

Institution: University of East Anglia		
Unit of Assessment: 34 – Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management		
Title of case study: Changing Rhythms: Influencing the Form and Content of Festivals		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: Between 2014 and 2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): George McKay Dr Elizabeth Bennett Dr Emma Webster	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Professor of Media Studies Senior Research Associate Senior Research Associate	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 2014 to present 2018 to 2020 2015 to 2016
Period when the claimed impact occurred: Between 2014 and 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>George McKay's research directly contributed to how some of the UK's most influential music festivals have engaged with their musical, social, and cultural histories. McKay's work has led to a refocusing of festival intentions through programming strands, new commissions, and inspiring the production of new music.</p> <p>McKay's direct influence on the format and content of British jazz and music festivals includes new strands such as the Professor in Residence role at a range of high-profile music festivals (most famously the EFG London Jazz Festival), an increased focus on Black British jazz and histories of slavery, and new music informed by McKay's research interests.</p> <p>In sum, this work has brought festival producers, programmers, and musicians into dialogue with their own histories and cultural issues. It also demonstrates how McKay has worked with festivals to demonstrate the scale and importance of their cultural, economic, and touristic impact.</p>		
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>McKay's world-leading research on festivals spans almost three decades from <i>Senseless Acts of Beauty</i> (Verso, 1996), <i>DIY Culture</i> (Verso, 1998), and <i>Glastonbury</i> (Gollancz, 2000) to <i>Music From Out There, In Here: 25 Years of the London Jazz Festival</i> (3.4, with Emma Webster), <i>The Pop Festival</i> (3.7), and ongoing success in award of research grants (3.8, 3.9, 3.10). The underpinning research listed below offer highlights from a set of funded projects he has either led or been centrally involved in, constituting a body of funded work, sustained collaboration, and events on the history and significance of jazz and music festivals.</p> <p>McKay has led on key pieces of industry-facing research, including two co-authored, open access reports from reviews of scholarly, policy, and sector texts (3.1, 3.5) that arose from an AHRC fellowship (3.9, 3.10). Each of those was accompanied by open access annotated bibliographies, and one revised as a journal article (3.6). McKay and Webster's co-authored book <i>Music From Out There, In Here</i>, marking the London Jazz Festival's 25th anniversary (3.4) was the result of an AHRC collaborative project with the festival (3.7). This public-facing output drew on academic research to tell the history of London as a jazz festival city since the late 1940s. Leading monthly magazine <i>Jazz Journal</i> described it as an 'eminently readable book ... [with] intriguing insights into the genesis, growth and popularity of this major jazz festival' (5.2).</p> <p>McKay's UK and EU projects have been key to his productive long-term collaborations, helping develop and expand the field of (jazz) festival studies. As part of the Rhythm Changes project, he edited <i>The Pop Festival</i> international collection, which includes essays by festival promoters and</p>		

consultants (3.7). As part of Cultural Heritage in Improvised Music Festivals in Europe (CHIME) (3.10) he co-edited a journal special issue and authored a research article focused on decolonisation and UK jazz festivals (3.3). For the high-profile Europe Jazz Network collection, he wrote a chapter historicising the development of the jazz festival across Europe (3.2).

McKay has given keynote addresses and chaired panels at a wealth of festival conferences and events, including Aveiro (2013), Fribourg (2018), and the London Jazz Festival. He has also given keynotes at industry-scholarly conferences organised as part of festivals such as Twelve Points in San Sebastian (2016), Edinburgh Jazz Festival (2017), and MiJazz Milan (2017). His work with festival umbrella organisations includes invitations to the annual conferences of the Europe Jazz Network (Wroclaw 2016, Ljubljana 2017, Lisbon 2018), the British Arts Festival Association (2018), and the East Anglian Festival Network (2019). He was a member of the organising committee for the CHIME project (3.10) conference on Music, Festivals, Heritage (Siena 2017) and the regular international jazz studies conferences he co-founded in Amsterdam, Birmingham, and Graz (2014, 2016, 2017, 2019, 2020 – postponed due to Covid-19).

Such national and international events constitute an ongoing set of industry, scholarly, and public-facing events, characterised by cross-disciplinarity, dialogue, and shared innovation between scholars and the festival and jazz industries.

