

NICOLAS PILLAI AND VANESSA JACKSON

Birmingham City University

HOW TELEVISION WORKS: DISCOURSES, DETERMINANTS AND DYNAMICS ARISING FROM THE RE-ENACTMENT OF JAZZ 625

Abstract

Re-enactment can enable participatory researchers to ‘experience’ through qualitative ethnography the dynamics of how teams of practitioners employ tacit skills to make decisions and collaborate. This article explores the practice-as-research re-enactment of a historic 1960s television show, *Jazz 625*. With the emphasis on the process rather than the product through the production of a modern-day interpretation of the original – entitled *Jazz 1080* – the researchers draw conclusions around the complex workings of a television production team through the creation of a new artefact. The empirical research captures how professional attitudes and institutionalized forms of collaborative creative labour shape programme-making. Comparisons are made between the original and re-enacted productions, with the conclusion being made that, despite advances in technology, the practices and processes of television production are remarkably similar between the 1960s and the early 21st Century.

Key words

Re-enactment, jazz, tacit skills, television history, production, performance, simulation, practice-as-research, historical imaginary, jazz studies, operating system, distributed creativity

In 1968 the children’s imprint Ladybird Books published the fourth in its ‘How It Works’ series, entitled *Television*. A prefatory paragraph provided young readers with a rationale for the book’s existence:

Television is one of the marvels of our age, yet how many people ever stop to wonder how it works? If you do, this book is for you. It explains the various principles on which the whole system is based and how these principles are used to give us so many hours of enjoyable viewing at home. (Carey 1968: 2)

In this article, we proceed from the intuition that television studies as a discipline has historically elided the micro-elements of television production in favour of asking larger questions about medium, commerce and text. However, a growing interest in the last few years in practice-as-research across fields in the humanities, coupled with the affordances of digital technology, has encouraged researchers to deploy adventurous re-enactment methodologies as a way of understanding how television used to work.

Doing so allies one's research to issues raised by H. Otto Sibum, whose re-enacted performances of past experimental practice aimed to refocus attention towards what he termed gestural knowledge, 'the complex of skills and forms of mastery developed in these real-time performances' (Sibum 1995: 76). Following Sibum, Roger Kneebone and Abigail Woods have used re-enactment as a method of mapping technical skill in the surgical operating theatre:

Despite popular stereotypes of the lone 'heroic surgeon', ethnographers have shown that surgical expertise is distributed across the historically neglected surgical team, whose performance is much more than the sum of its parts. Its members coordinate the resources of the operating theatre in time and space, thereby enabling the surgeon to assume power and control. Expertise is expressed in their collaborative ways of working, which rely on complex unspoken communications, relationships, and interactions. Members also draw upon a huge repertoire of automated, tacit and shared 'ways of doing' that extend to aseptic rituals, technical procedures, appropriate behaviours and the use of space (Kneebone and Woods 2014: 109).

By applying these methodologies to television production, notions of 'performance' are significantly redefined from something achieved once by onscreen talent into something enacted again and again by a production team, in which limitations of time and space provide a framework for technicians to communicate and proceed.

Royal Holloway's ERC-funded ADAPT project, led by John Ellis, is an exemplary case, in which the object of study was the reunion and interaction of teams of skilled workers with the retired television production equipment they once operated. Ellis theorizes the interface between human and machine and the intermediate zone between as an operating system, 'a process of negotiation between bodies and machines designed elsewhere, but modified in that process of negotiation [...] the combination of learned skills and physical adaptation of the object to the specific user' (2015). Like Kneebone and Woods, the ADAPT project made extensive use of digital video recordings to capture the working processes simulated through the analogue re-encounter of men and their machines. Both studies

adopt a 'hands-on history' approach, where physical interaction with objects stimulates a sensory understanding of the past (Fickers and Van Den Oever, 2014: 273), and so rely upon the provision and maintenance of archaic equipment. Registered charities like the Broadcast Television Technology Trust have been set up by private individuals to preserve and restore television's physical heritage.¹ These activities are usually a labour of love undertaken by teams of enthusiasts, many of whom worked professionally in broadcasting. They manifest a desire to preserve, share and validate material traces of their own working lives; in effect, these projects rebuild forgotten links in the production chain that allow Ellis's 'operating system' to be re-enacted.

We contend that the simulation of television production circumstances can act as a media laboratory, bringing questions of timescale and environment onto lived experience in a manner impossible for the paper archive. As Ireland (2012) argues, the recreation of historic television production conditions leads us to new types of knowledge, re-introducing the human paradigm and an ability to witness the editorial process. His ambitious re-enactments of *Doctor Who* episodes from the 1960s and 2000s perform this methodological innovation with remarkable success. Indeed, Ireland's re-enactment of 1965 lost episode *Mission to the Unknown*, shot at the University of Central Lancashire, was premiered on the BBC's official YouTube channel and signalled the corporation's interest in re-enactment as a way to approach its own history.² Through re-enactment, researchers *experience* the decision-making process in television production, detailing the 'invisible' micro-elements of the production process which enable organization and realization. Understanding the dynamics of the production team, and who is making which decisions, why and when, provides the researcher with a rich source of data to layer on top of the re-created text.

