clarinet, Albert's system, and I learned that under Professor DeLater. He used to be in Barrack Street. Not long after that, the war started so I joined up. I got into a brass band and learned a brass instrument under a bloke named Nesbitt. He was the band leader at the time. I had this old clarinet and I used to study it in the meantime, although it wasn't appropriate in those days for brass bands.

I returned to the unit and there was another chap in the brass band that informed me he wanted to sell a clarinet because he found it was beyond him, he said he couldn't manage it so I said, 'Well, I'll buy it off you', and I think I paid him fifteen pound for that one. That was yet another clarinet that had something wrong with it, it was a high-pitched Boehm system which was quite difficult when you get the Albert's in your mind. I used to put a piece of cord down the middle to drop the pitch. Not very helpful to a muso learning an instrument of course.

After the war I got my deferred pay and for thirty-six pound I bought another Boehm system clarinet and this time I struck oil so to speak. I got a good instrument, or relatively good for those times and continued studies and ended up joining a dance band at Wundowie followed by another at Toodyay.

Cleve Mumme
Reeds Player/Composer/Arranger

My parents were both musicians and I grew up in a pretty musical sort of family. I started learning piano and doing the A.M.E.B. exams and I did that to a sufficient degree to get myself into Uni. You had to have seventh grade piano and fifth grade theory and you were in. I intended to make the piano a sort of thing but I had only done exams, studying and practising for exams. I had played a few church concert kind of things but never seriously.

I'd always nursed an ambition to be a professional musician but I didn't think it was possible. In my situation I would have to become a classical pianist and I started playing when I was nine. Well, you've got to start when you're five and you've got to be playing piano concertos by the time you are nine so I wasn't really in the running.

About the time I was fourteen or fifteen I got very keen on jazz. It was very difficult. In those days there was no information you could get. The only jazz records I could get were 'Jazz Goes to Junior College' by Dave Brubeck and the Modern Jazz Quartet's 'Pyramid'. I couldn't afford records. I paid fifteen bob for my first one and it was second-hand and I got all the books out of the public library I could and things like that but I couldn't sus how to play jazz on the piano. I thought, 'there's drums. You can play that if you've got a pair of drumsticks,' so I started doing that and playing along with records.

When I got to Uni the rock and roll thing, the stomp was happening, the Beach Boys. It was 1963, before the Beatles. A friend of mine was also interested in jazz. We used to go to a few of the rock dances to see what the rock bands were like and what they were doing. We used to listen to this stuff and say, "oh come on, this is a piece of piss. Come on man, make a buck out of that."

I'd been working at the post office and things like that during high school and saved up and got myself a bass drum and a snare drum and a pair of high hats and a ride cymbal so we started a rock and roll band. My friend played bass and my brother played guitar, that sort of thing.

My interest in jazz didn't decrease. I'd been going to the Hole in the Wall Club to jam, because that was the only chance you got to play jazz. A couple of friends and I found we could get jobs as a jazz trio there and that was enough money to get us through. I could actually make a quid out of music so I put myself through Uni.

Bruce Devenish
Drummer/Composer/Arranger

My background is to do with music as a force for community cohesion. I grew up with lots of singing around the piano and campfires and that sort of stuff when we were travelling around the countryside and that's why I like it. I love to hear a room full of people singing or tapping their feet or whatever and I think that music's a fairly natural thing for a community to make and I think that a community with music is richer than one without.

Gary Burke
Bassist/Entrepreneur

It was during the folk craze. There was a teacher who taught us folk guitar where we would get nylon string guitars and just strum them. The first performance was what they called a Hootenanny where all the students got together at someone's house and just sang. My voice was already very low. I remember the incredible stage fright and nervousness.

I later took classical lessons which helped me to learn how to read music. Apart from that it was just buy a guitar, paint it different colours to go with the psychedelic era and play in very rough rock bands that might get a gig at a party or something once in a while.

I went to college for about half a year and then my friend Ray Bensen, whom I had played with in these rock bands and folk groups, rang me up and we had the idea of forming a Country and Western Swing band.

I had been borrowing a lap-steel guitar, a six-string and I started playing that. Ray said, 'You're the pedal-steel guitarist'. I said, 'Fine, what's a pedal-steel guitar?'

Reuben (Lucky Oceans) Gosfield
Hawaiian Steel Guitarist/Composer

When my marriage broke up I didn't used to go out at all and then a girlfriend of mine said, 'You can't just keep sitting in all the time'.

I went out one night with this girlfriend and we went to listen to a Country Music band. I met a few of the guys there and it went from there. They wanted a female vocalist and didn't particularly want to do it but they were stuck one night and I said, 'Well, look, I'll give you a hand', because they'd been booked with a female vocalist and she was a bit unreliable. That's how it began.

Before I did that I knew heaps of songs, like most people do if they're interested in a particular kind of music. I learned a dozen or something for the night, which didn't take too long. Its always been in me I suppose. My family are quite musical, they're all into Country Music.

One gig turned into two, then I used to do four and five which was heaps because I was working through the day as well doing office work. The bank work wasn't well paid because it was supply and demand. There were a lot of very good bands so it kept the wages low. I had to take the kids to school and pick them up so I just used to cram my day job in between.

The extra money was handy, but it was a release as well. I used to be basically a very shy person and it helped me to get out and meet people and build up a little bit of confidence which at the time was quite important. After a marriage breaks up it leaves you wondering what happened.

I live the songs. I love them and to me its the only way to put them across. You can't ask people to understand something if you don't show them how or explain how. When I put emotion into a song I feel as though I'm baring my soul sometimes but its the only way I know how and I only sing songs that I can feel otherwise it becomes just like a nursery rhyme.

Norma Kelly
Singer

I had an incredibly lucky break. After a year of making no money and going back to Uni and feeling that it probably wasn't what I want to do I auditioned for a job playing piano in a band at the Parmelia (a luxury hotel in Perth) in the garden restaurant. This was with really good musicians and I got the job. I think it was because I was basically passive and looked as though I was eager to learn and they didn't want anyone who was going to rock the boat. It was five nights a week and it was very quiet music so they didn't want someone who was going to be an aggressive personality or a very aggressive player. That went on for five years: five nights a week these musicians would drive from different parts of the metropolitan area to this gig.

I never made a decision to become a professional musician as such. It was just that other options became increasingly unattractive. I remember being delighted when I finally discovered that I was professional. I woke up one day and thought, 'this is what it is to be a professional musician', and that was rather a nice thing. I think my fantasy of the situation was quite romantic and the reality was quite different.

Ross Bolleter
Pianist/Composer/Improviser

WORKING

If anyone is working, regardless of what they do they are working class. If you're working you've got to be working class. Working class are people who work for a living. If you don't have to work for a living then you're definitely upper class or whatever you want to call it.

I find that most people you meet have a lot of respect for you. They think its something they can't do and I think they respect musicians. If you're doing a good job I think you get a lot of respect from most people except those who don't like music, but they're in the minority.

Gordon Broad
Accordionist/Entertainer

I was an engine driver with the railways. We were working shifts. You had to make arrangements sometimes with blokes on the job to do your shift for you and in return you'd do one of their shifts or change rosters or something like that but you had a content of afternoon shift and of night shift. That meant for me four or five hours practice a day because that's how long we used to practice. We spent hours and hours studying the instrument. There was fourteen years in Toodyay where I was averaging at least four four-hour periods a week of solid practice on the instrument: exercises, scales and goodness knows what.

Another feature of those days was you'd go and play for a show, say, up at Kellerberrin and you'd get back to Toodyay probably about half past three in the morning, maybe later. By nine o'clock on the Sunday morning I'd be around Alan's place and a couple of other people there and we'd start practicing straight away. After about an hour twenty or thirty people would turn up and they'd decide to have a party then we'd go half the bloody night again and go to work at one o'clock in the morning on the engine. That's the way people used to live in those times and we thought nothing of playing for hours and hours on end you know it didn't mean a thing.

They used to nickname me Terrible Ted. I used to drink a lot and never bothered going to bed.

Cleve Mumme

Creativity is the guts of it, whether you're a musician or an accountant. It is a thing that to a certain extent in our society is not being fostered enough. So when I get friends of mine who say to me, 'Look, I would like to learn to sing', or something like that and they look at me like I'm expected to be negative about it, I say, 'Fantastic, do it'.

Segovia said he did not make his best music until he was sixty-five. I saw a video of Artur Rubenstein playing when he was eighty-six. He is one of the most famous virtuoso pianists.

When I see people like that I am encouraged. People can stay working for the whole of their lives. I would really like to be a musician for all of my life. Or, to go one step further than that, I would like to be creative for my entire life.

Phil Bailey
Bassist/Composer

If you increase their clientele you usually have a very sweet relationship with a hotel manager. If you don't, they sack you. There was one pub where I worked on Saturday nights for a while. After five weeks the manager came to me. He said, 'Bernard, I love your music, its great, its right up my street. I think what you do is wonderful but its not selling any beer. So toodleoo'.

Bernard Carney
Singer/Songwriter

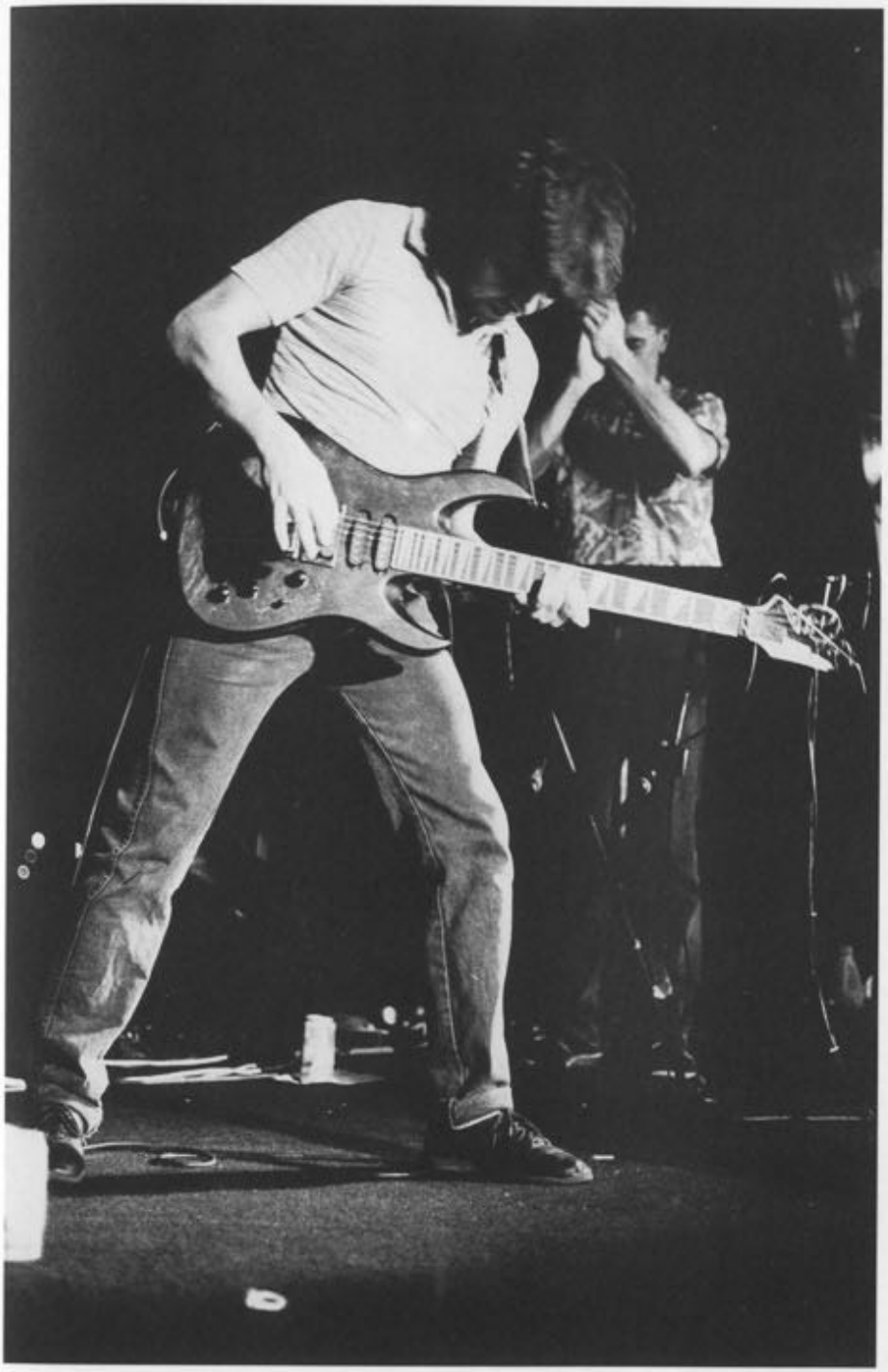
If you've got a young band they're prepared to work hard for relatively modest returns. If you've got guys who are old and have been in daytime jobs they have a style of life to which they are accustomed and they realise that you won't make anywhere near that money in a full-time jazz and cabaret band. If I were to go full-time now I would lose a lot of money. Had I done it as a youngster I would not know what I'd missed in terms of the regular and pretty hefty income.

At this stage in my life, my mid-forties, my plan is to get my assets together and then gradually relinquish my daytime job so that I can devote more time to music because I have observed that, particularly in jazz, the older you get the better you get and its quite respectable to be playing jazz at seventy.

Musicians must keep developing. For certain musicians the daytime job conflict gets stronger and stronger. Other musicians are quite content to hold down two jobs. Its a very daunting field to be full-time in because the criteria for being full-time are creativity, original compositions that win public favour, recording contracts and a book that's full of engagements of the sort that you want.

I've grown to respect very much any professional musician who just keeps on coming up with new stuff. They've got to pull it out of themselves, they've got to bring from within new ideas and have the confidence, the daring to push it out for the public to buy like any artist does. I sometimes wonder whether I've got that sort of courage and daring.