3. References to the research

- 3.1** From Brass Bands to Buskers: Street Music in the UK.
Bennett, E. and McKay, G.
An Arts and Humanities Research Council-funded Report. (2019). Norwich: UEA/AHRC.
DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.2.18521.98408.
- 3.2** 'Festivals' In Francesco Martinelli (ed.) The History of European Jazz: The Music, Musicians and Audience in Context.
McKay, G.
Sheffield: Equinox/Europe Jazz Network (2018). Pp707-718. ISBN 9781781794463.
- 3.3** The heritage of slavery in British jazz festivals.
McKay, G.
International Journal of Heritage Studies. Special journal issue co-edited by McKay on cultural heritage and jazz festivals. (2018). DOI: 10.1080/13527258.2018.1544165.
- 3.4** Music From Out There, In Here: 25 Years of the London Jazz Festival.
Webster, E. and McKay, G.
Norwich: UEA/AHRC. (2017). (saved on file at UEA)
- 3.5** From Glyndebourne to Glastonbury: The Impact of British Music Festivals.
Webster, E. and McKay, G.
Norwich: UEA/AHRC. (2016). DOI: 10.6084/m9.figshare.3413836
- 3.6** The impact of (jazz) festivals: an AHRC-funded research report.
Webster, E. and McKay, G.
Jazz Research Journal 9(2): 169-193. (2015). DOI: 10.1558/jazz.v9i2.29783.
- 3.7** The Pop Festival: History, Music, Media, Culture.
McKay, G., ed., and author of 'Introduction' (pp1-13;) and 'The pose is ... a stance': popular music and the cultural politics of festival in 1950s Britain' (pp14-31)
London: Bloomsbury (2015) ISBN: 978-1-62356-820-7

Grants

- 3.8** Project: Connected Communities Programme Leadership Fellowship stage 2.
PI: **McKay, G.**
Funder: AHRC (renewal) award. Dates: 2015-19. Grant value: GBP626,993.
- 3.9** Project: Understanding Changing Community Cultures and Histories and Patterns of Connectivity within and between Communities.

PI: **McKay, G.**

Funder: AHRC Connected Communities Programme Leadership Fellowship award.

Dates: 2012-15. Grant value: GBP318,683.

3.10 Project: Cultural Heritage in Improvised Music Festivals in Europe (CHIME)

Senior Researcher: **McKay, G.**

Funder: EU Heritage+ JPI award. Dates: 2015-18. Grant value: GBP157,309 (GBP24,682 to UEA)

4. Details of the impact

“festivals ... need and value the criticality of academic research ... [Your work] helps us shape, make sense of, and rethink what we are doing” (John Cumming OBE, EFG London Jazz Festival, 5.1).

McKay's impact on the modern jazz festival is acknowledged here by the late John Cumming, arguably the UK jazz scene's most significant producer of the past 30 years (founding Director of the EFG London Jazz Festival; Director, Serious Music). He identifies the importance of McKay's contributions to the study and delivery of musical festivals across the UK and Europe, with an extensive range of collaborations with festival professionals – producers, curators, and creatives – in locations including Lancaster, London, Cheltenham, Edinburgh, and Trollhatten. Cumming's assessment is mirrored in Bruce Lindsay's comment, in *Jazz Journal*, that McKay's work includes an important critical engagement with the industry which **“doesn't shy away from discussing issues of concern, for example around funding and programme repetition”** (5.2).

The impact highlighted here arises from the projects, publications, events, and collaborations outlined in sections 2 and 3 (above): it demonstrates how McKay (working with Bennett and Webster) has shaped debates in festival organisation, and affected identifiable changes in:

- Programming strands and commissioned content;
- New musical and creative works;
- How festivals understand and articulate their own cultural significance and impact.

1. Programming strands and commissioned content

“a first for any festival anywhere—we are the only festival with its own in-house professor” (5.3).

McKay instigated the concept of a Professor in Residence (PiR) at popular music festivals in 2011 (5.3), and this innovation has helped transform festivals' understanding of the role and application of academic research to their industry, leading to changes within festival programming, curation, and commissioning.

In 2014, McKay developed the PiR concept in partnership with one of the world's largest jazz festivals, the EFG London Jazz Festival. As the inaugural PiR, McKay created a template for this academic-industry interaction, shaping an expanded jazz studies content that included a series of public events across the 2014 festival. Described by jazz media outlets as **“a unique and brilliant appointment”** (5.4), the PiR role became an established annual feature in that festival, multiplying its initial influence and impact over time:

“George McKay's idea of the Professor in Residence, especially at so major an event as the London Jazz Festival, really helped both raise the profile of the new jazz studies and change the programming landscape of festivals themselves ... foregrounding research and challenging ideas in jazz ... offered an important context for the London Jazz Festival programme, and encouraged audiences to develop deeper insights, not only into the music on offer but also about the broader cultural and political significance of jazz past and present” (██████████, 5.6).

“[the PiR] allowed me to test and preview curatorial ideas as well as develop an audience [for a jazz exhibition]” (██████████, 5.5).

McKay’s research has also impacted the commissioning of new festival strands and music. Given the charge that festivals repeat programme approaches and content (5.2), McKay has shown how academic research can challenge and encourage shifts in programming, encouraging festivals to tackle head-on key social and political issues. The London Jazz Festival noted that McKay and Webster’s **“painstaking, sympathetic and sometimes provocative”** approach – including Webster’s embedded research role – **“helped ... remind us of our core values ... It’s not just about the music, extraordinary and inspiring as that can be ... It’s about the way that ... creative work can reflect and respond to external change – and, we hope, make a difference”** (Cumming, 5.7).

