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Transcript of an interview with
Garry Lee

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SLWA Perth Jazz Oral Histories - 04 - Garry Lee
Interviewer: Adam Trainer
Recorded 4th September 2023

Adam Trainer
This is an oral history with Garry Lee, recorded at the State Library of Western Australia on the 4th of September 2023. The interviewer is Adam Trainer. Garry, can I please start with your full name and your date of birth?

Garry Lee
Garry Colin Lee. 27th of December 1951.

Adam Trainer
Great. And where were you born, Garry?

Garry Lee
Leigh-on-Sea, Essex, England.

Adam Trainer
Okay. And how long did you live there?

Garry Lee
We came to Sydney in 1957. So I was five.

Adam Trainer
Right. How long did you live in Sydney?

Garry Lee
Moved to Perth at the end of 1983. So coming up to 40 years ago.

Adam Trainer
Sure. Okay. So what was your home life in Sydney like? Were you, was it a musical family?

Garry Lee
Extended family was. So when we came over, it was actually my father worked for a bank in London, and it was taken over by the ANZ Bank and so he was working with Australians, mainly Sydney people. And one, he was very friendly - - suggested that life in Sydney would be a lot, lot easier and better than it was in post-war England, because rationing about just finished at that stage - - I mean, I was young so it didn't really affect me. But yeah, it wasn't a particularly good place, I would have thought, to live after the ravages of World War Two. So he got his younger brother, my uncle, who was a jazz musician in England, and he said to him, “Get a job with an Australian bank”, which my uncle did with then Bank of New South Wales, which is Westpac these days, and they both just transferred to Sydney. And we came over on the Strathaird which was a PNO ship in 1957, and they were both on salary. So it was me the only child, my parents, my auntie and uncle and my dad and uncle's parents, my grandparents. So seven of us, and we all lived together in a suburb called Eastwood in

the late fifties and then, a rented place. And there was a piano in that house that my uncle played. My aunty also played piano. My grandmother also played piano and I used to muck around on piano. I was, I guess now a six-year-old. But my family is hugely sports orientated and it was decided that I was more likely to be involved in sport than in music, which is kind of crazy because my whole life has been about music, mainly jazz, and football, which is soccer. And I still play. I play walking football. And last year I was asked to be part of the Australian team to go to the Zurich and again this year for the FIFA World Masters Cup. I didn't do too many commitments back here, but yeah, it's weird. So the typical Anglo Saxon pigeonholing – either/or – you know, you're a musician, therefore you're not a sportsman; very sportsman therefore not a musician. That really kind of applied to me. My uncle, by the way, wasn't particularly good at sport, and my father and mother were both pretty good. My grandfather was excellent. You know, he played football, represented Essex and he was a pole vaulter when they used to use telegraph poles as poles. Yeah. So, my mother played hockey until she was in the mid-fifties and she coached it. And my father's role, he founded a football club that's still going in Eastwood called St Andrews Association Football Club and that's still huge there. But he also was very much involved in athletics, and I guess his highest position was president of Oceania for the IAAF, and he was very much involved with getting the Sydney Olympics. He was on the IOC, passed away a couple of years ago now. So I had all that around me growing up.

Adam Trainer
A lot of competing influences.

Garry Lee
I had a lot of sport around me, which I enjoyed. I mean, I was good at it but wasn't great, you know? I mean, I wasn't going to be become a professional footballer any time soon. I was pretty good at athletics, but not great. You know, I wasn't going to represent Australia in the Olympics or anything like that, you know.

Adam Trainer
And how about jazz? Do you attribute your interest in jazz to your uncle?

Garry Lee
Yes, I do in the first place, because one of the first things they did was buy a car, Humber Super Sniper, and it had a car radio in it. And my earliest recollection is listening - - of the car - - is listening to jazz as I'm sort of like - - we've been somewhere, the Blue Mountains or down to Kaiama and we're driving back to Eastwood and there's jazz on the radio. I can remember that. And my uncle had a trio that would rehearse at our house and that had a couple of times. Apparently, I didn't know him - - who he was at the time - - but the drummer was a fellow called Chris Karan who went on to beat Dudley Moore's drummer in the Dudley Moore Trio in the 1960s. That was that was on TV in Australia. Yeah, the Dudley - - Peter Cook and Dudley Moore, you know.

Adam Trainer
So how did your musical education or how did you first start playing music?

Garry Lee

Well, I went to a private school in Sydney, Newington College, which was a Methodist school like Wesley College here in Perth, originally Methodist. And I was very much into listening to pop music. And the six years I went to Newington was 1964 to 1969 inclusive, which if you look back at it, was The Beatles. You know, that was the soundtrack of secondary school started with The Beatles. But it also very quickly introduced me to Rolling Stones, The Animals, The Kinks and all those other English bands, British bands. And I really did enjoy the more blues orientated sounds of bands like The Stones and Animals, and that then led me and - - Yardbirds was the other one. And I remember vividly it was an athletics carnival. And I heard that this guitarist who used to be in the Yardbirds had - - was in this new trio called Cream, and I remember hearing a tune on the radio. It was AM radio, and there was always radios going, even at the school, at an athletics carnival. And I remember hearing this tune of Strange Brew by Cream, and I said, that's Cream, you know, that's got to be Cream. I mean, no one told me. I just knew that that would be the sound they'd make. And so I was into that, that and Jimi Hendrix Experience, which followed through so that they were hit with heavy duty blues rock bands, loud volume.

But I started to look at what had influenced those players like Eric Clapton and Peter Green and Mick Taylor and the Stones themselves. And that took me to players, the actual Chicago players that had influenced the whole scene on the outside. I knew, even in the sixties, I knew about John Lee Hooker. I'd heard him, Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf and those, that sort of blues, Bo Diddley. So yeah, I was very much into that. But at the same time also into jazz, which sounded nothing like that to my ears back then because I was now babysitting my uncle and aunts two boys, my cousins.

So my uncle had a jazz record collection, so I would sit and listen to that. So I was listening to Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker, Thelonius Monk, and Count Basie and really enjoying that. And Lester Young. I remember Billie Holiday hearing all that in the sixties as a teenager. So what happened next when my best friend through school at almost the end of school, he was a drummer in the cadet band, but he also enjoyed the same sort of music as I did. And so we would drum together. We used to have boaters that we wore, you know, straw hats you wore at school. So we would be singing tunes on the train home and bashing the heck out of the boaters. And memorably, this is a good story: Year 12, which we used call six year, it was raining cats and dogs, so everyone had to be in the classroom before school. So this fellow Don and myself had two upturned rubbish bins and we were singing and playing ‘Wipe Out,’ you know [plays Wipe Out on his leg], I was singing that along. And one teacher looks in, a young teacher looks in the door, and all our friends are listening and they are enjoying it. They'll look in and go - - a bit later on an older teacher comes in, so, we got six - - we got caned for it. And she was on the backside. Yeah, we got caned for it. But it was just unbelievable when you think about: it's 1969, you know?

Adam Trainer
But that couldn't keep you down?

Garry Lee
No, I was already playing. I started playing guitar in 1968, in fifth year, so year 11. And I was very, very slow in making progress. And one of my mates played classical violin and I'd been playing for about three or four months and this guy borrowed a guitar one weekend and came back on the Monday and he could play better than me. And I was

so annoyed, you know, because I'd been getting away with it. But, you know, I persevered, and I was listening into the jazz. And then in 1969, my dad managed the Australian athletics team on a trip through Asia, ending up in Japan, and he asked me if there's anything that he could get for me. And I wanted to play vibraphone, but I knew that him getting vibraphone, if you see the size of a vibraphone, that's not going to happen. So I said, could you get me a Glockenspiel? And he told me the story that in Tokyo he spent a day with a translator going around Tokyo and a driver, and they found one, which I've still got a Yamaha Glockenspiel, and that started me on the road to playing vibraphone. So after school I went to uni and I, look, I was enjoying it, but there was so much happening.

Adam Trainer
What were you studying?

