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Editorial:

Transnational perspectives on jazz

Catherine Tackley and Tony Whyton

The long tradition of British writing on jazz extends back (at least) to the foundation of two early periodicals, *Melody Maker* and *Rhythm* (in 1926 and 1927 respectively), as well as key texts by R. W. S. Mendl (*The Appeal of Jazz,* 1927) and Stanley Nelson (*All about Jazz,* 1934). Early encounters with jazz in a British context also prompted pronouncements from visitors such as Theodore Adorno (whose 1936 essay 'On Jazz' was written when he was resident at Oxford University) and Ernest Ansermet (1959), who sang the praises of Sidney Bechet's performances with the Southern Syncopated Orchestra in London in 1919. More recently, jazz studies has emerged as a strong interdisciplinary academic field in the UK, interacting with the country's vibrant live music scene and informing the growing presence of jazz as a specialism and within broader curricula at conservatoires and universities.

As part of this, jazz specifically in a British context has received increased attention from researchers, contributing to an awareness and critical appreciation of jazz outside America as a global and transnational genre. Thanks to the pioneering work of David Boulton (1959), Ian Carr (1973), Howard Rye (in particular his painstaking reconstructions of the tours of American musicians published in the now defunct *Storyville*, but also see his contribution to Oliver 1990) and the late Jim Godbolt (1986, 1989), amongst others, a chronology for the history of the genre in Britain has been established. This has enabled critical work by scholars such as George McKay (2005), Catherine Tackley, née Parsonage (2005) and Hilary Moore (2007). This area continues to develop, with two recent studies focused on the mid- to late twentieth century—Duncan Heining's *Trad Dads, Dirty Boppers and Free Fusioneers: British Jazz, 1960–1975* (2012) and Dave Gelly's *An Unholy Row: Jazz in Britain and Its Audience, 1945–1960* (2014)—and an ever-expanding list of biographies of key figures. Alongside this literature, significant research projects based in Britain have investigated, on the one hand, race as a key theme which runs throughout this historical narrative ('What Is Black British Jazz?' directed by Jason Toynbee at The Open University) and, on the other, British jazz within a wider European

and transnational context ('Rhythm Changes' directed by Tony Whyton at the University of Salford). Two anticipated books—*Black British Jazz: Routes, Ownership and Performance* by Toynbee *et al.* (forthcoming 2014) and *Black Popular Music in Britain since 1945* by Stratton and Zuberi (forthcoming 2015), which puts jazz into a wider musical context—will pursue the former theme, and a book series on transnational jazz studies (to be published by Routledge) will advance the latter.

This special issue captures some emerging work on the subject of jazz in Britain. To begin, Bob Lawson-Peebles demonstrates the importance of interdisciplinary methodologies to advance our historical understanding of the impact of music, analysing the use of jazz, ragtime and related themes in twentieth-century British literature. The other articles in this issue spotlight the work of current and recently graduated doctoral students. Will Studdert's article examines jazz in Britain during World War II, illuminating the impact of the conflict on the development of both musicians and audiences. Katherine Williams assesses the diversity of the post-war jazz scene in London, arguing for the importance of venue as a powerful mediator of jazz performance and reception. The final two articles deal with jazz in two specific geographical situations outside the capital. Helen Southall provides a thickly descriptive account of the impact of jazz within the broader live music scene in the city of Chester, in the north-west of England. Moving further north and towards the present day, Alison Eales examines the development of the Glasgow International Jazz Festival in relation to the changing political situation in the city, a story which doubtless will play out in interesting ways in the years ahead.

The study of jazz in particular national contexts has advanced rapidly in recent years, not least by exploring the ways in which the music can transcend national borders and stereotypes to reflect the complexities of identity. However, there is a need for the examination of common themes and concerns to be matched by deep and specific studies that enable the continued interrogation and enrichment of the accepted chronology and understanding of jazz within particular local situations (especially outside major cities). This issue demonstrates the richness and breadth of the ongoing work on jazz in Britain, and offers inspiration for further research in this area.

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