Murray Swain



Doing my back in moving a heavy piece of equipment is my major occupational hazard at present. Having drunks fall backwards into the piano when I have to set up on the floor is another. A stage makes a big difference but some venues don't have them and that is quite hazardous late on a Saturday night when people are dancing and drunk, especially for people like saxophonists who might get a reed pierced through their throat. Smoke is a hazard too.

As far as working in pubs go, I guess at this stage I am happy to have the work and I reserve judgement about the fact that I'm helping a brewery sell beer and helping people destroy their brains. I think it is a pity. It is really lovely to play in venues where there isn't any booze but it doesn't often happen. I would like there to be more venues which aren't booze oriented.

Someone put a decibel meter on the crowd at a pub where I was working recently and the noise in the room exceeded the regulation minimum. That's just the noise of the crowd talking and drinking and clashing their glasses and moving their chairs, not the noise of the band, so it can get quite dense in there. Afterwards you sometimes get pestered by drunks and that's a bit boring.

There was one gig that I did that was just hideous. It sounded awful, it was abominable. I wanted to crawl away and die and never do it again.

There had been no sound check so the sound was awful. The drummer and I were placed incorrectly so he couldn't see my hands. I didn't have a decent portable piano so I had to play someone else's instrument which I wasn't on top of. I didn't choose the right sounds always and I couldn't hear myself properly. What I could hear sounded awful.

One sax player said he would play with us and came to a rehearsal but then he pulled out at the last minute and we played with someone else who wasn't familiar with what we were doing. It sounded horrid. I was trying to signal to the mixing desk that the foldback sound was awful and play an unfamiliar instrument and do all the singing and oversee the shape of the song like, 'over to you, now back to me, now the B-section', kind of like be orchestra leader at the same time. It was awful. That was the last gig that band ever did.

What I learnt from that was to be better prepared and if the line-up of people changes and the sound is not going to be what people have come to expect; don't do it. Simple. And also don't take on too much. That took away a lot of my confidence and I had to go back and re-think my whole attitude.

Duncan Campbell
Pianist/Entertainer

I just love playing. I can't really describe how it makes me feel. It is a form of relaxation for me in a weird sort of way. I just can't see myself not playing because I have been playing for so long.

Steve Tallis

The working hours vary a lot because I'm freelancing which means I go for the jobs which pay more money but aren't on a regular basis. I have worked six nights a week at times. If it is a three-hour gig and it takes an hour to set up and an hour to pack away which I usually take into account its a thirty-hour week. In terms of actual playing its an eighteen-hour week. I haven't done that for a while now. Five years I made two-fifty to three hundred a week from that. If I was doing a residency now I wouldn't do that for less than five hundred a week.

I don't do that sort of work any more because it is quite destroying. Not only do you get very stale because your environment's the same every night but also you can't do the nice little jobs that come up when some promoter rings you up and says, 'We've got so-and-so playing at the Concert Hall and we want you to do a twenty-five minute spot'. You have to say, 'Sorry, I'm working'.

There's no average income when you freelance. You get a good week and then you get a bad week. I aim to make a comfortable living but I wouldn't say I'm a high-income earner. I'm not working five nights a week now and I find that if I can make a reasonable living there's no incentive to make more because the less nights I work the more I see my wife because she works during the day. She has to because we can't exist on my precarious income. I've got four step-children. I married into the family.

Bernard Carney

I wrote the music for some productions at a school which specialises in performing arts. I got nothing for the composing and nothing for the arranging. That is quite common. If I hadn't written it they probably would have done something that was already written. I got paid for being present at the rehearsals and being present to musically direct the show. There was no way they could judge the time involved. If I was sweeping floors they would have been able to know precisely how much that was worth and pay appropriately.

I made a description of my job to justify being paid better. The things I listed were: 1 ... consultation to discuss what we are doing; 2 ... the initial musical ideas; 3 ... meet with the librettist and have a working relationship; 4 ... meet with the students to see if it is in the right range and go home to change the key signatures if it is not; 5 ... meet with the choreographer and the students and by a series of adjustments and compromises work out the dance sequences; 6 ... write the score and the arrangements for the instruments; 7 ... find the musicians and audition them (which might mean chucking a few people out and hunting further afield); 8 ... find the copyists and be a taxi to run the charts to and fro and get the parts copies; 9 ... make applications for funds to support the copying; 10 ... rehearse the singers and the band; 11 ... stand at a photocopying machine and wait for a chance to use it; 12 ... construct books to hold the music to make sure it doesn't fall apart while it is performed; 13 ... musically direct the show.

I got paid for the rehearsals and the performance. I had to make a case to them and they were able to start to pay me a bit more properly. I was being paid as a teacher for one and a half hours after school and that was deemed to be my payment. There were a lot of unplanned rehearsals like, 'let's stay on till seven o'clock tonight', or, 'we're going to be here all day Saturday and Sunday', which didn't fall into the normal tutor time. So I had to speak up that it really wasn't on and they were able to help. In the end they paid about one quarter of my time. They were genuinely shocked to know there was that much work going on behind the scenes but they said they could not pay any more than that.

I wanted to do the work because it was a good chance to write a musical and know that it would be performed. There is a value in having my work performed and presented which helps to enhance my profile in the community.

Jeff Carroll

The kind of work that I did before I started to work in music was collectively-based and inevitably politically-oriented in the personal as well as the general sense, in terms of a working lifestyle and in terms of subjecting your working lifestyle to processes of review, to make sure you weren't lapsing into hierarchical procedures or ending up with male-dominated work groups or neglecting the viewpoints of minorities or any one of a number of other things which I do believe in work you should try and avoid.

There isn't that quality of communication in the music industry. The basis of community arts work is that people share a common political view and they come together to determine a strategy for action which may include theatre and music. People in the music industry come together primarily to make music and if there is politics it is, at least in the groups of people I have worked with, assumed and not often talked about.

Duncan Campbell

What pisses me off is the institutions who assume that because my husband is a musician he is not in a profession and therefore not entitled to the same rights and privileges as other people. Like, he wanted to buy a tape deck and I had to sign as guarantor because I had a nine-to-five Monday-to-Friday job. We were both earning good money at the time. Because I had the security of that job I could be his guarantor for the tape deck.

When it came to buying the house, I was nine months pregnant and I said to the bank, 'If I'm not going to get the loan I'm not going looking for houses in this state. Have I got the loan?' He said, 'What sort of money have you got?' I said, 'I've got over 50% deposit'. He said, 'Sure'. Then he said, 'What's your husband's occupation?' I said, 'Musician'. The look on his face... I said, 'What's wrong?' He said, 'That's a bit dicey. You see, as far as we're concerned, that's not really a profession and you have zero earning potential because you are pregnant'.

It was only because we had over fifty per cent deposit that they were willing to lend us the other half.

Another problem with being married to a musician is the hours of work. When I was working nine-to-five Monday to Friday I would come home at five-thirty, we would have an hour together and then he was out the door at six-thirty or seven. I would be off at work before he woke up and that's how we lived for quite a while. That was a real strain on the relationship.

THE BANDS

I spend my life working at times when people are usually having parties and celebrating. I'll be there at a place that is a big function or something and there are people having a raging time and I'll just be at work. Its as simple as that: at work.

People say, 'Here, have a few drinks, get more out of it'. I don't want to get more out of it. What do you want me to do? Kill myself for being in this profession? No way. There've been too many deaths as it is. I have a sense of dignity in what I do. That doesn't mean I don't enjoy it. I do.

When you have a really good gig the emotional and spiritual high you can get off it is just amazing. There is something very Zen about performing. You are there at the moment, the spot, the doing, the nowness of it. It is an incredible experience.

When you want to have some fun and enjoyment the only time you've got is before you go to work. Otherwise your enjoyment time is when everyone else is asleep, from one in the morning till dawn. Then everyone wonders why you're so slack as a musician, you don't do this or that. You don't get up during the day. 'Why are you sleeping? You're lazy.' They put all these tags on you because they don't realise you are forced to live different hours by the job.

When I am in a band that is working three or four gigs a week and really serious about it and pulling in money we might be doing two or three days practice a week, at least one business meeting a week and then the gigs.

If you're doing something original the songs take about five times as long to get together as doing covers does and you are trying to manage the band and do everything yourself. I was doing eighteen hours a day, seven days a week in a band like that. I almost had a nervous breakdown. If you've got a family the pressure on you is just horrendous.

I've been in a number of bands that have been one hundred per cent original and made a living at it too. Some people say it can't be done. There are smart ways of doing it and dumb ways of doing it. Rock and Roll is a business after all and the sooner you realise that as a young player the better off you are. I made a lot of mistakes, but I guess that's how you learn.

Phil Bailey

I do about five gigs per week. If I wasn't working during the day I would be working seven nights per week. I make enough out of music to pay for broken strings, repairs, petrol. I don't make any money out of music. There's no money in music. I make enough to survive, to keep going.

I could stop playing and hire out my P.A. and make more money than I do playing. I could make up to eight hundred dollars a week out of my P.A. It's sort of sick really.

For my five gigs I put in around thirty-five hours per week. That's not including if I ever get the chance to actually practice. That's counting rehearsal with the band but not my own practice. I might make one hundred to two hundred dollars from that. Roughly sixty dollars per gig. I don't regard that as good money. Eleven years ago I was earning about two hundred per week. Eleven years later I am earning the same amount. I don't reckon that is very good at all. I would like to make at least double.

There needs to be a big change in the attitude of people to manage and own the pubs and of the people who go to see the bands. People bitch about paying money to see bands. It is unbelievable that people bitch about paying two dollars to see a band but they go in there and buy a beer that costs two dollars.

Steve Tallis

We went to Melbourne. I was twenty-two and it was my first experience away from home. We got ourselves into a band that was doing weekly gigs. They had their own manager who was handling all the band's affairs at the time.

The manager and one of the members of the band, the guitarist, were handling all the trucks and this and that and we found out later from some reliable people that when the band broke up they had money, they had new cars, they had this and that and they weren't working except for band work. They were ripping us off.

At the time it didn't bother us, we didn't even look into it. We thought, 'We're playing in Melbourne, we're in a bigger place, more bands, more of everything so we're lucky to be getting regular work.' The story they were feeding us was we had to keep playing so we'd get a name and we'd get to a place where they were actually going to pay us good money.

The band did things like Fleetwood Mac, Canned Heat, Humble Pie, Eric Clapton, Osibisa, Gary Wright and a few originals. We did a lot of gigs. We did a 'New Faces' on Channel Nine. We got to third place and got twenty dollars for the effort but that was as far as it went.

Reg Zar
Drummer

It really is hard to make a living as a performer. It is impossible if you allow your integrity to prevail over the styles of music you are willing to play. The problem is that we play to a very musically uneducated audience. Not that they have to be trained musically, but what is around for them to hear often has no cultural or musical significance. The popular radio stations are shocking in what they play and promote. The music is so repetitive and base that people don't get a chance to develop their tastes in what they are exposed to.

You can make a living if you play popular music: if you play top-40 and play it well and if you have the band structured and organised like a real business. There is room for quite a few bands of that type in Perth.

A few years ago I played saxophone in one such band for five months. It was incredibly well organised commercially. The whole thing was presentation and the way the business was sorted out, the bookings were made. It was all to get the kids in the pub, get them drinking, by playing for them songs they knew and loved, to the detriment of the actual music.

We were copying songs that were popular on the radio. If there was an instrumental section in them with an improvised solo we couldn't do an improvised solo. We had to play the same solo because that was what they were familiar with so they could still hum along with it all the way.

We rehearsed once a fortnight and learnt four songs on one day, so that we could have four new songs each fortnight, say one in each bracket and each week we would shift the order of the songs around so that if you saw the band twice in a row it would be different because it was in a different order.

That was the least rehearsal I've ever done for any band. They were all good musicians, they were very good at what they do. They were organised. We got the tape of the new song a week before and we learnt our parts. We rolled up at the rehearsal, played the song, fixed up any nitty gritty bits, got the vocal harmonies right and that was it. Four songs in an afternoon. It was the most efficient rehearsing I have ever done. It was also very easy because all you had to do was play what was on the tape. Being a reading musician I wrote it down. I also wrote down the other saxophone player's part because I was quicker at doing it than he was.

The cover-band gigs were eight-thirty to midnight. I would get there fifteen minutes before I had to play. Finish playing at twelve o'clock on the button, pack up my saxophones, be out of

there at quarter past, home within ten minutes. Everything was organised. You walk on the stage, they turn the torch on, light up the steps. They would have put my saxophones together for me if I didn't want them at home. They did absolutely everything. It was incredible.

We got paid three hundred dollars a week for that band. It was a seven-piece band. There was a core of four people who were a corporation. They reaped the profit and the guitarist and two sax players were on a wage. They also had five crew, an enormous P.A., huge truck, huge light show. The drummer owned the light show. He mortgaged himself life and limb for about four years and bought the light show, which cut down costs for the band, and once it was paid off he had a bit of an income.

The bands that play this sort of music have to keep buying the new equipment which made the new sounds so that the kids are familiar with it. The most successful bands seem to have all that together plus a lead singer who has charisma and can get the audience up and happy and also has a voice that is pretty adaptable and can sound like the singer on each occasion, which of course is a really difficult thing to do.

If bands got together and were all pretty ethical musicians and decided to change things they probably could. They could change their audiences' tastes if they did it gradually so that the audience didn't really notice.

The problem is that it is so difficult to get your music played on 96FM or 6PM, the two most popular stations. They're the ones that are to blame really, its those two stations that all the kids listen to. They seem to listen to one or the other. If they are into 6PM they hate 96FM and vice versa.

I've been in bands that have tried to get on the radio and they can't, they are fighting an uphill battle. And if you finally get through they will only play it once. Ultimately their advertisers dictate what they play and it is not commercially viable to play local produce because it is not as popular as Dire Straits.

