

JAZZ 625

AND THE REENACTMENT OF TELEVISION HISTORY



OCTOBER 2019 RELEASE

Report by Nicolas Pillai



Fig. 1: A camera operator refers to their shot card as Xhosa Cole rehearses. Photo: Ian Davies.

Colour photographs by Ian Davies and Eugene Muldoon.
Black and white photographs by Brian Homer.
Screenshots with permission of Somethin' Else.

With thanks to Robert Seatter (BBC History),
Adam Barker (BBC FOUR) and Jez Nelson (Somethin' Else).

Dedicated to the memory of Gregory Pillai.

Birmingham Centre for Media and Cultural Research
Birmingham City University
The Parkside Building
Cardigan St
Birmingham
B4 7BD

Email: nicolas.pillai@bcu.ac.uk

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of this report

Approach of this report

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. Making is researching / researching is making
2. Tacit knowledge is as valuable as documented knowledge
3. Institutions shape creativity

CASE STUDY ONE: JAZZ 1080

Determinants: understanding parameters

Discourse: a wider lens

Dynamics: a way of working

Student experience

The shoot: survival, not perfection

Audience experience

CASE STUDY TWO: JAZZ 625 LIVE! FOR ONE NIGHT ONLY

The BBC FOUR documentary format

Comparison to Jazz 1080

OUTCOMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Outcomes from Jazz 1080

Outcomes from Jazz 625 Live!

Further project outcomes

WHAT NEXT?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Introduction

Purpose of this report

This report proposes that by reenacting television history we might better understand how television is made.

It provides an account of the making of two creative artefacts:

- **Jazz 1080** (recorded 22 May 2018, distributed online), a reconstruction of 1960s jazz programming in a university television studio
- **Jazz 625 Live! For One Night Only** (broadcast 3 May 2019, Somethin' Else/BBC FOUR), a documentary-performance hybrid that recreated the aesthetics of black-and-white music television.

Both productions arose from the research project *Jazz on BBC-TV 1960-1969*, awarded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) to Dr Nicolas Pillai as part of the Early Career Researcher Research Leadership Fellowship Scheme. The intent and execution of both productions were informed by Pillai's archival and ethnographic research findings. In each case, the focus on **reenactment** allowed Pillai to observe 'micro-elements' of production process not recorded in the archive. Often these processes are assumed to be common-sense among production crews and so are unspoken. Reenactment allows us to understand and categorize this 'tacit knowledge.'

As well as reporting on the project's findings, this booklet aims to model ways for practice-based researchers to generate public engagement and knowledge exchange with broadcasters. The project began with the hope of discovering more about BBC jazz television; it ended by bringing jazz back to BBC television.



Fig. 2: Lee Griffiths, Xhosa Cole and Eyituoyo Awala rehearse in the Birmingham Symphony Hall foyer, 1 May 2018. Photo: Brian Homer.

Approach of this report

Jazz on BBC-TV 1960-1969 conducted a two-year historical enquiry deploying:

- **archival research** at sites such as the BBC Written Archives Centre Caversham, the National Jazz Archive Loughton, The British Library King's Cross
- **anecdotal evidence** gathered through interviews with those who worked on, played on, or attended the recordings of jazz television programmes
- **practice-based re-enactment** that unpicked the micro-elements that go into every stage of television production.

It was taken as a given throughout that the evidence of a set carpenter or a sound engineer is as valuable as that of a performing musician: each contribution forms part of the collaborative work of television. This report uses fragments of this research to illustrate its central thesis regarding co-production.

As with much practice-based work, disruptive questions have permitted a reflection on institutional practices often categorized as 'common-sense' or 'everyday'.

The aspiration that has guided this research, and the writing of this booklet, is that historical research (combining archival, ethnographic and practice-based methods) can inform and improve programme-making – and that programme-making itself can be a valuable method of research.



Fig 3. Nicolas Pillai.
Photo: Eugene Muldoon.

Guiding principles

1. Making is researching/researching is making

In the academic humanities, a harmful distinction is traditionally made between *research* and *practice*. This outdated approach is gradually being over-turned by greater numbers of practice-based researchers and governmental instruction on impact and engagement.

Pillai conceived the *Jazz on BBC-TV 1960-1969* project by identifying a weakness in his own capabilities as a researcher. Despite having received a doctoral award in film and television studies from a Russell-Group university, he had no practical understanding of how studio television is made. This situation is not so ridiculous when we consider the predominance of textual and/or reception-based analysis in television studies.

The award of the AHRC fellowship permitted the resourcing of an experimental form of research. Using archival documentation as a roadmap to re-enact the pre-production and shoot of a 1960s jazz programme, the following outcomes were possible:

- increased skillset for lead researcher (Pillai)
- reuniting and observing ex-BBC core crew
- observing display and communication of 'tacit knowledge' from ex-BBC core crew to student support crew
- decoding archival documents through using them
- recording undocumented micro-elements of production
- giving television studio experience to young musicians
- providing a test run for larger-scale BBC FOUR programme.

2. Tacit knowledge is as valuable as documented knowledge

What is 'tacit knowledge'?

The term has been used in the fields of science and history to describe working practices that are implicit and overlooked but which are crucial to achievement. On a studio television shoot, tacit knowledge informs every aspect of production.

