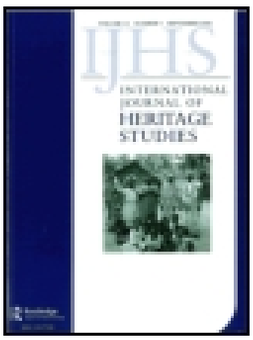

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# 'Cultural heritage and jazz festivals' special issue editors' introduction

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**ABSTRACT**
Editorial for the IJHS special issue on jazz festivals and cultural heritage

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> During the jazz festival, … [t]his sonic process is not (only) an echo of times past but a resonance on what is. At the jazz festival things come together and we fall into step. These memories function not as reactionary, backward-looking stoppages in the community. Rather, they are what places are made of – a series of what-used-to-bes that offer the material for what can be.
>
> Anne Dvinge (2015)

Festivals claim an important place in Europe's cultural ecology, with their dynamic and synergetic relationship to specific locations and cultural sites. European jazz festivals in particular offer a distinctive lens through which to explore key issues in heritage research, given their complex relationship to questions of race and diaspora, national identity, and cultural politics. In this special issue we present insights and findings from the EU JPI-Heritage Plus-funded project *Cultural Heritage and Improvised Music in European Festivals* (CHIME) which ran from 2015 to 2018 (see CHIME website, 2019). Drawing on jazz and improvised music festivals, CHIME explored how music plays a key role in the sonic refiguring of the urban and rural landscapes, and linked studies of cultural heritage to issues concerning national identity, cultural tourism, urban regeneration, and community engagement. In recent years, there has been a growing body of research that examines the relationship between popular music and cultural heritage, ranging from studies attempt to scope out the field of practice (Brandellero and Jansen 2014) to examinations of local identity, cultural memory and place (Cohen et al. 2015). Despite the growing interest in the popular music and heritage themes) and festivalisation of culture (Bennett, Taylor, and Woodward 2014; Cudny 2016; Currie 2019), CHIME was established to address the absence of research that placed jazz and its festivals within the broader contexts of heritage studies and the discourses surrounding place-making, the marketisation of heritage, urban governance, and cultural policy.

But what of *jazz* here? How does the specific musical practice and tradition of jazz contribute to these questions? In our view, as scholars from music, jazz studies, and the sonic end of cultural studies, jazz encapsulates and even dramatises questions of intangible and tangible heritage alike. The legendary figure of New Orleans cornetist and bandleader Charles 'Buddy' Bolden (1877–1931) may stand as emblematic embodiment here: via accounts of Bolden's astonishing innovative playing developed in the years up to 1906–07, which we cannot today hear because no recordings survive, Bolden is 'often cited as the first jazz musician' (Gioia 2011, 33) – or, better perhaps, as having

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a pivotal role in making 'the music that became jazz' (Shipton 2002, 83). Bolden is tantalisingly intangible: no surviving recordings at all, no notated compositions, one grainy band photograph, the odd crime newspaper report, fragments of medical records from the half of his life he spent in an asylum from 1907 to his death, an unmarked grave. He is a musical mystery wrapped in silence. But Bolden is tangible too: Edison wax cylinder recordings of his band *were* made – for a while, the Holy Grail of jazz history – though it seems highly likely that they were discarded among the contents of a demolished storage shed in New Orleans in the 1960s (Marquis 2005; Sager 2014). Today, extraordinarily, Bolden's house still survives in New Orleans – a neglected, boarded-up wooden 'shotgun double' that was identified in 2011 by the Louisiana Landmarks Society as one of the most endangered historic properties in the city (Nolan 2014; Fensterstock 2019). Such very tangible jazz heritage – musical material, a building – lacks care and prestige in the city where the music was born. As Bolden, thus jazz: an urgent live music of improvisation – now's evanescence sonified – captured on shellac and vinyl, catalogued and transcribed.

And what of *festival*? A subsequent New Orleans trumpeter, Louis Armstrong (as a child he had heard Bolden play in the street: Porter 2019), would appear as transatlantic headline act at what is broadly thought of as the first jazz festival proper, which happened not in the USA but in Europe, the Nice Jazz Festival in 1948 (for elaboration and qualification of this claim see Heyman 2017; Webster and McKay 2017; McKay 2018). The music's American 'history in fact manifests no fully realized conceptions of jazz festivals as such during [the inter-war] period of [jazz']s greatest mainstream popularity' (Currie 2019, 304). Yet the emptiness of situated meaning in the locations of most (European) jazz festivals means that 'cultural heritage probably contributes more to lifestyle branding than site sacralization today' (Currie 2019, 309), although that emptiness may be in itself a sign of a festival's refusal or reluctance to engage with the presence of its location's own problematic past.

