

Editorial

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Television has often been neglected by jazz studies. We might speculate as to the reasons for this: failures to recognize the vast differences between film and television as media forms; a sense within some areas of humanities that television is a transparent medium and/or purely representational; the recurrent complaint that jazz is ill-served by its interactions with mass media; and perhaps—most significantly—the lack of cross-pollination between the fields of academic jazz studies and television studies. It would be true to say that the textual and theoretical bases of both disciplines have frequently overlooked the mechanics of creative labour. In television studies, that omission is beginning to be addressed through funded research projects such as *ADAPT* (European Research Council, 2013–2018) and my own *Jazz on BBC-TV 1960–1969* (Arts and Humanities Research Council, 2017–2019), of which this issue is an output.

As well as mapping the scope of the jazz presence in BBC television programming during this era, and conducting ethnographic interviews with those involved, my project allowed me to commandeer a TV studio in my university to recreate a 1960s jazz show and found me—most unexpectedly—working on BBC4's revival *Jazz 625 Live: For One Night Only* (tx. Friday 3 May, 9.00 PM). The research has even prompted a fictional excursion into the world of Nick Prolix's indie comic book, *Slang Pictorial*, reproduced at the end of this editorial. These practice-as-research elements dynamically deployed the documentation of jazz television-making that I had studied at the BBC Written Archive in Caversham. *Jazz 625* (1964–1966) was BBC2's flagship music programme, making up part of its first week launch schedule. Its distinctive name alluded to the crisp 625-line Ultra High Frequency images rolled out on the secondary channel. Over the course of two years, 84 episodes were made, bringing together the best of overseas talent with an impressive roster of British musicians. It was followed by other, equally interesting programmes—e.g. *Jazz Goes to College* (1966–1967), *Jazz at the Maltings* (1968–1969) and *Jazz Scene at Ronnie Scott's* (1969–1970), all produced by Terry Henebery—yet it is *Jazz 625* that has lodged in the popular memory.

Unlike the later programmes, much of *Jazz 625* has survived in the archives due to the practice of telerecording the original tapes onto 35mm celluloid.

The archive

Jazz myth-making would have us believe that television cameras are mere witnesses to improvised genius. The production files held at Caversham tell a different story. Lists of technical requirements, set diagrams, production schedules, memos on sound quality and repertoire all demonstrated clearly the meticulous preparation and mediation undertaken by BBC crews. I was particularly intrigued by the camera scripts, many of which went bar-by-bar tracking camera movements to musical performances and which were heavily annotated in handwriting, adjusted and perfected throughout camera rehearsals up until the point of recording.

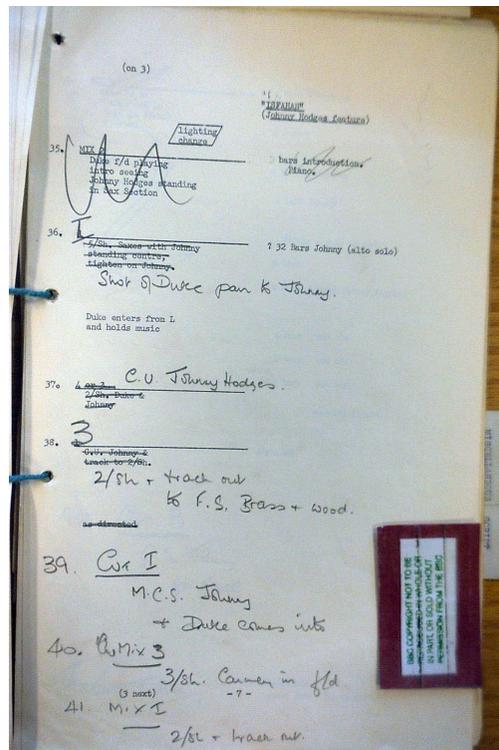


Figure 1: Camera script for *Ellington in Concert part 1* (rec. Tuesday 25 February 1964, tx. Tuesday 21 April 1964), drawn up by director Yvonne Littlewood. Terry Henebery credits this script as setting the template for *Jazz 625*'s style

Ethnography

I was conscious, however, that the archive could only tell me so much. The generous award of a fellowship from the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) allowed me to interview some of the people who had worked on, played on or attended the recordings of these programmes. I was especially interested in the everyday experience of television-making: the challenges and pleasures of working as a sound supervisor, carpenter, vision-mixer or musician in the TV studio or on an Outside Broadcast (OB). These anecdotal insights built up a rich picture of the complexity of music television production.