McKay’s work has changed how festival programming can respond to issues of race, crucial for a musical form such as jazz which has relied heavily on Black performers and musicians. Cheltenham Jazz Festival artistic advisor ██████████ first included more work on Black British performers in the 2014 festival **“due to discussions with George McKay”** (5.8).

Since then, **“McKay’s ground-breaking work on British jazz festivals and slavery ... has prompted us to look at our own historical situation, and to think about how we could commission new jazz so that the festival acknowledges and begins to address questions of decolonisation and transatlantic slave trade legacy around the Cheltenham festival site”** (5.9).

2. New music and creative work

McKay’s ongoing research has also inspired leading UK jazz pianist and composer ██████████ to create new work:

“George McKay’s research has impacted on my creative practice in various ways. He delineates histories of British popular music and jazz that have been under-represented in scholarship and journalism, and this approach has fuelled my own interest in pre-rock aspects of British popular music history ... particular topics that George has investigated have had a very direct impact on my practice”.

██████████ presented a new project, ‘Revisiting Winifred Atwell’ at the 2018 London Jazz Festival (achieving four-star reviews in *The Guardian* and *The Financial Times*), the 2019 Manchester Jazz Festival, and a 2019 Sofar Sounds concert at Manchester Museum. This creative work connected back to McKay’s research on Black British jazz musicians and festivals:

“[McKay’s] research ... directly led me to explore her [Atwell’s] 1950s work ... [and] opened up the possibility for me to approach both her rag and boogie compositions ... through a free-wheeling, avant-garde lens ... [this] would not have been possible without reading McKay’s work” (██████████ 5.10).

3. How festivals understand and articulate their own cultural significance and impact

McKay’s role (2012-19) as co-lead of the AHRC-led Connected Communities programme has underpinned the collaborative music festivals discussed above, and created a unique opportunity for dialogue between academics, advocacy groups, cultural workers, fans, festival producers, musicians, and the wider public.

McKay’s leadership of a series of academic-industry partnerships has produced important new impact through reports co-designed with, and for, the festivals industry. The main report, *From Glynedebourne to Glastonbury: The Impact of British Music Festivals* (3.5) was launched at the ‘Thinking About (Jazz) Festivals’ day at the 2016 Cheltenham Jazz Festival. It has been hailed by festival industry professionals in the UK:

- **“I market festivals ... there is valuable information to be learnt [from this report]”** (website comment (UK): 5.1).

- **“As [a] concert and show promoter, these types of serious detailed and well documented researches are helping us comforting the sometimes sceptical investors who can’t see the correlation between Music and tourism and local spendings by festival goers”** (website comment (UK): 5.1).
- **“irrefutable ... [confirms] the value and impact of our sector”** (Steve Mead, Manchester Jazz Festival, 5.1).

The report also had a global reach, demonstrating the wider significance of this impact:

- **“[The report] helps promoters organise their thoughts around the focal points, and local authorities better realise what festivals do—or can do—for their communities”** (Francesco Martinelli, Siena Jazz Archive, 5.1).
- **“I am currently working on the impact of an annual festival ... [this] will be helpful to me”** (website comment (African nation): 5.1).
- **“I ... am interested in these kind of reports that help to upgrade and develop [our] Jazz Festival”** (website comment (European nation): 5.1).

The wide impact of McKay’s industry-academic focus on the future for festivals, programmers, and musicians, is best summed up by John Cumming:

“immensely valuable ... work that informs our practice ... [and] marks the essential role of academic research in evaluating the impact of the cultural sector” (5.7).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- 5.1** Impact of Festivals website, 2016, ‘Ten good reasons to read our article on the impact of (jazz) festivals’. Collated and anonymised from unprompted feedback on open access online repositories and ‘What people are saying about our report on the impact of festivals’.
- 5.2** Review of *25 Years of London Jazz Festival*. *Jazz Journal*. (2017)
- 5.3** Kendal Calling director (2011), press release.
- 5.4** The Jazzmann (2014). ‘Professor in Residence at the 2014 EFG London Jazz Festival’.
- 5.5** Head of the Department of Music, University of Liverpool, testimonial, February 2020.
- 5.6** Professor of Jazz Studies. Birmingham School of Media testimonial, September 2020.
- 5.7** Founding director, London Jazz Festival/Serious Music. ‘Foreword: 25 years on ...’ In *Music From Out There, In Here*, p1-2.
- 5.8** *Carnivalising the Creative Economy: AHRC-funded Research on and with British Jazz Festivals* (15 mins. Film).
- 5.9** Artistic advisor to the Cheltenham Jazz Festival testimonial, October 2020.
- 5.10** UK jazz pianist and composer testimonial, October 2020.