

BOB BARNARD'S JAZZ SCRAPBOOK: A PICTORIAL MEMOIR by Bob Barnard with Loretta Barnard

Reviewed by John Shand*

[This review appeared on www.australianjazz.net on Wednesday, January 30, 2013.]

It turns out that a picture is actually worth about 300 words rather than a thousand. The proof is in this book assembled by Bob Barnard and his daughter Loretta Barnard. Rather than undertake the arduous task of penning a 90,000-word biography they have assembled a 'scrapbook' of over 300 photographs and pieces of memorabilia covering his life, with explanatory captions and an occasional slab of text. The tone of the writing is conversational, which suits the easy informality of the whole project.

Barnard, of course, is among the finest jazz trumpeters Australia has produced. I know some people who consider Barnard the greatest Australian jazz musician of all, and I can see their point. Certainly for sweetness of tone and beauty of line he has few, if any, peers. Above all he plays his cornet with glorious lyricism and a complete absence of self-consciousness.



Bob Barnard: he plays his cornet with glorious lyricism and a complete absence of self-consciousness....

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This book takes us from Barnard's beginnings as a trumpeter in the 1940s through the bands of his brother Len, Ray Price and Graeme Bell, and on to his own projects and his extensive international career as a freelancer. It would seem that there was someone handy with a camera along the way more often than not, so his life has been documented pictorially with extraordinary thoroughness.



Happy snaps feature Bob with luminaries such as Gerry Mulligan (above) and Wynton Marsalis (below)... PHOTOS COURTESY LORETTA BARNARD



Many of the photographs are mere happy snaps featuring Barnard's chirpy grin in endlessly diverse contexts. But when the happy snaps in question feature such luminaries as Ronnie Scott, Warren Mitchell, Gerry Mulligan, Clark Terry, Ruby Braff, Snooky Young, John Sangster, Stewie Speer, Graeme Bell and so many more

they are both fun and usually of interest. Generally more compelling, however, are the shots of Barnard and his colleagues in action, and perhaps it is a shame that these did not outnumber the posed photographs. They include evocative shots of Ade Monsborough, Keith Stirling, Bud Freeman, and there are dozens that, with typical selflessness, do not even feature Barnard.



The Bob Barnard Jazz Band, pictured here in 1980 with the photographer Edmond Thommen. Back row L-R, Len Barnard (drums), Wally Wickham (bass), John Costelloe (trombone). Front L-R, Barnard (trumpet/cornet), Chris Taperell (piano), Thommen, John McCarthy (clarinet)... PHOTO COURTESY EDMOND THOMMEN

The images also extend to albums, billboards, tickets, sheet music (including transcriptions of some Barnard solos) and posters. The latter have their own interest, documenting the evolution of jazz poster art across six decades.

Amid the entertaining anecdotes we pick up on Barnard's perspectives on his colleagues, his recordings and his idols, including Louis Armstrong, the first encounter with whom he describes as 'possibly the most exciting thing that had ever happened to me'. The writing is straightforward, understated and unassuming, but gradually and quite painlessly it adds up to a worthy history of not just Barnard's career, but Australia's classic jazz scene.

That his work should be documented is undeniable. That it should come in the guise of essentially a picture book with extended captions plugs a hole – and will hold immense appeal for Barnard's many fans – while still leaving room for Bob, Loretta or someone else to do the heavy lifting of those 90,000 words some time in the future...