The impetus to re-create a historic text requires some examination. For Hal Foster, re-enactment is part of an 'archival impulse' resulting from a 'failure in cultural memory' (2004: 21). Andre Lepecki challenges this assertion, articulating a more positive motivation around the ability to see new creative possibilities in the past work. The re-created work not

¹ For example, ADAPT used a 1969 colour Outside Broadcast 'scanner' truck CMCR9, known as North 3 – restored by enthusiast Steve Harris – to re-stage an outside broadcast of a darts contest (ADAPT 2018).

² *Doctor Who* fandom occupies an important role in the retelling of this history. Previous supplements for wiped episodes include the publication of telesnaps, commercial releases of soundtracks with linking narration and DVDs that enhance these soundtracks with Flash animation (see Molesworth 2013). Valuable and meticulous work on production detail has emerged from fan communities and in official publications such as *Doctor Who Magazine*.

only looks backwards but also provides an opportunity for one to ‘invent’ and ‘create’ something new, whilst ‘participat[ing] fully in the virtual cloud surrounding the originating work itself’ (Lepecki 2010: 9). Our re-enactment and observation of ‘networked production labour’ (Caldwell, J. T. et al 2012) models a rethinking of collaboration defined by Clarke and Doffman as an instance of ‘distributed creativity,’ in which processes of the past structure and inform the actions of the present (2017: 4). In the following sections, we detail a re-enactment created as an output of Pillai’s AHRC ECR Research Leadership Fellowship project *Jazz on BBC-TV 1960–1969*, hosted by Birmingham City University (BCU). Our re-enactment shares the interest in witnessing hierarchies of social actors working cooperatively that characterizes Kneebone and Woods’ surgical simulations and ADAPT’s re-enactments of defunct television processes. It combines this approach with the urge to learn through the creation of a ‘new’ artefact that typifies Ireland’s work, but foregoes his desire to recreate the textures of 1960s television using modern equipment.

PLANNING JAZZ 1080

The *Jazz on BBC-TV 1960–1969* project employed three methodological approaches: archival (mapping relevant holdings in the BBC Written Archive Centre (WAC), BBC Archives, the National Jazz Archive, the British Library, etc.); ethnographic (creating the first oral history of jazz on television through interviews with those who made, played on and attended recordings of jazz television); and practice-as-research (re-enacting the production process leading up to and including the live recording of a jazz television programme).³ While our focus here will be on the third methodological approach, it is important to note that archival and ethnographic findings informed our data collection during the practice-as-research element. As an originating work, the BBC2 series *Jazz 625* (tx. BBC2, 1964–1966) was selected due to the quantity of studio recordings available for study and the volume of documentation held at BBC WAC.

As a research team, Pillai and Jackson had to operate in two modes: both as observers of the television production process and as participants in it. While Jackson had

³ The project duration was April 2017–November 2019. Jackson acted as Project Mentor during the practice-as-research element. See Pillai 2019 for an illustrated account of *Jazz 1080*’s production with comparison to the later *Jazz 625 Live: For One Night Only* (BBC Four, tx. 3 May 2019), on which Pillai acted as research consultant.

extensive professional experience on the studio floor, Pillai's work had been entirely archival and textual.⁴ As such, roles and responsibilities were assigned to capitalize on previous expertise and to provide opportunities for on-the-job learning (Table 1).

Table 1: Roles and responsibilities

Nicolas Pillai	Vanessa Jackson
<p>Producer: responsible for editorial content; booking musicians and presenter; liaising between director, crew and musicians; overseeing behind-the-scenes documentary; recruiting studio audience; writing script links for presenter.</p>	<p>Executive producer: determining crew/technology requirements; recruiting of professional and student crew; liaising between production team and University technical support.</p> <p>Floor manager on the recording day</p>

As with any re-enactment performance, exact reproduction was impossible. Unlike the ADAPT project, our intention was not to use technology of the period to simulate conditions, but rather to work through timescales and potential programme formats set out in the BBC documentation gathered through Pillai's archival work, reproducing where we could standardized BBC document formats such as Technical Requirements, Studio Floorplans, Running Order, Camera Script and Programme-as-Broadcast. Rather than seeing these merely as archival artefacts to be decoded, this documentation represented the articulated process towards programme realization, determining the ongoing momentum of the production timescale. Our focus on this pre-production process and the decisions which constitute it meant that we had no intention of producing a simulacrum of a 1960s jazz programme; indeed if our experiment failed, we would still have gathered the data we needed. To highlight these differences, we paid tribute to the originating work's foregrounding of 625-line Ultra High Frequency (UHF) definition by naming our programme

⁴ Pillai's work on jazz in film and television has been instrumental in bringing media studies methodologies to jazz studies (Pillai 2016; 2017). Jackson's publications have asked how we might write new histories of television production through online community archives (Jackson 2014; 2018; 2019; 2020). With particular relevance to this article is Jackson's work on reunions between technicians and the equipment that they operated in their professional lives (Jackson 2013).

Jazz 1080, corresponding with the current HD broadcast standard equivalent of 1080 pixels (in a 1920 x 1080 resolution widescreen picture).⁵

We had determined to rig and record over the course of two days in May 2018, following the conventional time allotted for a *Jazz 625* shoot. A core crew of seven ex-BBC professionals (director/vision-mixer Mark Kershaw, Production Assistant (PA)/script supervisor Jayne Savage, camera supervisor James French, sound supervisor Tony Wass, lighting director Charles Osborne, lighting technician Gordon Waters and sound assistant Stephen Longstaff) led a crew of fourteen students from the BCU School of Media, training them in the roles of camera operators, camera assistants, sound assistants, vision assistants, autocue operator and audience support. Whilst none of the core crew had actually worked on *Jazz 625*, the director Mark Kershaw had directed many productions involving live musical performance, varying in scale from *Pebble Mill at One* to *The Proms*.