It connects the:

- determinants (institutional, environmental, technological)
- discourses (cultural, sociological, historical)
- dynamics (personalities, vision, creativity).

Given the nuance of these interactions, it is challenging to record and analyse tacit knowledge. During the production of *Jazz 1080*, a two-person documentary crew shot as much behind-the-scenes footage as possible for future analysis.

These are the things that are absent from documentary evidence – the things that 'everybody knows', which don't end up in the archive.

Fig. 4: One of the behind-the-scenes student documentary crew records studio rehearsals. Photo: Ian Davies.



3. Institutions shape creativity

When we think about creativity, it is tempting to ignore the structures that allow it to happen.

These might be:

- macro-structures (e.g. the welfare state, public service broadcasting)
- corporate structures (e.g. timescales afforded by a recording contract)
- micro-structures (e.g. the established workflow of a television production unit).

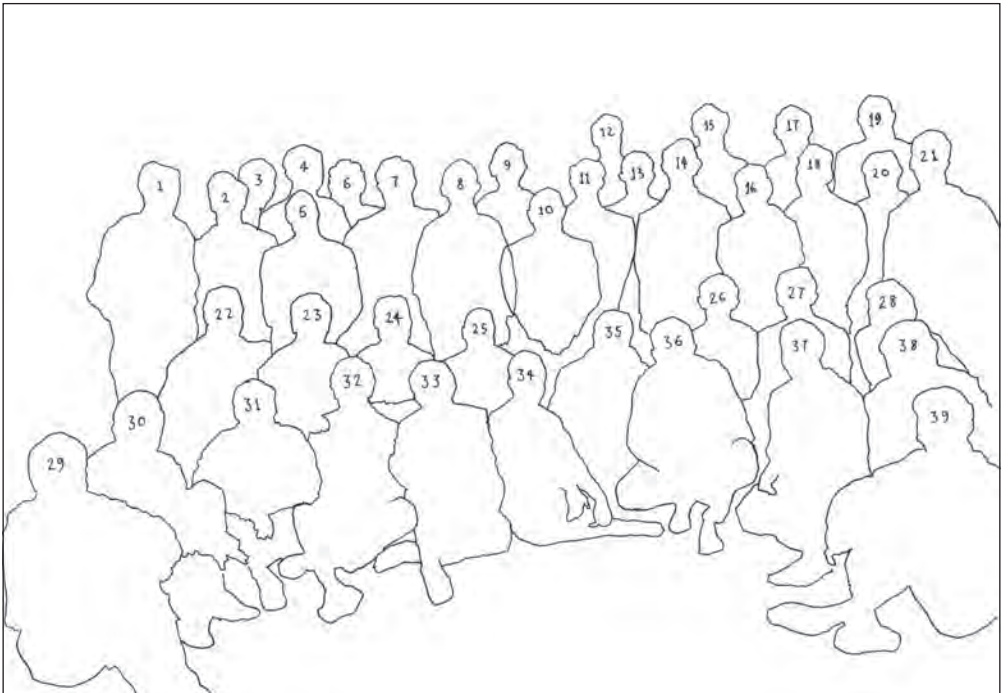
Traditionally both television and jazz histories have privileged hierarchical notions of creativity, ascribing authorship to individuals of genius and so hiding collective effort.



Fig. 5: Jazz at the Maltings crew, Aldeburgh Festival Concert Hall, September 1968. Property of Roger White, photographer unknown.

Fig. 6: Jazz at the Maltings crew.

1. Gordon Blockley, cameras; 2. Brian Horne, engineering; 3. Stan Poole, lighting crew; 4. John Wilson, videotape editor; 5. Geoff Jowitt, production manager; 6. Roger White, videotape editor; 7. Vernon Lawrence, assistant producer/director; 8. Terry Henebery, producer/director; 9. Tommy Thomas, no1 engineering manager; 10. Les Lambert, gaffer; 11. John Mason, no2 engineering manager; 12. Bob Littlemore, role unknown; 13. Les Edwards, rigging supervisor; 14. Nolan West, vision supervisor; 15. Bill Graham, rigging crew; 16. Johnny Johnson (formerly John Heard), cameras; 17. Cyril Tuplin, rigging crew; 18. Mike Begg, stage manager; 19. Ted Cocks, senior cameraman; 20. Maurie Winton, rigging crew; 21. Unknown; 22. Unknown, scene hand; 23. Les Jones, lighting crew; 24. Bob Powell, lighting crew; 25. Unknown, scene hand; 26. Alistair Black, engineering; 27. John Sewell, engineering; 28. Dave Gautier, cameras; 29. Keith Gunn, sound; 30. Chris [surname unknown], contract public address; 31. Mike Johnson, sound; 32. Graham Haines, sound supervisor; 33. Ernie Cooke, engineering; 34. June Moody, production secretary; 35. Bruce Millard, stage manager; 36. Gerry Levy, engineering; 37. Geoff Rathbone, engineering; 38. Peter Cook, cameras; 39. Tony Reason, cameras.



Case study one: *Jazz 1080*

Jazz 1080 – Studio A, BCU Parkside – 52 mins – rigged 21 May 2018; recorded 22 May 2018

Jazz 1080 was an experiment that attempted to model the production process of BBC2's flagship music programme, *Jazz 625* (BBC2 1964-1966).

