

Joe Chindamo media kit



Australia's leading jazz pianist and composer, and winner of the 2002 Australian Entertainment "MO" Award for Instrumental Jazz Performer of the Year.

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Joe Chindamo

"He has that Bill Evans knack for bringing unlikely material into his own orbit."

Michael Cuscuna

Producer of the reissue program

Blue Note record label USA

Biography

Joe Chindamo

Joe Chindamo, pronounced Kindarmo.

Pianist and Composer, Joe Chindamo was born in Melbourne in 1961, the eldest son of Italian immigrants, who came to Australia in search of a better life. At the age of six, he was encouraged by his parents to take up a musical instrument: the accordion. He immediately fell in love with music and the idea of creating it. At the tender age of 13 he won the televised talent quest Kevin Dennis New Faces and, a year later, Bernard King's Pot 'O Gold (also a nationally televised talent quest). Along with his brother, Domenic, on drums, Joe spent most Saturday nights playing accordion at local Italian functions. On the day of his 14th birthday, he made his first record. The record company closed its doors only months before it was due to be released, so it never became available to the public.

Tiring of the histrionics that went with performing on the accordion ('all that smiling made me nauseous') and inspired by the great pianist Oscar Peterson, Joe switched, at the age of 15, to the piano. Soon he was working with the well-known band leader Denis Farrington and other musicians twice his age during the 70's. Meanwhile, at home he taught himself jazz piano. He studied the recordings of the great jazz pianists, wrote out their solos, then duplicated them on his piano.

At 18, Joe attended Melbourne State College, where he received his first formal piano lesson and studied classical music for the first time. He soon became the preferred pianist of just about every film composer in town, including Bruce Smeaton, Brian May, Bruce Rowlands, Nigel Westlake and Paul Grabowsky, and later, of visiting international composers, Jerry Goldsmith and Angelo Badalamenti.

Joe's playing has adorned more than 60 films, including Pharlap, Man from Snowy River 2, The Sound of One Hand Clapping, Evil Angels and Babe. He has accompanied Shirley Bassey, recorded with Vince Jones, Olivia Newton John, Christine Sullivan and Yvonne Kenny, orchestrated and conducted a string orchestra for Peter Andre, and played with Dame Kiri te Kanawa, Caroline O'Conner and Don Burrows.

He has toured extensively through Europe, the US, Japan and Argentina and recorded & played with international jazz artists such as the late Ray Brown, Billy Cobham, Lee Konitz, Mike and Randy Brecker, Frank Morgan, Mark Turner, Ernie Watts, Ravi Coltrane, Larry Coryell & James Morrison.

When Billy Cobham first heard Chindamo play in 1990, he immediately asked him to join his group and tour internationally. This association has led to seventeen major tours throughout America, Europe, Japan and Argentina as well as two international recordings (The Traveller and By Design).

Joe has to date recorded 10 CDs as leader. His debut recording entitled *A Brief History of Standard time*, featuring legendary US bassist Ray Brown and Australian drummer Andrew Gander achieved wide acclaim. In late 1997, a second CD and an ARIA nominated release entitled *Anyone Who Had a Heart*, featuring Chindamo's highly personal arrangements of eight Burt Bacharach songs also met with critical and public acclaim, winning the **ABC Listeners' Choice award for Best Australian CD of 1997**. Following this, Joe's third recording, *Reflected Journey*, was released worldwide by A Records in 1998: this CD features Michael and Randy Brecker.

In July 1999, Chindamo was awarded an Australia Arts Council Grant to perform and represent Australia with his trio (bassist Ben Robertson and drummer Dave Beck) at major Jazz Festivals in Denmark, Sweden, Italy and Finland. He lived in Paris throughout most of 1999 where he worked with the celebrated guitarist Christian Escoude.

The year 2000 saw the release of *Good Little Ploy* which features Joe's original compositions and orchestrations, performed by his own trio and 20 strings from the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra. Later this same year ABC TV filmed a 20 minute story entitled 'Joe Chindamo – Profile of a Jazz Pianist'. Joe was also featured in the 5th episode of 'The Pulse' a television documentary show casing the cream of Australia's jazz musicians.

