

## **UKASTLE UKESTRA** **THE UKE REVOLUTION!**

Welcome to the Ukastle Ukestra!!! We are part of a worldwide revival of interest in the uke, not so much as a novelty instrument to listen to on the radio (*a la* Tiny Tim or George Formby), but as something to play and, more importantly, to play with others. It's portable, its easy to play, you can sing along, and it has a vague cuteness factor. That said, the richest man in the world, Warren Buffett, also plays the uke.

### ***The Ukastle Ukestra***

I have been playing uke for 4 years, on and off stage. I was first a trumpeter, then a guitarist / singer. Now I have transferred my skills across from the guitar to the uke, which is probably different from being a purist ukist. I am enjoying all the elements of the uke that I described above, but especially love the resonator that I play (especially that it stays in tune!).

I was in a band in Victoria (the Ugly Uncles) which used ukes as a novelty, although there was one skilled player. I now use it in a duo (SQuidge) with Jane (with banjo, guitar and other things) and am finding it a wonderful rhythm instrument.

I have also been along a couple of times to the Melbourne Ukulele Kollektive. It was vaguely anarchic, but seemed to work.

The Ukastle Ukestra is my effort to start something in Newcastle that is happening in all other cities in Australia. There is even a Ukulele Club in Milton! (South Coast, NSW) and I'm sure many other towns. It is also a (small) part of my own endeavours to earn a living through being a community musician (someone who helps others to make music), hence the charge. Getting things happening has actually taken a lot of effort, and I hope that you will get value from the organising that I do.

That being said, I have absolutely no qualms about people meeting through this and heading off into their own groups. That is one objective of playing together! But whoever you meet through the Ukastle Ukestra, and whatever you do with them outside the group, you will always be welcome into this group as well. My hope is that you will appreciate the structure and focus that having an identified 'leader' (I prefer the word 'facilitator') can bring, although my attitude is very much that I would like all people to have solid and dynamic creative input. Some of you will provide stronger leadership than others, whilst others will probably enjoy learning from the experiences and ideas of those people.

I would like us all to feel free to talk about expectations (what we want to get out of this), any future projections, places/venues/stadiums/fetes to play, songs to play, and general commentary on how things are going.

Mark Jackson 10 November 2009 ([markjackson@iinet.net.au](mailto:markjackson@iinet.net.au), 0430434291)

### **Uke on the Web**

There is so much on the internet!!! YouTube is a great public uke resource, with virtuosos and amateurs all vying for your attention. Each has its merits too! Personally I just love the Ukulele Orchestra of Great Britain, and can't recommend highly enough that you watch their songs on there (You Don't Bring Me Flowers and Smells Like Teen Spirit are my favourites). Some useful uke-specific sites include [www.ukulele-tabs.com/](http://www.ukulele-tabs.com/), [www.ukulelehunt.com](http://www.ukulelehunt.com) (which uses and unfortunate contraction of its name in its emails) and [www.doctoruke.com/songs.html](http://www.doctoruke.com/songs.html), Richard G's Ukulele Songbook ([www.scorpex.net/uke.htm](http://www.scorpex.net/uke.htm)) and [www.chordie.com](http://www.chordie.com) (on which you can change the chord instructions and keys to any song picked out of there). Don't forget in your searches that it could be 'ukelele' or 'ukulele', although I believe the latter is more culturally correct (i.e. Hawaiian).

I have a few audio files that you may want including the wonderful *Into the Music* special on Radio National from 27 June 2009 – [www.abc.net.au/rn/intothemusic/stories/2009/2574963.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/rn/intothemusic/stories/2009/2574963.htm) *Picking on Something Smaller: A Little History of the Ukulele*. If you give me a USB stick next time I can get it to you the following week.

Finally, you may want to plan a trip to Melbourne February 26th - March 2nd 2010 when the

Melbourne Ukulele Kollektive is hosting the inaugural → (more info at [www.muk.com.au/muf2010.html](http://www.muk.com.au/muf2010.html))



[www.myspace.com/ocavaquinho](http://www.myspace.com/ocavaquinho) is a rather special group of musos too. Good luke!!!