Garry Lee
I was doing a BA and so I was doing basically English and History, that would have seen me become an English history teacher. I guess. So I enjoyed the subjects, but I was just like my heart was in the music. So I dropped out and I dropped out after two years. And it's an interesting, you know, I suppose when you look at it now, if you've dropped out of university courses like that, you can do a jazz course. But back then, if you didn't want to do that, you find part time work. But my mother said to me - - my parents at this stage separated and they were divorced in 1974 formally. But my mother said to me, "Well, you're not going to sit around at home all day just practicing music". And I accepted that. I didn't. I made no effort. I realised I needed to get work. I wanted to buy a car, I wanted to buy decent gear. And so I became a professional cyclist, I was a postman on pushbike. And I did it for 11 years. I even did it when we first arrived in Perth. So it was a great job in so many ways because it kept me really fit. And you went home when you were finished, so I could often do it in 4 hours or less. So you start at 6 a.m. That was a bit of bad news, but you know, you'd be home 10:30 in the morning and the rest of the day was yours and you've got a full-time salary, you know, so by 1974, I was playing jazz. It would have been a pretty low standard I'm sure. But we had a gig on a Wednesday and a Saturday night in a restaurant in the Rocks in Sydney. And Errol Buddle and Col Nolan were there on the Thursday and the Friday. And they led a quartet and they're two of the legends of Australian jazz and I remember they would come in to get paid for their two nights after doing a gig on the Saturday night and sit and listen to us.

And so they were quite encouraging to me especially, you know. So it seemed like, you know, there was a bit of a pathway for me to go along. I got lessons from late, I think it was early 1971. I got my first lesson from George Golla on guitar, and George Golla was Don Burrows, guitarist for many, many years and recognized as Australia's leading jazz guitarist. And I had this two-hour lesson that cost a fortune. But he had a house, two story home opposite a golf course, and it was a beautiful home. St. Ives in Sydney and St. Ives is sort of a top address and I was very impressed and so I ended up having quite a few lessons with him over the next five years. What he actually - - the one thing he really taught me because it was so - - it was going to be so relevant - - the Count Basie band made their one and only trip to Australia just after my first lesson. And I mean they've been here since, but it's not with Count Basie and the Count Basie Band. had this guitarist called Freddie Green who played rhythm guitar. And as I've said to Mace Francis, I need to talk to the WAYJO guitarists about this

because so often, whether it's WAYJO or the school bands, we got it all wrong. They play - - they're playing electric guitars way too loud, and Freddie Green played an acoustic guitar unamplified in the Sydney town hall. George Golla had told me before I went to hear them. He said: Now sometimes you won't hear him. He said, you'll just feel him. And it was just spot on, you know. So I was, yeah, that was serendipity that I got the opportunity to be told that. So two weeks I think before I actually heard the bloke and I got this great memory after the Saturday night concert, it was a Saturday night concert and a Sunday afternoon concert in the Sydney Town hall. After the Saturday night concert, we all went to the Wentworth Hotel where Don Burrows Quartet played with George Golla, because I said to my mates, all my mates have to be interested in jazz, you know, that I influenced them.

And I said, look, we'll go down there because one of the Basie Band might come in for a sit in. And sure enough, this guy came in and he's a legend, Eddie Lockjaw Davis, a tenor sax player, and of course he didn't have his instrument with him and he's talking to Don Burrows. And we were half listening and he said, oh man, he said, I really wish I had my horn. I'd love to sit in with you guys, you know? And my mate said, Mr. Davis, my car's parked out front, why don't you ring the hotel where you're staying? And because he knew it'd be in inner city Sydney and we'll go round and pick up your tenor sax and bring it back. Will you do that for me? So we did it. And Eddie Lockjaw Davis sat in with the Burrows Quartet, and I reminded Don of this in 2001 when he came over here to play at Scotch College where I was teaching. I actually organised it but what he didn't know is that we'd actually got the horn for Eddie, he just yeah - - the next minute Eddie's playing with his group. And then Eddie said to him at the end, he said, look, he said, you know, I'm good friends with George Wein who runs the Newport Jazz Festival. I could get you guys playing there. And Don said, Oh, well, what's your address? And Eddie Davis says, I don't have an address. He said, What? He says, I'm on the road the whole time. When I'm in New York. When we're all in New York, we just stay in a hotel. It could be this one or that one. So I'll give you George Wein's address directly. So Don did that, and the result was that they played. That was the first Australian jazz band to play at the Newport Jazz Festival and they also played elsewhere on that tour. I think they might have done Montreux on the same tour. So we were sort of involved with making that happen, which I reminded Don, so where have I come from there? So as I say, I was interested in playing the vibraphone and I had the Glockenspiel and I was working out all the things you needed to do, and there was a fellow who had a vibraphone, not a very good one, but I would go to his place, an older guy, and he played an organ and we would jam with a drummer and so I was getting okay at it.

So I got my first vibraphone in 1974, but it was a bit of a toy. It was okay. It was better than the Glockenspiel, but not much better, if you know what I mean. And anyway, I just always knew I could play. I would be able to play the vibraphone. I just knew I could do the physical things that were required. The guitar not so much, although most of the time I'm playing guitar and teaching it, but the vibes, I just felt I could deal with that. So I got a better vibraphone. A vibraphone called an Electravibes in 1975, and this instrument required an amp. But because I was playing guitar, I had a top-quality amp and once I got that, I was just like, so happy and just working on this. And I had had various bands. I mean, I won't go into all the bands that I was in through the 1970s, but one band, which is kind of funny, was sort of a throwaway band. It was the mate Pater who got the saxophone for Eddie Davis in 1971. So we're still very close

mates. We've gone through Newington together he's a very successful solicitor. Anyway, we had this band where he was the singer and played congas. I was on guitar and we had electric bass and drums and this fellow came up to us at a gig at Sydney University and he said, Would you like to be in a in a Coca-Cola ad? And we said, yeah, okay, what do we need to do? And he said, well be at this address on Saturday morning, and it was kind of like we're doing now, it was a video interview with the four of us, and the fellow would ask us questions. We had to see if we had a sad look or a happy look or whatever, and we were a rubbish band. I must say this, and there was another band that we were vying against, apparently, and they were a five piece we were a four piece, and they were a top band around Sydney. I knew who they were. They didn't know us and I heard them play and I thought, you know but and they look at us well we don't know them, we've got this gig. They were so confident. But what they didn't realise that the music had already been recorded. We were miming the music and we got the gig.

Adam Trainer
Better mime artists.

Garry Lee
Apparently. They'd offered it to Sherbet, you know, Daryl Braithwaite and actually the drummer Alan Sandow. He was a year behind me at Newington, we used to play rugby together in the same team. They'd offered it to them, but their management wanted 20 grand and we did it for two grand. We didn't negotiate. We were told there's $500 each for two days work, which back in 1977 was. You'd take - - you would definitely take. It was a lot of fun. So the ad was broadcast film, shown all around Australia and New Zealand apparently, and was shown here, so I'm told. So I was the guy in the Coke ad and I was a postie at the same time. So that was kind of funny. But I mean, a lot of what I did in Sydney in the seventies was, listen, going out to listen to live jazz, if I wasn't playing, I was listening. You know and sleeping. I'd get a sleep in the afternoon after the postie, doing that, that and I started in 1974 teaching out of a music shop. So I had, you know, some days there I was going, yeah, really flat out, I think it was 1975, very briefly for about two or three weeks I worked in the band at Les Girls in Kings Cross, so we had to play before the first show between the shows and after the final show. So I think we finished about 4 a.m. and Mondays and Tuesdays, I think I did two weeks of it. I just couldn't handle doing that. I would then drive to the post office. I was working at Beecroft at that stage and the head postman would wake me up and then I'd start doing my postie's thing and then go home and have a sleep and then do it all over again. Well, it was okay for a while, but two weeks and I was I was out, you know. But there was so much jazz to be heard.