More recently, his very successful ARIA nominated CD *Joy of Standards* reached **number 1 on the HMV modern jazz charts in Japan**, the first Australian artist to have achieved this distinction. A Vol. 2 edition was released in January 2003 to wide acclaim reaching number 3 on the HMV modern jazz charts.

He was invited back to France in July 2002 to tour with such US luminaries as Mark Turner and Ravi Coltrane (son of John Coltrane). He is becoming a regular performer at Australian festivals, most notably, The Perth, The Wangaratta Jazz and The Port Fairy Music Festivals.

Never one to rest on his laurels he travelled to Italy on at least three occasions throughout the past 15 years in order to further his classical piano studies. His teachers in Naples were Alexander Hincef and Massimo Bertuccio.

In June 2002 Joe's talent has been recognised by the Australian music industry – he was awarded the **2002 Australian Entertainment "MO" Award for Instrumental Jazz Performer of the Year** and has been re-nominated in 2004.

Photo library

Joe Chindamo



1 Joe Chindamo



2 Joe Chindamo



3 Joe Chindamo



4 Joe Chindamo



5 Joe Chindamo



6 Joe Chindamo



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8 Joe Chindamo



9 Joe Chindamo



10 Joe Chindamo with Nina Ferro

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**Photograph 3-5 & 10
courtesy Ponch Hawkes
photography**

**Photographs 1,2 & 6-9
courtesy Joe Vittorio
photography**

Photo library continued



11 Joe Chindamo – Iwaki auditorium



12 Joe Chindamo Iwaki auditorium



13 Joe Chindamo – Trio, Iwaki auditorium



14 Joe Chindamo Trio, Iwaki auditorium



15 Phillip Rex, bass, Iwaki Auditorium



16 David Beck, drums, Iwaki auditorium



17 Archibald entrant Joe Levine with Joe



18 Gerry Koster, Newmarket Music with Joe

Joe Chindamo

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Photographs 11-16
courtesy Joe Vittorio
photography



Discography



Paradiso – The Joy of Film Music (soon to be released in 2004)

“The spirit of this recording reminds me of what happens to great food in the hands of a great cook.” Geoff Hughes

Piano and Accordion **Joe Chindamo** Guitars **Geoff Hughes** Violin **Nigel McLean** Drums **David Beck**
Bass **Matt Clohesy** Percussion **Alex Pertout**



The Joy of Standards Vol.2 (2003)

Following on from the very successful release of Joy of Standards by Japanese record label Atelier Sawano in 2000, listeners will find the Joe Chindamo Trio have excelled themselves on this new album. It received a 9 out of 10 stars on a review on HMV's Japanese website.

Piano **Joe Chindamo** Bass **Matt Clohesy** Drums **David Beck**



'America!'– Joe Chindamo plays the Paul Simon song book (2002)

“...Most of the tunes are extensively examined. In lesser hands they might not have been worth the treatment but Chindamo has an amazing harmonic sense and great time that enables him to imbue them with a fresh vitality...this disc is a reminder of just how good some of Simon's songs are. As for Chindamo, he continues to raise the bar of excellence with each new disc.” Kevin Jones, The Australian

Piano **Joe Chindamo** Bass **Matt Clohesy** Drums **David Beck**



'The First Take' (2002) re-issue of the 1993 recording 'A Brief History of Standard Time'

Featuring the legendary US bassist Ray Brown

“...Offer[s] a fresh perspective [on the standard jazz repertoire]. His playing is often dazzling, but the overriding quality is the pianist's clarity of tone and thought.”

Adrian Jackson, The Age

Piano **Joe Chindamo** Bass **Ray Brown** Drums **Andrew Gander**



'The Joy of Standards' (Recorded 2000, released 2001)

This album was commissioned by Japanese record label Atelier Sawano and immediately raced to number 1 on the HMV modern jazz charts in Japan.

“The epitome of taste and imagination, this set is a landmark in Australian jazz piano.”

