

1960s Northern Tablelands Artists and Bands

The following biographies provide details on individuals and bands which pre-date the Australian pub rock era, which is generally considered to have emerged in the early 1970s. The Northern Tablelands Music Industry Archive recognises, however, the important role that the musicians from the region played during the 1960s in helping to establish the basis of a local industry.

NEIL AUBREY

aka Nobby

(1952 -)

- Bands incl. **Generation**
- Also associated with: **Firebirds**

Guitar/keyboards

Neil Aubrey, nicknamed "Nobby" during his youth, grew up in a creative family, with both his parents being actively associated with the Armidale and District Musical Society – his father, Keith, as musical director conductor, and his mother, Olive, as stage director. Aubrey learned to play classical piano from an early age, and while attending The Armidale School (TAS) in the mid-1960s he occasionally played with local band **Firebirds**, contributing with his Farfisa electronic organ. During this same period he became friends with guitarist Laurie Wheaton (later with **Bogislav**). This association eventually saw him take up guitar, and according to Tony Jagers "Nobby" began mastering the new instrument almost immediately. After transferring to Armidale High School in 1967 Aubrey met Jagers (previously with **The Union Jack** and **In Sect**) and together with former In Sect drummer John Patterson, co-founded **Generation**. The band went on to play numerous local gigs, notably the Police Boys Blue Light dances and college and university balls. Jagers records, too, that they played as far away as Tamworth and Gunnedah, even though still high school students. **Generation** also competed in two **Hoadley Battle of the Sounds** competitions - 1968 and 1969.



With Generation (1968)



2008

No details of Aubrey's association with rock bands and music performance from 1970 onward have yet been uncovered. However, it is likely that he continued to be involved in some capacity while undertaking training as a teacher at the Armidale College of Advanced Education (formerly Armidale Teachers' College). Neil Osborne records that Aubrey (described as a "wild one") and his wife were living in Inverell in 1977. The following year they settled on the Central Coast of New South Wales Coast, with Aubrey becoming a music teacher at Gorokan High School. He has continued his association with the school for more than three decades (in recent years this has also included teaching computer studies). Aubrey's involvement with musical performance has also seen him actively involved with the Central Coast Music Society, under whose auspices he has published several music text books - notably the *Gorokan Workshops* series. In addition to his teaching Aubrey has continued to perform solo classical concerts. Among the highlights of his career were concerts in Banff, Canada.

- A selection of performances by [Neil Aubrey](#) can be seen on YouTube. These include "Sayonara" and "Ms Diana" (Don Alder), Akaskero (Thomas Leeb), "Catherine" (Don Ross), "The Handing Down" (Edward Gerhard), and his own composition "Flow."
- You can also visit [neilaub's Channel](#) on YouTube, which included his own performances and favourites by other people.

FIREBIRDS

- Personnel: [*] **Cornish** (guitar) ; [*] **Cornish** (guitar) ; **Greg Goldsmith** (bass) ; **Ralph Monley** (guitar) ; **David Tapp** (lead guitar/harmonica) ; **Geoff Walsh** (drums).
- Also associated with the band: **Neil "Nobby" Aubrey** (keyboards)

Firebirds formed at Armidale High School around 1963/1964. The band initially comprised the two Cornish brothers, Ralph Monley, Greg Goldsmith and Geoff Walsh. Goldsmith had the then dubious 'honour' of being the son of the school's Deputy Principal. After the members all graduated at the end of 1964 the Cornish brothers left Armidale. Their replacement was, as Tony Jagers' recalls, 'a stunning musician called David Tapp on lead guitar and harmonica.' They were also sometimes joined by Neil 'Nobby' Aubrey (from The Armidale School) on Farfisa keyboards. Jagger also recalls that the band's equipment included Fi-Sonic and Super Twin amps. Ralph Monley was also noticeable for his flame red Maton guitar.

Source: Tony Jagers (correspondence, Nov. 2010).

GENERATION

(1967-ca. 1970)



L-R: Neil Aubrey, John Patterson, Tony Jagers, Laurie Wheaton

- Personnel: **Neil 'Knobby' Aubrey** (lead guitar) ; **Tony Jagers** (bass/lead vocals/keyboards) ; **John Patterson** (drums) ; **Laurie Wheaton** (rhythm guitar/bass)

Generation's origins date back to 1966 when Neil 'Nobby' Aubrey, Laurie Wheaton and a fellow student began jamming together while students at The Armidale School (TAS). Aubrey had previously been loosely associated with the band Firebirds, occasionally playing keyboards with them. In 1967 Aubrey left TAS to attend Armidale High School, and while there he met Tony Jagers (**The Union Jack** and **In Sect**). They eventually decided enter the following year's **Hoadley Battle of the Sounds** competition, but this forced a line-up change when the other TAS musician was denied permission to become involved. Although Jagers was a guitarist he took on the bass role, while former In Sect drummer John Patterson was brought in to complete the rhythm section.

The 1968 Armidale heats of the Battle of the Sounds was one of Generation's first gigs. In correspondence Tony Jagers recalls that no one could hear the lead guitar on the opening song (an instrumental), because 'Nobby' Aubrey had not had time to work out the switches on the Fender Jaguar guitar loaned to him for the occasion by Finx guitarist Snowy Townsend. "No-one seemed to notice, though" he adds, including the band, as it was well before the invention of fold-back systems. The problem was fixed for the second song, Free's "Gimmie Some Lovin'", but although Generation was accorded an enthusiastic audience reaction, **Finx** went on to win.