The basement in, down near Circular Quay was a great place to hear jazz. And there was jazz there. I think that started in 1973, round about that stage. Even before that, there was the rocks push down in the rocks and yeah, there was always places where we could hear. I got very friendly with a guitarist singer called Johnny Nicol, who I would have lessons with. John Nicol is a Thursday Islander and he, unlike George Golla, he had no theoretical knowledge of what he was doing music. So I would take one of these little portable cassette players down and we would jam. I was good enough to keep up with him, but he would do all the soloing. Any phrase, I especially liked to say stop and I would say play that slowly. And he just played it and I said, let let's keep going. And we just do that for an hour and I'd pay him, you know, and he

was happy. I was happy, you know. So I got a lot from that and just talking there. And then he would let me sit in on vibraphone. And then another, his drummer, Harry Rivers, who passed away about three years ago now, I guess up in Cairns, he was fantastic with me. He was really encouraging and would actually pay me out of his own money to come and sit in on gigs, playing vibes and guitars, a fair amount of stuff and musical equipment to take in. Two trips at least you know. So we got married in 1980, I met Sue in 1977, actually met her through playing football. I played football for Macquarie University even though I wasn't studying there. But in 1978 I actually went back and did some more units there so I could play intervarsity for them. as a mature aged student, in 1978. So I played intervarsity football for Macquarie and Sue and I had, yeah we just hooked up about this time September in 1977, and we got married in 1980 and she was working for National Mutual and she was in charge of about 20 women running the first word processing set up in Australia apparently.

But she was in her early twenties but once I started, once we started going out together, she realised that, you know, I wasn't going to be around on a Saturday night to go to parties and all that. So she started to get a second job as well. But this one interesting thing I find this significant for today, so early in our relationship, she turned up at a party without me and a girlfriend said, so where's your new boyfriend, this guy, because I'd been in the Coke ad at this stage, this guy in the coke ad? And she said, Oh, he's doing a gig. And the other girl said, what's a gig? And you think, now we've got a gig economy that comes straight from music, you know? So no one knew what a gig was except musicians in the in the late seventies. And now it's like, it's defining us in some ways, well younger people it is, you know.

So into the 1980s, I just realised that I didn't want to do this postie job forever and the build-up of mail in the area, I was in Epping and I basically was second in charge. So sometimes when the head guy was off, I was in charge of a dozen blokes, you know, which was interesting to do, but I just thought, do I want to do this? I really want to do music. I want to be a full-time jazz musician. We bought a place, a home unit, as they call them. They call them apartments now, but it was the home unit in Concord West, which is not a fashionable suburb in Sydney in late 1979. And then we could afford we bought a block of land up north of Coffs Harbor on the ocean frontage and then we bought a place in Scarborough. Peter, my solicitor friend, was coming over to Perth in the early eighties and he came back and he said, Would you believe you can buy a place on a beachside suburb like Scarborough for $25,000 and they're such small figures now, but at that stage you couldn't find anything in Sydney for under $50,000.

So yeah, that's like saying half a million to a million, you know, it's double obviously. So we bought a place here in Scarborough and so we could easily afford both doing full time and part time work to cover the three mortgages but we moved here in 1983. We spent about two months traveling from Sydney to here, and a couple of weeks into the trip, I remember going to bed. We're staying at Sue's brother's place down the south coast in New South Wales, a holiday home and he had an old black and white TV and went to bed and the last race of the America's Cup was on, I was pretty hazy. So we went to bed and woke up the next morning, I turned it on and it was just coming up to the finish. And of course we won. Bond's Syndicate won, and we realised that where we were heading was now going to be the home of the America's Cup. So that to me, for Perth jazz is the first sort of extraneous factor that when we got here, we just went, hey, this place is just buzzing. Everyone was just on such a high, you know, and even

people in the jazz community were on a high about it. And it's just such an incredible vibe about Perth that we picked up on instantly. I went to Perth Jazz Society, probably the first Monday that we were here and from 1980 I think the Perth Jazz Society met at the Hyde Park Hotel and that went through to the 2000's. Then they met at the Charles Hotel, North Perth, and then it sort of folded with these weekly concerts. So what got me, apart from the atmosphere in Perth, was the number of Brits involved in the jazz scene. So the committee of the Perth Jazz Society was almost entirely British and being English born myself. But having lived for so long in Sydney, I actually had a Sydney “strine” accent but it mollified so quickly because of meeting these Brits.

But I think three of them I can remember were all what they now seem to call Thames Valley, so London area, which is Thames Valley is myself, as well as Essex. So that was Don Mead and his wife Moira and Graham Fisk and Mike Messenger. They were all pivotal guys. The Perth Jazz Society I think Mike might have been the president at that stage, but they sort of took it in turns. Don Mead was the band booker. He was never the president, I don't think, but he was the force behind Perth Jazz Society for so long. And Don, I asked him if I could open for a concert the next week, just playing solo vibraphone, and he said, “I don’t see why not.” And so I set up my vibes and it was the Ted Vining trio from Melbourne and I played. The place was packed, absolutely packed. It was the Hyde Park Hotel, it's where Dan Murphy's is now and the stage is where the beer is. So it's kind of fitting for me and I did some solo vibes pieces and the pianist with Ted Vining, Bob Sedergreen, who turned 80 last week, week before last, day before Ray Walker. He said to me, do you want me to come and sit in? So he came in on piano. We did two tunes, piano and vibes. I'd never met Bob. I knew who he was, but to me he was like a giant of jazz and I just, you know, the place was packed and everyone was just so welcoming to me, you know? And it was almost as far as the committee was concerned. It was like, oh, at last we got a vibraphone player because the vibes in jazz, it's in Australia, I've written an essay on this, it's a forgotten instrument. That's what I call it, vibraphone the forgotten instrument of Australian jazz. But in American jazz it's quite a significant instrument.

The Modern Jazz Quartet, Milt Jackson before him, Lionel Hampton was a significant vibes player with Benny Goodman. The band within the band that played at Carnegie Hall in the Thirties, the Red Norvo Trio, was a very famous concept for Trio with vibraphone, guitar and bass from the late forties, early fifties. Garry Burton was a full mallet virtuoso who came to the fore as a teenager with Stan Getz in the sixties. So the vibraphone was very much part of that of American jazz. But the instrument's very expensive to buy, to get a start. As I say, I started with a Glockenspiel you know? So it's very hard to sort of deal with it in that respect. So I was welcomed very much. And fellow called Adrian Kenyon held the position of WA jazz co-ordinator, and this was something that a position that was kind of foisted on to the Perth jazz community and Don Mead was totally against it, but the Australia Council were funding it and you were going to have one WA because all the other states did.

So this was before I arrived. I think at the beginning of 1983 they had a sort of informal meeting at the bar at the Hyde Park Hotel for a Monday night and Adrian got the position and he said to me at this concert I came up and made himself known. He's English, by the way. And he said, you maybe should think to contact Pat Crichton because they're starting a jazz course next year and there might be some work there for you. And I thought okay, thanks for that. And I contacted Pat. Pat's New Zealand

born and but he, like me, grew up in Sydney. But this was a different generation, you know, about ten years older maybe, and I never knew him in Sydney. I knew he was when he played in the Daly-Wilson big band, which was very famous in Sydney in the late sixties seventies, so he moved to Perth. I'm not sure when late seventies, whatever, but he had earlier that 1983 had been one of the founders of WAYJO and the first musical director of the WA Youth Jazz Orchestra. And now he had apparently worked out to start this jazz course, which was starting in 1984. Anyway. So I went up and met Pat at Glen Forest where he lived, and I put together a cassette of myself on vibraphone, and I lent it to him and he got back to me and he said, I could give you some hours. So whether he went back to Sydney and contacted people to ask about me, I'll never know. I never asked him. But anyway, I was given hours in that very first year, so 1984 was, that was the start of tertiary jazz education. Now Pat was full time employed, the rest of us were part time employed and the initial staff was Jim Cook and Lew Smith. They were both reed players, that's to say saxophone. Lew Smith was mainly involved in jazz history. Then there was Ray Walker. There were two pianists, Mike Nelson and Barry Bruce. Murray Wilkins on double bass and electric bass. Bruno Pizzata on drums and yours truly. And basically my role was to take the drummers on a second study of vibraphone. And so that first year there was only one year of intake.