Sound supervisor Graham Haines waxed lyrical about *Jazz at the Maltings*, shot in Aldeburgh, nominating this (mostly lost) series as his favourite of the 1960s shows; studio technician Pat Heigham mischievously recounted finding a glamour magazine on the music stand of one of Duke Ellington's soloists, and paid tribute to his colleague Len Shorey's masterful sound balance; pianist Laurie Holloway, so accomplished in his performance on the Clark Terry-Bob Brookmeyer *Jazz 625*, admitted that he had been terrified sharing the stage with these US heroes. Alan Flood and John Weston, who had attended recordings of the episodes as teenagers, recalled that the cameras had been unobtrusive throughout—a testament to the professionalism of the BBC crews.



Figure 2: Audience ticket for the OB recording of The Victor Feldman Trio at The New Marquee Club, Wardour Street (rec. 14 February 1965, tx. 2 June 1965). Property of John Weston

The studio floor and the production gallery

There was one missing element in my research. While my interviews had brought me closer to direct experience, I wanted to go through the process of production myself. This 'practice-as-research' element would test the way I was conceiving of television, as a collaboration between complementary orders of expertise (musical, technical, institutional) in the service of artistic creation. Studio A at Birmingham City University became the venue for a remounting of *Jazz 625*, renamed *Jazz 1080* by our director Mark Kershaw to reflect the digital technology we were using. Our aim was not to mimic *Jazz 625* but rather to use archive documentation as a roadmap to shape our own vision. The TV studio became a laboratory, a space in which I could observe and record the micro-interactions between our core ex-BBC crew and the larger BCU student crew, between crew and musicians, between musicians and audience. We recorded and vision-mixed live, in front of a studio audience—and we did it all across two days, just as the BBC had in the 1960s. Footage from the programme was used by our bandleader Xhosa Cole in his winning application to the BBC Young Jazz Musician 2018 awards.



Figure 3: *Jazz 1080*, The Xhosa Cole Quintet. Euan Palmer (drums), Xhosa Cole (tenor sax), James Owston (bass) pictured. Arts and Humanities Research Council/Birmingham City University

In the week that we made *Jazz 1080* at BCU, I was invited down to BBC Broadcasting House. Adam Barker (BBC4) and Jez Nelson (Somethin' Else)

had hit upon the idea of reviving *Jazz 625*, for one night only. Just as Henebery had taken advantage of US musicians touring the UK, this production would deploy some of the stars playing Cheltenham Jazz Festival. After my university experiment in jazz television, it was tremendously exciting to be applying my research to a genuinely new episode of *Jazz 625* on the BBC. As the programme's research consultant, I worked with director Chris Walker on the videotaped (VT) documentary packages to be dropped into the live broadcast. Unlike previous repeats and clip-shows, this broadcast would acknowledge *Jazz 625* not just as landmark music television but as a milestone in BBC history. A personal highlight over the course of production was the interview that we conducted with Terry Henebery, architect of the programmes I've spent years researching.



Figure 4: Replicating original 1960s graphics in 2019, over Rod Youngs (drums) in *Jazz 625 Live: For One Night Only* (BBC4/Somethin' Else)

The future

One of my aims with the AHRC project has been to provide leadership and development for the study of jazz and television. My initial book chapter on *Jazz 625* (Pillai 2016: 83–115) was swiftly followed by Jenny Doctor's excellent analysis of the same programme early the next year (Doctor 2017: 103–143). We had both pursued a similar methodology, consulting the same files at the BBC Written Archive, conducting textual analyses of the same surviving programmes. At that point, it was clear to me that the possibilities for the study of jazz television were limited by archival visibility and a consequent failure of imagination in academia. This is not to say that either Doctor or myself were wrong to identify *Jazz 625* as a landmark in televised

jazz; rather that we were in danger of generating a canon based upon the materials readily available to us. One aim of this special issue was to challenge notions of an emerging canon and provoke new avenues of enquiry.

