



RAPTUROUS AUDIENCES, BOX OFFICE SUCCESS AND PROFOUND CONFLUENCE AT THE CLOSE OF THE 2010 MELBOURNE INTERNATIONAL JAZZ FESTIVAL

"The [Melbourne International Jazz Festival] must now be classed as Australia's foremost jazz festival..."
–The Australian

"...a festival that has itself become a confluence of ideas, cultures and genres, bringing them together in an intoxicating program that manages to transcend style, eschew elitism and help foster new ways of listening..... " - The Age

As the final note of India's cherished tabla player **Zakir Hussain** gave way to a standing ovation on Saturday 8 May, the 2010 Melbourne International Jazz Festival wrapped up its most successful and memorable event in its thirteen year history.

Delivering an ecstatic musical experience that left many lost for words, the Australian premiere of **Sangam** - Zakir Hussain's collaboration with US saxophonist **Charles Lloyd** and drummer **Eric Harland** - was a resounding expression of the extraordinary impact of the 2010 Festival. The concert title, **Sangam**, meaning "spiritual confluence", was a fitting end to 8 days of events that profoundly touched the broadest and most far-reaching audience to date.

In a program characterised by Australian exclusives and world première performances, the Festival repeatedly delivered transformative musical experiences that has affirmed its significance as an international centre for artistic pursuit and exploration. The Festival achieved capacity concerts across its rich program, attracting seasoned jazz lovers alongside indie punks, kids, families, musicians and members of Melbourne's diverse ethnic and artistic communities. It has immediately been heralded as one of the most enriching and rewarding weeks of music and culture the city has ever experienced.

In their second year, the Festival artistic team **Sophie Brous** and **Michael Tortoni** brought together a line-up of unprecedented international and Australian talent. **Program Director Sophie Brous** curated a program that has firmly placed Melbourne on the international map as a leading forum for jazz creativity. As Brous stated in her closing night address,

"...what is a Festival but a coming together, a confluence of musicians, communities and cultures...the extraordinary music we have experienced this week is a testament to Melbourne and its celebration of creativity and artistic progress.."

The numbers speak for themselves. With over 400 performers in over 95 events, 20 free concerts, 16 world premieres and 21 Australian premieres, the eight-day festival **exceeded box office targets** and **achieved record crowds for both ticketed and free events**. The Festival expanded its corporate and business sponsor portfolio and also significantly developed its cultural program and involvement with wider community groups, jazz co-operatives and industry leaders.

Over 15,000 people came together on Saturday 1 May across the **Opening Celebrations**. The Festival kicked off at Federation Square as thousands of people touted violins, saxophones, percussion and even a sousaphone at **The Big Jam**. Organisers rejoiced to see Melbourne coming together to celebrate creative community and the universality of improvisation. The sun shone and the crowds gathered further as the Festival's **Opening Concert** followed, and US percussionist **Dave Samuels** and Australia's **Ben Vanderwal's Latin Project** thrilled the crowd of families and music-lovers, as did Ethio-jazz pioneer **Mulatu Astatke**, whose first ever visit to Australia provided one of the stand out moments of the Festival.



Many of the program highlights were characterised by profoundly moving concert experiences:

- The Australian debut of the iconic **Charles Lloyd New Quartet** will surely be remembered as one of the great jazz concerts to come to Melbourne. The group's extraordinary performance drew two standing ovations at the Melbourne Recital Centre, as did legendary US pianist **Ahmad Jamal**, who, at the age of 79, demonstrated his ongoing status as a true icon of jazz.
- New York next-generation jazz innovators **Theo Bleckmann** and **John Hollenbeck** (with his **Claudia Quintet**) produced truly remarkable performances that left audiences in awe, and US pianist **Jason Moran's** solo piano concert affirmed his place as a true emergent jazz master.
- The 6 hour festival-within-a-festival dubbed **Overground** explored the outer reaches of jazz and improvisation to a sold out crowd made up of seasoned jazz lovers, punks, families and artists. Overground's startlingly original program saw European free-jazz pioneers **Peter Brotzmann** and **Han Bennink** join a long list of Australian creative musicians in an event that left audiences thrilled and online music forums buzzing.
- The **Australian Art Orchestra's** wildly innovative tribute to **Miles Davis, Prince of Darkness**, left a full Town Hall audience buzzing and stimulated much discussion about the legendary trumpeter's musical legacy, whilst US guitarist **John Abercrombie's** stunningly delicate performance with his acclaimed quartet featuring violinist **Mark Feldman**, drummer **Joey Baron** and bassist **Drew Gress** further established the Melbourne Recital Centre as a jazz venue of the highest order.
- Performances from Chicago post-rock pioneers **Tortoise**, drummer **Brian Chase** of the Yeah Yeah Yeahs (USA), and Wilco members **Nels Cline** and **Glenn Kotche** thrilled new Festival audiences and further broadened the notion of what jazz music has evolved into today.