Kevin Jones, The Australian

Piano **Joe Chindamo** Bass **Ben Robertson** Drums **David Beck**

Discography continued

Joe Chindamo



'Tender is the Night' (2001) with Nina Ferro

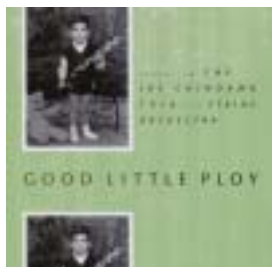
"...a rare and moving experience...it makes listening a pleasure."

Kevin Jones, The Australian

"Outstanding...that's the story of this album."

Leon Gettler, The Age

Piano **Joe Chindamo** Vocals **Nina Ferro**

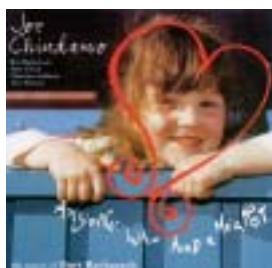


'Good Little Ploy' (Recorded 1998, released 2000)

"Chindamo's string arrangements deliciously avoid the pitfall of being an afterthought to a straight jazz date. Sophisticated and sexy, there has never been a jazz-with-strings album like this before. It is a masterpiece."

Kenny Weir, Herald Sun

Piano & Accordion **Joe Chindamo** Bass **Ben Robertson** Drums **Andrew Gander**
Percussion **Alex Pertout** Cor Anglais **Michael Pisani** with String Orchestra



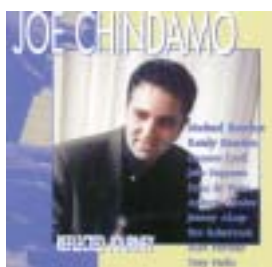
'Anyone Who Had a Heart' (Recorded 1996, released 1997)

This album won the ABC Listeners' Choice Award for 'Best Australian Recording of 1997'.

"This has been the year of Burt Bacharach, with tributes from McCoy Tyner and John Zorn. Now it's local pianist Joe Chindamo's turn and this one is by far the best."

Leon Gettler, The Age

Piano & Piano Accordion **Joe Chindamo** Bass **Ben Robertson** Drums **Tony Floyd**
with guests Percussion **Alex Pertout** Vocals (On title track) **Christine Sullivan**



'Reflected Journey' (Recorded 1991/2, released 1997)

With guests Michael and Randy Brecker.

"I first met Joe around 10 years ago. During a stay in Melbourne he asked me to play on his record and the music was so wonderfully written, it was a session I never forgot."

Randy Brecker

Piano, Piano Accordion, Keyboards & Samplers, Composer **Joe Chindamo** Tenor Sax **Michael Brecker** & **Tony Hicks**
Trumpet **Randy Brecker** & **John Hoffman** Alto Sax **Graeme Lyall** Drums **Andrew Gander** Acoustic Bass **Ben Robertson** Electric Bass **Jeremy Alsop** Guitar **Doug DeVries** Percussion **Alex Pertout**

Latest reviews 2002

Joe Chindamo

America! Joe Chindamo Trio Plays the Paul Simon Songbook

"He has that Bill Evans knack for bringing unlikely material into his own orbit."

Michael Cuscuna, Producer of the reissue program, Blue Note record label USA

"No matter how over played the tunes – and the 13 tracks here by songwriter Paul Simon have been covered dozens of times – Chindamo has the rare ability to turn them into personal musical statements. Chindamo has an amazing harmonic sense and great time that enables him to imbue these songs with a fresh vitality. He continues to raise the bar of excellence with each new disc."

Kevin Jones, The Weekend Australian

"The Melbourne pianist knows how to deconstruct and rebuild, how to refashion the familiar without losing it's essence. The musicianship and interplay shine through and more often than not the familiar is transformed."

Leon Gettler, The Age

"Given his attraction to melody, it makes sense for Melbourne pianist Joe Chindamo to spend an album on the songs of Paul Simon. Casting familiar material in a new light – revising the harmony and rhythms while retaining the melodic essence – is something Chindamo has always enjoyed. He excels here. Chindamo displays masterful touch and enjoys tasteful support from bassist Matt Clohesy and drummer David Beck."

Adrian Jackson, The Bulletin

"Local composer and pianist Joe Chindamo has rifled through his flower-power records and put the mojo into Mrs Robinson so to speak. Chindamo is challenging audiences to resist singing along to his interpretations of Paul Simons hits."