With Pillai acting as producer-researcher, a crew was assembled alongside a jazz quintet led by saxophonist Xhosa Cole. A core crew of seven ex-BBC professionals (director/vision-mixer, script supervisor, camera supervisor, sound supervisor, lighting director, lighting technician, sound assistant) led and trained a crew of fourteen students from the BCU School of Media (performing the roles of camera operators, camera assistants, sound assistants, vision assistants, autocue operator, audience support). Additional support was provided by BCU studio technicians and HR.

Pre-production took place over four months: 1960s BBC programmes did not have to proceed from scratch in this way, achieving as much in shorter time periods through established in-house BBC technical and bureaucratic processes. One of the challenges of this project was to retrain these procedures and to graft them onto the university environment. In doing so, we might understand how the aggregation of these processes creates television.

Fig. 7: Camera supervisor James French provides on set training for his student team. Photo: Ian Davies.



Determinants: understanding parameters

Studio A at BCU Parkside was built for undergraduate teaching in contemporary technique and the occasional professional hire. It was not built for a live five-camera music shoot recreating 1960s style.

A series of reces by core crew established the requirements for existing resources and external equipment hire. To a great extent, the ambition of the production was determined by the technical possibilities of Studio A, which was augmented with externally hired equipment: radio talkback between the gallery and the camera crew, microphones appropriate for individual musical instruments, makeshift shot cards attached to cameras.

As would have been common in 1960s production, musicians were not privy to these decisions: their experience of the studio came on the Day 2 shoot and required reactive adaptation. However, in the weeks leading up to the shoot, Pillai acted as a liaison between director Mark Kershaw and bandleader Xhosa Cole, who planned repertoire and led band rehearsals.



Fig. 8: Rigging the studio floor.
Photo: Ian Davies.



Fig. 9: Charles Osborne's lighting plan adds depth and texture.
Photo: Ian Davies.

Fig. 10-13: Band rehearsal 1 May 2018, James Owston, Xhosa Cole, Lee Griffiths, Eytuyooy Awala, Nicolas Pillai. Photos: Brian Homer.





Discourse: a wider lens

In the early 1960s, *Jazz 625* represented an exciting new way to visualize musical performance. Broadcast in the new 625-line definition, as part of the nascent second channel's schedule, technical innovation and achievement were foregrounded. Over the years, as the show has been recycled in clip shows and segmented on streaming sites, these qualities have been eroded. Through its focus on production process, *Jazz 1080* aimed to cut through this nostalgic haze.

Pillai remained distant from certain key production decisions made by the crew and the musicians. In so doing, he was able to observe and record the attitudes and approaches that determined the crew's relationship to an imagined archive television text. As producer, Pillai had to trust to the accomplishment of the crew and to hope that creativity would flourish when contained within a scheduled operational process.

While the musicians were free to perform any kind of music, they chose to play in a style appropriate to the 1960s (save for the electric piano). Their uniformity of dress similarly displayed their idea of what 1960s jazz 'should' look like. Given the evidence presented in Case Study Two, we can infer that the 'new-ness' of *Jazz 625* is hard to recapture.

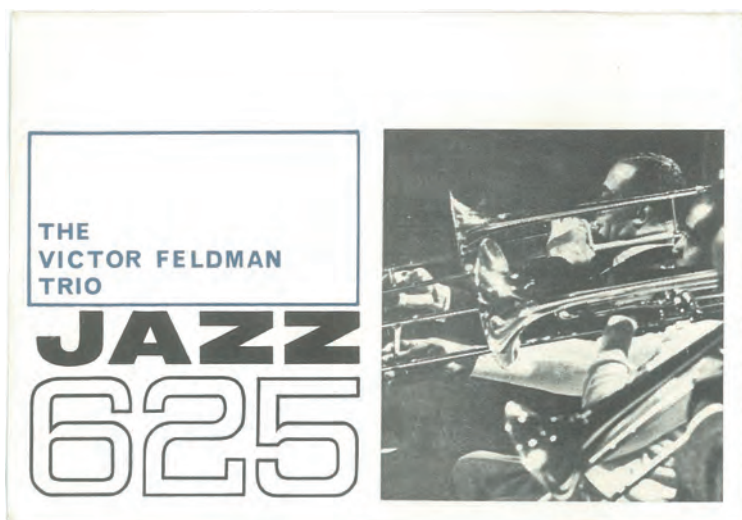


Fig. 14: The programme's modernist branding extended to the design for audience tickets.
Property of John Weston.

The student crew, broken up into sub-teams, reported to their core crew supervisor who took responsibility for reporting to director and producer. Across Days 1 and 2, core crew passed down 'tacit knowledge' to their sub-teams, providing historical context for production decisions. Logistical and operational challenges were addressed by sub-teams working largely separate from each other (e.g. lighting crew did not observe sound crew meetings). Director Mark Kershaw set the pace: communicating remotely with script supervisor Jayne Savage and on set with Pillai and Xhosa Cole to prepare initial drafts of the running order and script.

Nevertheless, surprises happened on Day 2 as musicians diverted from the expected bar counts which had dictated shot planning. In rehearsal, Savage (now on-site) redrafted documentation to accommodate these changes. During the shoot, as further changes occurred, Savage and Kershaw responded in the moment and communicated new instructions via radio talkback to the camera crew to ensure a smooth televisual sequence. Trust between crew members – and a director with a cool head – is essential in these situations.