The Festival attracted wide-reaching crowds, inviting interest from previously unreached audiences through its impressively diverse program. Houses across the Festival were full and brimming with excitement. Capacity shows included:

- **Baby It's Cold Outside, An Evening of the Great Jazz Standards**, Melbourne Town Hall was reimagined as an intimate jazz club with Clare Bowditch, Megan Washington, Lior and Whitely interpreting the classic jazz songs with Joe Chindamo performing exquisitely alongside his trio.
- **Paul Copsis'** stunning **Songs of Love and Death**, where the Sydney vocal virtuoso took centre stage to interpret the torch songs of Billie Holiday, Nina Simone and Dinah Washington;
- **Mulatu Astatke** performing with Australian ensemble **The Black Jesus Experience** at The Forum; **Oehlers/Harland/Grabowsky/Rogers** in their brilliant world-premiere collaboration; **Stu Hunter's The Gathering**; **Han Bennink Solos and Duos**, **Jo Lawry Quintet**, **Nels Cline/Glenn Kotche with Scott Tinkler's DRUB**; **Paul Grabowsky Sextet**; **Dick and Christa Hughes**; **Noah Preminger Trio** and other club sessions held nightly at Bennetts Lane.

On top of successful ticketed events, the festival experienced unparalleled attendances to its series of free performances at Federation Square, along with various **Visions of Sound** programs across the city centre:

- Crowds gathered nightly around the beautiful and calming merging of music and light, **The Places In Between**, designed by Collingwood based creative agency 21-19 in association with the Festival and featuring a commissioned work by pianist **Chris Abrahams**. While at Southern Cross Station, the **Metlink Jazz Fest Piano Staircase** delighted commuters as they used the station's Bourke Street stairwell, to discover it has been converted into a fully functioning piano.
- The interdisciplinary potential of jazz again drew in much interest with strong attendances at **Hybrids and Folklore** at the **National Gallery of Victoria**, **Conversations** at **The Wheeler Centre**, and the **ACMI Jazz on Film** program.

The growth of the Festival **Family Events** and **emerging artists** program proved to be a huge success:

- The world premiere of **Play School's Big Jazz Adventure** attracted more than 3000 kids and families to two packed out Melbourne Town Hall events; the 14 **ArtPlay Jazz For Kids** smaller group sessions introduced families to the joys of improvisation in a sold out season of shows led by Ireland's **Nico Brown** and **Martin Brunsdén**.
- The Festival was also able to celebrate the jazz excellence of Australia's young and emerging musicians in its **Future Leaders Jazz Award**, **Monash with John Abercrombie** concert and **Metlink Musos** prize, the latter generating many hundreds of votes from Melbourne's public transport commuters.



Overall, the 2010 Festival presented an immersive program of profoundly affecting performances and events, with punters racing from event to event and staying out late into the wee hours to make the most of the rich program on offer each day.

Whether it was slipping into an ever-buzzing Bennetts Lane on any given night or attending the Modern Masters performances at The Forum, Recital Centre or Town Hall, stories of amazement and wonder were shared from punter to punter and artist to artist following each evening of performances. Many international artists spent days and nights watching shows, the seeds of new international collaborations planted.

But it was as the audience roared in adulation at **Sangam's** breathtaking closing night performance that the success of the 2010 Melbourne International Jazz Festival was truly palpable, in its bringing together of music and community, and its continued path of exploring and redefining jazz as a musical and social movement.

Testimonials:

"This Festival... there really is no other like it in the world, it's incredible what you have here..."

– Theo Bleckmann, US headline artist

"...what's happening here is just so beautiful..."

– Charles Lloyd, headline artist and jazz master

"It really is a remarkable Festival, it was a pleasure and an honour to be a part of it"

– Nels Cline, US guitarist (Wilco)

"It was an honour to be involved in such a strong and diverse program of creative international Jazz"

– Stu Hunter, Australian pianist/composer, 2010 Australian Jazz Bell Award winner

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