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Editorial

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> It's after the end of the world, don't you know that yet?
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> (Sun Ra and his Intergalactic Solar Arkestra 1974)

Some three decades ago, Francis Fukuyama proposed that, with the fall of the Berlin Wall, the collapse of Soviet Communism and a seeming end to the Cold War, history was 'finished' (Fukuyama 1989). That is not to say that the progression of events was complete or that the world had achieved some form of stasis, but rather that history (when viewed as economic political progression) had exhausted all alternatives to Western-style democracy. Jean Baudrillard weighed in on the issue with further degrees of pessimism suggesting that, with mass media and the wholesale embracing of Marshall McLuhan's medium/message matrix (1964), we primarily view events as media images devoid of emotion and significance, with events being analysed and qualified before they even achieve fruition (Baudrillard 1994). Ironically, to some this was old news.

Sun Ra had begun to explore these notions as early as 1970. Sun Ra's version of the end of the world was far more radical than that proposed by Fukuyama, and the implications of his ideas would resonate with artists, scholars and creatives, eventually being viewed as some of the earliest seeds of what we now know as Afrofuturism. Afrofuturism by its very nature invites speculation about history and possible alternative histories or historiographies (Womack 2013). Sun Ra, George Clinton, Egyptian Lover, Miles Davis, Drexciya and so on (Eshun 1998; Womack 2013) all engaged in speculation, experimentation and fantasy as part of their artistic expression before Mark Dery even coined the term 'Afrofuturism' (Dery 1994: 180). For many, Sun Ra's post-history can be taken as an emancipatory gesture. By removing the challenges of a racist and prejudiced past, and without attempting to predict future eventualities, marginalized communities and

groups can free themselves from the leaden weight of reality, giving space to imagination, creativity and allowing alternative narratives to take flight.

Just as Afrofuturism can be viewed as a tool to engage with or reframe traumatic histories in a compositional mode (see Drexciya's *Storm Series*), so too can speculation be employed as a tool in musicology. Both musicians and musicologists can utilize such speculative approaches to free themselves from the 'oppressive prison of reality' and history (Harper 2018). If, as Sun Ra suggests in the opening monologue from his 1974 Afrofuturist *Space is the Place* film (Sun Ra and his Intergalactic Solar Arkestra 1974), 'the first thing to do is to consider time as officially ended', what does this mean for jazz research? What remains after transcription, biography, analysis, ethnography and historiography are declared to have ended? Musicologically speaking, what is left to explore after the end of the world? We do not mean to infer that scholarship in its current form (i.e., that of a positivistic approach to 'truth') has been exhausted. Rather, we hope to suggest alternative approaches that do not view reality/speculation as dichotomous or binary positions.

In *The Last Angel of History* (Akomfrah 1996), we hear the legend of Robert Johnson selling his soul to the devil at the crossroads, but this time with the story framed through an Afrofuturistic lens expressing the blues as a core Black technology for emancipation. Other speculative approaches besides Afrofuturism can provide new readings and alternative histories for us to explore. Sonic fictions (Eshun 1998; Schulze 2020) allow us to hear Herbie Hancock as a cybernetically enhanced funk machine on 'Future Shock' or as an artificial android crooner on 'I Thought It Was You'. The sampler, a potent force that can 'make all other instruments' (Eshun 1998: 57) allows the past to collide with the present as a 31-year-old Marlena Shaw jumps from Montreux in 1973 to Paris in the year 2000, joining the iconoclastic acid-jazz figurehead St Germain on 'Rose Rouge'. What about queering? Imagine the uproar of providing a new queer reading of [insert musician here] on the broader jazz community—to some it would be shocking, to others liberating.

This issue of *Jazz Research Journal* takes Sun Ra's profound statement as a starting point by including submissions that actively embrace the speculative, the imagined, the half-remembered reminiscence, the queer, the remixed, the Afrofuturistic, and the falsified. These are the tools promised by Sun Ra that allow us to 'work on the other side of time' (1974). This special issue interrogates the conjectural mode as a new beginning for the understanding of jazz and its culture. We contend that, despite the destabilizing

intentions of New Jazz Studies, discourse has remained centred on ahistorical canon formation and racialized conceptions of genius. In this, the statues of jazz have remained firmly in place. We wish to challenge the monolith of history and these dominant narratives.

