

# Vase® NEWS

## VICTORY AUDIOPHONIC SOUND EQUIPMENT

June 2009

This month you'll meet another couple of the guys on the current VASE team. You heard of Noel Bourne's involvement in the first run of VASE TT15's last month. By the way, I don't think we mentioned that the "TT" in the TT15 is in honour of Tony Troughton.

Below you'll find Noel's VASE story as well as that of Graeme Whitehouse, who is manager of Norwest Productions in Queensland.

### Bio of Noel Bourne

**My interest in electronics and music dates back to the late 60's in Brisbane when as a young teen I would supplement my pocket money by collecting scrap metal like aluminium, brass and copper from our local rubbish tip.**



**Electronic waste such as discarded radios and the like was always a great source of scrap and I became interested and learnt all about how these things work and resurrected many a discarded radio and constructed a few single ended valve amps.**

**Began learning guitar around the same time and purchased my first electric guitar, an el cheapo Japanese Coronet brand with whammy bar. Got an MXR distortion pedal and a Wah pedal and I was in bedroom guitar bashing heaven!**

**Completed my secondary education and got a day job cabinetmaking that I did for 8 years. Whilst cabinetmaking and with a number of years of guitar playing in garage bands behind me, a local music shop owner asked me to teach guitar in the evenings.**

**I did the 2 jobs for quite some time and eventually finished cabinetmaking to work full time in the music shop selling instruments, guitar amplifiers, sound reinforcement systems and installing public address systems.**

**Needing a larger amplifier for gigs I was now playing, I bought a secondhand Vase Trendsetter 100 with a double quad box set and a Fender Telecaster.....that amp was so loud!**

**Interestingly, this amp was also great for bass guitar and I used it whilst playing bass for a band named Maiden Voyager as support act for Wishbone Ash at Brisbane's Festival Hall....sounded great mic'd up through the main system.**

**I was offered the position of Project Coordinator for an audio contracting company and took up this position and oversaw the on site installation of some very large audio engineering projects including the new Brisbane Entertainment Centre and the new Brisbane Domestic Airport that employed a custom engineered PC based 100 volt line 88 zone (amplifiers) Public Address System with over 1200 loudspeakers and many kilometers of microphone and loudspeaker cabling.**

**I stayed with this company for many years becoming Brisbane branch manager and National Product manager involved in the importation and distribution of a range of audio and lighting products.**

**In semiretirement I kept my hand in by building some valve based pedals, small combos and heads.**

**Having heard rumours that VASE was to be resurrected I contacted those involved and am now very pleased and excited to be involved in the rebirth of this classic Australian iconic brand.**

### Here's Graeme Whitehouse's VASE story:

My first VASE amp came to me at an early age, I think I was about 16. It was a Bassman 100 from memory and my uncle had resurrected it from his repair shop when I told him I needed an amp to play bass guitar through. It was a pretty poor example, somebody had covered it in brown carpet and it really looked older than it was. I loved the distortion I could get from it once I turned that volume knob past half-way. Alas, the other members of my first band convinced me that I needed something not quite so, well, brown; so at 17 I swapped the brown VASE for yet another 3 speed gearbox for my Holden panel van and embarked upon a ten year journey of soul-less transistor mediocrity around the cover band venues of Australia. Somewhere in there I gained a trade as technician and certainly the thought of tubes was a fairly distant one, my trade leading me towards the modern electronics of Mosfets and chip-based preamps..



circa 1990

Much later in life, after my foray into live audio had taught me an appreciation for vintage tones, my current career as manager of a large national audio company lead me to become friends with Harry Lloyd-Williams of Acoustic Technologies. Harry has a passion for guitars and all things musical. His knowledge of Australian music history, both modern and ancient, still impresses me to this day. Harry decided I needed educating in the history of Australian amps and the Brisbane music scene of the 60s and 70s and I was a willing student.

Harry at that time had a wonderful example of a Trendsetter 40, which he still has complete with it's companion 3 x 12 speaker cabinet. He'd had a few VASE amps and knew the history of VASE well, having had some connections with Tony Troughton over the years. It didn't take long before I was enthused to join him on his mission to re-create this wonderful Brisbane brand, reputed to be the most sturdy, reliable amps ever made in Australia. Their tones were unique as was the whole construction, from the hand-lettered front panel to the auto-vinyl covering. The technician in me was impressed by the military spec construction not seen in many of the American brands of the era. I loved the whole "make do with what's available" design criteria that seemed to be the method Tony employed. The amps are so "Australian" it's almost hard to believe he was an Englishman!