Blanche Clark, Herald Sun



Testimonials

“There are some pianists who dazzle with their touch and technique. There are others who knock you out with their restless creativity or erudition. Then there are those who seduce you by evoking emotions of vulnerability, joy and rage, playing as if they are telling you a story. What makes Joe Chindamo different is that he is one of the few who can integrate all these qualities.”

Leon Gettler, *The Age*

“Joe Chindamo stands strong for the music in his own unique way. Personality projected through the music is an important factor in determining the ‘uniqueness’ of an artist. Joe is unique and special as his music reflects. He therefore stands alone in many positive ways.”

Billy Cobham

“The artistry of Joe Chindamo is a special case, for his talent is so vast and deep that it transcend both stylistic and cultural considerations. His tone, touch and technique at the keyboard are outstanding in whatever idiom one wishes to place him.”

Tony Gould

“I first met Joe around 10 years ago. During a stay in Melbourne he asked me to play on his record and the music was so wonderfully written, it was a session I never forgot. Several years later we toured Australia with Billy Cobham and it was a pleasure to get to know him also as a great player and person.”

Randy Brecker

“Music loving Australians have long been aware of Joe Chindamo’s prodigious pianistic talents, now it’s time for the world to become aware of his extraordinary musical gifts.”

Mike Nock

“It is always a pleasure anytime I can play with Joe Chindamo. His sense of melodic and improv is a catalyst for my own performance. When we are on the bandstand together, I’m happy just to lay back and listen to Joe’s magic on piano. He is truly a gifted musician.”

Ernie Watts

Testimonials (Letter from a fan)

Joe Chindamo

Dear Joe,

You don't know me, my name is Jonathan Skovron, I'm 17 and about to begin my bachelor of music at the VCA on improv guitar. I'm not sure if you'll remember, but someone came up to you after a Malvern Town Hall gig with Nina Ferro etc during the International Jazz Festival - a short blond kid – and told you that the first time he heard your rendition of Moon River (with Nina) was a life-changing experience and that you are a genius. That was me.

Anyway, I just got home from one of your Bennett's Lane gigs with Nina, Phil and Dave and I was once again absolutely blown away. Apart from the whole gig being absolutely sensational, there was this bit in the bridge of Cheek to Cheek (where it goes "i've never climbed a mountain and reached the highest peak" etc.) in your piano solo when you started playing that motif in all these different keys, progressively ascending in minor thirds or something like that (that's probably incorrect but I'm sure you know what I mean), and I can honestly say I've never heard something so brilliant in my entire life!! Heaven, I was in heaven!!

Anyway, the point is that every time I hear you play I am more and more stunned by the incredible things you do; the way you completely slash supposed harmonic boundaries with startling

(and wonderful) modulations or harmonic variations, the way you manipulate the chord changes to the nth degree, sometimes using dissonance (and sometimes not) to create this incredible magic that in my brief jazz experience and education is unprecedented. I'm definitely rambling on here, and probably sounding like some kid trying to sound clever, but I'm not - I'm one hundred per cent sincere with all of this and I don't know how else to express my love for your music. I'm not really sure why I wrote this email, I guess just to thank you for giving me some of the most enjoyable moments of my life!

Yours sincerely,

Jonathan

PS - please don't get freaked out by this email, I'm not some crazy obsessed stalker, just a huge fan!

Joe Chindamo journey

Joe Chindamo

The following article was written for the prestigious French jazz publication JAZZ HOT (www.jazzhot.net) and a translation appeared in the December 2002 edition (No. 596)

How it all started

I began to play music at the age of six and the instrument of choice (my parents') was the accordion. One of my earliest memories involves my teacher playing his version of 'happy birthday'. Although I didn't know what the word lush meant at the time, I certainly have a very strong reminiscence of the feeling his exotic new harmonies elicited in me – I could almost taste the chords and it really affected me in a special way.

I progressed little by little, learning to read music. Actually I learnt to do this before learning to read English! My parents spoke to me in Italian, which became my mother tongue during these early years, notwithstanding the fact that I was born in Australia.

