

UKASTLE UKESTRA
THE NEWCASTLE UKE REVOLUTION CONTINUES!
Newsletter #2, 3 January 2010

Thank-you!

It was a wonderful seven go-go-go weeks for me, from the first interview on 1233 (the local ABC) on 5 November, then the inaugural Ukastle Ukestra on the 10th, through to our daggily excellent concert on 22 December.

It makes me think a lot about where we are going. As always, I want your active input on this. What do you want to be doing with the Ukastle Ukestra?

I want to thank very much the wonderful assistance of John Dickinson (who has expanded the beginners session), Jane Jelbart (who was naughty and nice and assisted in so many ways) and Suzie Lochhead (who provided numerous suggestions for me to do this or do that). I also want to thank the enthusiasm of everyone who has come along regularly. Most people seem to really be enjoying it, and I feel privileged to be a part of it.

This is, I suppose, a **newsletter**, providing both news about things to come for the Ukastle Ukestra, and other useful tips. It is really Newsletter #2, given that I handed out something similar at the inaugural Ukastle Ukestra meeting.



Change in pricing

A number of you will already know that the Ukestra is part of a small business that I have very recently started. I have called it *The Sum of the Parts (music)* (TSotP) and my aim is to help people play music together.

The Ukastle Ukestra is the first of a number of TSotP activities and some Ukestra members suggested that my initial pricing was too low. So as part of providing a more realistically sustainable service I am changing the fee to \$10 for the whole session. This compares well with other sorts of nights out or choir type activities which all seem to be in the \$10-\$15 ball park figure.

It also seems standard to offer a cheaper price for people who wish to commit in advance. So, if it suits you better, you can pay **\$90 for ten weeks** in advance. Most choirs seem to have this difference between 'one-off' attendance fees and longer term commitments. If you want to take up this option please see me.

Gift vouchers?

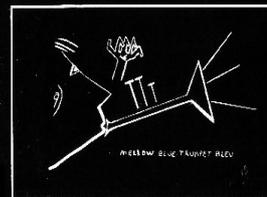
This is just an idea for you (or for hints to your relations!). I had a phone call quite out of the blue before Christmas asking about a present for a father-in-law. I whipped up a gift voucher worth 4 private lessons or 10 Ukestra sessions. Money went in the bank so I assume we will see the person in due course!

Ukastle Ukestra is on 5th & 12th Jan. then 2 week break.

Normal rehearsals / lessons are happening on 5th and 12th January. But I will be away for 2 weeks (19th and 26th of Jan). Things are back to normal on 2nd Feb. As usual Tuesday evenings begin at 6:30pm with a beginners lesson. This is for uke players who do not yet feel they have mastered the basic chords. However more experienced Ukastle Ukestra members are also starting to come along at 6:30 to practice together, to chat, compare instruments and have a drink. Much thanks to John who has been a great catalyst and facilitator for this. 7:30 is when Ukastle Ukestra practice commences, finishing at 9pm.

Mark Jackson - Community Musician

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The Sum of the Parts (music)

Bullet Points for Busy People

- Price change - \$10 for whole evening
 - Gift vouchers available
- Ukestra on 5th & 12th, not 19th & 26th
 - Westlakes Ukestra?
- Melbourne Ukulele Festival – 26 Feb.
- Join the Ukastle Ukestra Yahoo group
 - Uke making school
 - First Monday Bluegrass Club
 - Strings n'things
 - some youtubes

- What performances would you like to do?

Ukastle Ukestra Yahoo Group

If you want access to music files, photos or news, (and you want to make it easier for me to email you!) then please join the Ukastle Ukestra yahoo group. Invitations will magically appear! Through this you can also email your fellow ukestrans with questions / news / things you have seen that you want them to see...

Performances?

Our first family & friends concert was such a success that it seems a waste to let all our talent go unviewed! If you have ideas for venues or events to perform at, please raise them during our normal Tuesday night gatherings. We basically have an open invitation for the Olive Tree Markets (first Saturday of the month at the Junction Primary School), but if we are to do this I would like to see a really good roll up of Ukestrans.

