Bill Armstrong: Contributions to the History of Audio Recording in Australia

ABSTRACT & SPEAKER BIO:
Bill Armstrong has been a sound recording pioneer for over 60 years. Bill recorded the 1949 Jazz Convention on a Pyrox wire recorder and made the first recordings (on wire) in Australia of court proceedings. Bill launched his own record labels in the early 1950s, creating an outlet for local bands and singers giving the Australian jazz scene an important boost. He was also producing live to air radio programs of jazz and variety shows at the ABC’s 3LO & 3AR radio stations and later worked as a recording engineer on live to air variety programs on 3UZ and 3DB. At the 1956 Olympic Games held in Melbourne, (for Philips) Bill was in charge of the PA system at the main stadium and played a key role in the broadcasts of opening and closing ceremonies. He established the disc cutting room and studio at W & G Records. He managed TELEFIL Studios in St.Kilda, recording many hit records and pre-recording for all of HSV7 variety shows. In 1965, Bill established his own studio. It became the ‘hit factory’ for Australian pop music for decades, including producing Australian classics such as “The Real Thing” and “Eagle Rock”. Bill Armstrong Pty Ltd became known simply as “Armstrong’s” and took the lead in new technologies, equipment and techniques for record production. He also backed the locally made Optro Tape machines and installed them in his studios. Bill then went on to have a major role in new radio services, first by providing the operational and technical support for the new ethnic radio stations 2EA and 3EA, and then as managing director of 3-EON-FM, the first commercial FM station in Australia to go to air in July 1980 which was subsequently sold in 1984 to 2MMM Sydney. Bill was appointed Vice-Chairman of the ABT (Australian Broadcasting Tribunal) in December 1984. Bill now continues to remaster historic recordings as ‘The Bill Armstrong Collection’, using the latest programs in digital restoration to breathe new life into old recordings, disc and tape, some of which have never been released.

Bill has been awarded an ARIA for Lifetime contribution to the Australian Music Industry, the Advance Australia Award for his outstanding contribution to the industry and commerce, the Melbourne Music Festival ‘Hall Of Fame’, the Audio Engineering Society for achievement in sound recording, and the APRA Ted Albert Award for Outstanding Contribution to the music industry. This year, Bill was awarded the National Film and Sound Archive’s Cochrane-Smith award for his contribution to Sound Heritage.

Come and hear Bill recount some of the milestones in audio recording including his personal and significant contributions to the industry.

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