Gradually my interest in music intensified. Mind you, I wasn't one of these kids who practiced all day: music came naturally to me and I was able to learn pieces and commit them to memory very quickly. I remember learning some of them on the morning of a competition. I would set the alarm clock for 6am and away I went! Even then I left things to the last minute.

Very soon I began to win talent contests, quite a few of them televised, and I suppose this encouraged me to want to get better. I used to play those novelty pieces like Variations on the Carnival of Venice and the Flight of the Bumble bee. Actually, it was quite virtuosic music even if it did lack profundity.

Along with my brother, Dominic, on drums, I spent most Saturday nights playing accordion at local Italian functions.

On the day of my 14th birthday, I made my first record. Unfortunately...or fortunately, the record company closed its doors only months before it was due to be released: the tapes, thought to be lost, were miraculously found – they had been stored at the 'Screen and Sound archives' in Canberra.

Joe Chindamo journey continued

Discovering the piano

Tiring of the histrionics that went with performing on the accordion – all that smiling made me nauseous – and inspired by the great pianist Oscar Peterson, I switched, at the age of 15, to the piano. I was at a party one night and someone put on The Trio – Live in Chicago and I wanted to know who this wonderful pianist was. At that moment I decided I was going to be as good as Oscar Peterson one day. The first thing I needed to do in order to achieve this goal was to buy a piano! The funny thing is that Live in Chicago is still my favourite Oscar Peterson record.

Sources of inspiration, gigs, study...

At around this time I began doing gigs with the well-known Melbourne bandleader Denis Farrington. Most of the musicians were more than twice my age. It was a great learning experience because I played with different musicians of varying talents every night. Meanwhile, at home I was teaching myself jazz piano. I studied the recordings of the great jazz pianists, wrote out their solos, and then duplicated them on my piano. My favourites apart from Oscar were Bill Evans, Erroll Garner, Herbie Hancock and Chick Corea. At 16 I fell in love with Now he sings, now he sobs. A lot of people have based their style on the way Chick plays on this record and I don't think anyone has since surpassed him at this sort of playing. It still sounds incredibly modern and fresh 35 years later. I must admit that lately I've been attracted to the older pianists. Ahmad Jamal has become a favourite and three years ago I went through a manic Art Tatum period, transcribing his famous Yesterdays performance from The piano starts here 1949 live recording and Willow Weep for me from the Capitol sessions.

If I were to choose the three geniuses of jazz piano, I would cite Art Tatum, Erroll Garner and Bill Evans.

After years of listening to modern players like Pat Metheny, Chick Corea, Herbie Hancock, Weather Report, Mike Brecker (who, along with Randy actually ended up playing on one of my records) and Miles Davis, I'm having fun discovering all those wonderful swing musicians like Benny Goodman. His pianist, Mel Powel was a fantastic player and no-one talks about him these days. The same with Erroll Garner.

Somehow, because the latter had a certain sense of fun associated with his music making, he's not taken as seriously as say, Keith Jarrett. It's like in the movies: they always give the academy award to the actor who plays a tragic figure whereas in actual fact, it's much harder to play the comic, and I'm not suggesting that Erroll was a clown, of course.



Joe Chindamo journey *continued*

I don't like preciousness in music and I have no time for the kind of performer who agonisingly screws his face up and contorts his body just to play a C triad. I'm attracted to effortless mastery, whether it be Mohammad Ali, Art Tatum, Sir Donald Bradman (the great Australian cricketer), Frank Sinatra, Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli or Fred Astaire. I like difficult things to look easy and not the other way around.

College, films, composers, jazz...

At 18, I attended Melbourne State College, where I received my first formal piano lesson and studied classical music for the first time. I worked like a demon because I felt that I needed to make up for lost time. Most professional pianists begin studying this monster of an instrument in early childhood.

After graduating I became the first call pianist for film sessions and was employed by just about every film composer in town. Some of them were great musicians: others were good at convincing the director to give them the job and consequently relied on the musicians to write their music for them. I can't tell you the number of times I walked into the studio and found an almost blank sheet of manuscript sitting on the music stand. Often there would be a motif which I was suppose to use as a basis on which to create five minutes of music. This is like going to a publisher with an idea for a plot and having one of their authors write the book for you. I hated this aspect of film work because I felt as that I had been taken advantage of and got very little if any credit for my work.