So I started work at Cottesloe Post office in the beginning of February, and I transferred over from Sydney and because I didn't quite know what was going to happen and I would sort of thought, well, I've got to be working. But I was getting gigs left, right and centre as well. So by four months into it, so February, March, April, the end of May I went, I just did the teaching and what had happened is we'd sold the property, up north of Coffs Harbor, we'd sold the place in Sydney and we sold the place in Scarborough, were able to move into a place in Mount Lawley, which we still live in. So that was in 1984 and it was again, you know, was a heck of a lot cheaper than, than any similar place, probably half the cost of a place in Sydney of a similar distance from the city and access to everything. And it's a character place with swimming pool and all that.

Anyway, so what was interesting, and this is again from a historical perspective, at the end of that first year in 1984, I remember guys like Jim Cook saying, Well, that's probably it, lads. You know, we've got everyone that's going to want to study jazz in this first year and they're going to come back to finish. It was only associate diploma, which was a two-year course. So there'll be no one else to audition how wrong he was, you know, because this thing just opened up. In that first yearthough, the students, there were a lot of mature age students. Sue Kingham was one who, you know, her then husband, Mike Kingham. There were people like Allan Pithers who's, you know, nearly my age, Lenny Parker guitar. There was one fellow called Bob Britain, who was an architect, then aged in his fifties, who actually just took time out from being an architect for two years to do the jazz course. There was Robbie Pisano, Robbie Corvaia. None of these guys were direct from school. I think it was only about one fellow who'd been at school in 1983 gone year 12, year 13.

Adam Trainer
So the idea that you could get a qualification, even though these people had actually had already been playing was appealing?

Garry Lee

I don't know whether it was the qualification or the knowledge to be fair. You know, I mean, obviously a qualification is what they would get, but it seemed, very, very neatly segued into a degree that so I think the first-degree students and it was a four-year degree graduated in, I'm not sure was 1988 or 89. And increasingly you got students coming straight from secondary school to audition. And I think, yeah, the one guy that set the bar in my thinking was John Mackey, who I met him when he was in year ten at Churchlands and he would come to a gig that I would sometimes do on a Sunday afternoon, the Sunday session at the Glengarry Tavern, which I think was in Warwick, I don't think it's there now, but it was it a great gig. And his dad, Ron Mackey, who went on to become president of WAYJO in the late eighties, brought John along probably about 1985, I would say. So I met John then John's playing with Vince Jones now and based in Canberra, lecturer in jazz at ANU. So he's a significant player in Australian Jazz and we talked about jazz and I gave him ideas and so on and so forth. What happened in 1985 that's probably significant is a couple of things: I was asked to be the first administrator of WAYJO and that was a half a day week. I got paid so, not much, but it was added to the money I was now making teaching and there were two years to teach. Whereas in 1984 there was only one. That was the first thing.

The second thing was that there was dissatisfaction in the jazz community about the role of Adrian. He had a very good music magazine - that was his deal. You know, he was a music journalist who played piano. I mean, he had a very good across the board knowledge of all styles of music, really, including jazz. I mean, he liked jazz, still likes jazz. He's playing at the Ellington at the end of this month on piano. So he lives in Albany these days. Anyway, this dissatisfaction was also coming from it was coming from Perth Jazz Society committee, and in 1983, basically as we arrived here, they formed the Jazz Club of Western Australia, Jazz Club of WA, which was a good thing for everyone because it meant Perth Jazz Society didn't have to worry about traditional jazz.

Jazz Club of WA were fully set up to only deal with traditional jazz and anyway, their committee weren't happy with Adrian either. He wrote a column in the Daily News, as I recall, at that stage, and I was on his committee. When he first started, was not committee around him then. He would go across to Sydney, to the Australia Council and he came back, I think, in 1985 and, and he said to me, I need to form a committee, would I like to be on it? So there was people like Pat Crichton and there was Anne Conti from the Jazz cClub of WA, she was the newsreader on Channel Nine and she was a big jazz fan who liked primarily the traditional jazz. But she did like modern jazz as well. There's a whole bunch of people I can't remember exactly who the membership of the committee, but they didn't. They basically expressed a vote of no confidence in him - - in Adrian continuing as jazz co-ordinator. So the grants for the position were coming from the Australia Council and the WA Department of the Arts or whatever it was called back then, that was four days, two days each. So he was getting four days a week and he was running this magazine. Which obviously was making money for him and also writing professionally, I think, for the Daily News. So it was, you know, he wasn't perhaps able to do to be as proactive as he could have been. And I could see that the sad thing is I got on well with him. In fact, we played football together at one stage on the same team. But I could see that he just, he was needing to do too much with the other stuff. And I could see all these things that that could be done. Having lived in Sydney and just knowing, you know, he'd come, I think he'd lived in Africa prior, immediately prior to coming to here. So he didn't really know

much about the Australian jazz scene. How could he have? Whereas I had a bit of an overview of it I might know people to talk to, but I knew I knew all the movers and shakers. So the position basically became vacant, that the funding went to the Musicians Union here in Perth. And the secretary, Peter Woodward, basically said, You know, to him, Adrian that that you didn't have the confidence.

It was a bit of a legal thing there. But I think the funding - - I think the state body got involved and said, well, no, we can't, you know, just this is how it's got to be, Adrian, you know. And so he reluctantly left the position and then it was advertised and I was shortlisted for the position and got the position at the end of 1985. So that was, you know, really that meant now it dropped to three days a week and that was three days a week the whole time I did it. But I had the teaching at WAAPA and then gigs that I could do after that. So it was pretty, was pretty good. I mean, the money wasn't particularly good. It was good for teaching. But the other, the gig money is up and down and the jazz co-ordinator, position was that was just okay, you know.

Adam Trainer
So what did you do with that position as Jazz co-ordinator?

Garry Lee
Well, it was kind of a weird position. The idea was to promote WA jazz.

Adam Trainer
And Adrian had obviously been doing that through his magazine.

Garry Lee
Well, he perceived he had and through the Daily News articles. But often, you're spot on, was that, you know, he was trying to - - he didn't like the Jazz Club of WA. He made that kind of known I think, in his articles in the Daily News. So there was personalities. The interesting thing is just about all of them were Brits. He also, he and Pat Crichton fell offside because Adrian had an enormous amount to do with the formation of WAYJO, helping Pat Crichton and a certain amount to do, including recommending me for the formation of the - - it wasn't called WAAPA originally, but the WAAPA jazz course. So he had a handle in that. The other thing he'd had a handle in is, you know, he sent through an ad that went in the paper in the middle of 1985 about the Australian Bicentennial Authority seeking commissions. So I think he just sent that through routinely and I saw it and I think I'd seen it already in the paper. And when I saw it the second time from Adrian and I thought, I went to Pat Crichton and Mike Nelson the pianist who I knew to be a jazz composer, and I said, look, why don't the three of us put in a submission to get commissioned? And basically their attitude was, if you do the work, we'll say yes, you know, So I did it.

Yes, but this before I was Jazz co-ordinator, and we were successful, so we got, we got commissioned to write a work for 1988 and I was huge, hugely successful in certain ways. It's hard to sort of say this. I think it basically started to show people in the jazz community and then went once I was jazz co-ordinator, I pushed for this that, hey, you know, we're artists, we're yeah, we might play in a pub on a Saturday afternoon, but we're also artists, we're jazz artists, we're eligible for the same sort of opportunities that the classical musicians have.

And I don't think really anyone in the Perth jazz community had really thought quite like I was thinking, because I'd seen how that worked in Sydney. You know, one of the very first things I did when I was appointed jazz co-ordinator, is Contact Musica Viva, which, if you know, Musica Viva, is mainly involved with chamber music ensembles. But even back then it had a program where it would send ensembles out into the schools to promote certain styles of music. And in Sydney or in New South Wales, I knew friends of mine were in a group that played jazz and took it to primary school students. So I actually suggested that. And I also knew that Don Burrows had travelled under Musica Viva auspices quite a lot of times around the world. And when he couldn't do it, as was the case, I think in about 1980, he would pass it on to someone else and that someone else in 1980 was Erroll Buddle, a guy who'd played, had played with me. A friend of mine was asked to play bass in the band and they went up to Asia or something to tour. And I remember thinking, Well, it's all, you know, if Musica Viva Australia, but it's all Sydney, you know. And I wrote to them and I said, look, we have some fine musicians here and so on. And almost within, well, several months a student ensemble from WAAPA basically, I think under the leadership of pianist Russell Holmes, who was a student at that stage, went up to Singapore and did two or three weeks there.