Lee Buddle
Reeds player/Composer/Entrepreneur

I was in a band which went on tour from Perth to Melbourne and Sydney. We had a hard time with the band of not getting enough sleep because we were doing one gig at lunchtime and another at night and getting up early because it was a very busy schedule. Everyone was interested in the band to the extent that Mushroom Records were offering a deal to make an album. The manager was holding back to see what was the best deal we could get but so far the Mushroom deal, which was a whole Australian label, was the best offer.

I gave notice to the band because a lot of the people in the band were getting into hard drugs and I thought, 'This is just gonna crumble', and by the time I'd decided that the Mushroom records found out about what a few of the members of the band were doing and thought it was a liability to sign them on a recording contract because it would be irregular and just fizzle out anyway. They wanted something that was a long-term proposition for them to promote and produce.

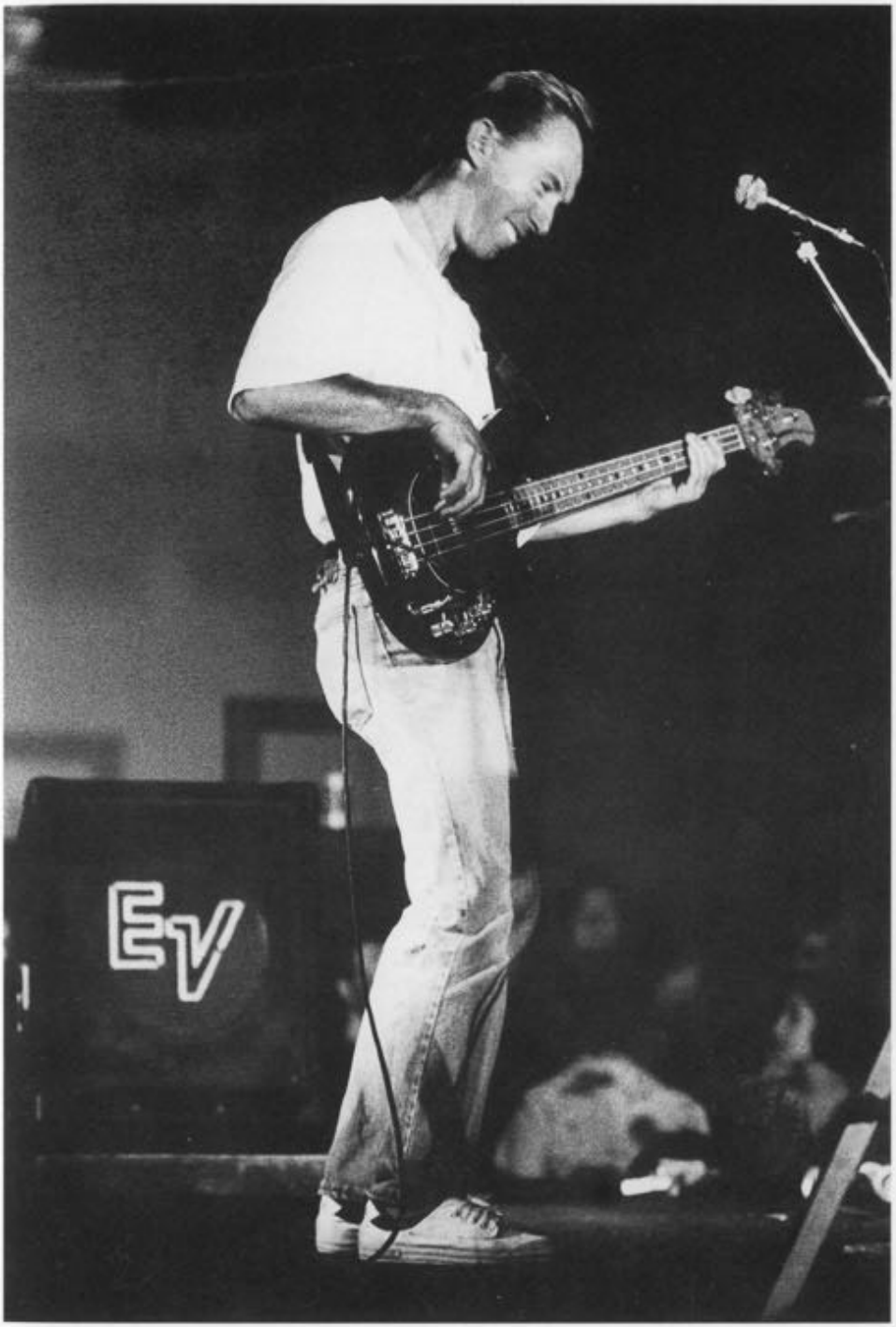
Overall it went haywire because it was just full-on work and we needed relaxation and some of them couldn't do it without drugs. I just wanted to play music and that pissed me off because I wanted to be part of the recording and they lost that and there was no way they were going to get it again.

I went back to Perth and got into another band which started to do quite well. We took over the position of the band I had left in Melbourne. We had the same management and he pushed us into the same venues so we got the same following. He was preparing for an Eastern States tour. We recorded a couple of tracks for a demo that got some radio airplay. We did a support for Joe Cocker which was a big boost for us because it got us more of a following. We did Chicago Blues, 1950's blues and a few originals. It was all dance music. When we went east we were all flying because there was a lot of money and everyone could afford to go in comfort this time. We were doing two gigs a day at lunchtime and nighttime but it was much better. We had two roadies with us, all we had to do was walk on and play. There was still pressure of not enough sleep but no one had to resort to anything because everyone got on a bit better and we knew things were going well and we were saving for an album, we were going to go back to Perth.

We were getting a wage of a hundred dollars a week but most of the money was going toward the recording. We went into the studio and recorded ten tracks for our album. Two were originals and the rest were standard Chicago Blues songs.

The recording took us twelve days and they we sent the tapes to Melbourne to get pressed. We made only five hundred copies which all went and now its a collector's item really. We covered our costs but we never made any money. We couldn't afford to re-release it.

Reg Zar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We went to play for a dart club do at a country hall. They had a beautiful spread there, a marvellous spread but progressively as the night wore on everyone got drunk, extremely drunk and then the President and the Secretary came up and they wanted us to continue beyond one o'clock in the morning. We'd been booked to one for a figure and we gave them a quote to continue on till two and so two o'clock came around and they decided they wanted some more of the same so a figure was agreed upon to go till three o'clock. By the time we got to three o'clock both the President and the Secretary were in a state that they could barely stand up and they seemed to have lost their equilibrium altogether by this time so then the hard question of the money came up. They decided they wouldn't continue on any further into the night so there was a very heated debate between the President and the Secretary which resulted in fisticuffs. One said that he shouldn't have made the agreement with the band the other one said that he didn't make the agreement with the band and as far as he was concerned they'd be paid and this was bandied backwards and forwards and eventually there was a wild haymaker swung that didn't connect. When it did connect this bloke went out like a light and he took two or three tables with him and there was crockery and half-consumed sponges and cakes moving all over the bloody floor so anyway we had to wait until the bloke on the floor revived himself and we got talking and talked a bit of sense into him and eventually they both reneged on paying.

Fortunately there was a farmer there that was well known in the district, he was quite a good bloke and he owned the pub as well. He said, 'Look boys', he said 'how much were you owed?' and we told him. He pulled out his cheque book and wrote a cheque for the amount. We said, 'Well look we don't believe that's very fair on you'. He said, 'Don't worry about that', he said, 'I own the pub', he said, 'I'll get it out of these bastards' hides the next day'.

Cleve Mumme

I was living in a rather nice house. I was very comfortable with the surroundings and I would come home from working nine to five just feeling like sitting down and putting my feet up. The band had been there all day practicing diligently. I would walk into the lounge room and it was a mass of drum kits and wires and microphone stands and all the paraphernalia. They very considerately moved the T.V. into the kitchen for me. They left the entire set-up and I was just pushed into the kitchen. The next day or the day after the roadies would come around and pull it all down and I was allowed to have my space back again. It used to annoy me but I never said anything.

At the same time they were very considerate of me. I was about seven months pregnant and flew over to see Phil when he was on tour at Wagga Wagga. I was sitting next to the mixing desk and the sound guy didn't like me being at gigs because was very aware of the baby inside me and how the noise might affect it.

A woman leapt up on the stage and raced over to Phil and threw her arms around him and gave him a big passionate kiss. He just stopped, looked at the rest of the band to see where they were and then started playing again.

The road crew all looked at me to see what my reaction was and I was grinning. I just thought, 'Why didn't I think of that first?' It would have had far more impact if I had waddled up on stage ...

Having performed well at the Port Hedland Music Festival and taken a prize for the Gamelan group we set off back to Karratha (240km). Halfway back we stopped at the Whim Creek Hotel where I had an engagement for the evening: rock and roll for the 6th annual Whim Creek Bike Run.

The atmosphere in the pub was charged and smokey. One motorcycle had already been burned (sacrificed in homage to an unknown deity or demon) and one group of burly heavies were burning out the tyres of an old Holden.

The Filipino and Indonesian women were very keen to leave. My girlfriend decided to stay. I set up my gear. The rest of the band were already there waiting. I had been promised over $250 for the night and hoped to get a lift back in the early hours of the morning.

The brackets went by. I did nearly all the singing and played the guitar hero. Rock, reggae and blues. George Thoroughgood and Hendrix imitations.

After the second bracket I was asked, 'Are you staying for the session tomorrow?' 'What session?' I sensed some dirty work afoot. A session had been 'suggested'. The drummer was not keen. The sax player's father-in-law owned the pub. He was an ex-prize fighter. Cauliflower ears and a drinking problem.

More brackets went by. Eight cars and bikes had been burnt out. My lungs were very tired and sick. There were occasional showers of beer cans.

We finished at one a.m. Nobody was driving back to Karratha. I went in to see the owner about beds for the night. 'Now, you're doing this session tomorrow, aren't you?' he said, lifting me off my feet by my shirt-front with little discernible effort. 'I may not have a choice', I replied. 'What's it worth?' He felt that the price promised included the Sunday Session. I politely disagreed and asked for a room with a bed and a lock. The issue remained unresolved. Burnouts, partying and fights continued throughout the night.

Next morning we washed and thought about arranging a lift home. Two bikers, Chink and Moose (Moose was very big) asked what the problem was with the session. I explained the disagreement with the manager, the poor work conditions, lack of hospitality and my basic refusal to play the session for free. Chink and Moose persuaded me to stick around with a guarantee of food, drink, money and drugs.

We set up to play. Toast, eggs, bacon, tea, joints and a bucket of money arrived during the first bracket. The rest of the session continued without problems. The manager was peeved at being made to look like a rip-off and was not prepared to offer extra money. Chink and Moose said they were quite prepared to wait for the truth to surface and when it did, the Hell's Angels would 'act accordingly'.

Mike Burns
Composer/Multi-instrumentalist


P

We were playing a gig in a woolshed in the country when a big fight broke out. There was no stage, we were set up on the floor. The fight got right onto the stage. A cymbal got knocked over but nothing was damaged. There were enough people there that weren't drunk that could keep the brawlers back. We just stopped playing and the police came and that was it. The organiser told us to call it a night. It was pretty frightening but as long as the gear was O.K. and we didn't get hurt it was just another thing that happened.

Reg Zar

We turned up to do a hotel gig and the piano wasn't just in disrepair, it was unplayable. The hotelier was unaware that we couldn't use it at all and said things like, 'O.K., you guys just do the best you can', and so I said, 'We cannot play on this and we're just not going to work', whereupon he was extremely angry and said he'd report us to the A.H.A. I don't know if he ever did but for the next two or three years we played at the A.H.A. Annual Convention Ball.

Murray Swain

There is a story about a famous rock band who were touring Perth for the first time. They had two adjacent rooms at a hotel, or so the story goes, and they decided to knock the wall out between the two. When the cops came and the management freaked out at this huge party that was going on the band's manager presented the hotel with a blank cheque and said, 'If its that much hassle, take this. Its only a brick wall'.

It's like people throwing T.V.'s out of windows and stuff. Having been on tour once for eight months solid, I can understand that.

Phil Bailey

Some years back we did a tour to Kalgoorlie. I was about twenty at the time. We were told we were going to be put up in good accommodation and when we got there we were put up in absolute squalor. We were all in one room and the guy was trying to pawn off his daughter on us. He reckoned we could have his daughter for ten bucks instead of going to the brothels down the road.

We ended up getting really drunk before we played and we abused the people who were putting us up. They came up to us afterward and said, 'Don't ever come back to this town, you'll get hanged in the main street'.

When we were driving back we came to Greenmount Hill on the edge of Perth and a wheel fell off the truck. The guys had said something as we left like, 'hope you make it', or something. We found the wheel nuts had been loosened. The van was completely stuffed anyway, we had to tie the gearstick in with some rope.

We were all out of it in the back. The guy who was driving the van was somehow together enough to stop it before we went off the cliff. We had to ring our parents to come and get us and we left the van beside the road.

I still wouldn't like to go back to Kalgoorlie and that was more than fifteen years ago. It was pretty frightening, especially when the wheel came off.

Steve Tallis

I took time off when my first child was born. I took seven weeks off and when I got back on the bus to go on tour it just felt so hard. It felt like this bus was rattling your bones and your liver and was making you sick and you were stopping at truck stops to eat and there were these dingy motels, they were all the same, on some strip next to a MacDonald's and a Kentucky Fried Chicken.

Ninety-eight per cent of your life on the road is just totally wasted. You are just sleeping or watching television. I was trying to read books and increase my awareness but it was an uphill battle.

It was great in a way because it was like being on summer vacation for ten years. You never had any responsibility except for showing up on stage but once I had something back home it was different. When I came back and saw my two-month-old daughter not remember me after being away for three weeks I said, 'I've got to quit'.

