

Michelle Nicolle Quartet

Biography

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Mo Award 2001, 2003 & 2004 (Australian Entertainment Industry), **National Jazz Award** (1998) winner and **A.R.I.A Finalist** 2001, 2004 (Australian Recording Industry), Michelle Nicolle is a jazz musician whose chosen instrument is Voice.

Known for her ability to get right to the heart of a song, as well as being an in the moment improviser Michelle has continually developed and nurtured her art form with the help of her quartet. As well as releasing 6 CDs the MNQuartet has toured extensively throughout Australia and internationally - in 2005 performing at the **North Sea Jazz Festival** in Holland.

Arranger, band leader and award-winning jazz vocalist Michelle Nicolle started her musical career when she began the violin at the age of eight in the Barossa Valley, South Australia in the 1970s. Based in Melbourne, she is now celebrated as Australia's finest jazz singer.

As a country girl Michelle grew up listening to pop music and old movie tunes, playing in the Barossa Valley Schools Orchestra, and teaching herself to play the Angaston Town Hall's grand piano ~ whilst her father worked, polishing the dance floor. Throughout High School, music continued to dominate. She moved up the ranks of the Orchestra, kept 'nutting out' pop tunes on the piano (Prince & Duran Duran!!), blew 3rd cornet in a local marching band and sang in every choir on offer.

In 1985 Michelle was accepted into the Adelaide University - playing the violin. Surprisingly, Michelle says she didn't develop an interest in jazz until 1986 when she started singing with the university *Adelaide Connection* Jazz Choir. Hearing for the first time about Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald and Chet Baker, Michelle soon immersed herself in their music- deciding that this was the music that her heart wanted to follow. In 1987 she swapped her major to "Jazz Voice".

She began transcribing the great horn players Miles Davis, Freddie Hubbard, Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie - learning the language of improvisation through chord changes. When she completed her teaching degree, Michelle went on to study for her Associate Diploma of Jazz, where she "got into be-bop in a big way!" These two years, Michelle says, were the most important of her musical life as they laid the foundations for her wanting to make a career in playing jazz.

Several musical ventures, including the 5-piece vocal group *Vo-Cool* and her own quintet, followed. In 1995 Michelle moved to Melbourne to live.

At the 1998 Wangaratta International Jazz Festival Michelle won the prestigious **National Jazz Award** ~ the judges included the legendary be-bop singer Sheila Jordon (USA), current *Blue Note* star Kurt Elling (USA).

"This year's winner was Melbourne singer Michelle Nicolle, whose unaffected demeanour was as disarming as her exceptional technique. A beautiful voice; a courageous, risk-taking approach - she deserved to win." *The Age* Nov.'98

Leading her band with a quiet dignity, Nicolle's apparent ease at clever, difficult, and varied improvisation, bring to mind the skills of singers like Betty Carter, Mel Torme or Ella Fitzgerald.

But this exceptionally talented woman sounds like none of those singers. What she does hold in common is being true to her artistic self, having an incredible 'ear' as well as being a serious jazz musician and lyricist. Her clear tone and impressive breath control indicate hard work and dedication to her art form.

Michelle received the Australian entertainment industry's **Mo Award -Jazz Vocalist of the Year 2001, 2003 and 2004**

CD Releases:

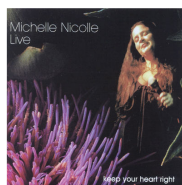
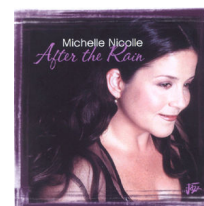


Michelle's debut CD **Misterioso** (Newmarket,1998) was warmly received by audiences and critics:

".....formidable technique and a staggering range.....more interesting than most other jazz vocalists in the country. *** Rolling Stone

In May 2001 her second CD **After the Rain** (ABC/Universal) was released, and in September named a Finalists for the ARIA Awards Best Jazz Album:

"This is the best album by an Australian jazz singer I have heard in more than a decade of reviewing music." Kevin Jones, *The Weekend Australian*, 2001



The 3rd release for the Michelle Nicolle Quartet, **keep your heart right** (Newmarket Music) is a live concert recording, released in Nov 2002.

"Australian singer Michelle Nicolle solidifies her reputation, at least within her country, as an inspiring singer of undoubted fortitude - one whose subtlety and faculty of her work." Bill Donaldson *Cadence Magazine (USA)*, June 2003

"Her handful of originals are what stand out .. "Tell The Truth", for example, rings true as something from the jazz canon yet it's all hers." Shane Nichols, *Financial Review*, Nov 16, 2002

Specially commissioned for ABC Jazz (Universal) **The Crying Game**, released Nov 2003, it was a **finalist in A.R.I.A Award** (jazz album of 2004)

"Nicolle's knack for uncovering surprises jars our imagination. Like the best artists, she reveals what we thought we knew in a clearer light. A 2003 highlight."

The Age Dec. 2003



What Kind of Fool (Newmarket Music), Released in October 2005.

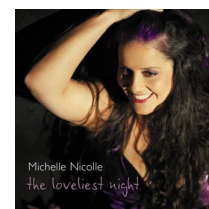
This double disc not only features a fresh studio recording with a new Quartet line-up, but a full length **DVD concert of MNQ Live in Korea.**

"Nicolle has killer qualities as a vocalist...a mix of uncanny precision in timing and phrasing, stretching and compressing words and notes to perfection, and an inventiveness that doesn't let up." Leon Gettler, *The Age*, 3 Nov 2005

The Loveliest Night (ABC Jazz), Released in March 2009. The 6th release is another commissioned album for ABC Jazz and features the MN Quartet playing as they do live – stretching and kneading old songs to find something new.