And later in the decade in the eighties, Mike Nelson's group went to India to represent there on another occasion Cornerhouse Jazz Band who were traveling in Asia anyway, did a function at the embassy in Singapore, Malaysia. I can't remember which one, but yeah, there was opportunities like that and Musica Viva were beginning to think for us. I was very aware that if we posited ourselves more as artists rather than, you know, pub musicians doors may open and they certainly did.

Adam Trainer
And it seems as though with the incorporation of PJS, the establishment of jazz at WAAPA, and obviously it was the early days of WAYJO at that time that was sort of, I guess coalescing in circumstances that allowed the Perth jazz scene to view itself in a different light.

Garry Lee
And that's exactly right. And in 1989 - - so I had been on the committee of Perth Jazz Society almost from when I arrived here, they asked me, came on and I became the first musician to be on that committee. So from 1984 I was the liaison between jazz at WAAPA and PJS and then when I became jazz co-ordinator, I had to drop my position on the committee, but I had to attend every committee meeting, so I was still there. And once you got into the committee meeting, I was, yeah, I was allowed to talk and so on as much as I liked and make recommendations basically and sometimes they would, the committee would say can you check this out. Now one thing that I did in I think it was 1988 Courtney Pine Quartet or Quintet actually travelled to Melbourne, didn't play in Perth, and I heard they were coming back in 1989. And I said to the committee, look, we should get them to play in Perth on the way through. And do you want me to chase it up? Yes, I mean basically I had to do the work, but that was me being jazz co-ordinator, so I fully understand I was giving myself work. So they played at Hyde Park Hotel and I think they broke all records for attendance. The place was just like packed because Courtney Pine was a big name, English, black English jazz musician, saxophone player. But what I did do is recommend to the committee two things. I recommended that they have a part-time administrator that was funded and

that came to pass with and Helen Matthews held that position. And then and by the way, it was her and I was shortlisted for the jazz co-ordinator, position at the end of ‘85.

But I got the position based on what I'd been doing as administrator of WAYJO so one thing we've moved into the next. So I suggested in probably ‘88 that we should be or Perth Jazz Society should be applying for projects that involve local musicians with interstaters, because the Australia Council grant that went to Perth Jazz Society was all about airfares and airfares for interstate artists were hugely expensive back then. Probably they are cheaper now the night than they were there. You know, the good news, however, was that the international airfares, if an American flying into Melbourne or Sydney wanted to go on to Perth, it didn't cost that much because they were on an international ticket. So we got a lot of internationals through that way. But I was successful with the Perth Jazz Society concept of the grant of having locals being funded and the first one was a guitar concert which involved Jim Kelly and Steve McKenna, two guitars from Sydney with Ray Walker and Freddie Grigson, and that took place in 1989.

Also in 1988, WAYJO, we seem to be, you know, I work very closely with them and Ron Mackey was now president and I got on very well with him and we weren't able to jag the funding that we wanted. We felt we should be getting funding for WAYJO, and it wasn't happening, anyway, I'll never forget it, the Sunday Times mid-1988 and it was a breakdown of who got what from the WA Department for the Arts and the W.A. - Youth Orchestra, the classical ensemble, and they had created their Constitution based on WAYJO's Constitution. They were getting somewhere about 60 grand a year. And I rang up Ron Mackey and I said, If you've got the Sunday Times, and he said, I don't get that, you know, paper, blah, blah, blah. Nah, look, go and get it. Do me a favour, go and get it and ring me back this really, really, important. He rang me back and I said look that page 11 or whatever it was. I told him which page and he said, oh yeah, we’ve got to have a meeting. And so he worked for the Commonwealth Public Service. He worked in archives over near Curtin University. I don't know whether it's still there. And so he - -

Adam Trainer
Was that the National Archives?

Garry Lee
Yeah. So that was his gig. And so he and I and Pat Crichton went into the WA department for the Arts and Ron just sat there patiently and said: “We're not leaving till we get, we get a fair deal out of this.” And it came to pass that's what happened. So yeah, it was basically, I had so much, so many roles as jazz co-ordinator, I could go on for hours, but that would be very stupid really, because I'd say the biggest thing was trying to create that philosophical shift in attitude for jazz musicians to start thinking of themselves as creative artists and, you know, aligned to whatever else was happening in the community, whether it's a sculptor or a painter or a poet or a classical musician, you know, we had to start thinking like that. And people did. you know, and I would obviously encourage them help them with grant applications and so on and so forth. And we moved into, really into an entirely different way of looking at it.

Adam Trainer

And that seems to have been facilitated partly by the fact that people could now study.

Garry Lee
Yes, absolutely.

Adam Trainer
There was also, I suppose, with PJS bringing international touring artists the opportunity to see that, to see what an artist as such looks like how they ply their trade.

Garry Lee
Yes.

Adam Trainer
The opportunity to play with them, alongside them and obviously those other opportunities that you talk about in terms of grants and I suppose building the industry through those key organisations – PJS and WAYJO. So are there any sort of, I guess, key developments in or shifts in the way that PJS has worked? Obviously, you were involved from the early eighties onwards.

Garry Lee
Yeah.

Adam Trainer
You know, thinking about the decades since, how has what that organisation does evolved?

Garry Lee
Well, I have had really nothing to do with PJS in recent decades. Once they stopped the weekly concerts, it sort of went into mothballs. I don't know really what happened then you So we're talking 2007-08 or somewhere about that. I mean, I certainly played at the Charles Hotel. What's happened in the 1990s. So my position, funding to my position finished at the end of 1992 and it was quite controversial. But we won't go into that. But I think a lot of it was an outcome of WA Inc. I don't think the State Government had any money and I was a casualty of that along with probably all sorts of other things that I didn't know much about.

But in the nineties what happened and I could see this was just this enormous growth of jazz in the secondary school system and there were, if you look at this from 1991, there's a couple of bands, Churchlands high band and I think the CBC Fremantle band were performing the York Jazz Festival then. But you know, now there is jazz in school, you know, in schools throughout WA, including regional centres and you can do jazz at ATAR level and, and my energy in the last ten years has been in the teaching area. I teach at Hale School and in fact tonight at Ellington, three year twelves are doing ATAR jazz and they're playing what they're going to be playing for their recital at the end of September. They're playing that tonight, you know. But none of that was really quite in place in the eighties. But it started to really get some momentum in the nineties. And so increasingly, I mean, it was a two way effect because the students knew they could go on if they wanted to and get a degree at WAAPA. And so at the secondary school level they knew if that the earlier they started the better. A couple of weeks ago Roger Garrood passed away and Roger wasn't part

of the original staff, but he came in pretty early and he played in my band through the late eighties and nineties and - - but he also - - his significant legacy is students he taught and I include John and Carl Mackey and James Sandon, Troy Roberts, who is big stuff on the international jazz scene but also Jamie Oehlers, and Jamie recounted at the funeral that he was asked to say a few words and he recounted that he got his first lesson with Roger. Roger actually showed him, as a 13, 14, 15-year-old how to put the saxophone together.

So you had people like Jamie, who's having, not had, he's having a stellar career as both a performer and as an educator. And that's where it started in that - - from Roger Garrood. So Roger Garrood, were he still alive and able, would be a fantastic personality to have here to be interviewed – because he arrived in 1971 and he was working in that studios and playing in the Will Upson band and a telethon doing all those sort of, they're not jazz gigs as such, but they're gigs that jazz musicians do. And then once to say that we moved to that concept of being an artist, he really enjoyed playing my compositions, but also other people's compositions as well. So the first two jazz CDs that came out and this is something that's worth noting. There really weren't that many WA jazz vinyls, they were too awkward to record. There's one from 1965, Simplicius Chong and that's quite amazing. He's still alive, I think, in Sydney. He's a pianist. He went to UWA and studied Bach, but he loved jazz and he put together a band and they recorded in Sydney. And I've got the vinyl and it's like, whoa, you know, it's like an oasis, you know, in the desert from what's around. But you could see, I mean that there was some really good players, you know, in that time, anyway.