Reuben (Lucky Oceans) Gosfield


PERTH
JAZZ
SOC T
CBS RD
Roland

THE SOLOISTS

On the first page of *The Importance of Being Ernest,* Ernest of Algernon is trying to work out the music for a party that he is having and he says, '... the problem with choosing music for a party' — which is a bit like what restaurants are these days — 'is that if the music is too good nobody talks and if the music is not good enough, nobody listens'.

For cocktail work, restaurant work, you have to try and strike that balance between the two and not get bored. I think the contract that you enter into with the audience, insofar as anyone is listening with that kind of work, is that if people do tune into it they have to think 'Oh, that's an interesting and lively interpretation of a popular, or obscure tune', rather than, 'oh God he sounds bored, it must be an awful job, fancy doing that six nights a week, we shan't come here again'.

Duncan Campbell

I changed over from organising concerts and that sort of thing to going out and busking and creating solo acts. I was used to travelling around mainly Melbourne, Adelaide and Canberra and just lobbing into places and singing songs. When you do it on the road you're a new face, you've usually got new songs and they're often songs about the road, they're fresh off the road as it were. But once you take up a residency in a coffee lounge or so on it's a different kind of thing. You can't rely on freshness, you've got to develop a bit of professionalism. I found that I needed the busking because you can keep a certain amount of freshness in that, you're always meeting different people, you've got to try and interest your audience. That taught me heaps about connecting immediately with anyone in front of you.

I did reasonably well out of busking. I got a reputation as being a prominent busker in the Fremantle Markets. I never made less than ten dollars and I would often make twenty dollars in a day. There were days when I would make forty or fifty dollars but that was after four hours busking. Usually I would busk for two hours and I would expect to make twenty dollars in two hours.

With the coffee lounge stuff I was making about thirty dollars a night and I found that much harder because after a while I realised that you couldn't expect people to listen to you. No matter how well you are playing, people have just got other things in mind. I found it was very difficult to get a reasonable pay from people involved in restaurants and so on. I needed the money and if I asked for the union rate they would have said, 'we can't pay you that and we just have to get someone else'.

I found after a while that I would rather be a professional rock musician than a solo artist. The solo work had too many problems associated with it. I found that restaurant audiences were some of the worst audiences to play to.

Mike Burns

I've always worked solo. I can't make a living out of playing in the folk clubs. The fact that I make a living out of music virtually precludes me from playing at folk clubs in Perth because they're always on Friday or Saturday nights and it generally means the loss of a night's wages. There's only one club that's got its act together to pay decent money and I do a night there every six months or so.

Over the years I've worked restaurants, taverns, wine bars, private weddings, birthday parties, backyard functions. The list goes on. I've worked on building sites, hospitals, old folks' homes, lunchtime concerts, students' campus and community arts programmes. I've worked in shopping centres on Saturday mornings and Thursday nights. Anywhere that pays a quid really.

I play a variety of music. I wouldn't like to categorise myself under one heading. I'd like to think I've got some versatility up my sleeve. What I do depends on who I'm playing to. If I'm playing in an old folks' home I'm doing old-time singalongs and songs from the 20s and 30s that they can all join in with and they know. If I'm playing in a restaurant and its a quiet low-light sort of place then I'll play some jazz standards. If its a tavern then its middle-of-the-road stuff, sixties, Cat Stevens, James Taylor, Don McLean, Beatles, Stones, rock and roll type stuff, getting more up-tempo depending on how the crowd like it.

I like blues and ragtime and I like to play guitar instrumental if I've got an audience that I can do them for which means I like doing concerts ultimately.

I worked for six months as a wandering minstrel at a big restaurant. I realised after the first week that I didn't know enough songs, the type of music that people wanted to hear. Wandering Minstrel means that you go and relate to people and talk to them at their tables. It

means you put your neck on the line because they say, 'come on mate, give us a bit of ...' whatever comes into their head. If you don't know the first half dozen people they mention you might as well not be doing the job. I did a lot of homework and probably increased my repertoire twenty-fold.

I gradually got to know what was required of being a working musician. I worked for a long time not really taking it seriously. It was still a hobby and yet I was earning some money out of it and I was thinking 'Well, I might as well be doing this as digging holes in the road'. Over a period of ten years of doing it I've gradually changed my attitude to thinking that this is now my profession because I've been out of everything else for so long that I don't know what else I'd do. Now I do think of it as a living and a profession and I have to safeguard it as a career.

In a restaurant you have to make sure that people are happy all night. You have to read when they want to let themselves go a bit, which is usually after ten-thirty when they've had about five bottles of wine between the two of them and they're getting full of piss and bad manners. They begin to loosen up and then you start doing the stuff that pubs want you to do all night.

They generally respond to having some tasteful music played while they are eating. Not too loud. That's a long slog, playing when nobody is listening although you're setting an atmosphere. I get thoroughly bored doing background music and I'll only do it for about an hour and a half then I'll take a big break. Later I'll go around the tables and chat with them and drink their wine and say 'Do you know this song?' and try to give them a bit of comedy.

Bernard Carney

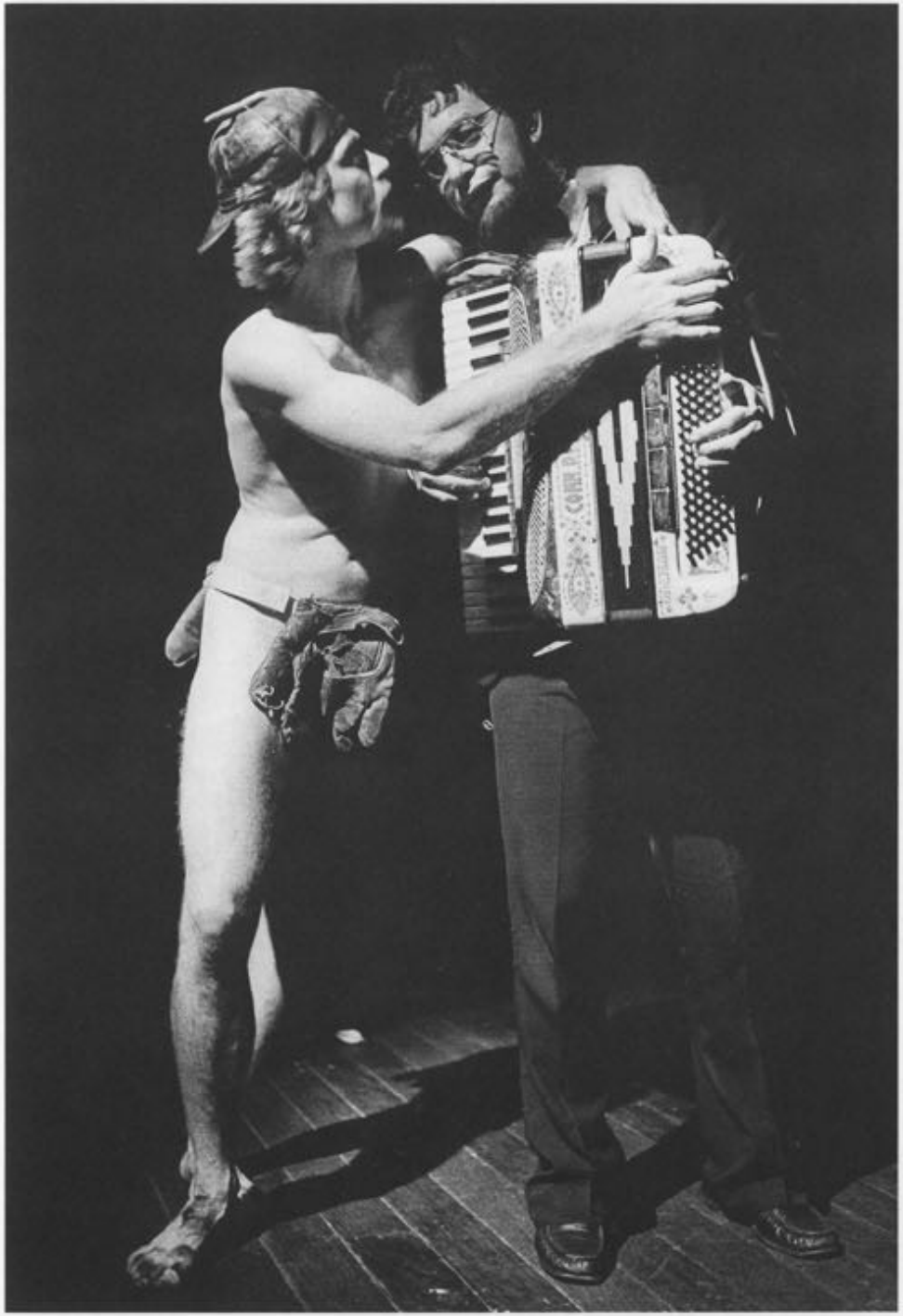

Ludwig

I did nine months playing in a piano bar. They wanted someone to do the nine-till-five stint. That was a big strain working there. People used to sit around the piano. You had to know their requests.

I would get upset sometimes. Like, I would come in at nine o'clock at night and there would be three or four guys who had been there since four o'clock in the afternoon, drinking. They would be leaning on the piano with their peanuts and their newspapers all over it, incredible garbage everywhere. They would be leaning in the elbow of the piano with their backs to me while I was playing. I couldn't see the bar for their backs and occasionally these people would turn around and request me to play quieter or play some stupid request.

I used to tell people to push off, or find a seat, but I used to do it under some stress because there would be a build-up of tension before that. I would hope they would move off anyway but then they wouldn't and eventually I thought 'I don't care if I lose my job, I'll tell these people'.

Ross Bolleter



Occasionally in restaurant work you have a night when you think 'Absolutely nobody in this room could care less what I'm doing'. Just when you think that most strongly someone comes out of the crowd and says, 'That's wonderful, I haven't heard that song for twenty years, thank you very much, you've made our whole night, we'll come back again and will you play for our party?'

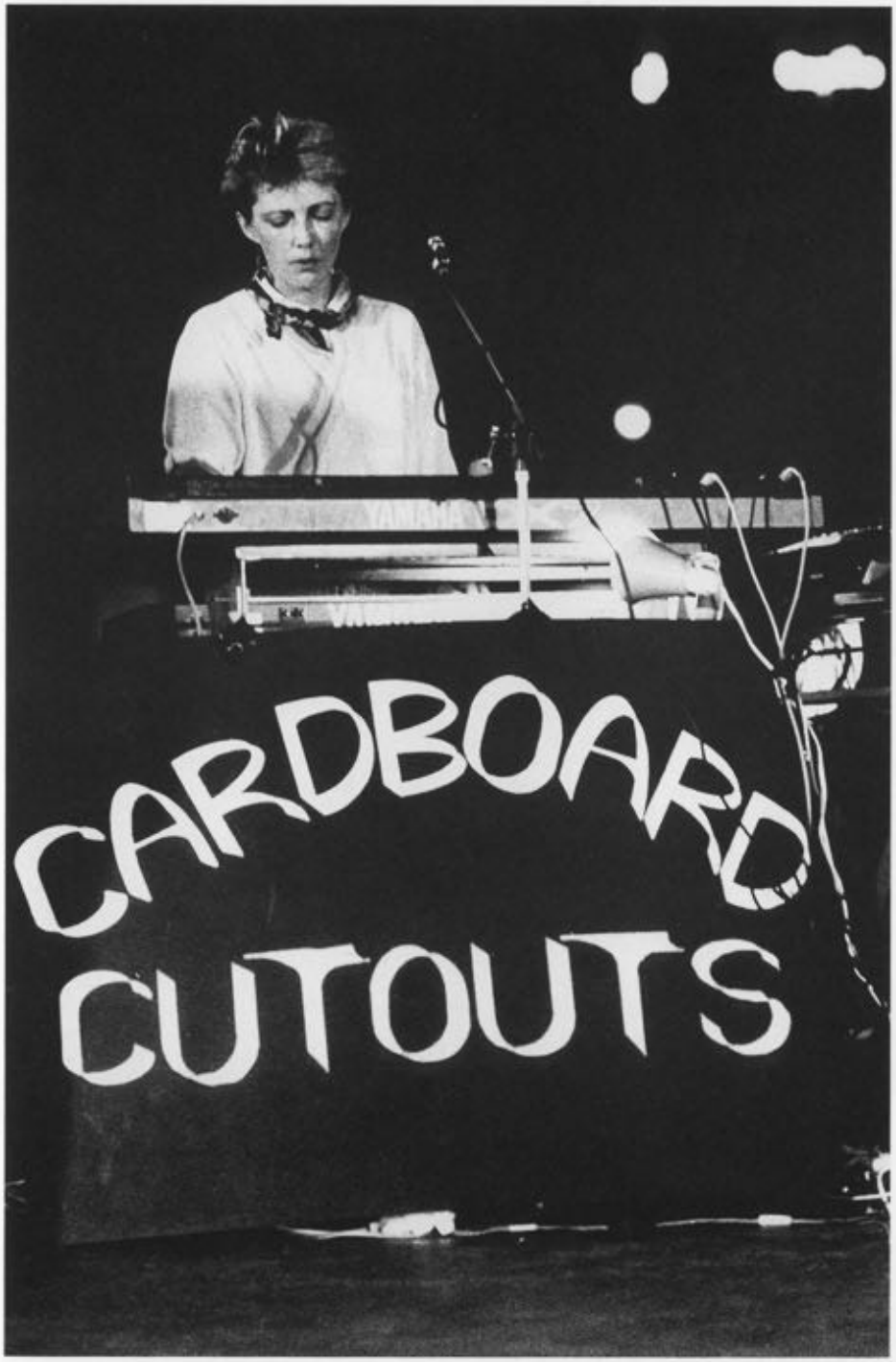
You can choose how much interaction you will have with people. A technique I used to use to keep myself from boredom was to cast my eye around and speculate about someone who might be close enough to hear and think 'I wonder if they know this song?' and try to deliberately engage their attention by playing a particular song. If I could then establish their reaction of a bit of eye contact that they did then I would think, 'If they know that then they might know this'. I was trying to establish a relationship with the audience I suppose but on the basis of a one-to-one thing. I suppose that's a way of keeping the boredom of cocktail work at bay.