Fig. 15: Mark Kershaw directed and vision-mixed Jazz 1080, providing strong leadership and modelling professional discipline. Photo: Ian Davies.



Dynamics: a way of working

The core crew's pre-existing dynamic from their days at BBC Pebble Mill provided a firm basis on which to build. Shared anecdotes and jokes were used as tools to explain elements of the production process. Taking pity on Pillai's inexperience, the core crew unpicked their own processes 'for the benefit of Nic.'

Dynamics and trust were an underlying theme in the interviews that Pillai had previously conducted with 1960s production crew. As grams operator Pat Heigham recalled, everyone in a BBC unit went through rigorous training:

"The BBC train people. I had six months in studios, shadowing various people on the camera in the sound department. Then, you go away for a three-month residential course to the training college in Worcestershire, and they take you, basically, through the whole A-Level Physics syllabus again [...] It's a very, very deep, thorough training."

Fig. 16: Charles Osborne (left) and Mark Kershaw (centre) discuss how best to light the piano.
Photo: Ian Davies.





Fig. 17: Camera operator 4 adjusts his viewfinder. Photo: Ian Davies.

Student experience

Without the benefit of nine months of BBC training, we could not be sure that our student crew would be up to the intense discipline of the two-day shoot. The fact that core crew members had teaching experience from the BBC facility in Wood Norton was crucial to our production's success. Fears were allayed and techniques imparted during a preparatory training session run by camera supervisor James French and during stolen moments during the two-day shoot.

"It's that sort of professional discipline that I hope we've instilled today which perhaps might not have been in the student environment and hopefully showing that all those disciplines have to knit together to actually make it all work at the right time for the recording."

Mark Kershaw, *Jazz 1080* director, interviewed immediately after the shoot

"I saw this project as a brilliant opportunity to work with industry professionals, network and gain some brilliant experience under industry professional supervision."

Anonymised student crew feedback

Student experience

"I learnt so much from listening to others."

Anonymised student crew feedback

"One of the biggest things I learnt was the order in which things took place. I was one of the behind the scenes camera operators and so I went around all the locations in a studio shoot talking to the professionals in those areas. I learnt more about the backgrounds of the professionals and the ways that they got to where they are today. This was invaluable to me."

Anonymised student crew feedback

"This experience helped me in my professional development in the sense that I learnt about staying vigilant and being able to do and how to adapt to anything that was asked of me."

Anonymised student crew feedback

"I learnt how calm former BBC director Mark was which will have a huge impact on me later on as I am still quite pedantic when I am directing!"

Anonymised student crew feedback

Fig. 18: Sound supervisor Tony Wass answers student questions. Photo: Ian Davies.





The shoot: survival, not perfection

Day 2, crunch time: the musicians are here, ready to rehearse. It's happening tonight.

An important addition to the crew today is Jayne Savage, the Script Supervisor, who has worked remotely with the director on Day 1 but on Day 2 is a crucial player in the production gallery. She hastily redrafts the script as it develops; she counts bars as the musicians perform; she ensures the director is oriented within the script at all times so that he can determine which shot is coming next.

This is one of the most important roles in the production of music television.

Fig. 19: Jayne Savage (left), Mark Kershaw (centre), student autocue operator (right). Photo: Ian Davies.



Fig. 20: The musicians wait for a signal from the floor manager as cameras receive instruction. Photo: Ian Davies.

The shoot: survival, not perfection

For the musicians on the studio floor, rehearsal time on set is an odd experience. They're asked to recreate creative improvisation by rote to guide the camera team. They're closed out of the radio talkback system, through which the production gallery communicates to camera crew via earpieces. There are long waits in silence as this happens, with rehearsals stopping and starting as camera choreography is perfected.

A compressed timescale means that musicians are rarely privy to the technical processes that mediate them, except in a superficial way. Indeed, the liaison between Xhosa and the production team was probably luxurious in comparison to musicians used in the 1960s, for whom a television studio shoot was just one date in a long international tour.

These tensions were humorously recalled by Humphrey Lyttelton, the second presenter of *Jazz 625*, in his memoir *Take It from the Top* (1975, Robson Books):

“On TV, the job of passing on [...] instructions and requests to the set normally belongs to the floor-manager, an authoritative type permanently encased in head-phones who, because he is partially insulated against the sound of his own voice, tends to issue instructions in a barrack-square bellow. Stentorian injunctions like ‘Hold it Squire, HOLD IT!’ or ‘Start again, old son!’ directed at jazzmen of uncertain temperament in the full flood of creation added considerable suspense to rehearsals.” (p.117).

Fortunately, our floor manager Dr Vanessa Jackson – also Degree Leader in Television at BCU and Pillai’s project mentor throughout the shoot – was far more sensitive to musicians’ requirements. Similarly, while some of Pillai’s interviewees had echoed Lyttelton’s recollection of bad behaviour from talent, the Xhosa Cole Quintet were models of professionalism.



Fig. 21: Floor manager Vanessa Jackson, in a rare stentorian moment. Photo: Ian Davies.