West Lakes Ukestra?

The Ukastle Ukestra is getting a lot of people from out the Lake way (Cardiff, Argie, Fennell Bay, Toronto). For those who *are* out that way, I'd like your opinion on whether you (and others) would be interested in another (or replacement) Ukestra in a bowling club (or similar) in Teralba or Toronto, somewhere like that. Considering that there are a few retirees attending, it might even be worth thinking about having it in the daytime or late afternoon, instead of the evening. Just ideas, but I'd be interested to hear your thoughts.

Rose Turtle Ertler and the Melbourne Ukulele Festival

Rose (one of Australia's pre-eminent ukulele players) is playing at a *Winter Exchange* (Bolton St, Newcastle) next Wednesday 13 January. If you haven't been to the *Strato* it's a little like our very own speakeasy – great vibe and venue - it is NOT a pub.

Rose & I are ~~Sorry!! Postponed until Winter...~~ talking about having a workshop just prior to her concert (5pm?), venue TBA.

This is on! If you are heading to Melbourne in late February for the Melbourne Ukulele Festival, then you can catch Rose in action there. The program is now online and it looks like a total hoot!

www.muk.com.au/muf2010.html

First Monday Bluegrass Club

This is a group of people who sit around in a circle at the Wickham Croatian Sports Club and play bluegrass music on the first Monday of the month from 7 to 9pm. They are very welcoming, even of beginners (and ukulele players!). And to top it off, many of the chords are C or G! Draw back is that you will be surrounded by louder instruments (damn banjos!). More info at www.myspace.com/firstmondaybluegrassclub

Ukulele Making School?

After the Newcastle Post article I had a phone call from *Strato Anagnostis* who is interested in helping people make their own high quality ukulele. Strato runs the *Australian Guitar Making School* in Toronto and is keen. The School helps people make their own guitars over a period of about 28-40 weeks. You go along once a week for 4 hours and pay \$55 per session. You do the maths, but you end up with a guitar worth more than the \$ you put in. Ukes would, I imagine, be cheaper. Strato is keen to see if any of us mob would be interested in making ukuleles for ourselves and I expect he will visit us some time in the next few months to check us out and for us to check him out. More info at www.guitarmakingschool.com

Ukulele strings etc.

An online music shop (www.ellisguitars.com.au) contacted me when we started, and I have had a look at their website. They are in WA, but seem to have real people running it! I think you'd be surprised how quickly stuff can be delivered, and they have a very wide range of ukulele strings that they mail out, especially for the more hard to get instruments like the baritone & tenor ukes that some Ukestrans now have. If you know of other places to easily get strings, please tell me, and I can spread the word.

Some Useful YouTube Ukulele Moments / Discoveries

Youtube is the television you can watch on the internet. It is huge! A really wonderful resource for those seeking out the obscure and rare. Here are some links you might enjoy watching.

- George, Paul & Ringo (yes. The Beatles) performing Ain't She Sweet in 1994 in a garden.
www.youtube.com/watch?v=v5k-OE0-fWs
- 2 videos of a very cute 5 year old showing us how easy it is to play the uke – puts us all to shame.
www.youtube.com/watch?v=ErMWX--UJZ4
www.youtube.com/watch?v=hPtbG0vtkHY
- Tongan uke master Sione Aleki doing some crazy old school show off stuff on the ukulele
www.youtube.com/watch?v=trI9p9GHyRs
www.youtube.com/watch?v=YgaxLsLSTUE&feature=fwv
- And finally, some people who are featuring at the Melbourne Ukulele Festival
Azo Bell - www.youtube.com/watch?v=TKdhECF0-BU
Bosko & Honey with Rose Turtle Ertler (including interview) - www.youtube.com/watch?v=xYcgtAcjCZ8

Here's to uke'n Mark Jackson The Sum of the Parts markjackson@iinet.net.au 0430434291