Duncan Campbell

I like playing and seeing people's reactions to my music. We meet a lot of people because we're those old-fashioned musicians where at least an hour, an hour and a half a night we go around the tables entertaining people individually at their tables. We get to know a lot of people, all types of people. Sometimes we get a lot of tips too.

We give a lot of people a lot of enjoyment. I love the surprise on a lot of people's faces when we go to their table. Sometimes we go to tables and play people songs which are not only from their country but their area of their country. They really like it. They get so much surprise and enjoyment out of it to think that someone is playing something from where they came from. I think the role of musicians is to give people enjoyment.

Gordon Broad


CARDBOARD
CUTOUTS

I was lucky enough to go and study in London with a Russian teacher. I had admired her for years but I hadn't been able to see how I was ever going to go and study with her. I got a scholarship from the Welsh Arts Council to go and do that. She coached me for a solo recital.

I did two concerts in London at the Musicians' Chapel and that in itself is something that is looked up to, to play in London and get a good review. I played a Beethoven Sonata, I did Bach and some Liszt. It all had to be memorised which was an extra stress.

I was petrified. She practically had to tie me to a chair before I went on. I was all set to leap out of a window and run away, I was so scared. I have never been so scared.

When I got on stage the feeling vanished and the whole concert which took an hour and a half just seemed to go by in two seconds. It was astonishing. Once I got in front of people it was different, I was not conscious of myself any more, the music just had to go out through me. It was not me doing it. I felt safe behind that. I thought, 'Its not really me that's playing, they've come to listen to the music'.

I thought, 'I would love to do this all the time', but I couldn't really see a way of doing it. I didn't get any money for those concerts. I had to pay my own fares from Manchester and my hotel bills and lessons. I must have been out of pocket two hundred dollars per concert. I didn't have the wherewithall to keep doing that. You've got to be able to spend six months as a recluse just practicing the piano to prepare for giving concerts. It relies very much on having plenty of money behind you. You've got to travel overseas and spend a lot of time getting lessons. It is like an athlete training: you've really got to have someone looking after your progress and that is very expensive. I wasn't in the running for anything like that.

Su Lloyd

In my restaurant work I just play background music. If I can create a pleasant atmosphere which is fairly unobtrusive then I'm doing a good job. If in fact most people don't notice the music but just have a pleasant time then I've been successful. I don't see it as a performance, I don't expect applause although it is nice if occasionally someone will compliment me on the music.

I've had jobs where I was getting paid about half of the union rate. If I asked for more money I would lose the job. They would say, 'well, if you don't want to work for that we can't afford it so you better finish up tonight'. Then they would find someone else who would do it for that money. I know other musicians who have been in the same position who are also in the union. I don't know what the solution is.

In one job I was earning forty-five dollars a night. The rate was about ninety. I hassled for an extra five dollars. That was a major trauma when I asked for another five dollars a night.

I had a dispute with another restaurant owner who just didn't pay me for a month and there were a couple of thousand dollars owed to me. I went to the union who intervened and I got my money the next day. No amount of asking politely was getting any joy there.

I resigned immediately after that. I wasn't prepared to stay there and be treated like that.

Jeff Carroll

The worst conditions are having to do a private party in someone's lounge room where there isn't enough room to set up a P.A. system and there're five hundred people crammed into it and they say, 'Oh, here's a guitarist, good on you mate, go on, rip into it'. Those are conditions which I could do without. It can go either way. You can never ever get through to them or you can be brash about it and get everybody's attention right from the start and hit them with a song which will cause them to listen. I use comedy material for that, or I say 'I've got an announcement to make, and by the way, while you're all listening I've got a little song to sing'. It works but it won't work for three hours and then you've got to drift around and fit in really.

I turned down a job at a restaurant fair where they wanted a musician to play to the diners. It was an outside venue where there was probably going to be a lot of noise going on. There was a time I would jump at jobs like that and I can do them but I prefer to earn my living an easier way. It doesn't show what I can do in any good light. There comes a time when you have to think 'This isn't going to do me any good, this job'.

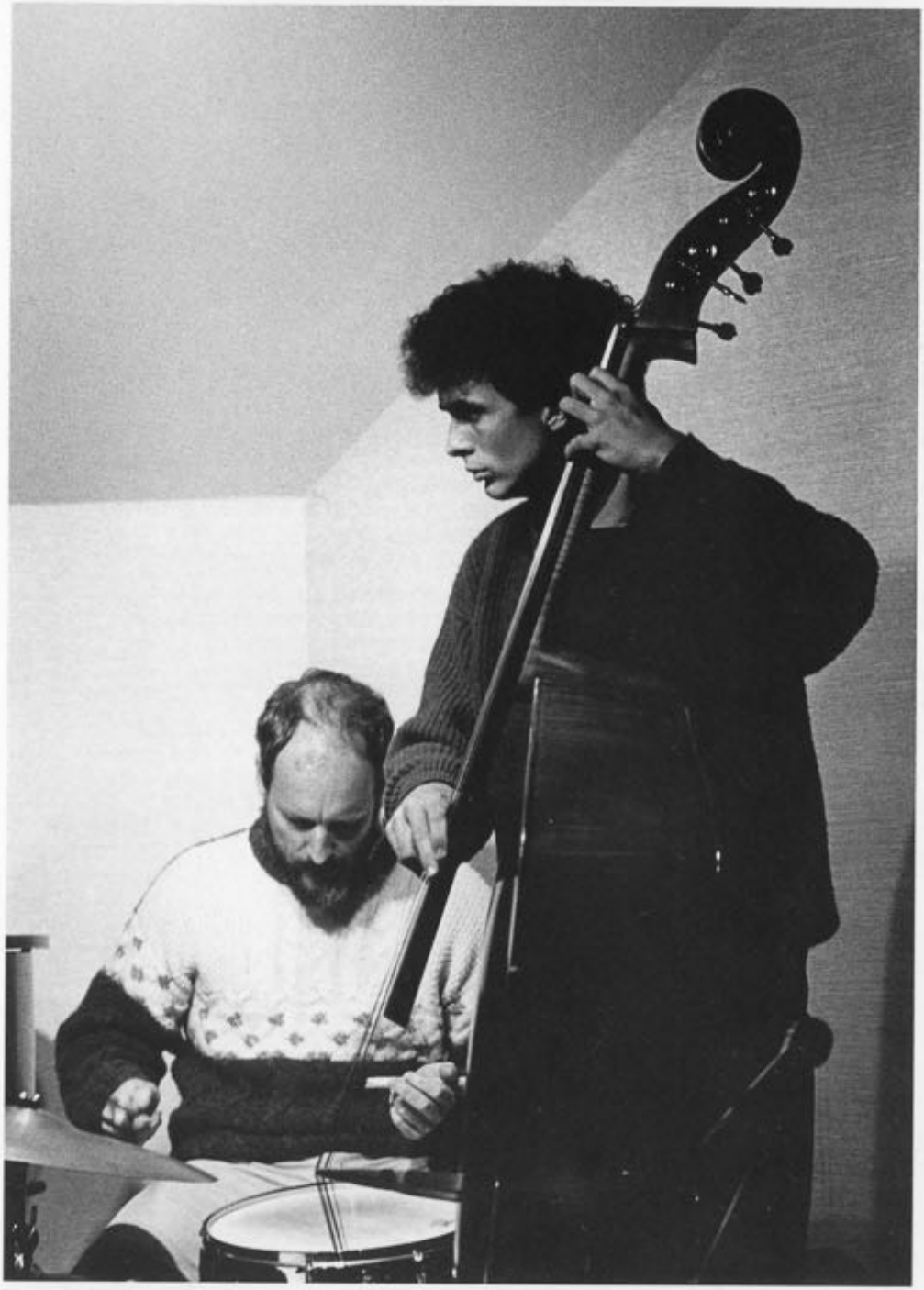
A good successful evening can be the night in the pub where everyone is with you singing along and standing on the tables and clapping and shouting for more at twelve o'clock and you're giving them more. A certain blend of circumstances have got to be right. Another example of success can be to do a show at the Concert Hall for half an hour and be shouted back for an encore and sell thirty-five records in one night.

I generally consider a job to be a success if the people I am playing to have enjoyed what I've done and they come up to me afterwards and say, 'Gee, thanks, that was really great, really enjoyed the show', or 'You did a good job tonight, everybody liked it. The bride liked it, the bride's mother liked it'.

Conversely I count the failures to be the ones where I can't establish any kind of working relationship with the people I'm playing to. I feel as though I am playing the wrong kind of music. When you take a break the jukebox goes on. There is a coldness from the landlord when he gives you the money. Or you've made not an iota of an impression. That could be bad venue as well.

I've done rotten jobs in these Asian food markets. You're on there for two hours and people will just sit and eat all night and there won't be a clap, there won't be a response of any sort. They're bad venues. They've got an armful of shopping and they've got to do some more and they've come for a breather.

Bernard Carney



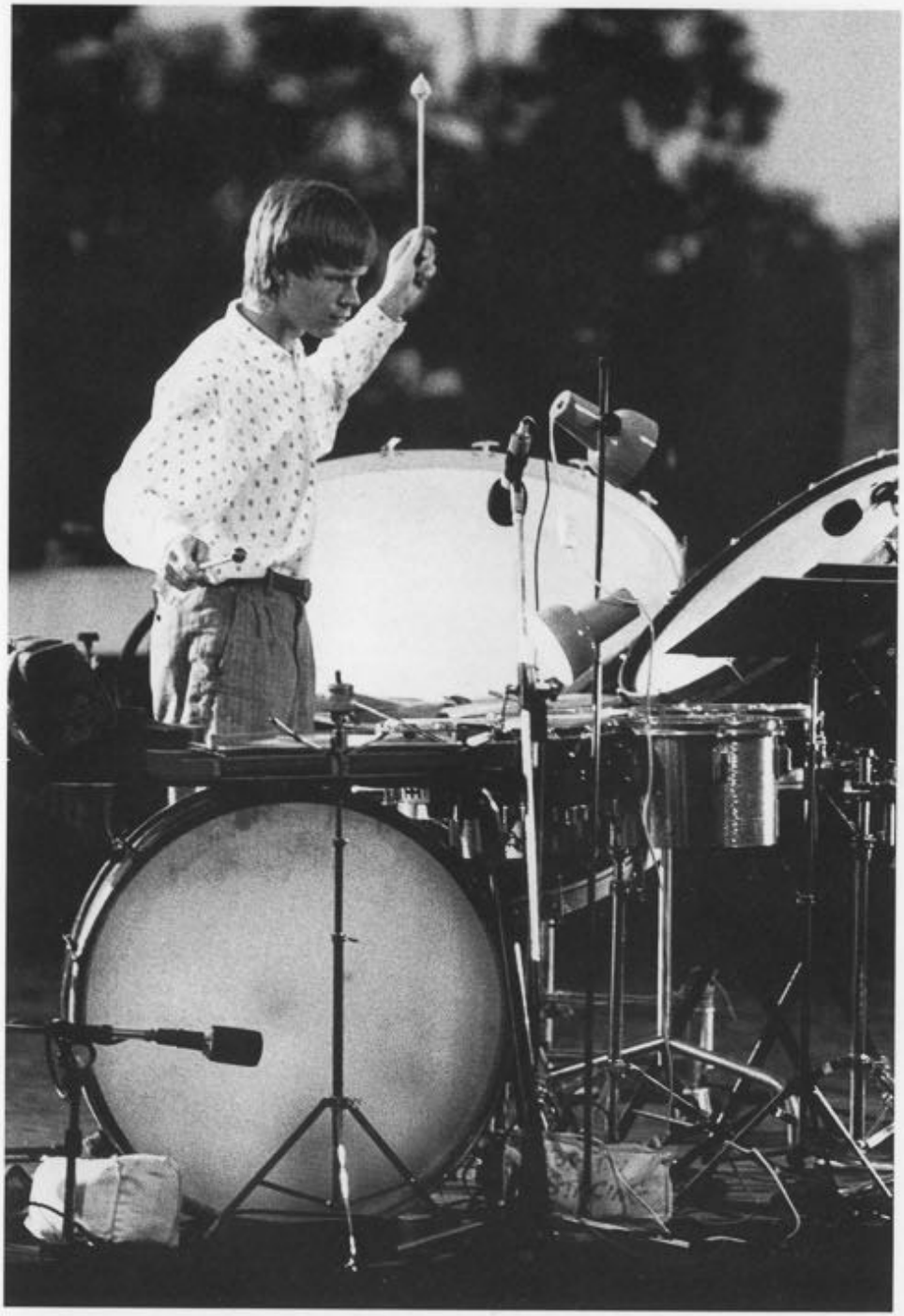
I'm an accordionist. I went in for it because there's very little competition. There's no-one chasing those particular type of jobs like there is in other fields of music where you've got hundreds of musicians all trying to get jobs playing certain kinds of music. With this group it's very limited.

My average earnings of the years are between five hundred and fifty and six hundred dollars a week. That's every week of the year, my gross income before tax and expenses are taken out. Some weeks I earn up to a thousand dollars a week. Its up to me. If I want to go out and do more its there if I want to. I like to have some time to myself to write music and watch a bit of TV, go out for a meal occasionally and do some gardening. I've got to have time for those sorts of things as well but if I want to go out and do another two gigs a week it is quite easy.

I work nineteen hours a week at a restaurant for five hundred dollars a week. That's there all the time. The rest of the bookings I do are extra. They vary from one week to the next. At home I'm always playing. Learning new material and improving this and that. I can do two to three hours a day quite easily. Sometimes I spend four or five hours writing, not every day of course. I put a lot of time into this that's for sure. I put more time in to the non-performing hours than the performing hours. That's because I want to do it. I enjoy doing what I do.