BCU is home to a number of researchers who employ practice-as-research methodologies but a project on this scale was unusual and placed extra resourcing demands on technical support staff whose main responsibility has been to undergraduate teaching. While the television studio in the Parkside building (Figures 1 and 2) has been used by professional companies, it is primarily a teaching space and so lacked the capacity for some operational needs of a music television programme filmed as live (e.g. radio talkback). These issues of expertise and environment presented extra challenges to the project, and were the main focus of the four months of pre-production leading up to the two-day shoot. The core crew's familiarity with training methods at BBC Wood Norton, and BBC production centres more widely, was beneficial to the student crew who, whilst used to staging undergraduate productions were unfamiliar with the discipline of 'professional' live multi-camera recording. However, as we shall discuss in the next section, the core crew's unfamiliarity with a research environment and the peculiarities of Parkside Studio A generated its own challenges.

⁵ Again, a comparison to Ireland's re-enactment of *Mission to the Unknown* (2019) makes an instructive comparison in its simulation of black-and-white broadcast texture, 1960s set lighting and camera movement, and its 4 x 3 framing.

Figures 1 and 2: Rigging the studio floor at BCU Parkside. Charles Osborne's lighting plan adds depth and texture.



In Table 2, we list the key dates in production. They are divided into (a) technical meetings; (b) editorial; (c) training and production; and (d) research development. Unsurprisingly for an ad hoc production, the operational elements of the process took up most time, with the spaces between these dates spent attending to the detail of planning. An anticipated recurring issue was the question of responsibility and the fulfilment of roles, as this was an addition to the professional responsibilities of almost everyone involved in the process; this would not have been the case for those working within the BBC's defined hierarchy. While the meetings classified as (a), (b) and (c) mimicked the attempt of a production crew to create the best possible programme, in the research development

meetings (d) we reflected upon our process as researchers, and what a practice-as-research methodology might achieve. We acknowledged that our research interest was in the *process* of television production rather than the programme as an end result. In this conception, we accepted that mistakes, blockages and errors of judgment had the potential to be more interesting than success (a very different approach to production than that of the crew). Indeed, we came to see the formal boundaries of *Jazz 1080* as a series of provocations that would define the established ways of working that our core crew fell back into from their days of working together at Pebble Mill. By observing these, we hoped to capture professional attitudes and learn how institutionalized forms of collaborative creative labour shape programme design and execution.

Table 2: Schedule of production and research

A. Technical	B. Editorial	C. Training and Production	D. Research Development
20 Feb, studio recce (director, Mark Kershaw, Nicolas Pillai, Vanessa Jackson)	22 Feb, planning meeting with bandleader Xhosa Cole (Xhosa Cole, Nicolas Pillai)	17 May, camera training for students with camera supervisor, James French	13 March, research agenda meeting (Prof. Tim Wall, research mentor; Nicolas Pillai, Vanessa Jackson)
7 March, technical requirements with University technical team	1 May, band rehearsal (Birmingham Symphony Hall)	21 May, rig all day (all crew, bandleader Xhosa Cole)	24 April, research agenda meeting (Prof. Tim Wall, research mentor; Nicolas Pillai, Vanessa Jackson)
20 March, technical requirements meeting (Mark Kershaw, Nicolas Pillai, Xhosa Cole,	10 May, second band rehearsal (Xhosa's lock-up)	22 May, rehearse and record (all crew, full band, studio audience)	

University technical team)			
13 April, core crew planning meeting (Nicolas Pillai, Vanessa Jackson, Mark Kershaw, James French, Charles Osborne, Tony Wass, Gabe Stewart, David Massey)			
17 May, sound recce (Tony Wass)			

PRINCIPLES AND SYSTEMS

Determinants

The 13 April production meeting marked a crucial stage in the process. In this meeting, the freelance core crew and University studio team first came together, and *determinants* such as employee roles, technological challenges and institutional capacity were defined. It was noted that in the normal BBC process, individual department discussions might have resolved issues in advance of this full crew meeting. Given the fixed-term nature of the core crew's employment, it was impossible for us to achieve a similar pre-production consensus. A particular concern expressed in this meeting was that the requirements of the programme might be beyond a student crew. The camera supervisor noted the established trust between a working unit at the BBC and the lengthy process of training undertaken even before admission onto the studio floor; it was proposed that a training session focused on camera discipline would run in advance of the shoot on 17 May (Figure 3). The lighting director noted the difficulties that might ensue if the lighting crew were not available in

both production gallery and studio floor. The sound supervisor expressed frustration at not being provided with information regarding musical instruments and amplifiers. In order to achieve an excellent microphone balance, and to overcome the inadequacy of the studio for radio talkback, we hired some additional equipment.

Figure 3: Camera supervisor James French provides on set training for his student team.



Discourses

Three examples will illustrate the changing nature of *discourse* around the popular memory of 1960s jazz television.

First, during the first meeting with the bandleader Xhosa Cole (22 February), Pillai impressed upon him the creative freedom that he could exert. The point was made that it was practically impossible to recreate the music of the 1960s and that pastiche should be avoided. Nevertheless, while varieties of instrumentation, personnel and repertoire were explored in band rehearsals, the final style of music decided upon, and the songs and instrumentation chosen, were geared towards a 1960s hard bop style. Similarly, unprompted by the production team, on the day of the shoot the musicians turned up in a uniform of dark suits and ties.