I closed my 2016 chapter with a challenge to scholars to address the variety of jazz in film and television, and its place within wider cultural movements. The articles that comprise this issue represent the first response to my challenge. Both Michael Borshuk and Alexandre Gagatsis expand upon case studies in my book, providing invaluable close readings that push well beyond my own ambitions. Meanwhile, Liam Maloy and Elliott Powell break new ground by turning their attention to genres of television previously ignored by jazz studies. Will Finch expands our understanding of jazz on British TV by considering how the formal qualities of television documentary present jazz. Gabriel Solis closes us off with a timely consideration of what jazz means to the arena of ‘quality’ TV as America falls into political crisis. It is difficult for me to conceive of these pieces being published even five years ago. Undoubtedly, here are (some of) the writers who will help us to shape an understanding of what jazz means for television, and what television means for jazz.

It is notable, and disappointing, that there are no women authors included. Only men responded to the call for papers, though a number of women volunteered their time to conduct peer reviews. *Plus ça change*. By perpetuating this inequality, however reluctantly, I consider the current issue to have fallen short—evidently, as an editor, there is more that I could have done to widen the reach of the call beyond the male-dominated jazz studies community. It would be dispiriting to see a ‘jazz and television’ over the next decade dominated, and limited, by men, particularly since television studies is populated with innumerable superb female academics. Bridges must be built. It is surely significant that one of the finest pieces of writing on jazz television is by a woman: I am thinking of Gayle Wald’s analysis of Roland Kirk’s ‘chair act’ (Wald 2015: 116–27).

Television is a popular medium, and a uniquely domestic one. I think the writers contained herein point us in an exciting direction. To paraphrase my late friend V. F. Perkins, finally jazz studies is considering television as television.

References

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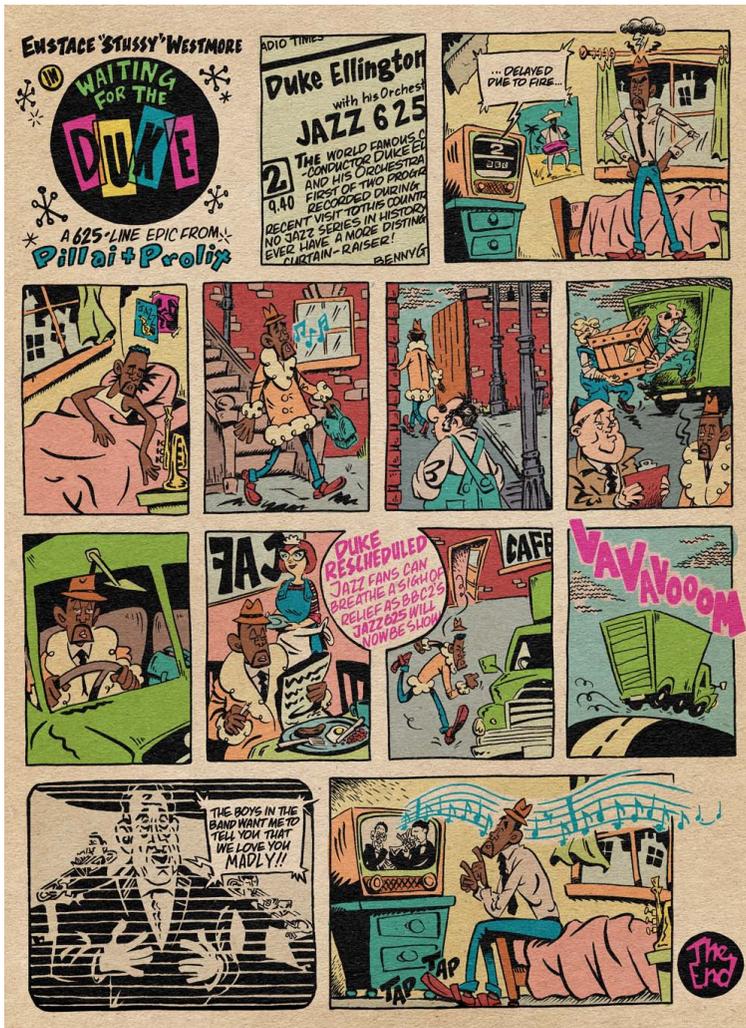


Figure 5: Shaping fiction around research in *Waiting for the Duke* (2019)