The shoot: survival, not perfection

Jazz 1080's presenter Juice Aleem was keenly aware of the challenges of his role, post-*Fast Show*. As a key figure in the Birmingham arts scene, he brought the gravitas which Steve Race and Humphrey Lyttelton had to *Jazz 625*. The voice of the show, Juice had to adapt to last-minute changes to autocue script, working closely with floor manager Vanessa Jackson and camera supervisor James French to craft his framing role.

Juice's rapport with musicians was particularly important in an unscripted interview segment with Xhosa Cole. During the lunch break on Day 2, Juice worked with Xhosa to develop fertile avenues of discussion.

This section was slightly marred by a malfunctioning crackly hand mic but Juice's charisma carried the moment.



Fig. 22: MC, rapper and educator Juice Aleem was *Jazz 1080's* presenter, bringing authority and warmth. Photo: Ian Davies.



Fig. 23: Lee Griffiths prepares his instrument at the start of Day 2. Photo: Ian Davies.



Fig. 24: James Owston (bass) and Euan Palmer (drums, camera rehearsal). Photo: Ian Davies.

Audience experience

Audiences for *Jazz 625* applied for tickets from the production office. For many audience members, this was a wonderful opportunity to see great stars for free.

Our audience similarly applied for tickets, this time online through an Eventbrite page. Their expectations of the event were somewhat different in that they were aware of a research element to the shoot. Audience questionnaires collected in the week following reflected a closer attention to the workings of the camera crew than the recollections of attendees at *Jazz 625* recordings interviewed by Pillai.

While the director and camera supervisor noted some rocky moments technically, the student crew acquitted themselves tremendously well under extreme pressure. As the production had been vision-mixed, no post-production editing was required – though the director took some extra audience applause shots at the end of the shoot for insurance. End credits were generated in the days following by studio technician David Massey. The full video was distributed via online platforms: Youtube and the BBC History blog.

“I spent as much time watching the camera process as I did the band.”

Anonymised studio audience feedback

“Very different atmosphere to being at any other kind of live event.”

Anonymised studio audience feedback

“It was exciting to see how the programme was filmed. I hadn’t appreciated how many talented people are involved and how getting everything to come together at the right moment was so crucial.”

Anonymised studio audience feedback

Case study two: *Jazz 625 Live! For One Night Only*

Jazz 625 Live – Cheltenham Film Studios – 90 mins – rigged 2 May 2019;
broadcast 3 May 2019

In the production week of *Jazz 1080* at BCU, Pillai was invited to BBC Broadcasting House for a meeting with Adam Barker (channel executive, BBC FOUR) and Jez Nelson (CEO, Somethin' Else Productions). Building upon the success of 2018's *The Old Grey Whistle Test Live*, BBC FOUR was interested in using the same format to explore the *Jazz 625* archive. In this meeting, Pillai reported the experience of planning *Jazz 1080*, drew up a list of potential presenters/interviewees and presented archival/ethnographic findings from his project. Pillai's research supported Jez Nelson in writing the programme pitch to commissioners.

“Jazz 625 was a rare project – a tribute to an iconic 1960s programme dear to those with a passion for jazz history. Nic worked with us throughout the development, research and production of the programme. His knowledge of and passion for the original series was invaluable at every stage: from production insights, to research resources and stylistic touches. As exec producer I really appreciated the fact that he was there when we needed him but was also respectful of the pressures of a busy live production. Nic played an important part in what was a little bit of TV history.”

Jez Nelson, CEO Somethin' Else

“It was a privilege to be able to revive the unique BBC brand Jazz 625 and bring it back to life for a new contemporary audience on BBC FOUR.”

Adam Barker, channel executive BBC FOUR

“Jazz 625 Live was a wonderful way to bring a milestone of BBC History to life, with scholarship, flair and insight. Many congratulations to Dr Nicolas Pillai for this project.”

Robert Seatter, Head of BBC History



Fig. 25: Scott Hamilton (sax), Dave Green (bass), Charlie Watts (drums) at Pizza Express Soho. Screenshot with permission of Somethin' Else.

The BBC4 documentary format

Jazz 625 Live! would combine four pre-recorded documentary inserts with a live broadcast from Cheltenham Film Studios, shot during the jazz festival so as to recruit big-name musicians attending. Over the course of pre-production, Pillai was employed as a consultant, providing a unique opportunity to compare the processes of *Jazz 625* in the 1960s, *Jazz 1080* at BCU, and this 21st century broadcast programme.

Unlike *Jazz 1080*, which had replicated the performance-centric format of *Jazz 625*, BBC FOUR's *Jazz 625 Live* had to perform multiple functions: a reenactment of a seminal jazz programme using contemporary stars; a recreation of the aesthetics of a black-and-white broadcast; a documentary account of the significance of *Jazz 625* to broadcasting history; a live television event.

A session involving Scott Hamilton, Dave Green and Charlie Watts was shot at Pizza Express Soho, with accompanying interviews. This shoot trialed the techniques that would be used in the live broadcast to recreate the aesthetics of *Jazz 625*.

As well as the interviews shot with Hamilton, Watts and Green (the latter had appeared on the original programme) at Pizza Express, a small team travelled to other interviewees around the country. The original producer of *Jazz 625* and the series that followed it, Terry Henebery, recalled the circumstances of production; Cleo Laine, with her daughter Jacqui Dankworth, was filmed watching back her 1965 appearance; people of interest such as Val Wilmer, Ram John Holder and Courtney Pine commented on the context and legacy of the programme. Pillai and Xhosa Cole also recorded onscreen interviews.

