

## Leigh Barker Biography

Bassist, composer and bandleader **Leigh Barker** was born and raised in Canberra, where he spent his formative years studying with American bassist Eric Ajaye at the Canberra School of Music. His move to Melbourne in 2003 provided much professional experience, with Leigh proving to be a popular accompanist for the cream of the traditional and contemporary Jazz scenes, appearing with Julie O'Hara, Jamie Oehlers, Sarah McKenzie, the Hoodangers, Katie Noonan, George Washingmachine, Brian Ritchie (Violent Femmes), the Fireworks Jazz Band, Joe Chindamo, Julien Wilson, Peter and Andy Baylor, the Bennetts Lane Big Band, The Band Who Knew Too Much, Heather Stewart and many others.

In January 2004 Leigh travelled to the US for five weeks, where he pursued formal studies with bassists Ben Wolfe, Eric Revis and Reginald Veal, as well as spending valuable time with mentors Branford Marsalis and guitarist Doug Wamble. In March 2010 Leigh and his band had the great privilege of being the supporting act for Branford's Australian tour. Leigh opened concerts in Perth, Melbourne, Brisbane and Sydney, and performed encores with Branford at the Sydney Opera House and Queensland Performing Arts Centre.

In 2006 Leigh collaborated with celebrated Tasmanian pianist Tom Vincent on the soundtrack for the hit ABC television program 'The Collectors'. Leigh now tours frequently with Tom Vincent's band, which is in demand around the world.

March 2008 saw Leigh performing in concerts with American Tenor Saxophonist Ned Goold, who is the musical director of the Harry Connick Jr. Big Band. Leigh also toured as the support act for Chris Botti in 2011, appearing with the Sarah McKenzie Trio, and in April of 2011 participated in the Australian tour of the 'Hot Jazz Alliance' featuring American musicians Josh Duffee and Andy Schumm, world reknown experts in 1920's Jazz.

In 2010 and 2011 Leigh was nominated for the prestigious '**Music Council of Australia Freedman Music Fellowship**' and in 2011 his CD 'The New Sheiks' won a prestigious **Australian Bell Award** for '**Best Traditional Jazz Album**'. <http://www.bellawards.org/index2.php>

Since 2003 Leigh has been consistently touring his band around Australia performing at concerts, festivals, school workshops and promoting his four CD releases. "Off to Moruya" which was recorded for the ABC 'Jazztrack' program (2005), a self titled debut disc from 2004, a live album named "Lynnville" (2008), and the latest disc, "The New Sheiks" (2010). These albums are available around the world through **CDbaby.com** and the **Apple iTunes** store. There are also two albums of live material available exclusively on **iTunes**, both recorded by premium film company 'Exero' at the BMW Edge theatre in Melbourne. ("Live at the Edge" and "Leigh Barker Live at the Edge" both released 2006).

Despite being in constant demand as a sideman, Leigh Barker has always had as a high priority his own working band to tour around the country and the world, playing a mix of traditional repertoire and new original Australian music. These days the band tours under the moniker 'The New Sheiks' and features musicians that Leigh has been working with for 10 years. The band explores a great range of music drawing on all the greatest elements of Jazz music, from Jelly Roll Morton, Louis Armstrong and Ellington, to the classic small group music of Davis, Coltrane and Monk, as well as original pieces from band members and other Australian composers. The wide ranging tastes of all the members and their respective contributions to the repertoire mean that the ensemble covers a wide textural and emotional range, an exciting brand of Jazz that draws on many sources.

"I always have trouble explaining the sound of the group, but it's all in there, whether you like hard swing, blues, beautiful ballads, great melodies or hot Jazz. The Guys and Girls all write good tunes and it has always been a combined effort..."