"Nicolle's warmth and an effortless flow of ideas makes the old sound new. This is a voice Australia should be proud of. 4.5 Stars"

Kevin Jones, *Limelight* June 2009



Tours:

A career highlight: July 2005 MNQ performed at the prestigious **North Sea Jazz Festival** (Holland). Other international gigs and tours to date include **2007 New Zealand, Turkey, Estonia, Finland, Singapore** and in 2004 a month-long tour throughout Asia; Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, Thailand. In August 2003 and 2006, the MNQ toured to all states & corners of Australia - 17 gigs in 20 days!

Festival Performances include:

Jakjazz (Indonesia), **Jazzkaar International Jazz Festival** (Estonia), **April Jazz International** (Finland), **North Sea Jazz Festival** (Holland), **Jarasum International** (Korea), **Java Jazz Festival** (Indonesia), **Christurch International Jazz Festival** (NZ), **Thailand International Festival of Music & Dance**, Wellington International (NZ), New Caledonia, Wangaratta International, Melbourne International, Glenelg, Queensland Biennale, Barossa Valley Vintage Festival, Fremantle Jazz

and venues around Australia, Italy, Malaysia, Korea, Taiwan, Singapore & Turkey:

Starfish Club, Wine Banc, The Basement (Sydney), **The Governor Hindmarsh** (Adelaide) **Perth Jazz Society, Brisbane Jazz Club, The Fontanonestate**, (Rome), **The Emporium** (Kuala Lumpur), **Once in a Blue Moon** (Seoul), **CHUNNYUN Jazz Club** (Seoul), **Shannon's** (Taipei), **Arts House, Southbridge Jazz Club** (Singapore), **Babylon Jazz Club** (Istanbul), Ankara Swissotel (Ankara).

Michelle Nicolle performs regularly at Melbourne's *Bennett's Lane, Dizzy's Jazz Bar*, and Big House. She also performs with *The Moovin' & Groovin' Orchestra*, and made regular national TV appearances on Bert Newton's **Good Morning Australia**, *After Midnight* and ABC's **The Pulse**.

Michelle also works as a free-lance vocalist, recording backing vocals for various artists including Charlotte Church (*Just Say Hello*), and is heard on many Australian TV advertisements. She sings 1st soprano in the *Melbourne Symphony Chorus*

Michelle Nicolle holds a Bachelor of Education, an Associate Diploma of Jazz (University of Adelaide) and currently teaches vocal studies at **Monash University, NMIT** and is a regular guest-teacher at Adelaide's Elder Conservatorium.

Concert Reviews:

"..an engrossing and flawless performance" *The Australian* August 8th 2006

"Nicolle's love of music and singing has a way of wrapping itself around each tune and turning her body language into an extension of each phrase." -review of CD Launch, *The Age*, Dec.17th 2002

"Throughout the Michelle Nicolle Quartet's engaging performance they played with a laid-back rhythm with a focus on improvisation, and embraced the challenge of this approach unencumbered by past styles and more interested in focusing on the essence and uniqueness of the material at the moment.." *Bangkok Post*, 2nd October 2004

"Michelle Nicolle has a rare flair for jazz singing.....lively ingenuity in her phrasing, interpretation, improvising and in her exploitation of her considerable range."

John Shand, *Sydney Morning Herald*, May 5th, 2002

"Thoroughly entertaining...the vocal pyrotechnics were breathtaking, yet they arrived only because the shape of the music demanded climatic exuberance." *Evening Post*, New Zealand, Oct, 2001 Wellington International Jazz Fest.

Visit: www.michellenicolle.com for sound grabs, photos & gig information

Michelle Nicolle Quartet - **the Band**

Geoff Hughes (guitar)

Originally from Wellington, **New Zealand**, Geoff is a highly accomplished musician. His practical knowledge of harmony and time is rare and much sought after - honing his craft whilst living and working throughout Europe in the 1980's.

During this time Geoff's gigs included **The North Holland Philharmonic**, and supporting jazz greats Michael Brecker, Dave Liebman, and Herb Ellis.

Since moving to Australia he's recorded a CD "*The Drop*" with Allan Browne, and brought his unique sound to the bands of **Joe Chindamo** and Christine Sullivan. He often plays sessions with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, and touring shows such as The Main Event.

Geoff is a core member of teaching staff at the Victorian College of the Arts, and in 2007 he completed his **Masters in Music Performance** at The University of Melbourne.

Tom Lee (double bass)

Tom Lee completed the Bachelor of Music Performance at the VCA in 2002. While at the VCA he studied under bassists Geoff Kluge, Ben Robertson as well as Assistant Principal bassist for the MSO, Andrew Moon. He has also studied at the School of Improvised Music, located in New York, under bassist Drew Gress.

Tom has recorded with ensembles such as **Vada**, the **Gian Slater Project** and Contrabanda. He has performed at numerous festivals including the WOMADELAIDE, Wangaratta International, & the Melbourne International Jazz Festival.

Ronny Ferella (drums)

Ferella's own band **Ishlsh**, for which he composes most of the material, has made quite an impact on the Australian scene - releasing four CDs. In July 2001 Ishlsh performed at the prestigious **Umbria Jazz Festival** in Italy, and **Pori Festival** (Finland).

Ferella leads other original improvised-based bands including **Mandala** and in 2009 launched a CD label and website, **Downstream Music** www.downstreammusic.com.au which promotes improvised music made in Melbourne. In 1997 he was a finalist in National Jazz Award Drum Competition. He co- founded and directed **Half Bent Festival** - a musician-based organisation involved in presenting concerts and he teaches music at The Song Room.