Second, in the 13 April production meeting, the lighting director expressed the desirability of a 'pared-down' set, with the implication that this would most closely approximate the aesthetic of studio episodes of *Jazz 625*. However, when we analyzed this decision in the 24 April conceptual development meeting, we noted that the desire for a 'pared-down' set might reflect a dominant jazz iconography drawn from US mid-century photography of musicians, later propagated in 'retro' coffee-table books. We also speculated on practical reasons: given that BBC2 budgets were smaller than those for BBC1, there would be economic benefits to a quick rig and de-rig, as well as permitting more opportunities for camera movement and removing the necessity for complex set positions. Understanding these concerns allowed us to see how *Jazz 625*'s simple rostra and cyclorama were rooted in pragmatism.

Third, on the day of the shoot, the director chose a typeface for the programme graphics. The demands of the day meant that neither Pillai nor Jackson were in the room when this occurred. The typeface chosen was inappropriate in the sense that it connoted 1920s Jazz Age swing rather than 1960s modern jazz – so period specificity was lost in favour of a generalized 'past-ness.' As Wall and Long (2009: 155) and Pillai (2016: 113) have observed in relation to BBC4 jazz programming, the removal of archive television from its original broadcasting flow and the stripping away of original graphics or presenters in documentaries or clip-shows risks the decontextualizing and distortion of what jazz programming was in the 1960s. Here was a good example of how mistakes generated insight: for Pillai, a moment of self-reproach in not having planned graphics in advance and also a realization regarding how often impactful decisions are made in the moment during production.

Dynamics

The internal *dynamics* within the production team and musicians, and the interplay between them, became a fascinating object of study. Kneebone (2017), through his simulations of historic surgical techniques, highlights the importance of tacit skills which are frequently difficult to articulate but which exist within teams of practitioners. The tacit skills he observed meant that surgical instruments were passed between surgeons and nurses often without explicit requests; the same professional understanding was evident within the

core crew of ex-BBC staff. They shared a language, knowledge and experience, which were difficult for the external observer to understand or feel part of.

In the 13 April production meeting, it became clear that BBC hierarchy and bureaucracy facilitated particular systems of communication. The seating arrangement encouraged a reporting mechanism back to producer and director, as well as break-out conversations between, for example, the camera supervisor and sound supervisor seated next to one another. The Technical Requirements document was used by the director to order the meeting, running through each section in sequence. Picking up on the issue raised over student readiness, it became evident that many aspects of production practice were assumed, as part of a shared bank of experience that working units would draw upon. Given Pillai's inexperience and consequent lack of access to this knowledge, digressions to explain technical decisions 'for the benefit of Nic' became necessary. An example of this arose when Pillai's lack of understanding the precise industry context led him to assume (as producer and research investigator) that he should chair the meeting. Director Mark Kershaw (Figure 4) explained that it would be usual for the director to lead the meeting to co-ordinate the technical approach of each department, and this is what subsequently happened.

Figure 4: Mark Kershaw directed and vision-mixed Jazz 1080, providing strong leadership and modelling professional discipline.



While *Jazz 625* is chiefly remembered for episodes featuring pre-existing bands, the series also presented musicians specially brought together for television. In this spirit, for *Jazz 1080*, Xhosa Cole gathered together a quintet made up of musicians from the Birmingham scene. We did not make any requirements in this regard, to encourage creative freedom and increase the likelihood of a band forming that would have a professional life beyond the TV shoot. For the musicians involved, television production was an odd and sometimes frustrating process. At the 20 May production meeting, Cole confirmed to the director that he would be playing with a quintet, the instruments to be used and the positioning of musicians in relation to instruments on the floorplan. As new musical arrangements were being written, a repertoire could not be agreed upon at this stage. Due to other commitments, only two band rehearsals were possible before the shoot and each differed considerably to what ended up onscreen, both in terms of repertoire and personnel. It became very important for both Pillai and the director to cultivate a trusting relationship with the bandleader.

As dates on a touring schedule, *Jazz 625* recordings did not allow for much by way of music rehearsal; as we were featuring a custom band, it was decided that rehearsals would be necessary. The 1 May rehearsal took place in the foyer of Symphony Hall, Birmingham (Figure 5). A stills photographer was present to familiarize the musicians with performing for the lens and encourage them to think about gesture and poise. The 10 May rehearsal took place at the bandleader's rehearsal space, an artist's lock-up at the canal. A student filmmaker was present to record the rehearsal process and to develop further the musicians' comfort with being observed by the camera. Pillai's presence at these rehearsals mimicked the occasional BBC practice of attending prior concerts of featured musicians in order to plan programmes around numbers. Pillai was also able to observe the formation of the band dynamic and the ways in which Cole communicated and perfected arrangements, often through mid-rehearsal use of phone apps such as YouTube or Spotify. For the jazz performers of today, streaming content is not only a way to reach an audience but a cheap and convenient way to access the history of their music.

Figure 5: Band rehearsal, 1 May 2018. Lee Griffiths (alto sax), Xhosa Cole (tenor sax).



Prior to our two studio days, the only interaction between the student crew and the core crew had been the training for camera and sound on 17 May. In these sessions, the camera and sound supervisors addressed their concerns about the readiness of the student crew, and explained to them the vocabulary, procedures and expectations of a live studio shoot.