These segments, combined with voiceover narration and archive clips, were helmed by the documentary director Chris Walker and edited together at the Somethin' Else studios in the weeks leading up to the live broadcast. In the industry, segments of this kind are still anachronistically referred to as VT inserts (from the days of videotape).

Like *Jazz 625* and *Jazz 1080* before it, the performance elements of *Jazz 625 Live!* took place across two days, under the direction of Marcus Viner. Day 1 rigged the studio, Day 2 ran dress and camera rehearsals, culminating in the live broadcast in the evening. Due to the commitments of musicians during the festival, a camera rehearsal with all talent present was not possible.



Fig. 26: Rod Youngs (drums) in the opening sequence of *Jazz 625 Live!*; note the replication of the 1960s programme's typeface. Screenshot with permission of Somethin' Else.

Figs. 27-30: Interviews from the VT segments.
Screenshots with permission of Somethin' Else.



The BBC4 documentary format

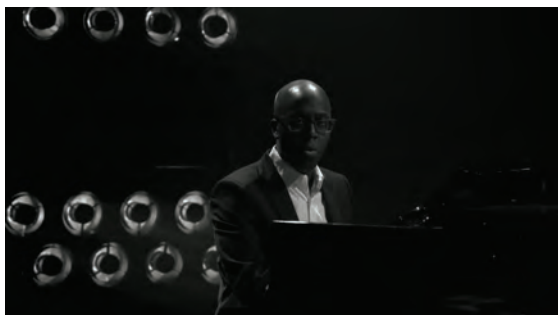
A house band would provide continuity throughout the programme, with guest appearances. Robert Mitchell (piano) acted as bandleader, devising repertoire in advance, with Jean Toussaint (sax), Shirley Tetteh (guitar), Larry Bartley (bass) and Rod Youngs (drums). The house band met for rehearsal the week before broadcast at The Vortex Jazz Club, Dalston, with a drop-in from guest artist Jacqui Dankworth. Other guests Joshua Redman, Camilla George and Gregory Porter were only available on the day of broadcast.

Andi Oliver was chosen as the programme's presenter, a role which required energy and quick thinking. Wearing an earpiece, reading from autocue, improvising when things went wrong: a live broadcast presented a very different proposition to that which had faced Steve Race or Humphrey Lyttelton in the 1960s. Andi conducted in-studio interviews live with some of the musicians and guests such as Gilles Peterson and Jay Rayner, both of whom were playing the festival.

Fig. 31: Andi Oliver, the show's presenter. Screenshot with permission of Somethin' Else.



Figs. 32-35: Jean Toussaint (sax), Robert Mitchell (piano), Larry Bartley (bass), Shirley Tetteh (guitar). Screenshots with permission of Somethin' Else.





Figs. 36-37: Dame Cleo Laine and her daughter Jacqui Dankworth. Screenshots with permission of Somethin' Else.





Figs. 38-39: Close-up on Tetteh's guitar; Joshua Redman, Jean Toussaint, Camilla George (saxes). Screenshots with permission of Somethin' Else.



The BBC4 documentary format

In the days leading up to the shoot, producer Janie Valentine had finalized the links script which Andi Oliver would read. Pillai provided programme data as well as anecdotes from his ethnographic research and documents at the BBC Written Archive for Valentine's script and for the accompanying BBC Radio 2 broadcast *Jazz 625 Live* (broadcast 5 May 2019).

Haven't been able to pin down which of the three Oscar Peterson episodes this number is from unfortunately. Only have one camera script of his to refer to! Hopefully the facts below can be helpful:

Cleo Laine performed this version of 'Lady Be Good' in an episode with her husband's band, The Johnny Dankworth Quintet. The episode was recorded on 8 November 1964 at The New Marquee Club on Wardour St in Soho and broadcast three months later on 13 February 1965. Cleo was no stranger to BBC television, having previously appeared on programmes such as *What's My Line*, *That Was the Week That Was*, *Compact* and *Monitor*. She was one of eight women to appear on *Jazz 625*. The others were Otilie Patterson, Marian McPartland, Annie Ross, Millicent Martin, Beryl Bryden, Dakota Staton and Anita O'Day.

Booking Oscar Peterson was a coup for *Jazz 625*. Producer Terry Henebery was so keen to feature the Canadian pianist that he requested a budget increase to cover the band. Like many of the show's international bookings, the deal was brokered by impresario Harold Davison. Here, Oscar appears with his classic trio, Ray Brown on bass and Eddie Thigpen on drums.

Wes Montgomery appears here playing 'Full House.' As was common practice, the crew recorded two programmes back-to-back on one date, making best use of the talent available. This tune comes from the 14 April 1965 episode, shot at BBC Television Centre.

Fig. 40: Email from consultant Nicolas Pillai to producer Janie Valentine, 1 May 2019. Note the limitations created by the absence of certain camera scripts in the BBC archive. Documents were selected representatively; it would have seemed redundant to archive all three Peterson scripts.

Fig. 41: Link script excerpts by Janie Valentine. Note the level of detail deemed manageable (a) for the live presenter to convey, (b) for the at-home audience to absorb in comparison to Fig. 40.

