

THE LION ROARS: THE MUSICAL LIFE OF WILLIE ‘THE LION’ MCINTYRE by Phil Sandford. 214pp, published by Phil Sandford, 2018. EPUB: 9781925579826 POD: 9781925579840

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In my father’s book *Bob Barnard’s Jazz Scrapbook* (2012), there’s a brief reference to Willie ‘The Lion’ McIntyre. Apart from the fact that he appeared with Bob in a couple of musical comedy sketches on a television program in 1960, that was all I knew of the man until I read Phil Sandford’s excellent musical biography. A key member of both Tony Newstead’s Southside Gang and the Portsea Trio, McIntyre was a prominent figure in the formative years of Australian jazz.



Willie McIntyre on a riverboat cruise, probably 1946-49... PHOTO COURTESY AUSTRALIAN JAZZ MUSEUM

**Loretta Barnard is the daughter of Australian jazz trumpeter Bob Barnard and mother of the jazz pianist Casey Golden. A freelance writer and editor, she has long been active in the book publishing industry. She has edited *Jottings Of A Jazzman: Selected Writings Of Len Barnard* and co-authored a book with her father, *Bob Barnard’s Jazz Scrapbook: A Pictorial Memoir*. These days she pursues her love of music, literature and theatre, and is something of a wannabe roving ambassador for the creative and performing arts.*

Willie McIntyre and a handful of other musicians had been playing jazz since the 1930s, listening to American players on the radio and watching artists like Jack Teagarden and Artie Shaw in Hollywood films and Movietone shorts. McIntyre et al laid the groundwork for the establishment of Melbourne as both birthplace and hothouse of Australian traditional jazz. Sandford provides plenty of information about the mighty Melbourne jazz boom of the 1940s. The first Australian Jazz Convention was held in 1946 and Melbourne became known as the ‘New Orleans of the south’.

Willie ‘The Lion’ McIntyre had a big stage personality. An accountant by day, he was a roaring entertainer at night, his big cheerful personality, loud singing and bold thumping piano – played in both boogie and stride styles ‘sometimes moving between them in the one piece’ (p147) – a magnet for audiences. He often worked with clarinetist George Tack and the comedic sketches they performed are the stuff of local legend.



Willie McIntyre’s colleague George Tack, here on tenor sax...PHOTO COURTESY AUSTRALIAN JAZZ MUSEUM

What makes Sandford’s book so engaging is the wealth of research he’s brought to his subject and there are plenty of informative quotes from people who knew and worked with McIntyre peppered throughout. The book provides a comprehensive account of McIntyre’s influences (among them Fats Waller, Jimmy Yancey and Jelly Roll Morton), and details the gigs, the personnel, what songs were played, the recordings and the reactions of audiences and other musicians.

Sandford has also provided some social historical context, reflecting on the massive effect on society – and on musicians – of the introduction of radio to Australia in 1924, the Depression, the impact of World War II (including descriptions of conditions in Papua and New Britain and references to the experiences of prisoners of war in Changi), the segregation of black American servicemen on leave here, post-war immigration, and the rise of manufacturing, among other things.

As well as an extensive look at McIntyre's output, Sandford writes about other seminal jazz figures of the time. In fact the book is something of a who's who of early Australian jazz. There are some wonderful tidbits of information about jazz personalities, such as John Sangster's 'discovery' of Miles Davis; amusing anecdotes like the one about Don Reid, who in 1941 used a suitcase on a recording because he couldn't get hold of a drum kit, or when Willie 'The Lion' won a substantial sum at the racetrack and bought a case of Grange Hermitage which he and some friends drank over the course of one weekend; and a lovely description of the time McIntyre played a duet with American trumpeter Rex Stewart in 1949.



Tony Newstead's Southside Gang circa 1950, L-R, David Ward (trombone), Newstead (trumpet), Don Reid (drums), Ray Simpson (guitar), Willie McIntyre (piano), George Tack (clarinet), Keith Cox (bass). Reid played on a suitcase in a 1941 recording. ... PHOTO COURTESY MIKE SUTCLIFFE & OXFORD COMPANION TO AUSTRALIAN JAZZ

Sandford's easy writing style has captured the headiness of those musical days and there's so much more in the book than can be covered by a short review. There's nothing much about McIntyre's personal life (he died in 1987): the book is subtitled 'the musical life' for a reason. Comprehensively referenced, the book includes a list of all McIntyre's recordings, an excellent bibliography, index of songs and full index. Our early jazz history deserves to be more widely known: *The Lion Roars* is thus a welcome addition to Australian jazz literature.

For more information about the book and the companion CD, visit the website: <https://williemcintyre.com>