One of my biggest problems is finding time to take holidays. If I get a week a year I'm lucky. I've got to grab the opportunity when I can or when I can get someone to stand in for me. That's been a problem all along, to find a reliable person to stand in for me, someone they will accept. I got in trouble with my restaurant gig last year. I put someone in there and when I came back I got hell. There are very few accordionists around and those who are doing it are very busy. Very few of them are as multi-cultural as we are. We do thirty-two countries.

Gordon Broad



It is an interesting thing about working by yourself that occasionally stretching opportunities come along and you get to where it is that it is going to happen and you just think, 'I can't do this, I'm scared and nervous and frightened, I'll just have a migraine and run off'. When you work with other people you may arrive at a venue and have a similar response to it but you might be the only person that responds in that way. Everyone else thinks, 'this is fine, we can cope with this', and so you get stretched by the other peoples' commitment and support. If it is just yourself sometimes you can evade those very necessary stretching experiences because if you run off and don't do it, well you're the only person that suffers.

When I was in Sydney one year I bluffed my way into a job in a cabaret cafe which involved sitting in the window of a restaurant for three hours and I had never done that before and I was dead scared about doing it but I really liked the people and some friends of mine had got me the recommendation and I was anxious to please them too. So that was a breakthrough and when I came back to Perth I began to deputise for other pianists at a restaurant where I ended up working for six months six nights a week doing three hours a night. If I hadn't done that job in Sydney I wouldn't have been able to do the job here and if I hadn't done the job here I wouldn't have developed a feeling of confidence, that I was in charge of what I was doing rather than it being in charge of me.

Duncan Campbell

THE ORCHESTRAS

There are in most symphony orchestras long periods of frustration. I don't think that any orchestra, no matter how great the conductor, can provide anyone with a continuously stimulating and exciting experience.

One of the things I warn my students about if they want to go into orchestral work is that they need to be prepared for the fact that there is a fair amount of drudgery in there. There will be high spots, there will be the great conductors who come and there will be the wonderful pieces of music that you have to play but in general to sit from ten o'clock in the morning till five in the afternoon rehearsing a concert programme cannot ever be said to be a continuously exciting and stimulating experience.

Various people react to this in different ways. The younger people who are looking to an exciting and fulfilling musical experience are going to be disappointed some of the time. You go through having to sit there being fairly bored while new conductors come along and tell you their theories about how the same piece that you did last week ought to be done and in the first instance confuse you and in the long run turn you into a fairly phlegmatic character where you say, '... been there, done that. If you want it a bit louder or a bit softer, a bit longer or a bit shorter, that's O.K. We'll do that no sweat because five o'clock's coming and we can go home anyway'. That's the kind of hard-bitten approach which isn't necessarily true all of the time.

The life of an orchestra is best when there is a conductor whom you respect as an authority on the music he is directing and when he is directing the finest music. Then it stays fascinating and interesting the longest and you want to give of your best for longer periods. It is at its worst when you are playing music that is patently bad or under a conductor who is patently inept. In those instances there are those who want to fool about or complain to management or make fusses. In the long run those of us who have been in the game long enough tend to say, 'Alright, he'll be gone next week', and we see it out with a kind of wry grin.

As far as the day-to-day work goes, it is about fifty per cent fairly frustrating and boring, about twenty-five per cent where you can feel that what you are doing is worthwhile even though it is fairly ordinary but another twenty-five per cent which ranges from, 'Hey, this is alright', to the top one or two per cent which is, 'Hey, wasn't that fantastic?'

It is that one or two per cent that keeps people in the job. I think the reason why people stay in situations in orchestras where conditions are not very good is that the people who employ them have got them by the short and curlies. They want to play music. They love playing music and they look forward to those great high moments. If there is no way to do it other than accept the less-than-satisfactory conditions, they'll probably still do it.

The main requirement of a conductor for me is not as a metronome but to give inspiration, a common exciting idea or mood that everyone in the orchestra can respond to and give something. The conductors that people respond to are conductors who are there primarily for the music. They're not interested in the showmanship, they're not interested in their own personal egos, they are there because there is something fantastic that can be brought to life.

Even when most conductors get shitty and personally abusive, that's O.K. if they are uplifting and inspiring. The orchestra will try and do the best it can.

Conductors are the lynchpin of the whole performance. If you are looking at a performance as just cranking out the notes. O.K., a conductor doesn't have much to do with that. But if you are going for the magic that is in the music, conductor is all. It is the orchestra that do it but it is the conductor that brings the forces together and presents them in an optimal sort of way. The conductor is the driving-force.

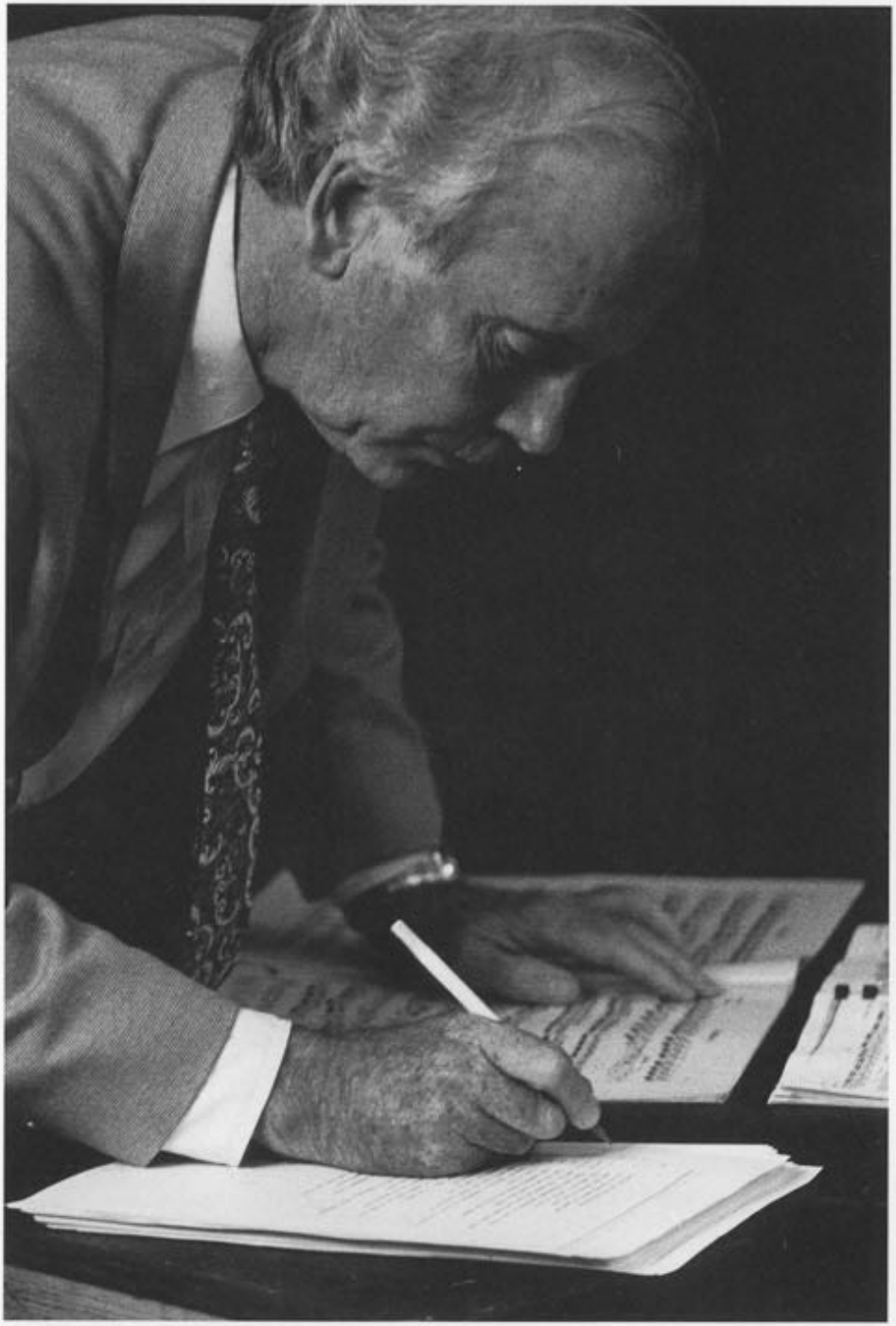
It is very fashionable to dislike conductors. If thirty per cent dislike a conductor he is pretty good. If ten per cent dislike him he is terrific, he is fantastic.

I go off to work at seven o'clock at night and usually my husband is home so he can look after the children. The night work when you work five or six nights a week is killing. For ballet seasons we often work Tuesday through Saturday night and that is very difficult. I am lucky that my husband usually gets up and gets the children to school so I can sleep in. His lifestyle and mine seem to fit in well that way.

During one ballet season we were working from Tuesday till Saturday and then they slotted in a rehearsal on Monday night. I just remember the awful feeling that it would never finish.

In a sense I regard orchestra now as just bread and butter, which is a real shame. Its only because the management and the music down there are so pathetic. A lot of people complain about the pay. O.K., the pay's no good but to me that's not important.

There is so much fabulous music around and we don't play it. We play all this rubbish. It could be fantastic down there but instead people down there are all looking at the clock. It's soul-destroying.



When I said to the people in the London Philharmonic Orchestra, 'I'm going to Perth, I'm going to work in a twenty-one hour a week orchestra and I'm going to receive something in the vicinity of twenty-eight pounds a week', they were quite amazed. They could see this wonderful lifestyle with very good, as far as they were concerned, income.

That was a livable sort of wage in those days (the early sixties) and there was a fair bit of extra broadcast work about. I could go to the Music Supervisor at any time and say, 'Look, I've got a sonata ready for a broadcast', and I would be fairly sure of getting a contract to broadcast that work. Or I could say, 'I would like to do a concerto with the orchestra', and it might be programmed in the next few months. We'd have a string quartet or a light music ensemble and there were regular engagements for these sorts of things.

Nowadays there is no money for that sort of thing and musicians are looking outside for other gigs. There are some around but, of course, the old stigma that attaches to ABC musicians working outside is still there. Management looks down its nose a bit if you go off and play in a supporting group for a visiting pop artist or go and do some other thing because the letter of the law still says that ABC musicians are under exclusive services.

In fact, if one did nothing but what the ABC offers one would be on the breadline. So most of the musicians, including myself, do all sorts of other things, like private teaching at home and we find other chamber music and whatever kind of activities in order to bring in an extra crust.

Personal practice fluctuates a lot. Sometimes I do hardly any and ideally when things are going well at work I do about two hours a day. I usually try and do that in the mornings before I go.

I leave home about nine-thirty in the morning. About quarter to ten we tune up. At ten o'clock the conductor comes in. It's usually ten till one, two till five. They are long days I must say. Sometimes I come home with a roaring headache. Some conductors just work you straight through

Lunchtime is an hour which is an unfortunate length. It should either be a half-hour or an hour-and-a-half. It's not quite long enough for a leisurely lunch and it is too long to just go and grab something. I've been going swimming just to keep my fitness up because I've found it really important. Also there are problems with sitting down for such a long time. I get a sore backside. Between working and practicing it is bad news. We have twenty-four hours a week of calls and we have to practice the parts outside of that time.

The time I put in on learning the parts varies a lot. Sometimes for a week or two I don't have to do a thing. Other times there are bits that no matter how much practice you could do you still wouldn't get it really right so you just do the best you can.

If you compare it to other professions we are not adequately paid: doctors and lawyers have to keep up with journals and things and that is equivalent to doing your own practice, keeping in shape. Lecturers would never lecture twenty-four hours a week, that would be a ridiculous amount of time.

Consider the amount of time that has gone in just to be actually sitting there: you could get a person off the street and in a month they would be a bus driver. You grab a person off the street, most of them, no matter how many years you trained them, they still couldn't play in an orchestra. It takes years and years. And yet, bus drivers get paid almost as much as us.

There are full-time music courses and some people say, 'Oh well, you go and study for three years and you get into an orchestra'. That's not true because they've been learning from the year dot and invested heaps into lessons. They have instruments that are probably worth thousands that they have to pay for themselves.

We don't have any tool money or that sort of thing. There's a string allowance but it doesn't cover everything. They give interest-free loans up to a certain amount and give you some sort of insurance while you are on the job. That's it.

The value of instruments in the orchestra is enormous. Some of them are worth hundreds of thousands as they are.

I was a permanent player with the ABC for one and a half years and I must say I didn't like it very much. The system in the ABC is very similar to the system at the BBC in London but of course they don't play for six hours a day there. In London it's based on a six-hour call but here its a fulfilled six hours which I simply can't do. I still want to practise and develop myself and there's no time and no concentration left after six hours playing in the orchestra. After six hours I am not able to do anything except rest.

If they had people there with experience of the BBC in London they would know that a musician is rarely able to play for more than four hours a day. What the Australian orchestras need is not the quantity but the quality of work to bring a very high standard of playing. It can't be done without practising and having solo recitals and suchlike. As an ABC player you have no time left to do anything else except some teaching or whatever they used to do.

I see it as a sort of duty for the Concertmaster and the leaders of each section to be giving solo concerts because if they don't they standard of playing is slowly going down. One or two recitals a year is just a necessity I would say.

The ABC is directed from Sydney and the policy is not to listen to the musicians but just to order what should be done. Its hard to make the right decisions. The policy for the European orchestras I was playing in is different. You sit in on auditions for new players and it's counted of course. The conductor, which is a very important part, which we had here at all, the conductor is auditioned in front of the orchestra and the musicians have the say which means that if fifty-one musicians say 'We don't want him' and forty-eight or forty-nine say 'We want him', he simply can't lead the orchestra. Here nobody ever asks you at all. I mean, who is actually able to say whether the conductor is good if not the musicians? They are working directly with the man. I think in the future there will be a change of policy. Its a question of time and comparing with other orchestras.