JAZZ 625: ONE NIGHT ONLY LINK SCRIPT
SEQ: 21 TX: 3 MAY 2019

**SEQ.21. ANDI BACKREF & CHAT TO GREGORY.
LINK TO VT (01:39)**

ANDI IN FRONT OF BAND

ANDI
 Gregory Porter singing Musical Genocide!

AD LIB - great having a grammy award winner join us tonight.

Gregory's going to sing another song later... but Gregory I know you are a fan of someone else who appeared on the original Jazz 625 show – pianist Oscar Peterson.

GREGORY RESPONDS

Time once again to delve into the Jazz 625's rich archive. At the time Oscar Peterson was a big star so it was a big coup for the show to get him, although the producer had to go an ask for more budget. Here's a snippet of the great pianist performing Hallelujah Time on the show in 1964.

VT NEXT

Issue Date: May 2, 2019 Page: 18

JAZZ 625: ONE NIGHT ONLY LINK SCRIPT
SEQ: 25 TX: 3 MAY 2019

**SEQ.25. ANDI BACKREF. LINK TO VT
EVS FLOAT (0:45)**

ANDI IN FRONT OF AUDIENCE

ANDI
 Robert Mitchell and the Jazz 625 house band playing Robert's own tune Les Theatre Des Bouffes.

We're live for a very special edition of Jazz 625. We asked our audience here in Cheltenham to dress smart in homage to the original show. And they've done a great job – here are some audiences

EVS: MUTE

back then. As you can see also very smart but in each shot you can always spot a smoker puffing away.

ANDI (IN VISION)
 And now a classic performance from 1965 featuring a British Jazz legend and trailblazer – Cleo Laine.

Cleo was one of only 8 women amongst the hundreds of musicians that appeared over the course of two years. This track was recorded at the Marquee Club in 1964.

Issue Date: May 2, 2019 Page: 22

Comparison to Jazz 1080

While Pillai was involved in almost every aspect of the *Jazz 1080* production, his participation as a freelance consultant to Somethin' Else meant that less data could be accumulated. It is useful to note the similarities and divergences between each programme – and to their shared source material.

In his consultant role, Pillai advised on programme format, sourced interviewees, provided information on programme recording and broadcast dates, confirmed archival footage availability, contributed to press and publicity, wrote script for presenter Andi Oliver's onscreen links and appeared as a 'talking-head' interviewee for one VT insert and the accompanying BBC Radio 2 broadcast. This involvement provided an unparalleled opportunity to place the project research into the public eye and to observe television production as it developed.

The live broadcast of *Jazz 625 Live!* took place at Cheltenham Film Studios, a facility located away from the main festival. The space permitted a sophisticated camera rig, using four cameras, a craned jib and a van parked outside that relayed the live broadcast. Unlike *Jazz 625*, which was produced in-house, the production employed various freelance firms to handle sound and relay. This is now common practice in television production.

Jazz 1080 had employed a crew of 25; *Jazz 625 Live!* employed a crew of 41; compare to the *Jazz at the Maltings* crew photo, Figs. 5 and 6.

Comparison to Jazz 1080

BBC FOUR's decision to broadcast in black-and-white required specialist lighting. 'True' black-and-white was not possible with current cameras and so the solution was to turn up contrast to maximum levels, bleeding colour out of the image. This aesthetic decision drew a large amount of press attention, as it was the first black-and-white BBC broadcast since 1974.

This decision illustrates a tension within the production, between a desire to communicate the successful jazz mediation characteristic of *Jazz 625* against a tendency towards nostalgia common to BBC FOUR documentaries. Similarly, the set was designed to evoke the layout of a Dizzy Gillespie recording from BBC Television Theatre. This detail was extremely effective – paying tribute to Jez Nelson and Nicolas Pillai's favourite episode of the original series and conveying with brevity an atmospheric detail from another era of television.

Figs. 42-43: Recreating Television Theatre backlighting from Dizzy Gillespie (top) for Gregory Porter (bottom). Screenshots with permission of Somethin' Else.



The broadcast was scheduled for 90 mins and so performance sequences, presenter links and live interview segments were timed to the minute, shaped around the length of the VT inserts. Crucial to the success of the programme was the ability of the presenter Andi Oliver to manage timings and chance circumstance, all the time receiving instruction from the production gallery via earpiece.

Recording live is a tightrope. At one moment the autocue failed; Oliver's ability to fill time here – learnt through a career of live TV – was a particular skill that other presenters might not have had.

The moment was a great example of Mark Kershaw's credo, expressed during the making of *Jazz 1080*: '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.'



Fig. 44: Close up on Young's drum kit. Screenshot with permission of Somethin' Else.

Fig. 45: Gilles Peterson (left), Andi Oliver (right). Members of the production crew in the background. Screenshot with permission of Somethin' Else.



Comparison to Jazz 1080

Press coverage of *Jazz 625 Live!* was gratifying: it was Pick of the Day in the TV listings of numerous broadsheet newspapers.

Long-form articles in *The Guardian* and *Jazzwise* magazine quoted Jez Nelson and Pillai on the intentions and historical context of the programme. Pillai wrote blog posts for BBC History, the AHRC and Cheltenham Festivals. In addition, he was interviewed for BBC Points West on the research background of the project.

Audience overnights were in the region of 177k viewers, consolidated (i.e. including iPlayer catch-up) 196k. The Audience Appreciation Index was 84.