Within a short period of time the band began finding work both in the immediate Armidale/Uralla district and beyond. Jagers further recalls that the band travelled to Guyra and Tamworth, and even as far as Gunnedah. Local gigs included the UNE and Teachers' College balls, as well as regular Police Boys Club Blue Light dances. Generation was also the support act for many touring bands, including Johnny Farnham, Normie Rowe, The Flying Circus, The Valentines, The Executives, Cleves, Jon Blanchfield, The Groove and The La Di Das. The latter support was played in the Armidale basketball stadium, and according to Jagers, the La Di Das stage and equipment took up about half the venue.

The band's repertoire was initially an eclectic mix of Australian and international songs, notably Shadows instrumental ("The Rise and Fall of Flingal Blunt"), a La Di Das-inspired version of Traffic's "Heaven is in Your Mind," and a cover of Cleves' version of the Tim Hardin classic "If I was a Carpenter." Another remembered song is Eddie Cochran's "Summertime Blues," which they played in similar style to Blue Cheer.

By the end of 1968 Laurie Wheaton had moved to bass allowing Tony Jagers to concentrate on the frontman/lead singer role. He also occasionally played a Farfisa keyboard. The following year the band again entered the Battle of Sounds competition, but this time took the opportunity more carefully. Jagers' admits that they even spied on Finx during one of its rehearsals. Generation's opening song for the Armidale heats ("Summertime Blues"), a non-judged warm-up, began with the house lights down. A strobe light (possibly never used before in Armidale at that time) started up as the band took the stage and began playing. While the two competition songs were performed above expectations they paled somewhat to the spectacular intro and the band failed to place. Undeterred they played the same set in reverse at the Tamworth heats a couple of weeks later but this time were beaten by Doug Parkinson and his band.



Neil Aubrey and Tony Jagers (2009)

By the end of the year some internal disruptions started to develop. Tony Jagers admits that he was partly to blame in this respect. As the others were attempting to advance their musical abilities, he was more interested in the showmanship. "I was side-tracked by the fun part," he writes. He also recalls becoming increasingly interested in certain illegal substances. In December the other members politely informed him that they intended to pursue other musical directions, and he left the region soon after to go surfing. It is unclear how long the band continued into the 1970s, but it may not have been long, as Laurie Wheaton became one of the founding members of Armidale band **Bogislav** in 1970 or 1971.

Source: Tony Jagers (correspondence, Nov. 2010). Images: Aubrey and Jagers (Armidale High School Class of '69 reunion) courtesy of Tony Jagers.

IN SECT

(1965)

- Personnel: **Tony Jagers** (guitar) ; **Craig Vaughan** (bass) ; **Noel McCrae** (vocals) ; **John Patterson** (drums)

Formed in 1965, In Sect comprised Tony Jagers, Craig Vaughan and Noel McCrae (vocals). The band never had a permanent drummer, being forced to rely on the availability of several locals. In correspondence Tony Jagers records that his first choice was always John Patterson, the son a well-known local drummer. "Patterson," he notes "was one of the finest I've ever played with [and thankfully mostly] on call. He also played at times with **Finx** and **Firebirds**."



In Sect often hired halls to play its own gigs, with one of the best being the basement under the Armidale Town Hall. A friend, Tony Singh, would look after the door and there was never any need for security. As Jagers further recalls, the local girls were "caught up in the revolution and a good time was had by all." The band's amplification comprised a Fi-Sonic amp, Jagers' Goldentone amp (with 6x6 inch speakers) and a bass bin built by Craig Vaughan which he built in the woodwork room at school. He also built the amplifier, with the speakers reversed and channeled out. As Jagers' records, it was a "bit like sub-technology."

Source: Tony Jagers (correspondence, Nov. 2010). Images: In Sect reunion photo courtesy of Tony Jagers

TONY JAGGERS

- Bands: **Generation** ; **In Sect** ; **Union Jack**

Tony Jagers, who left the Northern Tablelands in late 1969, exemplifies the career of a journeyman musician whose earliest musical opportunities were experienced as a Uralla/ Armidale teenager during the 1960s. After co-founding the bands **In Sect** (1965), **The Union Jack** (1966) and **Generation** (1967), Jagers initially pursued a surfing lifestyle. He re-gathered his music mojo after attending Australia's first music festival Ourimbah, and since then has played in many different bands, while occasionally taking time out to surf, try the hippy lifestyle and at one stage to manage a radio station.

In 2002 Jagers decided to abandon the security of playing in a band and put together a solo acoustic act, and has since performed at the Thredbo Blues Festival, four Great Southern Blues Festivals, Tumba Fest and a couple of "guest" spots at Broadbeach Blues (Qld). Jagers' act has evolved in response to his developing sequencing and home studio recording skills and now sees him use utilise backing tracks to create a rock sound that allows him to venture into the pub and club market. He has subsequently played gigs from from the Victoria border to Wollongong, Canberra to the Southern Highlands and all points in between.

To find out more about Tony Jagers visit:

- www.tonyjagers.com
- [Tony Jagers on Myspace Music](#)



Barooma 2009

Source: Tony Jagers (correspondence, Nov. 2010). Images: Courtesy of Tony Jagers

THE UNION JACK

(1966)

- Personnel: **Neil Hunt** (drums) ; **Denny Goodhew** (guitar) ; **Tony Jagers** (guitar) ; **Robbie Paulson** (bass)

The Union Jack established itself in the Armidale/Uralla district in 1966. According to Tony Jagers the band members were all fairly inexperienced and essentially learned the business as they went along. "Robbie had never played [before] but turned into a pretty good bass player," he notes. "We did the usual thing, hired church halls, school socials and for two weeks were the resident band four nights a week at an ill-conceived [social] in the unused Uralla Theatre. We were never paid... welcome to the music biz!!" The band folded when Jagers gained his drivers' license and began hanging out in Armidale more often, which eventually led to him co-founding **Generation**.

Source: Tony Jagers (correspondence, Nov. 2010). **Images:** Courtesy of Tony Jagers