Adam Trainer
So was that all Perth musicians that recorded in Sydney?

Garry Lee
Yeah I think they all went over, yeah. And the only other vinyls after that I'm really aware of, are the Will Upson Big Band and I think there's two Manteca that are sort of fusion vinyls that came out in the early eighties before I arrived here and then really nothing until the CDs. Now going back to that bicentenary commission, was called Reflections of Western Australia 1788 to 1988. So we recorded, apart from premiered it in 1998. We recorded it at the ABC studios in 1988 at the end of the year, and it was broadcast nationally on Jim MacLeod's Jazz Track on ABC FM. And so I had the master tapes. But what to do next? Because I could see the CDs were coming in but were they here to stay because it was like a bit of a thing. So hung on and hung on and by 1992 it was obvious that there were CDs and vinyls were out the door - - they're making a massive comeback right now. Chris Foster Trio just released the first, I think the first Jazz vinyl since Manteca. He gave me a copy of it last week. So that's the sort of, like, where we are at on this day. So once the CDs came out, the CDs were quite a lot easier to manufacture than the vinyls. And so the first CDs, Reflections of Western Australia and one in my name called ‘I Mean You’ which is a Thelonius Monk composition, but my CD, the only non-original was the title track, the Monk tune. The rest were tunes by myself or a composition by myself and one by the bass player Murray Wilkins. And the Reflections of Western Australia was three movements. I did the first, Mike did the second, and Pat did the third. With my first movement, I was writing from a 1788 perspective, and I wondered today how it would go with the way that the sort of the politics have of indigenous First Nations, how that would go.

I mean there was no real problem there, but I wasn't going to use a didgeridoo, I was not going to just say, oh here's a didgeridoo and we'll play jazz on top of it. Oh that's just so I was trying to be as respectful as possible to give the landscape a sort of - - the timelessness of the landscape. I used two bass players, double bass, so one would do what's called arco, which is just bowing, which is a little bit like the drone of a didgeridoo. So we'd have that. But there was a lot of other jazz influences that I had as well. Eric Dolphy, who played bass clarinet. So Jim Cook played bass clarinet. But I'd ask Roger Garrood prior to composing. I said, what instruments would you want to play? Because I knew Roger played all the saxes and all the flutes and he said, I love playing as many as possible. So I wrote it with that in mind. So in 20 minutes of music, he played piccolo, concert flute, alto flute, soprano sax and alto sax. Yeah, that was great, you know, because he just loved that idea of putting one down, you know, doing that. He soloed on the alto sax mainly, but it was stuff on the flutes that he did as well. So it was good. And that was all part, I think, of creating this artistic approach to, for jazz, you know in WA. I've written it that Eric Meyers while I was state jazz co-ordinator, Eric Meyers was New South Wales and national jazz co-ordinator, based in Sydney. Today he writes for the Weekend Australia, he does jazz record reviews. CDs usually all or whatever, streaming, whatever. But he also has this incredible website where because he was a jazz journalist primarily, so he's got stuff going back to the seventies that he's written on and I've done quite a few essays, as I say, the vibraphone one.

But I did a whole thing about the history of Reflections, how that occurred. I also did something about my time as a jazz co-ordinator. But yeah, I've had obituaries in there of people that sometimes they would appear in the West and then I would just send them over to him and he would put them in. Plus I wrote some others directly for him. Just my memories of certain musicians, one not even played in Perth, but he was a Sydney musician. Bernie McGann. I just my memories of Bernie, you know. I don't - - I would like anyone to challenge me on it, but I think I've written more on jazz in WA in the last 35 years than everyone else put together. So I think it's a big thing to say, but I can't who else has written, you know, individuals have written this, that and the other. But there's just no one. I mean, there's very little written about it. And the end of this month Seesaw that I've been writing for the last three or four years - - I've been doing reviews for them - - they're folding till the middle of next year. That's what they're saying. But yeah, so that's another thing, where this - - there won't be anything about WA jazz written about, you know. So Eric has supplied a great thing having his website.

Adam Trainer
Right and obviously you had those columns, regular columns, across the major newspapers, street press as well.

Garry Lee
What I did in the late eighties is approached Daily News and I think for a couple of years I wrote a regular jazz column as part of my role as jazz co-ordinator, so I didn't get paid for it. And it was really about was happening the next Monday at the Perth Jazz Society and sometimes what was happening with the Jazz Club of WA and it was that sort of profiling, just giving a bit of background, it was quite valuable. Sometimes I would review recordings, CDs increasingly and when Daily News folded I approached X-press and they said I could do the same sort of thing on a fortnightly basis, had to

kind of change it a little bit because that was a street paper, whereas Daily News was a sort of newspaper, so it was a slightly different thing but all the way through from when I was first appointed Jazz Co-ordinator – in fact before Ron Banks wrote for the West Australian – he'd written an article just before I was appointed jazz co-ordinator, and he'd made a few little mistakes that they weren't accurate, you know, and typical of the Committee of the Perth Jazz Society, because they were a pretty fiery bunch and they were sort of, oh Ron Banks, you know, blah blah.

And when, I was now jazz co-ordinator, I thought, no, that's not the way to do it. As I contacted him and found out, he lived two streets away. So I said, look can I come and see you? You know, because I've just got this position and it's part of my role is to encourage you to write more about jazz, you know, and we get on really well. So, I'm still in touch with him you know, he's long retired but he became arts editor - - he wasn't arts editor at that point, he became arts editor. So having the arts editor of the West Australian on side to write about jazz was a big, big thing.

As I say, the Committee of Perth Jazz Society were more about, you know, lynching him or something, you know, not like that. It seemed to me a far better course of action. To say, look you know anything you're in doubt on, just use me as the resource and we'll get it sorted. You know, I mean I do that and it ended up - - so after stopping as jazz co-ordinator, I contacted him, I said it's all over and can I do some reviews and he said yep. So he would sometimes - - he got me to do all the reviews, he would sometimes do previews. Not often he would do those. And he sometimes, two or three times came to gigs with me because he liked jazz. So I had the arts editor sitting next to me and I'm making notes on what I'm going to write and so I would send that through and you know, he was at the same gig sitting next to me. So, you know, like it was, it worked well, we had a good understanding and his editing was fantastic when he retired, another chap took over from editing and it was - - I just couldn't handle what he did, he just reversed paragraphs for the sake of it, you know, just like what are you doing, you know? And it was a Pat Metheny concert at the concert hall and I wrote Pat played a 42-string guitar, which must have been a heck of a job to tune. That came out must have been a hell of a job to tune. I thought, I don't write that. I don't see why you have to change heck to hell, you know? I mean, that it's not bad language. It's just basic, do you know what I mean?

Adam Trainer
Sort of needless changes.

Garry Lee
Totally needless. And the bloke was not, he was hard to get on with. And I thought I don't need to do this anymore. You know I've written a lot of stuff there someone else can try to do it, I need to do it. And then when Seesaw kicked in in 2018, I think they started, but in 2019, I started writing for it.

Adam Trainer
Look, we've covered a lot of ground here, including obviously, your various roles across these organisations. You started as an educator and a journalist. One of the ideas that I'm picking up on is, perhaps, a bit of a ‘changing of the guard’ with regards to West Australian jazz, whereby with increasing education and with that notion of musicians being thought of more as artists as opposed to a unionised member of a

labour force, for example – how do you feel as though that has had implications for how musicians actually go about having a career or what they do as a jazz musician?

Garry Lee
Well, look, the pathway to a career in jazz is and has been for a long time. You've got to be prepared to teach. And I don't know that has worked with, you know, I'm going to name names, but I don't think it has worked with all the people say, for instance, at the staff at WAAPA - - there's colossal players, but I think given the choice that would be out the door down the road if they didn't, if they could make the same income without teaching.