On Day 1 (Monday 21 May), the director made an opening announcement to the student crew to emphasize responsibilities and lines of communication. The drum rostra was set and lights were brought down to rig. Instrument positions were temporarily set with chairs. In the production gallery, the director scripted one number, 'Manhattan', from rehearsal recordings. Working remotely, the script supervisor formatted this script and produced a draft running order. In the afternoon, a run of 'Manhattan' took place with the music played through the on-floor speaker system and with stand-ins for musicians. In this way, lights and camera movement could be rehearsed. Mid-afternoon, the bandleader joined the director to run through the arrangements. At this point, a change in instrumentation became clear which consequently required a re-rig of the lights. A final run of 'Manhattan' closed the day, and videoed vox pops with the director and bandleader were recorded. When the studio was clear, the band's drummer set up his kit to be ready for mic placement the next morning.

The musicians were present on Day 2 (Tuesday 22 May). Instruments were sound rigged with appropriate microphones and the lighting was checked. Four numbers were rehearsed and the presenter ran through his marks and use of autocue. Often, the musicians stood in silence as camera operators received talkback from the production gallery and re-ran camera movements (Figure 6). The musicians' communication with the production gallery was via verbal relay through the floor manager only. This enabled re-phrasing and additional explanation of instructions from the director to ensure they were aware of what was happening. Over the course of the day, the musicians reluctantly dropped music from their repertoire in order to fall within an acceptable programme running time.

Figure 6: The musicians wait for a signal from the floor manager as cameras receive instruction.



The ability and means to communicate within the studio environment are entwined with positions of power. The director at the centre of the operation can communicate with all the crew via talkback, despite the fact that the crew and performers on the studio floor cannot be seen, except through the cameras' lenses. Performers do not usually have access to talkback, although presenters often have switch talkback, meaning they can have their talkback turned on or off, so that they need not hear information irrelevant to them. During recordings, crew on the studio floor cannot reply on talkback, as the audio would be heard, and therefore camera operators often 'nod' their camera to show they have understood an instruction. Comparing the situation to more familiar gig settings, Xhosa Cole noted the extra labour required of musicians in a TV studio: 'It can feel a bit like "double pressure" in a sense because you want to deliver a great performance to the audience who are there at the moment but you also have this realization that this is formally being documented as a part of your playing career [...] It's really interesting to have such an in-detail kind of visual

and audio document of where you are at a specific time, as difficult as that may be to listen back to!’⁶

In the gallery, as rehearsals progressed during the day, the director and PA worked reactively to the music that they heard, counting bars and planning camera movements for numbers that were likely to change even in the few hours between rehearsal and shoot (Figure 7). Some of the pieces were carefully scripted, with shot numbers assigned to specific cameras, and called out over talkback by the director and PA. However, others, due to their improvisatory nature, were impossible to script, and the expression ‘as directed’ was added to the written script as a short-hand for the director and PA calling the shots in response to the performers and cutting to the cameras live. This same practice can be observed on the original *Jazz 625* scripts, where there is evidence of some numbers being camera scripted, and others being marked ‘as directed’. The PA on *Jazz 1080* would attempt to bar count to the scores she had in the gallery, but would frequently exclaim that the musicians were not following the music as written (knowing they could not hear what she was saying, as they were not on talkback), at which point a number which had been rehearsed with one set of camera shots and moves would be directed reactively. Even with an inexperienced crew, the improvisatory nature did not prove particularly problematic, as the camera operators had been briefed on their shot responsibilities, for example: camera 1, close-up shots of instruments; camera 2, wide-shot; camera 3, facial shots of performers, and so on. The camera supervisor had anticipated the fluid nature of the coverage, placing himself in the most testing camera position, one requiring frequent repositioning, and reframing in vision. Being aware of the capabilities of the student crew, he placed the most proficient operators in the most challenging positions and the least experienced on more static or wider shots. Instinctively, and despite this being to some extent an exploratory training exercise, he still took measures to ensure the highest quality finished product.

Figure 7: Jayne Savage (left), Mark Kershaw (centre), student autocue operator (right).

⁶ ‘The Futures of Jazz Television’ panel, *Jazz on the Telly* conference 12 October 2019, Birmingham City University. As Karl Coulthard observes, the technical crew also constitutes a ‘rather specialized audience’ with agency over the unfolding performance (2007: 6).



The students were aware of their relative position within the production hierarchy, without it ever being explicitly explained. One student reflected some months after the production that the director had rarely cut to her camera; she thought this was because she was not very quick or very skilled, being new to studio production. She was correct in her observation: the director had only used her shot occasionally, because her inexperience meant there was not the same professional trust that she would be able to quickly change position and provide a sharp, well-framed shot. The whole crew was working to achieve the best quality end product. No one was made to feel inadequate due to their lack of proficiency, but their skill level did affect their place in the crew. Jackson found herself instinctively doing the same thing when acting as floor manager. She had a student floor assistant. When deciding who should carry out which duties, she chose to take on the key tasks of cuing the performers and presenter herself, and assigning the assistant specific but less crucial jobs. This was a sensible division of labour given her greater experience. It was very easy to unconsciously slip back into the professional norms of television production, something which was evident in how each member of the core crew behaved. The manner of working together – the hierarchy, the language, what was said and unsaid – followed professional norms, displaying tacit skills developed over years of working in the television

industry. The students became assimilated into this collective human production ‘machine’, becoming part of the ‘operating system’ that Ellis (2015) observed in the ADAPT project, learning how to interact with the professional crew, equipment, and picking up on the particularities of televisual language and appropriate behaviours.

