



Honour: Respected jazz educator Dr Gene Aitken visits Wollongong. Picture: ROBERT PEET

Jazz unites world, teacher reveals

By JODIE MINUS

BANGKOK-BASED American Gene Aitken has taught jazz around the world: Baghdad, Burma, Beijing and Wollongong.

In Sydney on a whirlwind 10-day teaching blitz, Dr Aitken headed south on Wednesday for a series of workshops at the Wollongong Conservatorium of Music. One of the world's leading jazz educators, Dr Aitken was head of the University of Northern Colorado's respected jazz department for almost 25

years. His retirement has not been quiet.

"I moved to Asia six years ago for my work. We have been trying to get jazz programs going in countries like Vietnam, China, Thailand and Singapore and so forth," he said.

"Jazz in Asia is very popular but not many people play jazz. But there has been a development that is really starting to take off."

Also this year Dr Aitken was employed by the US Government and Kurdistan's Minister of Culture in a bid to unite Iraq's war-

ring ethnic groups.

"What we tried to do, what we succeeded in doing, was to bring the Sunnis, Shiites, Kurds and the Christians together towards one common goal, because they have all been separated for whatever reasons," he said.

"The first day the Sunnis all stayed together and the Shiites stayed together. By the second day you could not separate them and by the 10 days they were best friends. Through music we were able to bring them back together."

briefly

Jazz guru drops in on Con



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Page 9