Adam Trainer
Is that because those opportunities, those gigging opportunities, just don't exist?

Garry Lee
They haven't really existed playing jazz for anyone for probably 40 to 50 years. But even going back to Don Burrows in Sydney who, he's basically mentored James Morrison. So Don was making a living as a musician, playing jazz, but also doing lots of session work. And even from 1974, he was very much tied up with the jazz course at the Sydney Con. So the teaching scene came pretty much hand-in-hand. So if you only want to play and you don't want to teach, you hate the concept of teaching. Well, you've really got to find something else, some parallel career.

Adam Trainer
Play some other styles of music and be versatile in that respect.

Garry Lee
That is definitely a possibility but even doing that, I mean, once you move into other styles of music, if you're going to be successful, you'd probably eschew the jazz because the income from the jazz gigs would be too small. So really there's been talk about - - I brought it up in 1992 - - we had - - and it was a part of that Reflections bicentenary concept, Pat Crichton composed for a Big Band and after the recording he wanted to keep that Big Band together and it was sort of like the best of the staff and the best to the students at WAAPA. People like John Mackey and Carl Mackey and Jamie Oehlers all played in that band. It was called Jazz West Big Band. And I remember I was playing vibes in it, but the vibraphone in a Big Band - - people don't write much for them. So my role was more to compare when they played and I remember, we had a meeting and I said, look, we should be thinking like this. We've got WAYJO is WAYO, Jazz West is to WASO, we should be thinking about doing what exists in Europe. I knew it existed in Europe. State subsidised Big Bands and I tend to forget the reaction. And so I certainly hadn't been successful in changing the philosophy of everyone, see some of them were full-time employed as teachers like Pat Crichton and they just went - - they weren't going to be able to put any energy into it, to be fair.

But others just said, oh, I just prefer to have a gig in a pub on a Monday night or Tuesday night or something like that. And I went, yeah right. So you know in Europe they have these Big Bands, in 1997 or 8, the Danish Radio Jazz Orchestra played the concert hall and I actually guested with them on vibraphone and yeah I obviously got talking with the guys and that structured on a basis that for six months of the year 20

musicians are paid a full-time salary and that coincides with the one Northern hemisphere winter and then the other six months of year that they do whatever they can, and that's often playing in smaller ensembles in jazz festivals around Europe. The composing, arranging, if that's their bent, whatever, you know. So it's six months of the year full-time. But I mean there's in Germany, I think it's a WDR Big Band. Fantastic band that bring over Americans and they'll get arrangements of the Americans original compositions and it's superb music you know, there was, even 30 years ago there was precedent for this but no one's really pushed to do this and still you've got WAYJO and you got WAYO and you've got WASO, although I think WASO's a different structure to what it was 30 years ago in terms of how it's funded and so and so forth.

Adam Trainer
One of the other things I wanted to ask you about was we've talked about – some of these shifts, you know, this idea of increasing education, the notion of artist. And I wonder whether aligning with that is an increased importance placed on - - certainly there appears to be a greater proportion of original composition in the jazz scene versus reliance on standards and repertoire.

Garry Lee
Yeah, look, I mean, I certainly championed that, you know, the idea of people composing. I enjoyed composing but I knew Mike Nelson the pianist was likewise and very others and I do all I could to encourage them to compose. And even within the jazz repertoire there are the standards and the standards out of what they call the American Songbook, which might be tunes by, you know, people like George Gershwin, Cole Porter, Jerome Kern, you know, those sorts of people they've certainly been played to death by all and sundry and they're great tunes. I mean, I certainly would play them. But then there's also other, what I might call, specific jazz repertoire. I mean the whole bebop repertoire composed by people like Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie and Thelonious Monk and Tadd Dameron, you know, these are tunes that, often to the head of the tunes, are quite hard to play. You know, you've got to spend some time to get that sorted, you know.

So I think that what you're seeing – it's probably the pendulum went into the original music and that went that way and at the expense of actually doing anything else – so I think there's a happy medium there where there's a place for everything. But certainly, taking on the responsibility of composing your own material is important. And if you're going to record into whatever format you're going to record, you don't have to pay anyone else out. So even like, I can't remember what the fee was, but when I did that first CD, I Mean You, we had to pay out to the Thelonius Monk estate, I guess through his publishing company some amount. To do that whereas the rest were all originals, so I'm a member of APRA and have been since 1989. So yeah it's a good thing to be a member for me, but I mean it's not a financial thing. If I had a pop tune that was, like a Paul McCartney type pop tune you would be a multi-millionaire very quickly. You know. I remember someone telling me that the composer of the thirty second theme to Home and Away was making 30, 40 years ago - - $60,000 just every year was just coming in through royalties, just for that thirty second theme. I think it was Home and Away, well one of those soapies.

Adam Trainer

Well I guess that the notion of your APRA royalties – no one really composes music with that – well I don't know whether they do it, compose music, with that as an ultimate goal or whether - -

Garry Lee
One bloke was I think around Perth, there was one guy that was doing that.

Adam Trainer
Okay, fair enough.

Garry Lee
It was interesting, a unique take on it. But you're right, I agree with what you say, most people compose because - - you, when something comes to you it's - - I mean I've put together something on Saturday afternoon, you know, and what would inspire me is that I had a student later that afternoon, early afternoon, and I wanted to teach him some technique on the vibraphone. And I thought, oh, hang on, this sounds okay. And then suddenly thinking, yeah, I mean, it's a 12-bar blues. It's certainly not a Beethoven Symphony or anything like that, but it's just another original composition that I've done that no one's ever done before in the world. So yeah, I still get a buzz out of doing that and then having someone else learn it, you know - - and as I say, I've written it within the parameters of the capabilities of the student. So it's kind of like I can play it and I figure he can play it too.

Adam Trainer
I don't know whether this is an extension of that greater proportion of music being original compositions, but I wonder – and despite the fact jazz is such a wide-ranging genre – whether you've picked up on certain trends or approaches to jazz that feel distinctive to the scene here versus other scenes?

Garry Lee
That was always asked whether there is a unique style, and a book came out in 1994 called Bodgie Dada by a writer from Sydney, and Murray Wilkins and myself were asked to comment on all that. And we weren't co-operating on it. We did it independently and I think we both came to the same conclusion that there's this certain feel about Perth that sometimes I think I might capture - - or WA - - that I might capture in my music whereas Sydney I might not have - - the hustle and the bustle of it but it's pretty hard because you can't run a parallel universe to prove or disprove, you know, but it's certainly - - things inspire you differently according to your environment, I think.

Adam Trainer
Are there certain styles or approaches that have been more popular here versus elsewhere or vice versa?

Garry Lee
Well I think Latin jazz has been. There was a percussionist who hasn't lived here for a long time, Gary Ridge. I think he lives in Brazil these days, but he was very big on Brazilian Latin music. So Danny Susnjar, the drummer here is very much into the Afro-Peruvian style of jazz. So, you know, there seems to have often been that - - whether -

- look it's hard to sort of say whether that's a strong trait in WA and not a strong trait in other states.

What is interesting is that's sort of bypassed a lot of Australian jazz is this this genre of smooth jazz. So where that came from is one of the great originators that was Wes Montgomery is a major influence in my playing on guitar and he died in 1968. But he had albums where he had this sort of - - he had a fear of flying. So a lot of his compositions, I think, were written as he was sitting in the back seat of a of a Cadillac American yank tank from the sixties, you know, and he would be playing these sort of you can feel that and there's one tune called ‘Road Song’ so that gives it away, but you know this other tune ‘Going on to Detroit,’ ‘Mellow Moods,’ they've all got this kind of sound that then was taken up by people like George Benson after Wes died in ‘68. And Wes was basically groomed by the record label CTI to follow in those footsteps.