CLOSE ANALYSIS: ‘AND THEN SHE STOPPED’

‘And Then She Stopped’, a composition by Dizzy Gillespie, opens the first episode that his quintet shot for *Jazz 625* (rec. 30 November 1965; tx. 17 August 1966). Xhosa Cole’s inclusion of this song in the *Jazz 1080* repertoire allows us to compare decisions made by directors Terry Henebery (*Jazz 625*) and Mark Kershaw (*Jazz 1080*). By comparing the opening of each iteration of the song, we get a better sense of how studio geography, camera choreography, pragmatism and opportunity contribute to moments of music television (see Table 3). If we eliminate the very brief *Jazz 1080* shot 3, the sequences track remarkably similarly, with few differences of camera selection. Given that Kershaw did not study Henebery’s direction of this sequence closely or make any conscious effort to imitate it, we must ask what processes encourage such a parallel.

Table 3: Shot comparison for ‘And Then She Stopped’

‘And Then She Stopped’ shot comparison	<i>Jazz 625</i>	<i>Jazz 1080</i>
shot 1	camera 3: medium shot of Gillespie introducing song and counting off	camera 3: wide shot of full band, Cole counting off
shot 2	camera 1: medium shot of Clarke (piano), White (bass) behind	camera 2: close-up Awala fingers on piano
shot 3	camera 3: wide shot full band, tracking in	camera 1: medium shot Awala (piano) and Palmer

		(drums)
shot 4	camera 4: close-up Gillespie face	camera 3: close-up Cole tenor sax bell, tilting up
shot 5	camera 3: tracked in as shot 3 on Gillespie (trumpet) and Moody (flute)	camera 4: wide on full band
shot 6	camera 4: close-up trumpet bell, panning; Moody behind	camera 3: close-up Cole face
shot 7	camera 2: Moody and Gillespie	camera 4: wide on band
shot 8	camera 3: close-up Gillespie	camera 2: Cole and Griffiths (alto sax)
shot 9	camera 4: medium shot Moody	camera 3: close-up Cole
shot 10		camera 2: Griffiths foreground and Owston (bass) behind

The first of these, of course, is musical. Gillespie's composition has a punchy stop-start melody which both versions state across their opening two minutes. After the pianist (Clarke/Awala) introduces the tune, it is the two frontmen (Gillespie and Moody/Cole and Griffiths) who repeat it forcefully before the bandleader (Gillespie/Cole) takes a short solo segueing into featured soloist (Moody/Griffiths). As such it is natural that vision mixing should follow a sequence of piano–frontmen–bandleader–soloist in both *Jazz 625* and *Jazz 1080*.

However, as noted above, there are variations. While Henebery uses only one camera to capture the piano intro, Kershaw takes two shots (2 and 3). We may attribute this decision to a second factor, spatial determinants – while Henebery only had one camera of

four with a good sightline, the luxury of *Jazz 1080*'s five cameras allowed Kershaw two perspectives on the piano: one that demonstrated Awala's playing in close-up (shot 2; camera 2) and a follow-up that placed Awala in relation to drummer Palmer (shot 3; camera 1). Similarly, the shots that display the hand-off from bandleader to featured soloist (shot 9 in *Jazz 625*; shot 10 in *Jazz 1080*) use camera positions chosen according to the placement of musicians on stage (respectively, camera 4 dictated by Moody standing stage right; camera 2 by Griffiths stage left). Throughout, the framing of shots encourages our sense of the band as a collaborative unit.

The overall similarity between sequences speaks to a third factor: a shared audiovisual grammar shaped by discourse. We might speculate that Henebery and Kershaw shared sensibilities regarding the music: a sense that viewer attention should be directed to the mechanics of playing (shot 2 in both productions), to the connection between musician and instrument (*Jazz 625* shot 6; *Jazz 1080* shot 4) and the dynamic of individual expression within group endeavour (expressed both in wide shots and – more interestingly – in careful set-ups that allow sightlines along multiple instruments). Both directors follow genre conventions in the selection of shots. Wide shots remind the audience of the geography of the band within the context of the studio, and are therefore important to establish in the early part of the number, as seen in both versions. Wides are also a safety shot for the director, giving time whilst a decision is taken on cueing up the next close-up or developing shot. Additionally, they provide an aesthetic break from the intensity of close-ups.

The shots chosen by Henebery and Kershaw may have been remarkably similar, but the technology they were using was very different. BBC Television Theatre in the 1960s was analogue, whereas the modern studio is digital. The black-and-white cameras of the Television Theatre would have been relatively large and cumbersome, with heavy trailing cables, and according to a BBC technical pamphlet from the early 1960s, only two would have been equipped with zoom lenses (McLean et al. 1962: 210). Kershaw joined the BBC as a cameraman in 1970, and trained on the black-and-white cameras still used in some of the London recording spaces at the time. He recounted how the zoom lenses were unreliable and would stick, and the camera cables would pull you back as you tried to move the camera forwards. The cameras without zooms had fixed-focus lenses, which the camera operator would rotate to select, having to change the position of the Orthicon camera tube to alter the focus. In contrast, the five lightweight colour cameras of the modern studio, all

with smooth zoom lenses, were easy for the relatively inexperienced students to manoeuvre and operate. The microphones and mixing desk would also have been very different, with large valve microphones and a sound desk which lacked sophistication. The gallery would have looked different, with a much simpler vision mixing desk and small CRT monitors, as opposed to multiscreen flat LCD monitors. *Jazz 625* would likely have been recorded remotely at Television Centre or Lime Grove on a 2-inch quad videotape machine; *Jazz 1080* was stored on a university server and disseminated to core crew the next day as a download link, providing immediacy and secure storage.