One composer gave me a chord chart and all that was written on the part was something like the letters D minor, F major B minor etc., and he asked me to improvise 'concerto style' with sweeping arpeggios up and down the keyboard on those chords he had shorthanded: I did it without giving this much thought. A few weeks later he was boasting, 'Joe read every note I wrote'!

But I got to work with a couple of really great musicians such as Bruce Smeaton and Jerry Goldsmith, which I enjoyed very much. Besides, most of the players on film sessions are plucked from symphony orchestras, so no matter what else happens, the playing is always going to be first class. Plus, I even got to orchestrate the music and conduct the orchestra on a few films. I guess I've played on over 60 sound tracks, the most famous being BABE.

While my heart remained with jazz I made my living by playing with a great variety of performers. I've accompanied Shirley Bassey, Dame Kiri Te Kanawa, Vince Jones, Olivia Newton John and most of the well-known Australian performers. I got to play with some wonderful jazz artists such as Lee Konitz, Ernie Watts, Billy Cobham, Randy Brecker and Ray Brown.

Joe Chindamo journey continued

Billy Cobham – an important mentor

I played with Billy Cobham in 1990 as part of an Australian tour he was doing. The promoter hired different players for each state and I played the four Melbourne concerts. From the first moments into the opening concert I could tell Billy was impressed with my playing – not by the way he was looking at me (I probably had my eyes shut anyway) but from the way he responded to the things I was playing.

It felt really good from the word 'go'. Anyway he asked for my number at the end of the last gig and around three months later I received a phone call from him at five in the morning, inviting me to play with him in New York. Throughout the following 10 years, I travelled all over Europe, Japan, Argentina, the US, back to Australia and England with him. The group took a different shape on each tour. I think my favourite bands were the ones with Brian Bromberg, Ernie Watts and Wayne Krantz. I loved the trio gigs we did in Japan as well – Billy, Ira Coleman on bass, and me. Randy Brecker played on one of the tours, and I had fun playing with him too.

We made a couple of CDs – The Traveller and By Design. Billy encouraged me so much and in a way he was my first and only mentor in jazz. He really made me believe in my own abilities a little more and as a result, I was encouraged to make my own CDs.

The first recordings and a date with Ray Brown

The first one was Reflected Journey and I managed to get Mike and Randy Brecker to play on it. This is not as easy as it sounds when you live in Australia and they don't. I had to steal them away from their respective tours when they came to town. Mike was in Melbourne with Paul Simon back in 1991 and Randy was touring under his own name. I liked the Pat Metheny group at this stage of my life and that's probably reflected in this record. It was actually the first and last time I incorporated electronics into my music. My heart will always be with acoustic instruments. (I think that playing a digital piano is like dancing with a mannequin).

I made another eight discs. The second one A Brief History of Standard Time (reissued in 2002 as The First Take) is a trio recording which features Ray Brown on bass. He was such fun to work with. I met him in Tokyo. We were all playing at the 'Playboy jazz festival' when I approached Ray and told him I would love to record with him one day. I was serious but not expecting anything to come of it. About a year later he wrote to me from Istanbul – he was going to be touring Australia soon and wanted to know if I still wanted to make that record. I was in the middle of Reflected Journey and was in no position to go into the studio with Ray. Anyway we managed to make the record a year later. He sat on my left in the studio and never took his eyes off my left hand. The bass book I wrote for the sessions is signed by Ray. It says "It was a total pleasure. Let's do it again. More ballads." I treasure these words, especially now that he's gone.

Joe Chindamo journey continued

A year in Paris

I became disillusioned with living in Melbourne towards the end of the 90's. The famous 'tyranny of distance' causes many Australian musicians to feel that they are missing out on all the real action and I was no exception, notwithstanding the fact that I had played around the world quite a few times with Billy Cobham.