And then of course, in 1976, George Benson had this worldwide hit with This Masquerade off the album ‘Breezin,’ and that catapulted George into megastardom as a pop star, you know, and then a lot of people, talk to sort of like older jazz pundits who say, oh yeah George Benson used to be a really good jazz guitarist before he took up all that pop stuff and you think, mate, he's still a really good jazz guitarist. You know, he just wanted to have a happy, good lifestyle. And he admits that, you know, I've read his autobiography you know, once he signed to Warner for ‘Breezin' he got a check that you can immediately go out and buy a house in New Jersey with, you know? End of story, you know and all power to him and he's a fantastic guitarist, but a lot of people followed in that octave thing that Wes had, including George Benson with the octave style and the guitar and myself included, I love that. And it morphed in America. But not so much here into a sort of a smooth jazz style, which I guess has become quite predictable. And then you've had other people like, I don't know what's happened to him now, but Kenny G, who was very popular worldwide, very popular in Asia where that specific sound on the soprano sax.

A lot of that seems to have bypassed Australian jazz and Western Australian jazz. I actually am a little bit critical. The Wangaratta Jazz Festival started in 1990 as something that the National Jazz Coordination Program promulgated and it was a very successful jazz festival, was probably what was Australia's leading jazz festival up until probably the mid-2000 and teens there having one there this year and that's it. COVID obviously didn't do them any favours. But I always felt I probably went to about five of them and just thought we're trying too hard to try and create an Australian jazz style. It's like you have to turn your back on anything that the Americans might have done, which seems like you can't really, you know, to come up with something that is Australian. I think that's immature, is the one word that comes to mind. I think it just is a silly way of doing it, might be.

But having said that, I'm all for pushing original jazz, you know so - - and I've done it myself, you know, but I suppose if I analyse my own pieces that have been recorded, I'd say, well, I'm getting that influence from my favourite vibes players, Bobby Hutcherson, I'm getting that from Bobby Hutcherson, working with Eric Dolphy on ‘Out to Lunch’ album. I'm getting this influence from the ECM label, which started with Jan Garbarek and some of the stuff that Chick Corea composed with Gary Burton, the vibes piano duets that started with 1972 in ‘Crystal Silence.’ I'm kind of going to that as well, so it's going in my own thing but I guess everybody's different. Everybody's going

to compose and play which is, you know, in the environment with which they've grown up and the environment or the styles of jazz, which they especially like, I mean, if you spoke to, say, Jamie, who's done a lot of composing, he would come up with an entirely different answer to what I'm doing or Mace, you know, like their way of composing would be, the process would be entirely different. It's great that nobody's right, nobody's wrong. We're all right, really. I mean, it's like nobody's right. I mean, we're all we're all valid, you know? It's just where you see yourself in there.

I mean, what has happened in the in the years since PJS founded and certainly since WAYJO and WAAPA kicked off, is that Perth's population's doubled. You know? So like that's got to be something significant about what we all do now. You know, in those early days coming here and I've talked about right at the beginning, the America's Cup, the other thing that got me so much and I really enjoyed it, what they had, these Sunday sessions and each pub had a different style of music, but quite a few had jazz, you know. So the Brisbane Hotel would have jazz on a Sunday session, Shenton Park Hotel, Glengarry Tavern, as I mentioned before, places down in Fremantle, you know, so you could go on a Sunday for 3 or 4 hours. I can't remember for how long they were open, I think about 4 hours and you'd do a 3 hour gig and you know, that would be jazz and the Brisbane, I played there quite a lot and that was really buzzing, you know, it was really, really good. So when that stopped and the pubs could be open all day, the live music actually decreased in those sort of places. The Brisbane doesn't have live music now, you know. But it was integral to their Sunday thing.

Adam Trainer
I guess just one final question for you before we finish up, which is, where you see the scene at now, what you think, obviously you've talked about a lot of the changes that have taken place with the various organisations PJS and WAYJO being central to that.

Garry Lee
Yes.

Adam Trainer
It's obviously a pretty different scene now for contemporary jazz musicians. What do you see the focus being for them?

Garry Lee
Hard.

Adam Trainer
How do you see it moving forward?

Garry Lee
I do feel very sorry for the scene there that they're going into the recording scene now seems like a labyrinth. As I mentioned, Chris Foster launched his vinyl on Saturday at Ellington. He told me he's done a run of 200 vinyls, but it's also on all the streaming services. And I'm thinking, well, how does all that work? So he's got it on Spotify, he's got it on iTunes, he's got it on Amazon I think he said, I don't think he has it as a CD, but so all of that seems to be like a labyrinth to get through. Getting paid to do the gigs seems to be a problem, like getting a fee that's commensurate with 2023, you know. Like the teaching, if you teach at WAAPA, or teach in a school or whatever that

automatically goes up with the CPI over a decade and so forth. But the gig money seems to me to be pretty much going up incrementally, if at all. And in a lot of cases and the whole thing of playing for the door, you know, Festival Fringe back when I was jazz co-ordinator, and right up to 2000 to David Blenkinsop retired I worked with the Perth Festival on the Festival Club and they would put a lot of jazz in there and it would be my job was to let the Festival of Perth know the emerging people who are coming out, who would have, or emerging bands really, so same thing in a way, but they had to be organised to be able to do a gig. And I would say, well, you should get this band because they wouldn't know. So they relied on me and I was on the program advisory board till David retired in 1999 and they got paid properly, now you do the Festival Fringe and you pay for the door.

You know it's a door deal and the same people that are very successful at getting a crowd, getting an audience are doing all of them. It doesn't seem to me that seems to me to be counterproductive. I mean, and immensely frustrating for, you know, young musicians. I've got a couple of guys who I wouldn't say mentoring them, but I'm helping them. One, I taught when he was at school, he's a saxophone player, I was teaching him jazz improv. He's now second year at WAAPA and he's got a mate who I've met. He's a guitarist and he's a very good player. And I'm sort of trying to help them with ideas of what they could do. And I said I'll play with you if you can go and get the gig and just think, oh, you know, where would you start now, you know? It's really, really quite tricky, you know? So I think we've missed an opportunity.

Whether we can pick it up in the future about, as I was saying before, some sort of state subsidised jazz orchestra, jazz ensemble. In France, they have a state subsidised jazz ensemble. It's not a Big Band. And I think they change the artistic director every year or two or more. I don't know. Mace will know more about that, but I would imagine he'd be really interesting to talk to about that for the future but that's something we need to think about here in Australia. But obviously specifically WA, it's something that's, we're missing out on for sure. To say the Wangaratta Jazz Festival now folded, that was like a huge festival for so many people. So what do they do now for a gig, you know?

Adam Trainer
And how about the music that's coming out, the music that you hear from emerging jazz musicians?

Garry Lee
Well, everybody now is better educated so they've imposed their own standards on it. And nearly everyone that's got like to the stage like a Chris Foster has, the guys that he's playing - - he's got Nick Abbey on double bass and Danny Susnjar on drums. Danny studied in America, so I'm not sure, I'm sure both Chris and Nick have been to America and that's - - I mean I've had only two trips to America but extended stays one to two months - - both about two months each - - where you do really get to see what is happening in that scene and that's where it's come s from. I mean, I've been to Europe as well and heard a lot of jazz in Europe, and Japan. I played in Japan, played in Tokyo. But I think, it's interesting that as long ago as last night's news, the Premier was talking about more relationship with Indonesia and you know I've been pushing this sort of thing for jazz for a long time. Going back to the eighties, I was trying to push greater relationships with Malaysia and Indonesia and I was actually responsible for

getting Indra Lesmana, he's a sort of James Morrison character of Indonesian jazz. I got him for the Festival of Perth, but no one's followed through after me to get that to and fro.

We should be setting Perth up as a hub for Indonesia, Singapore, and Malaysia to start with. In the same breath you can add Thailand and so on. I was playing through the late nineties, I was going up to Singapore every year to play and I organised a Big Band to come down and play here from Singapore. So I had a lot of contacts there and it was good, but it needs more. It does need that infrastructure and WAYJO may be that infrastructure. PJS may be that infrastructure, but it needs that, an infrastructure rather than just one person on his own to do it. And that one person won't be me, I'm too old now.

Adam Trainer
Fair enough. Well that feels like maybe a full circle has been reached there and might be a good place to finish. So thank you very much for your time Garry, much appreciated.

Garry Lee
Oh pleasure, it's been great talking about this. Might have almost lost my voice.