Beyond their technical execution, decisions made by directors and crews articulate and perpetuate understandings of *what jazz is* and *how it should be mediated*. As Gebhardt has argued in relation to a Miles Davis broadcast of 1964, these decisions have profound effects: permitting viewers 'privileged access to the band's collective self-understanding,' creating circumstances in which 'the camera actively conspires' and – through the familiarity of the televisual medium – questioning 'the kinds of narratives we most often rely on to explain our relationship with jazz' (2016: 235–38). It is through re-enactment that we find our clearest and most direct engagement with such decisions.

CONCLUSION

In a piece on the trend towards re-enactment in public history, Alexander Cook notes a number of perils inimical to the methodology: that of spurious analogy, of misplaced focus, and a foregrounding of the emotional/visceral. To combat this, Cook urges a reflective approach:

Investigative reenactment should deal explicitly with the nature of reenactment itself, and with the cultural and sociological significance of the enterprise in question. In practice, this means acknowledging that projects involving reenactment are not in any direct sense "about" the period or the events being reenacted. Rather, they are about a modern set of activities that are inspired by an interest in the past. They are about placing modern individuals in dialogue with a historical imaginary (2004: 494).

Our own reflections on the process of making *Jazz 1080* have generated similar conclusions. By re-enacting the production process of *Jazz 625* we have not impacted the ontological nature of *Jazz 625* as a historical and cultural artefact. We have, however, observed and recorded the attitudes and actions of a BBC crew, the communication of their tacit knowledge to a student crew and a working jazz group, and a studio audience. As

researchers too, our relationship to historical objects of study has shifted as we have engaged with notions of the 'historical imaginary' in dialogue with empirical archival work and qualitative ethnography. Affective inquiry has been enmeshed with intellectual inquiry, and whilst re-enactment is imperfect in numerous ways, it has allowed us to improve our experiential and cognitive understanding of the past, particularly in observing the operation of tacit skills.

For jazz studies, which often limits the discussion of television to the documentation of musical performance, an understanding of how chance circumstance and institutional process shapes media products is essential. For television studies, the process of re-enactment is valuable not just for the academic of understanding elusive micro-practices but also as a way of introducing an element of historical understanding to undergraduate production-based courses. For the trainee unused to multi-camera work, this context and discipline can unlock a profound engagement with the 'operating system' of human and machine.

As researchers, we were surprised that the practices and processes of 1960s production could be so easily mapped onto a 2018 production. The equipment had changed, but essentially the rest of the 'operating system' was largely unaltered. Some decisions were carefully thought through, others were spontaneous, some were sound, others ill-judged. The students become initiated into the 'operating system' through the immersive and affective experience of re-enactment. For the core crew reliving processes familiar from their professional lives, so much of their achievement can be attributed to a dynamic built on mutual trust that smooths the compromises or settlements negotiated through their individualized roles. A pragmatic approach guided decision-making, exemplified in Mark Kershaw's observation during the shoot: 'even when it goes wrong, [...] if it's a live programme you do it and if you've got a wrong shot, so be it – it's gone', reinforcing the ephemeral nature of live television.

There is something remarkable, radical even, about applying this philosophy of working to jazz studies. While the New Jazz Studies of the 1990s aimed to deconstruct narratives of genius through a more complex understanding of socio-cultural factors, too often this addition of nuance has merely served to *explain* genius and to reinforce tiresome chauvinism regarding jazz's aesthetic superiority, its endless virtuosity, its indisputable greatness. How then might we resolve these lofty claims with the assertion, made by the

Jazz 1080 camera supervisor James French, that ‘television is always just okay’?⁷ Following Shuiling 2019, we would encourage a greater attention to materiality in jazz studies, not just by reconfiguring the musician-listener relationship but by acknowledging the essential yet invisible role of the technician.

REFERENCES

ADAPT (2018), ‘The Restoration of North 3,’ <http://www.tvobhistory.co.uk/bbc-north-3.html>, accessed 24/06/20.

Caldwell, J., Clarke, M., Hill, E. and Vanstrom, E. (2012), ‘Distributed Creativity in Film and Television: Three Case Studies of Networked Production Labor’, *The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies*. doi: 10.1002/9781444361506.wbiems050.

Carey, D. (1968), *How It Works: Television*. Loughborough: Wills & Hepworth/Ladybird Books.

Clarke, E. F. and Doffman, M. (2017), ‘Introduction and Overview’, in *Distributed Creativity: Collaboration and Improvisation in Contemporary Music*, ed. Clarke, E. F., Doffman, M., New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 1-18.

Cook, A. (2004), ‘The Use and Abuse of Historical Reenactment: Thoughts on Recent Trends in Public History’, *Criticism* 46: 3 (Summer), pp. 487-496.