Coming from a country with democratic past and non-democratic present the orchestras in my country are democratic and in W.A. they are absolutely not, if I can put it so simply.

We lose really good players all the time. One guy applied for principal here. He was thrown out. He'd been here for years. Now he's doing principal player of a top orchestra in London. His playing ability is no problem. Its a typical story: we get great players from overseas, they last six months and then they are off.

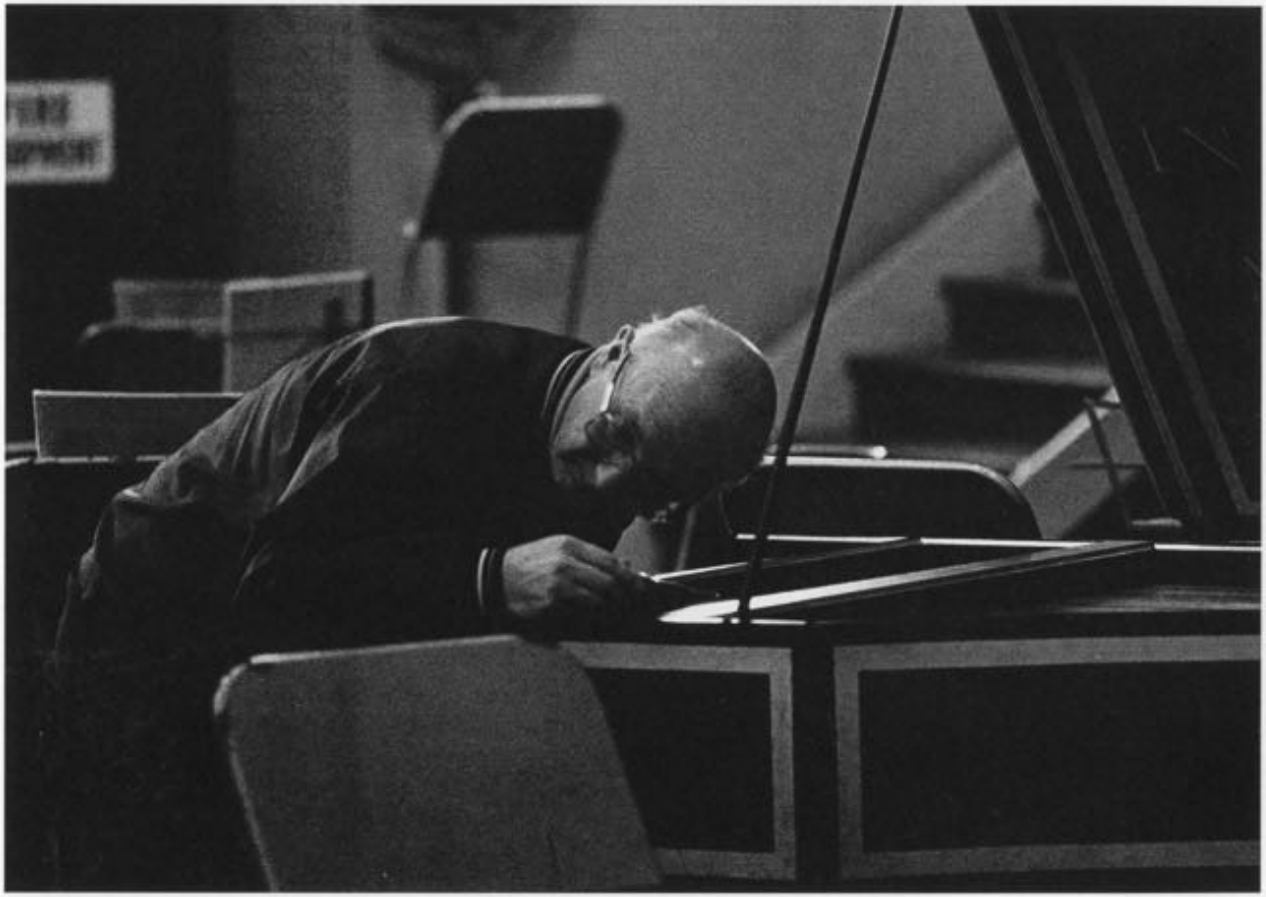
O.K., it's salary-related too, but mostly its just the unliberated environment there. There is a general feeling of powerlessness. I don't go to orchestra meetings any more. People get up and air their views and there might be the odd letter written or something but it never does a damn thing. We've filled out conductor surveys: do we want this person back again? Do we never want to see them again? We see them again even if we don't want to see them again.

We find that we are being told what to do by administrators who are jumped-up office boys with no particular musical qualifications, with no particular training and who can't even pronounce the names of the composers and the works we are playing properly. They have no understanding of what makes a musician tick. There is something very strange about that.

I've been playing the 'cello professionally for fifteen years and I just recently found a really good teacher. If I'd had a teacher like him when I was young I would have zoomed ahead. He is a great player and he can communicate. He has great sensitivity and a really good brain. A fantastic combination of all those things which is just amazing.

We talk about a piece. He asks, 'What do you want to make here? What is the mood? Is it bitter-sweet? Is it melancholic?' He is asking me to think along all of these different ways before I even approach the music. And then once I've got that he says, 'Well, try drawing the bow like this; try moving it before you hit the string; make it a sighing sound with the bow ...' All of this sort of stuff. He would encourage me to maybe think back to some special moments that I've felt or had.

And suddenly I'm getting goose bumps. Suddenly that's what music's all about. Also he is not dogmatic or rigid about things which some teachers can be. He leaves it up to me. It is really exciting. Other people in the orchestra have commented that my tone has improved a lot. Bigger sound, more confidence in high positions.



Musicians are drawn together by a common hatred of conductors in general. The stories that are told by musicians about things that happen in orchestras are usually about getting back at conductors. The underdog having his day kind of story, and there are lots of those. There is one that goes 'What is the difference between a bull and an orchestra? The bull has the horns at the front and the arsehole at the back. The orchestra is the other way around'.

There is a lovely story which is told about a prominent French horn player in London. A jumped-up, rather charlatan kind of conductor came to conduct the orchestra. The overture to the concert was *Oberon* by Weber which starts with three sustained horn notes.

This person being such a celebrity horn player was never actually criticised by the conductors because he was so good and he was also known as a bit of a testy kind of personality. In those orchestras if you are a conductor you can expect to be spoken back to by those sorts of players.

At the rehearsal the conductor gave the first beat or two and the horn player played very beautifully but the conductor stopped and said, 'No, it was too loud'.

The other players looked around amongst themselves and said, 'What is he doing? What is going to happen? There will be an explosion in a minute'.

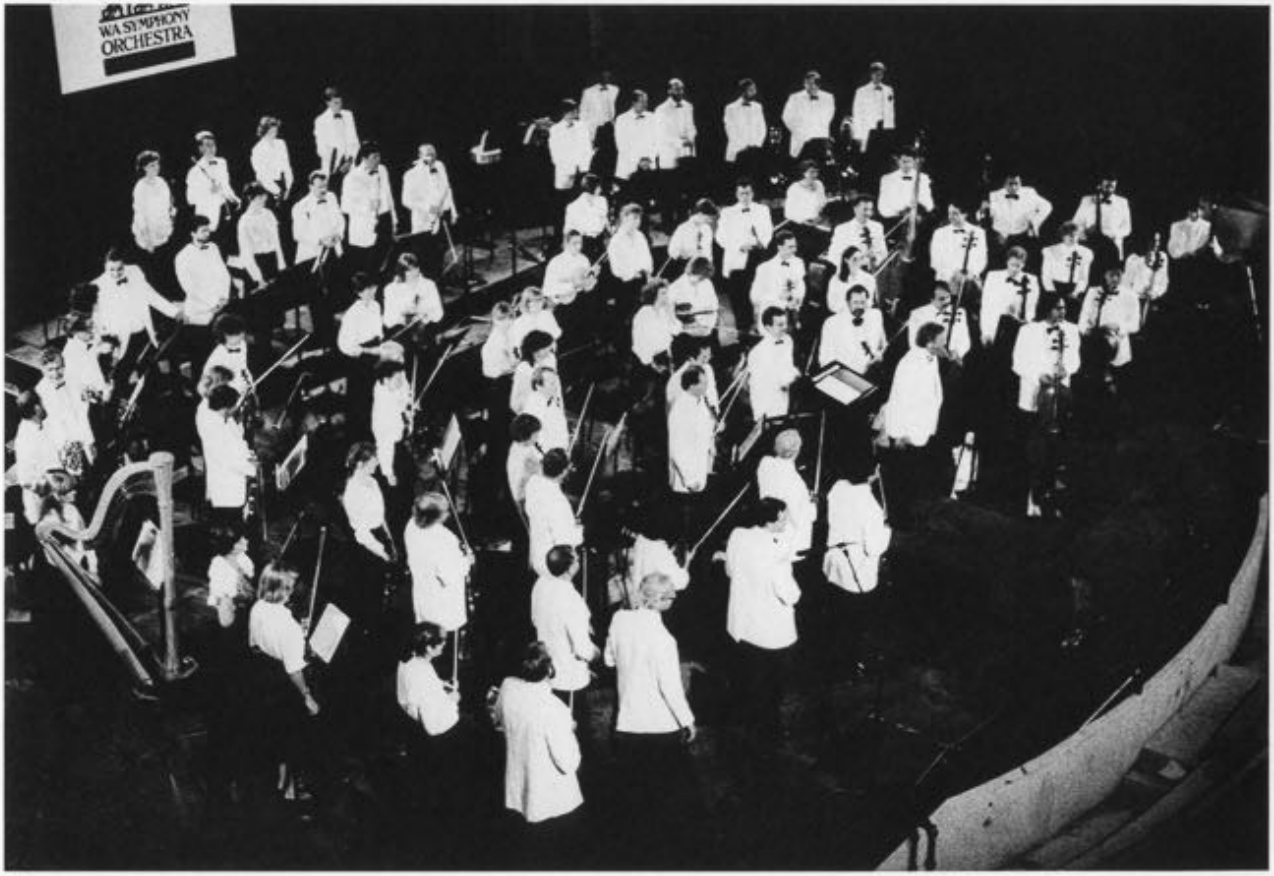
He started again. No, it was too soft. Started it again, it was too fast. Started again, too slow. To everyone's amazement this great horn player said nothing. They thought 'This is just crazy. He would have destroyed a conductor by now for stopping him four times'.

On the night of the concert the conductor came on the platform and gave the down-beat. There was the horn player with his instrument up to his mouth. Not a sound. The conductor looked a bit nonplussed and started again, gave another down-beat. Not a sound. Tried a third time. Nothing.

He began to look very agitated and worried. He got down from his podium and went over to the leader of the orchestra, about eight feet away. He walked across the stage and said, 'What are we going to do?'

While he was talking to the leader, what did he hear but the first notes of the overture being played by the horn and he raced back in great confusion and embarrassment and began to try and catch up.

These are common sorts of stories amongst musicians. If there wasn't some common bond like that they probably wouldn't be such a good team.


WA SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA

REFLECTIONS

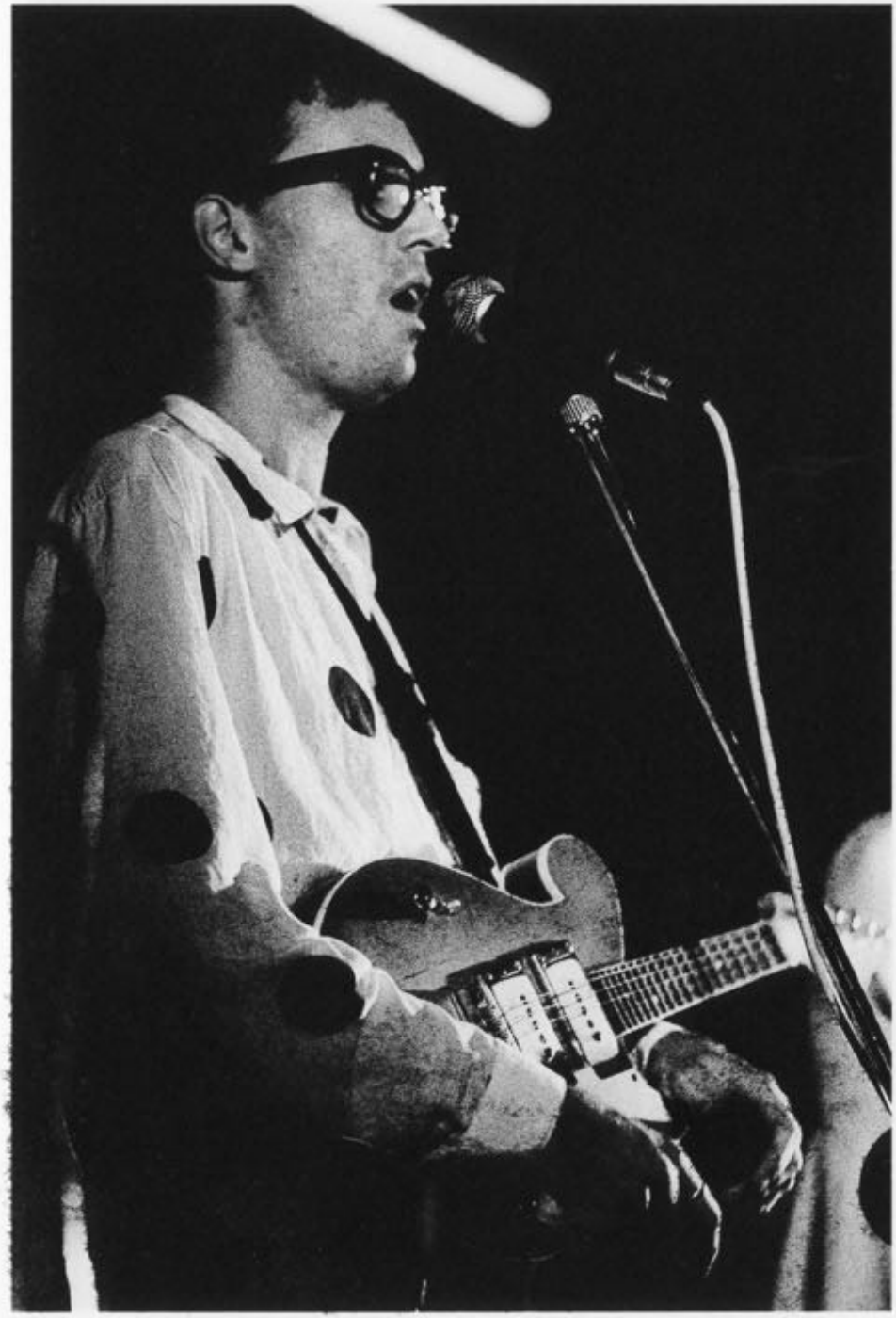
I think there is a real trap in being a cover band that once you get to the stage of being a very good mimic you lose contact with your imaginative side, your creative side and you're continually living in the shadow of someone else's inventiveness. In Aboriginal or American Indian society to steal someone else's songs in that way was considered a very serious crime. I think that the seriousness of the crime is that you're not fulfilling yourself, you're cheating yourself.

