

Case study

Rafael Karlen

Details

What:

Rafael Karlen is a Brisbane-based saxophonist, arranger and composer. Arts Queensland funding enabled Rafael to record and present his new album *The Sweetness of Things Half-Remembered*. The recording and performances also featured pianist Steve Newcomb and the Rosenberg String Quartet.

The album draws together elements from jazz and Western art music through skillful composition and improvisation. It was launched at the Brisbane International Jazz Festival and promoted through several performances at the Brisbane Jazz Club, Jazz Upstairs at West End and an advanced workshop at the QLD Conservatorium of Music.

Sweetness has received favourable reviews drawing national and international attention and was included in the top 25 jazz albums of 2014 by US-based music review website, Wondering Sound.

When:

December 2013 to September 2014

Where:

Album recorded at University of Qld, Brisbane
Performances at Brisbane venues

Key stats:

- four promotional performances
- 350 attendees at performances

Arts Queensland contribution:

\$8500 – Projects and Programs Fund



Rafael Karlen. Photo: Dave Collins, Blackbox Photography

Contact for further information:

Email: rafaelkarlen@gmail.com

Website: rafaelkarlen.com

Links:

Reviews of the album:

- <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/arts/review/magical-side-as-folk-and-classical-combine/story-fn9n8gph-1227172465619>
- <http://www.wonderingsound.com/list/best-jazz-albums-of-2014/>
- <http://www.birdistheworm.com/rafael-karlen-the-sweetness-of-things-half-remembered/>
- <http://www.brisbanejazzclub.com.au/rafael-karlen-the-sweetness-of-things-halfremembered/>
- <http://www.mycitylife.com.au/snapshots/2014/june/08/gallery-brisbane-jazz-festivalrafael-karlen/>

Outcomes

- New interstate and international contacts have been established and strengthened with the potential for future collaborations directly related to this project. There is an ongoing dialogue with several international and interstate artists with the opportunity to perform this material elsewhere.
- The album has received critical acclaim nationally and internationally, and is drawing attention to Brisbane's music scene.
- Rafael's music now appears on a wide variety of music distribution platforms not previously used.
- The recording will enable Rafael to be eligible to apply for participation in numerous festivals and competitions, interstate and intrastate tours.



Cover art from *The Sweetness of Things Half-Remembered*
Photo: Dave Collins, Blackbox Photography

Learnings and reflections

Rafael reflected on what he learned through the project and what were the most effective strategies to promote the album:

I have learned a great deal through this project. In addition to composing, performing and organising the project, I was also the producer and directly involved with every stage from mixing through to the design, promotion, marketing and distribution. I have gained valuable lessons and experiences and feel more confident about each of these aspects of the music industry.

As there were several performances throughout the year featuring similar material, I worked on bringing something new to each concert. I featured a guest musician or used a different support act to draw in new audience members. This proved to work well. Spacing each performance quite far apart was also a good decision.

The time and money invested in promoting the album and shows with the help of a publicist was also very effective. I sent over 100 copies of the album to radio stations and reviewers throughout Australia. Several audience members and internet users commented on how they came to the concert after hearing my music on ABC Radio National.

I also chose to pay more money and replicate my album as a Digipak with a 12 page booklet. This was a more expensive option but I decided to make the album more appealing than a much cheaper looking plastic CD jewel case.

Including my album launch in the 2014 Brisbane International Jazz festival worked very well. This allowed me to gain a good amount of exposure and increased audience awareness. My launch was one of the best attended concerts of the festival.

Receiving plugs and reviews in a wide range of media has been very helpful. This includes reviews/gig plugs interviews in the Weekend Australian, My City Life, Bmag, Wondering Sound (US), national and local ABC and community radio.