Coulthard, K. (2007), ‘Looking for the Band: Walter Benjamin and the Mechanical Reproduction of Jazz’, *Critical Studies in Improvisation* 3:1, <https://www.criticalimprov.com/index.php/csieci/issue/view/33>

Doctor, J. (2017), ‘Jazz Is Where You Find It: Encountering Jazz on BBC Television, 1946-66’, in *Watching Jazz: Encounters with Jazz Performance on Screen*, ed. B. Heile, P. Elsdon, J. Doctor, New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 103-146.

⁷ James French camera training, 17 May 2018.

Ellis, J. (2015), 'Between Human and Machine: The Operating System', *Journal of Contemporary Archaeology* 2: 1 (2015, online supplement),
<https://journals.equinoxpub.com/index.php/JCA/article/view/28283>

Fickers, A. and van den Oever, A. (2014), 'Experimental Media Archaeology: A Plea for New Directions', in *Techne/Technology: Researching Cinema and Media Technologies – Their Development, Use and Impact*, ed. A. van den Oever, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, pp. 272-278.

Foster, H. (2004), 'An Archival Impulse', *October* (110), pp. 3-22.

Ireland, A. (2012), "'Conditions of Time and Space": A Re- Enactment Experiment with the British TV Series Doctor Who', unpublished PhD, University of Bournemouth.

Jackson, V. (2020), 'Issues around collaborative community online archives: A case study of the <http://pebblemill.org> project', in *Communities, Archives and New Collaborative Practices*, ed. S. Popple, A. Prescott and D. H. Mutibwa, Bristol: Policy Press.

Jackson, V. (2019), 'Enriching "hands on history" through community dissemination: a case study of the Pebble Mill project', in *Hands on History*, ed. J. Ellis and N. Hall, Oxon: Routledge.

Jackson, V. (2018), 'Multimedia Online Archival Practice: What New Historiographical Opportunities Does It Present?' unpublished PhD, Royal Holloway, University of London.

Jackson, V. (2014), 'Using Social Media to Build Hidden Screen Histories: A Study of the Pebble Mill Project', in *Cinema, Television and History: New Approaches*, ed. L. Mee and J. Walker, Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Jackson, V. (2013), 'Revealing Television's Analogue Heroes', *View: Journal of European Television History & Culture* 2: 4, pp. 3-14.

Jazz 1080 (2018), https://youtu.be/m_ZHWC48_Mw

Kneebone, R., and Woods, A. (2014), 'Recapturing the History of Surgical Practice Through Simulation- Based Re-Enactment', *Medical History* 58: 1 (January 2014), pp. 106–21.

Kneebone, R. (2017), Recapturing a surgical past, in Boon, T., Kneebone, R., Heering, P., Staubermann, K. and Winkin, Y., A symposium on histories of use and tacit skills, *Science Museum Group Journal* Autumn 2017: 8 <http://dx.doi.org/10.15180/170808>

Lepecki, A. (2010), 'The Body as Archive: Will to Re-Enact and the Afterlives of Dances', *Dance Research Journal* 42: 2 (Winter 2010), pp. 28-49.

McLean, F. C., Baker, H. W. & Colborn, C. H. (1962), 'The BBC Television Centre and its Technical Facilities', in *The Proceedings of the Institution* 109, Part B, No. 45. London: The Institution of Electrical Engineers

Mission to the Unknown (2019), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NW8yk-m5lg8>

Molesworth, R. (2013), *Wiped! Doctor Who's Missing Episodes*. Canterbury: Telos Publishing.

Pillai, N. (2016), *Jazz as Visual Language: Film, Television and the Dissonant Image*, London: I. B. Tauris.

Pillai, N. (2017), 'Brubeck betwixt and between: television, pop and the middlebrow', in *New Jazz Conceptions: History, Theory, Practice*, ed. R. Fagge and N. Pillai, New York: Routledge, pp. 90-110.

Pillai, N. (2019), *Jazz 625 and the Re-Enactment of Television History*, Birmingham: BCMCR.

Shuiling, F. (2019), 'Jazz and the Material Turn', in *The Routledge Companion to Jazz Studies*, ed. N. Gebhardt, N. Rustin-Paschal and T. Whyton, New York: Routledge, pp. 87-96.

Sibum, O. 'Reworking the Mechanical Value of Heat: Instruments of Precision and Gestures of Accuracy in Early Victorian England'. *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part A* 26, pp. 73–106.

Wall, T. & Long, P. (2009), 'Jazz Britannia: mediating the story of British jazz on television', *Jazz Research Journal* 3: 2, pp. 145-170.

CONTRIBUTOR DETAILS

Nicolas Pillai is co-editor of *Jazz Research Journal*. He has published widely on jazz in film and television and is currently developing a collection entitled *Rethinking Miles Davis* for Oxford University Press. In 2019, he acted as research consultant, scriptwriter and onscreen interviewee for *Jazz 625 Live: For One Night Only* (BBC4/Somethin' Else) which went on to win Best Music Programme at the Broadcast Awards 2020.

Vanessa Jackson is a former BBC series producer, and now an associate professor in the Institute of Media and English at Birmingham City University. She teaches practical television production skills to undergraduates, as well as working on employability and enterprise activities. She completed her practice-based PhD in television historiography, under the supervision of Professor John Ellis, at Royal Holloway, University of London in 2018. Her research interests include the history of television, as well as the uses of social media in community history projects. She has also published on the use of social media in enhancing student employability, and student engagement.