The spiritual side of my music has always been one of the main themes. I try to loosen my spirit up as much as possible when playing and make my body the best vehicle for the spirit to exercise what it knows. I believe there is a replenishing aspect to music. As the Indians say, it is one of the few ways in which we can give life back to the earth because most of the time we spend our lives destroying life and not providing much. In fact the vibrations that we create with music encourage life around us and give life back to the world, make plants want to live and all that sort of thing.

The loosening of the spirit and the sort of positive, friendly vibrations that come from music are also very important in a social sense in that in linking together those vibrations we illustrate the way in which we can be a friendly, co-operative community of people in which we all have a part to play, in which we're all attentive toward one another and conscious of one another's needs and creative potential. Within any kind of music all of us function at different levels. Some of us are more creative but possibly less stable, others are more stable and less creative.

As composer/arranger what I'm really trying to do is set up situations where peoples' creativity can allow them to become a fulfilled person. They come away from the event and think, 'Well, that's something that I can be in my life. I can be creative, I don't just have to follow a pattern but I can transcend that pattern. I can just follow my own essence, my own inspiration in society. I can be effective instead of just being obedient. I can contribute as a human being'. I think that's the best thing about music: the simultaneity of order and inspiration.

Mike Burns



There was one notable dispute I was involved in which was with the management of a restaurant where I was playing. After I had been there for some months being paid in a pay packet at the end of the week with tax taken out as a regular employee they gave me casual notice, which meant they rang me up on a Wednesday and said 'Don't come in tonight or at any time in the future'.

Peter (the Secretary of the Musicians' Union) on my behalf took appropriate action within the framework of the arbitration system and got me my holiday pay, two weeks pay in lieu of notice and a reasonable figure of compensation.

That was a really nasty business. The man who ran that restaurant was a really arrogant and nasty man. A person doesn't get to be as rich as he is without becoming totally corrupt in terms of how he relates to his workers. He treats them as units in an equation, to be picked up and put down at whim. Everyone was treated the same way. The women were treated worse than I was.

He walked past me four or five times a night over a five month period and absolutely never said a word, except maybe once in my first week he said, 'Could you play a bit softer?' Absolutely nothing. So I was quite pleased to take an amount of money off him, although it was less than one per cent of the weekly gross of that restaurant. It was nothing to him. It might have bruised his pride a little.

Duncan Campbell

I played in a band at the Basement in Perth. The flute player and I began experimenting with playing free music which was just totally extemporised pieces on flute and piano so that in the middle of that jazz group we were beginning to develop some numbers which gave us an opportunity to play 'free' as we called it. It was probably close to the free jazz movement of the seventies.

When that job finished the group dissipated. The flute player and I made a pact that we were going to become more involved in this. We made a recording of about sixty minutes of our own compositions. These compositions, instead of having chord changes in them which we improvised on were just the beginnings of an improvisation. They provided the starting point and then we didn't play on the changes, we just developed from that point, using a couple of strategies for keeping us at least somewhat together.

We met a Polish double bass player who had played avant-garde bass in Poland. We formed a band with a drummer who could play very good open-form style. We played at the Perth Jazz Society and I am sure it was the first group that played Free Jazz at that club. People left in droves. Some stayed and liked it.

We formed a duo and had six weeks at a Perth nightclub doing gigs. This wasn't widely publicised I might add but we survived for about six weeks until the management became paranoid about the whole thing and got rid of us.

They used to have Glen Miller on when we arrived, very loudly. A defensive thing. So we would walk in to the strains of the Glen Miller Big Band which would be on till we started playing. We had to get out of the place. We would walk around the block and say comforting things to each other.

We were told we should dress up for the gig in some compellingly theatrical sort of way so I had my dinner suit on and an orange shirt and he used to turn up wearing outrageous costumes. We used to sit there and play. Probably we would play Chick Corea or things like that if we were cornered but otherwise we played Free.

No one took any notice of us. Sometimes people whom I knew came along and said, 'Why don't you play some tunes? We know you can play tunes. Now, come on...'

We went through an elaborate ceremony with the management before we did the gig. We said, 'Look, this is likely to alienate people temporarily but eventually the audience will build up because we are sure there are people out there who are looking for something just like we are offering'. We really stressed the situation with as much consideration as we could, probably to our own disadvantage because when business didn't build up and when people looked rather oddly at us and probably asked some funny questions around the bar the management finally said, in that half-baked, rather po-faced way that people do, 'Look, we don't think we'll have it next week', rather than, 'You're sacked'.

It got no real publicity. They never pushed it and it never took off. When it finished I was relieved.

Ross Bolleter

The great thing about playing a musical instrument is that even if you're an anonymous member of a section you can play well and enjoy your work. Even if you can't stand the conductor or anything about the situation you can go there and do an honest day's work.

I enjoy playing, I enjoy the extroverted business of projecting to an audience but I certainly would have my doubts as to the ultimate value of the concert situation, the opera, ballet, symphony orchestra situation. Even the childrens' concerts that we do for schools I think are in the right direction but somehow I'm not confident that it reaches very far.

Concert going is a spectator sport. We performers up there on the stage are quite far removed from the audience and we're sitting in our seats and who knows what we're doing? It is important to realise just how artificial and limited in time in the total history of humanity this concert hall setting is. Its only in the last two hundred or so years that music has had a concert-hall ambience. Originally what we now call Chamber Music was played literally in chamber rooms in aristocratic settings and the lower classes just didn't have music of that kind, they would have had their own music.

Concert going tends to be a status symbol and its questionable just what kind of experiences people are having when they're going to concerts. If people read books or listen to music or look at paintings they often have a very abstract relationship to what they're doing, they don't really vividly perceive and experience what it is that they're reading or listening to or looking at.

Music is meant to bring us together. Someone has said that music is really the only genuine way where four or five people can make love together simultaneously. Now that may bring up wild visions of orgies to some people but in fact that's true and that's why musicians prize chamber music so much because there is some feeling of working together. Unfortunately it doesn't always reach the heights that that description would suggest.

The question of the role of orchestras in the cultural life of people is a serious, a very valid question and I think they are often supported for the wrong reasons. Perhaps it gives people the illusion of a sense of meaning if they can say to themselves, 'Well, I've gone to a concert' or 'I'm going to a concert'. One of the basic human challenges that all of us face now is 'How do we meet people?' I mean, how do we meet people in our lives, in our work? Are we just always going to be working for big-name concerns? What are all these big concerns for anyway? What are we all for?

I think that we find meaning in our lives when we feel that we are really genuinely related to other people. Our relations tend to be so conventional: going to the footy on Saturday or going to the concert on Thursday or going to the pub after work or whatever it may be; these all tend to be just conventional situations. Where are those areas where we are really sharing, where we are really interested in what we do?

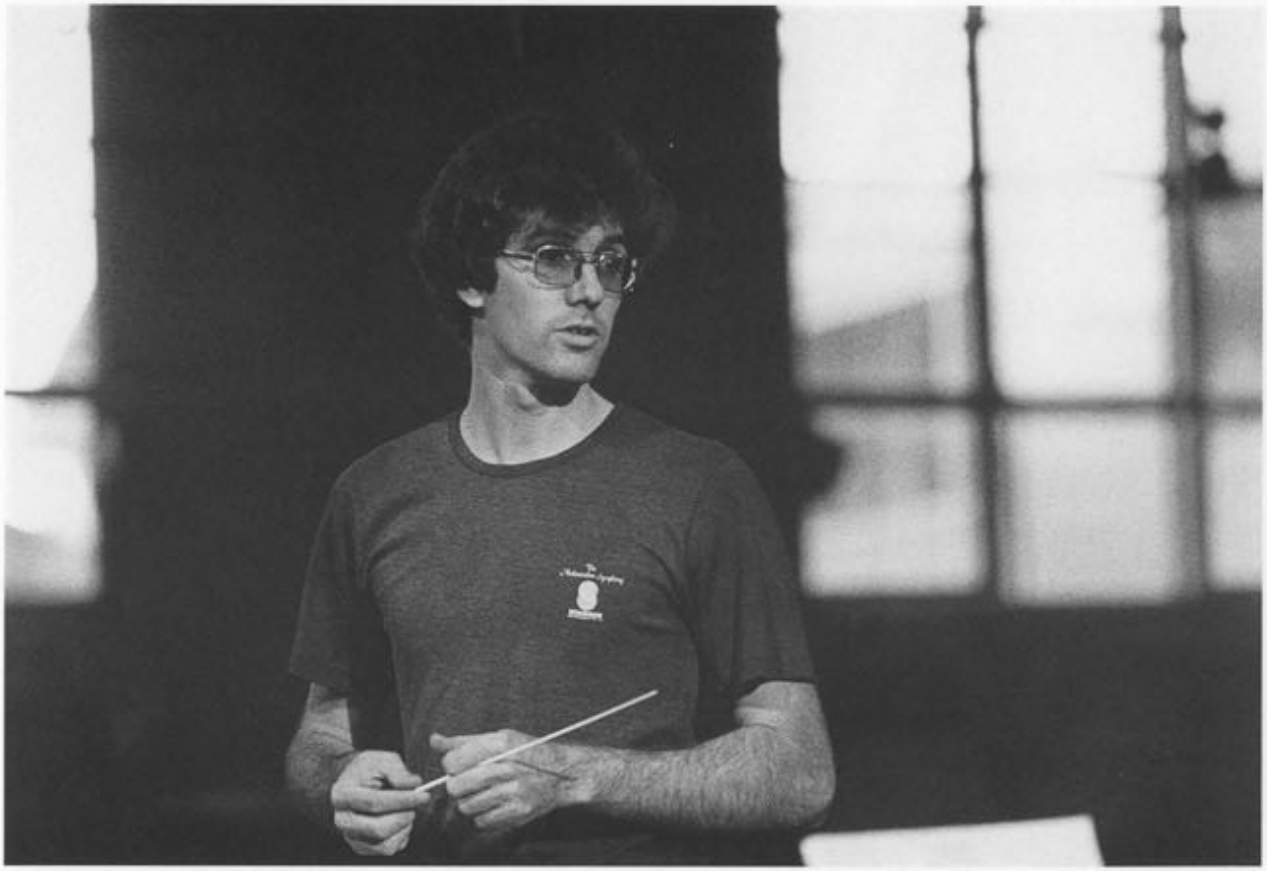
The society generally is so passive where everybody is consuming goods and watching telly and so on that people literally don't know what to do. If a life doesn't have a question it it its not a living life, its a dead life, its a passive life. A human being is by nature a questioner and the work quest is related to question: there's a feeling of going on a quest, discovering something. If you don't feel you're discovering something you're not really alive.

The economic situation where more and more people are unemployed all the time obviously shows that people are becoming expendable to the society and there's something radically wrong with an economy that's based on the production of material goods rather than human beings. You could just as well have an economy based on education as on the production of automobiles. Of course we need material production but it all depends on what people value ultimately.

As teachers working with students through the medium of music we're having a contact which involves more of the human being than say teaching mathematics might. That's one reason I value the teaching of the violin that I do with little children. I like teaching little children because the point is not necessarily whether they become wonderful violinists but that they experience doing something real beside sport. In this society, particularly in Australian society, people are great on sport. Sport is fine but its only one thing and its the only thing many people are doing where the doing is more on the inner realm.

Music is doing on the inner realm. It involves the body, it is physical but it speaks to the spirit so it has a harmonising effect on the whole human being. I think that's an area where music can play a healing role, an enlivening role in the life of people.

Orchestra Musician



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The Musicians

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Duncan Campbell, pianist/entertainer.
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Jeff Carroll, composer/arranger, currently musical director of a capella mixed voice choir.
Bruce Devenish, drummer with 'Moon Kings', music teacher and composer.
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Murray Swain, trumpeter and leader of the 'Swan City Jazzmen.'
Steve Tallis, singer/songwriter and proprietor of a record distibution business.
Reg Zar, drummer in the 'Coolgardies' and various other bands. Professional musician since 1968.

In addition we thank those musicians who allowed us to use their interviews but did not want their identities revealed.

'Musicians must keep developing. For certain musicians the daytime job conflict gets stronger and stronger. Other musicians are quite content to hold down two jobs. Its a very daunting field to be full-time in because the criteria for being full-time are creativity, original compositions that win public favour, recording contracts and a book that's full of engagements of the sort that you want.

I've grown to respect very much any professional musician who just keeps on coming up with new stuff. They've got to pull it out of themselves, they've got to bring from within new ideas and have the confidence, the daring to push it out for the public to buy like any artist does. I sometimes wonder whether I've got that sort of courage and daring.'

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