

PRESIDENTS REPORT

This is a reflection on the 2019 Festival and the lost opportunities of 2020 and 2021. It is also a restatement of our resolve to relaunch the Big 40th Festival in 2022 and continue the Festival in the years beyond.

American jazz trombonist, composer and arranger, J.J Johnson once said "**Jazz is restless. It won't stay put and it never will.**" Much like the Merimbula Jazz Festival – no matter what is thrown at it the Festival lives on, adapts to changing circumstances and comes back better than ever.

Although it seems a world away now, the 2019 Festival was a great musical success. The Festival once again showcased the best established Jazz musicians as well as some great new talent who will be a force in the genre in years to come. JAZZQUEST was, once again, a standout and our Musical Director/Program Co-ordinator Paul Dion must take much of the credit for this as well as for the way in which all performances throughout the Festival came together in a seamless fashion.

A new initiative at the 2019 Festival was the Lakeside Lantern Walk which was embraced by the Community to the extent that more than 1000 school children, siblings, parents, grandparents and dogs marched from Spencer Park to Market Street proudly carrying their homemade lanterns. They made their way to the beat of the Dragon Boat drum – another initiative. Thanks to Committee Members Vera David for organising the Walk and Denise Dion for arranging the Dragon Boat.

StreetFest was another initiative and performances at the outdoor stage provided the opportunity for the public to listen to some great Jazz. The Festival is about our community and its involvement as well as the enduring music of Jazz! We look forward to continuing these innovations at the 2022 Festival.

However, for all you Jazz lovers who attended and enjoyed you should give your thanks, as I give mine, to the small hard working Committee who made it all possible. Festivals do not organise themselves.

Following on from the 2019 Festival we started planning for 2020 but the Black Summer bushfires at the end of 2019 and early 2020 intervened in that process. However, we were revitalised and motivated as a Committee to ensure that the healing power of Jazz would provide some solace and comfort to those – all of us really – who had been impacted in one way or another by those horrific events. Then along came COVID and, whilst we kept on planning until the very last moment, we became a victim to the pandemic and Government imposed restrictions. There was a ray of hope at the end of 2020 and we had ambitions to proceed with the 2021 Festival but COVID won out again.

I recently recalled a conversation I had with an elderly chap many years ago when I asked him why he liked Jazz so much. "*Because it is happy music*" he replied. But Jazz is much more than happy music – it invades the senses and the psyche. When you are listening to the Jazz of your choice you become one with the music and the musos playing and you feel that things are right with the world if only for that brief moment in time.

The Big 40th Festival originally scheduled for 2020 **WILL** take place in 2022 and will once again make things right with the world for those Jazz lovers lucky enough to attend.