Will Gibson points out that scholarly leveraging of the fictional has a fairly long and established history in certain ethnographic methodologies, sociology and psychology, and appears to be broadly growing in research in health sciences, geography, education and so on (Gibson 2021). Whilst these modes of research are on the rise in the social sciences, certain aspects of them have a much longer lineage in the arts. Practice as research or practice-led research sees scholars re-examining their methodological approaches by actively *making* as well as engaging in analytical enquiry and tool development. Already, swathes of compositional work and interdisciplinary collaborations have seen music scholarship working in a conjectural or imaginative mode for over half a century. However, as Gibson points out, such conjectural approaches are only expanding in scope and growing in popularity within the humanities and beyond.

Musicians both embrace the concept of fictional narratives *and then* reify or instantiate those narratives in the real world through action: composition, performance, recording, production, remixing. Musicians dream and then make (after O'Shaughnessy). As musicologists or jazz researchers we must recognize the opportunities for exploration inspired by the very modalities of the fields that we study. There is already precedent for such approaches. The Punk Scholars Network has been extant for a decade; researching the disruptive and challenging approaches of punk and then applying those approaches to the study of punk. If jazz research cannot encompass elements of creativity and improvisation within its approach to study, then we may be right to question the veracity, exhaustiveness and appropriateness of the lenses we employ within our work. Thus, we ask: should we engage in scholarship about jazz or should we be engaging in jazz scholarship?

Katherine Williams opens this edition of *Jazz Research Journal* with a multi-layered meta-fictional exploration of discrimination, equality, optimism and feminism in the contemporary club circuit. Running parallel is Richard Elliott's repositioning of Nina Simone's classical jazz hybrid as futuristic and utopian, with her piano renewed as a Black technology after Eshun. Following this, we set controls for the heart of the sun as Clare Lesser stumbles across transcript fragments of an apocryphal conversation between Stockhausen and Sun Ra. We find new worlds within photographic archives

as Christopher Smith explores the lives and hidden contributions of 'chorus girls' pre-World War II.

Following this, an already fictional performer from the pages of Marvel Comics receives a reconstructed biography tied to notions of Afrofuturism and Black technologies courtesy of Jesús Jiménez-Varea. Liam Maloney uses digital sampling to imagine a new speculative future for Miles Davis that transcends his death and unfinished final album. We then switch to a more introspective tack with Bryan Banker's reconsideration of John Coltrane as both philosopher and musician, revelling in the sonic and conceptual contradictions therein.

A final clutch of contributions begins with Rashida Braggs's jumping back and forth over 30 years in an autobiographical exploration of Nina Simone and Montreux. We then progress to one of the more audacious pieces of this publication, in the form of a free jazz and found sound/found fragments inspired work of poetry by Maurice Windleburn. Finally, Nicolas Pillai uses the archival and ethnographic research from his 'Jazz on BBC-TV 1960–1969' project to dramatize the creation, loss and remembrance of a famous lost television recording. We hope that this collection will inspire reconsideration about what is or is not established fact; and whether such dichotomies hinder the broader goals of jazz research. We also hope that it provokes conversation and questions about the lively potential that speculative approaches have for opening up broader discussion and debate.

The nature of these pieces has led to a robust and productive peer review process. We wish to give special thanks to those who reviewed for this issue: your curiosity, rigour and generosity have been of immeasurable help to our authors. While *JRJ* typically employs two blind peer reviewers, in some cases a third reviewer was consulted or a sensitivity reader assigned. To those who might baulk at the speculative histories in this issue, we point to our commitment to scholarly process, to the traditions of practice-as-research, and to the more recent turn towards experimental writing in the social sciences and humanities (e.g., *So Fi Zine*, *Riffs*, *PlaySpace*, and the Fiction Desk at *The Sociological Review*). For his championing of experimental writing, jazz studies owes a huge debt to Nicholas Gebhardt who is departing as Extended Play section editor. Thank you Nick, for your vision and inspiration. We are grateful also to our new Reviews Editor Judit Csobod, who has themed this issue's section around jazz in exhibition spaces.

We end with a manifesto, collaboratively authored by JRJ's new editorial board. It is a provocation, a commitment, a hope.

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