I wanted to leave Australia and live somewhere else for a year and since I have always had a love for France and all things French, I took my wife, Fiona, and daughter, Olivia, to Paris. There was another agenda. I wanted to have lessons with a great classical piano teacher by the name of Massimo Bertucci in Italy. So from Paris, I travelled to Naples once a month for a couple of lessons.

Whilst in Paris I checked out the main clubs and began to meet people. I wanted to find out whether the grass was any greener here than at home. I soon realised that Paris wasn't going to provide a remedy for the frustrations I harboured as a jazz musician. I found that many of the best musicians in France dream of being in New York with the same passion that many of their counterparts in Australia do. It seemed clear to me that as far as creating an international reputation in the jazz world was concerned, the only place that counts is New York.

Now, the very reason I wanted to have a break from the Australian music scene in the first place, was to get away from the tiresome notion that only Americans can play. And here I was, in the one of the most celebrated cities in the world whose people have a formidable reputation for loving jazz, and the same dull prejudices prevailed. (Upon hearing that there was an Australian jazz pianist in town, one ignoramus was compelled to inquire "Do they have pianists in Australia?"). I learned a disappointing but useful lesson, that is, on the world scene, if it doesn't happen in America, it doesn't happen. So, even though towards the end of my stay in Paris, some good things were starting to happen (I played several gigs with Christian Escoude, who asked me to join his band. Boulou Ferré wanted to do an album, which he eventually did with Alain Jean Marie), I decided to go back to Australia. Anyway, my year was up.

Joe Chindamo journey continued

A change of fortune

Upon my return to Australia things were really starting to look up. A Japanese gentleman walked into a Sydney store and bought a copy of my Bacharach record and took it back to Japan. He gave it to his friend at 'Atelier Sawano' who loved the record and wanted to distribute it in Japan. In the meantime they asked me to make a CD for them the Joy of Standards. Well, three weeks after they released it the CD went to number 1 on the HMV modern jazz charts. I'll never forget the list they posted on the Internet showing the best sellers. There was my name at number 1 with the likes of Bill Evans, Keith Jarrett, Kenny Baron and George Cables underneath. At that moment, it didn't matter that Bill Evans had probably been on that list for 30 years.

I had achieved something special. My attitude to everything has changed since that moment. I feel unstoppable because I've managed to find the key to open that elusive international door. And because of it, people in my own country are taking me far more seriously. They gave me the 2002 Australian Entertainment "MO" Award for Instrumental Jazz Performer of the Year. I've made Joy of Standards Volume 2 for the Japanese which was released in early 2003.

Back to France

I had the pleasure of returning to France during the first half of 2002 to do a little tour with a band which bassist Olivier Gatto put together called 'The 360 degree project'. The members are Mark Turner, Ravi Coltrane and Benjamin Henocq. I really enjoyed it... and I loved playing with Benjamin. He's a really great drummer and we got on so well musically and personally. In fact, his manager is working on a tour for us for next year. It will probably be a trio or quartet. I hope to record with singer Brisa Roche as well while in France. I really love her singing and we met in such an interesting way. At the end of the first '360 degree' gig when the audience had left the hall, I sat down at the piano and played some standards – just on my own. A small but appreciative crowd, which included Brisa, gathered: I knew she was a singer because her band had played the first set. Anyway, I invited her to sing with me and we were there till four in the morning. It was so spontaneous and beautiful. She really has something of her own to contribute to the art of jazz singing – this is important for me because I don't like copycats. I hope this tour comes off next year, because I still have a great affection for France.

Joe Chindamo journey continued

Musical reflections

When I play with a singer, I generally don't think of myself as a pianist. Being a lover of Frank Sinatra's records, (particularly the ones he made with Nelson Riddle and Don Costa – Sinatra with strings is an album to die for!) I tend to think of the orchestra a lot when I play. I don't mean that I literally hear violins at a particular moment or an oboe at another, but I adopt more of an orchestral approach or that mindset, splashing colour and providing counter lines. I love working with good singers – maybe it's because I'm a romantic at heart, but nothing touches me more than great singing. I absolutely adore Joni Mitchell's latest CD Both Sides Now – and those arrangements by Vince Mendoza... Oh my God!