If festivals are understood as 'popular music (including jazz) collective gatherings in a sort of special space-time, in a compressed or heightened experience of multiple performance and playfulness' (McKay 2015, 3), in what ways is the very *experiential and participatory presentism* for festival-goers that is implied here captured by theorisations of intangible heritage; and, how might it nuance those theories? Do festivals of other music types than jazz have clearer opportunities to consider questions of heritage and location (McKay 2016)? Of course, there may be further heritage resonance from jazz music in festival culture, because of jazz's partial origins in the carnivalesque of New Orleans and Mardi Gras, even if we acknowledge that, in common with most music festivals today, the jazz festival is characterised more by corporate than carnival culture (Anderton 2019).

Articles within this special issue chart and interrogate key questions relating to heritage research on jazz festivals and provide specific case studies from contrasting heritage locations. Tony Whyton provides an overview of European jazz festivals as sites where cultural heritage is explored, celebrated and, at times, contested. Following consultation with members of the advocacy umbrella organisation Europe Jazz Network, Whyton proposes a typology of jazz festivals and cultural heritage and examines the way in which festival sites offer a discursive space to explore heritage themes. This article sets an important context for what follows and also functions as a horizon scan of state-of-the-art practice in the field. Marlieke Lisette Wilders and Loes Rusch present a case study of the ZomerJazzFietsTour (Summer Jazz Cycle Tour) in the Netherlands. This work explores the impact of jazz festivals within the historic region of Groningen, the critical tensions between conservation and use, and the role that improvised music can play in constructing a sense of place and belonging, past and present, as festival-goers cycle through the Dutch rural landscape.

George McKay's article identifies and explores the silences around the practice of the jazz festival in specific sites of heritage in Britain, those urban centres connected with the transatlantic slave trade. While elegant Georgian architecture is often the touristic offer of and backdrop to such festivals (and may be its performance spaces), the Black Atlantic music of jazz, formed out of triangulation, is rarely expected or encouraged to reflect on its complicit settings. McKay's is also intended as an intervention around decolonisation – an urgent topic and action space within heritage studies and the heritage industry, of course, but one significantly (and surprisingly, he

argues) much less present in jazz and jazz festival culture. Following McKay's theoretical and interventionist engagement with the problematic heritage of the transatlantic slave trade in UK jazz festivals, Walter Van de Leur and Beth Aggett present a case study of how jazz (and other) festivals on the Caribbean island of Curaçao (an autonomous island country under the Kingdom of the Netherlands) feed into this discourse from a postcolonial Dutch perspective. They explore transatlantic recirculations and traces of power where the touristic offer is 'music in paradise', and that offer is interwoven with the national myth (in – at least – Barthesian terms) of 'Dutch tolerance' to evade or obfuscate questions of colonial implication.

Finally, Beth Perry, Laura Ager and Rike Sitas seek to extend the discussion out from the musical and cultural specificities of (European) jazz to around festivals and cultural heritage more broadly by developing a framework for locating festivals in relation to wider debates about cultural heritage and sustainable development. In particular their formulation of festivals as 'integrative sites' invites further research on cultural heritage as constructed differently in the Global South and North, and presents an idea of festivals as not only integrative put potentially transformative, understanding and working with 'heritage' in new collective ways.

If, as jazz and festival scholars, we have not entirely lost the utopian (or 'blutopian': Lock 2000) impulse or desire that was one of the qualities that probably attracted us to the music and its festivals in the first place, we will reflexively think, with Anne Dvinge, that that is a good thing. What Dvinge calls 'the material for what can be' kind of sounds like it ought to be tangible, even if we, the jazzers, think we know otherwise: in its very utopia-ness, in its improvised musicality, and in its temporary heightened experiential event of the jazz festival itself, the intangibility of jazz is profound and it is weighty. Even where our scholarly engagement here with the heritage of (jazz) festivals is critical, and highlights its limitations as well as its transformative potential (which may be to say, transformation to date has been limited), our hope is that the transformative potential is illuminated, and enacted. That CHIME as a project has worked in collaboration with festivals and their organisations has been a part of our strategy of illumination and enactment.

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Michigan Press, 2013) and *The Pop Festival: History, Music, Media, Culture* (ed., Bloomsbury, 2015).He is currently editing with Gina Arnold *The Oxford Handbook of Punk Rock*.

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