My particular tilt towards bass guitar has been indulged with the development of the VASE bass speaker systems. I love everything about the 10" speaker range. They're so incredibly powerful and robust yet they still manage to produce the full-frequency tone demanded by modern bass players. I'm excited about the development of our new high-power, light-weight bass heads that will be released alongside our guitar amplifier range and will truly do justice to the legendary name of VASE. I'm equally excited about our re-issue Trendsetter 60. So much effort has gone into faithfully re-creating this iconic amplifier with only minor concessions to modern designs regulations. The re-issue is destined to be a classic in its own right and I'm looking forward to a long and fruitful relationship with what will be once again a legendary Australian manufacturer.



Pictured above a recent acquisition, Tony Troughton's Hawaiian Lap Steel Guitar, which was acquired from Owen Ray, Toowomba long time music professional pictured above with Harry Lloyd-Williams. Picture at right is part of the collection of vintage VASE guitar and bass amps. More about Owen Ray and his VASE connection in next month's issue.

## FEEDBACK

It's been great hearing from all you VASE enthusiasts. We'd like to share some of your stories.

George Purvins in Victoria wrote:

Hi Carol,  
Just a bit of VASE trivia for you. I grew up in a struggling working class family back in the 60's & 70's in the Northern Suburbs of Melbourne.

I played in a number of (unheard of) garage bands here in Melbourne. I could never afford top class gear and things like Fender & Gibson guitars and top quality amps were always that little bit out of reach.

I did however have an Australian valve amp head with two 2 x 12" speaker boxes. It was sold to me as a VASE by a guy I worked with at the time and had a VASE badge on it.

Just one small detail I didn't pick up on at the time was that the VASE badge was actually a "knock-off".

Someone had actually gone to the trouble of cutting the badge out of a piece of tinfoil. Which I didn't appreciate at the time (and) would have been quite a time consuming and painstaking job.

I used to be very proud of my "VASE" stack whenever I got up on stage and performed. Such was the respect for the VASE and someone had actually copied a VASE! Now that I think of it - that was probably more than likely the ONLY VASE copy ever!

Hopefully I can afford to buy a real one this next time around.

Hi George,  
Thanks for the story. Do you have any old pictures? Send me your mailing information and tee shirt size and we'll send you a (genuine) VASE tee shirt! Carol

Hi Carol,  
Very nice to hear back from you. Unfortunately I don't have any old pictures. It would have been great to have had the foresight.

We had some very good musos come from my old school, which was in Glenroy here in Melbourne. I can still remember going to see a concert at school with my big sister featuring John Farrar, Peter Robinson and Freddy Weiland who made up the Strangers. They were all students at our school. They were a few years older than me. John is hugely successful over in the US these days and is a very highly regarded as a producer and writer of film scores and hit songs. The Strangers were a great band, I still play one of their old albums regularly.

The drummer out of my first couple of bands is a guy named Dennis Dunstan who does some management work for Kevin Borich and Phil Emmanuel these days. (Think I saw some photos of Kevin & Phil with some of your amps featured in them if I am not mistaken).

Regarding my amp, I removed the fake VASE badge some years ago when I had it serviced. I only removed the sign because it did look a bit fake by today's standards. However, if I can find it, I will reattach it and send you a photo.

You are welcome to use my story and name. There may be one or two who may see it and finally realize after all these years that I too was a BS artist and it wasn't a real VASE- I did selectively tell people "Hey you should get on to one of these VASES they're great!"

PS I would proudly wear your T-shirt if you send me one.  
Many thanks & kind regards,

George

Hi George,  
Thanks for sharing the information. The shirt's on it's way! Carol

Hi Carol,  
Thanks, that's very kind of you (Hope I didn't crap on too much...)

Are you performing these days? I thought Railroad Gin was a great band!

I think I still have an LP somewhere.

Cheers,  
George

Hi George,  
Sorry, You've confused me with a rock star. I'm Carol Lloyd-Williams, wife of Harry (who's on the new VASE team) and editor of the newsletter. Can't carry a tune, but thanks for the compliment!

Editor Carol on left, Rock Star Carol on right.



That's it until next month. Let us hear from you!