Perhaps as a result of this orchestral approach, I don't consider myself a sideman or accompanist when I play with singers. It's much more collaboration than when I comp behind an instrumentalist.

Actually, I don't like being a sideman behind instrumentalists who treat the rhythm section as though it's a 'play along' record – those angry saxophone players who play 700 choruses at the same dynamic level without taking a breath. I'd rather go to the movies than play music. Then you play with someone like Lee Konitz, whose approach is entirely lyrical, and it's heaven! I did two gigs with him about five years ago and I really enjoyed that experience very much. He's probably the greatest living altoist in the sense that he was part of that coterie of the most important pioneers of that instrument. (Parker, Cannonball, Desmond, Stitt et al).

Playing with Billy Cobham was a special case. He can create more energy on stage than anyone I have ever heard and you need to not be intimidated by in order to play at your best. He writes extremely difficult music, much of it in odd meters. I can honestly say that after spending 10 years with him, I can play almost anything at any speed and in any key.



Joe Chindamo journey *continued*

In retrospect I know that until I began to work with Billy Cobham I was really more of a studio musician who was a frustrated jazz musician. It was with him that my jazz playing came of age because he encouraged me to be myself and not copy anyone. He loves to joke with me that when I first joined his band I sounded like ten different piano players (my retort is that he should have paid me ten fees!). In the studio they want you to be everyone else except yourself so it's not possible to develop a great sense of identity as an artist.

These days it's very hard for me to return to the studio and not be me. Luckily when I do so, more and more people are calling me to play the way I play. I think the main reason I decided to make my own records (at least the initial reason) is that I never felt as though the records I did as a side man ever represented the real me. I wanted to control the mix, the type of piano we used, who the other musicians were going to be, the repertoire, which 'take' was going to be used... etc. It's not about being a control freak – I give my sidemen a lot of freedom – it's about putting out the best possible representation of what I do and to tell my own story for a change. And the best way for me to do so is by way of the trio. I love this format because it gives me total freedom. Sometimes it feels as though the three of us are sitting behind the wheel of a Ferrari racing at top speed. Then it feels as though we are caressing a beautiful woman (at least for me it is).

I think it's important to have a theme to a recording. It gives it a sense of theatre because it tells a story. I've made a Bacharach record and recently a recording of Paul Simon songs America. To me the melody is sacrosanct but every thing else is at my mercy (can be changed) – the harmonies, rhythms, time signatures, tempi and aesthetics. I don't necessarily put jazz there at the end of the equation as a constant but it comes out sounding jazzy because of the way I conceptualise the music, harmonically and rhythmically. Anyway whether an album like America is jazz or not depends on whether one considers jazz to be stylistically restricted or a process by which a musician can emancipate from such strictures. Bill Evans spoke a lot about this – for him, people like Chopin and Liszt were jazz musicians. i.e., they were improvisers who played the changes! I think America is definitely a jazz album notwithstanding the fact that the tunes were born and grew up in the pop milieu. I present an impressionistic interpretation of them, which is no different to what jazz musicians did to Berlin and Porter in the 1930s. Essentially this music is a catalyst for my own musical expression.

Joe Chindamo
October 2002



Upcoming events

–	April 23rd, 24th, 25th, 26th May 1st, 2nd, 3rd	Tribute to Judy Garland at Capers (Hawthorn) with Nina Ferro
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Thursday	June	Bennetts Lane shows every Thursday night during June
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–	June 2003	National tour scheduled
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–	July 2003	Tour of France scheduled
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Wednesday	September	Bennetts Lane shows every Wednesday night during September
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–	September	The Melbourne Italian Jazz Festival scheduled for late September
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–	October	Port Fairy Spring Music Festival
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–	November	Wangaratta Jazz Festival
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Wednesday	December	Bennetts Lane shows first three Wednesdays of December
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Bennetts Lane concerts

The Joe Chindamo Trio has regular appearances at Bennetts Lane on an ongoing basis. The Age Entertainment Guide always records specific concert dates and details.

Mailing List

Should you wish to be added to the Joe Chindamo mailing list to be advised of forthcoming events in more detail, please forward your own e-mail address with **'subscribe'** as the subject to Joe at: chindamo@bigpond.net.au.