Outcomes and recommendations

Outcomes from Jazz 1080

- Research observation of television production from idea to shoot
- Generating facsimile production documents, interpreting timescale of 1960s production
- Modelling practice-as-research for jazz studies and television studies
- Introducing practice-as-research capability for BCU TV studios
- Student training
- Musician experience of the studio environment, resulting in professional photos and showreel
- Xhosa Cole uses clips from *Jazz 1080* for his winning application to BBC Jazz Musician of the Year 2018
- Test case for justifying the commission of *Jazz 625 Live!* on BBC FOUR

Outcomes from Jazz 625 Live!

- Increased public interest in 1960s jazz television
- First sustained BBC FOUR engagement with *Jazz 625* production crew-members and musicians
- BBC Archives begins digitization of existing *Jazz 625* holdings
- Shortlisted for Doctoral and Early Career Award in the AHRC Research in Film Awards 2019
- Follow-on funding application co-written between Pillai, BBC History, BBC Archives and Somethin' Else for consolidation of programme and project legacy

Further project outcomes

- Dataset of all jazz programming on the BBC 1960-1969, published on project website
- Oral history archive of 1960s production crew, musicians and audience members
- First academic journal special issue on jazz television, *Jazz Research Journal* 12: 1
- Three book chapters and one comic strip dramatization of the first night broadcast of *Jazz 625* (see page over)
- AHRC Research Networking application based around historical reenactment, to be led by Dr Vanessa Jackson
- Three conferences (Jazz and Visual Style; In the Beginning, Duke; Jazz on the Telly) providing a forum for academics, industry professionals and members of the public to interact and network over shared interests
- Jazz and the Media network which will act as a hub for networking and advocacy around collaborative work

Fig. 46: Shaping fiction around research for the indie comic Slang Pictorial 4, art by Nick Prolix.



Recommendations

1. Making is researching/researching is making

The experience of making television has been transformative to Pillai as a researcher. However, it must be acknowledged that the resources available to him through his fellowship are not commonplace. Many universities do not have the capacity for television production in the manner of *Jazz 1080*. Nevertheless, it is within everyone's capacity to reconsider their assumptions regarding the boundaries between 'research' and 'practice.' To do so is to face resistance from traditionalists and especially from those protective of their territories. Once you start annoying those people, you're probably doing something right.

2. Tacit knowledge is as valuable as documented knowledge

Academia has a lot of catching up to do if it is to record those 'common-sense' professional practices that fail to be documented. But if we understand the decisions that are made at every stage of a production process, then we have a better chance of understanding the roads not taken. This wider understanding lays the groundwork for formal innovation.

3. Institutions shape creativity

At the AHTV event held at the Barbican in February 2019, a panel of programme commissioners expressed their desire for formally innovative pitches. And yet, understandably, production companies pitch in a way that they know will be accepted favourably, second-guessing commissioners. By proceeding from new research *Jazz 625 Live!* sets an important precedent. However, a great deal more may be done – especially when researchers are involved at each stage of the production process. As well as generating new research, this involvement will help to shape the television of the future.

Broadcasters need to understand the requirements upon academic schedules and the demands of the Research Excellence Framework. It is to be hoped that the relationship built with the BBC and Somethin' Else through this project will lead to further outputs and that the Jazz and the Media network will facilitate this.

What next?

It was scary to be an academic in a professional television environment. But, as this booklet has hopefully demonstrated, it can be intensely rewarding and furthers research in exciting and novel ways.

To conclude the project, a Jazz on the Telly conference is scheduled for 12 October 2019 at the project's host institution, BCU. As well as reporting back to delegates the progress of the project, sessions will include academics reporting on their own research and an industry panel discussing the challenges of jazz television. Following this day, a Jazz & the Media network will encourage further collaboration around research and television production.

In collaboration with BBC FOUR, BBC History, BBC Archives and Somethin' Else, Pillai is writing a follow-on funding application for impact and engagement which will consolidate the legacy of the project. The projected scheme will develop public-facing exhibitions and performances in collaboration with BBC History, work with BBC Archives on the public availability of 1960s jazz programming and with Somethin' Else on further programme pitches. For academics, the follow-on application will offer workshops on working with industry, practice-as-research and creative engagement.

While more jazz programming exists in the BBC archive than we had previously expected, some episodes have been irretrievably lost. With the comic-book artist Nick Prolix, Pillai is developing a series of graphic 'reconstructions' which will revive these wiped programmes through archival detail, interview recollections and theoretical observations.

The two-year fellowship is over but the work is just beginning.

About the author

Dr Nicolas Pillai is a research fellow based in the School of Media. With Dr Katherine Williams, he is the editor of *Jazz Research Journal*. He is the author of the monograph *Jazz as Visual Language* (I. B. Tauris, 2016) and has written numerous articles and book chapters on jazz, film and television. He is the co-editor of *New Jazz Conceptions: History, Theory, Practice* (Routledge, 2017) and is currently co-editing the edited collection *Rethinking Miles Davis* for Oxford University Press.

Over the course of the *Jazz on BBC-TV 1960-1969* project, Pillai has acted as an advocate for 1960s BBC jazz programming through public lectures at the National Jazz Archive, the British Music Experience, the London Jazz Festival and academic conference papers in a variety of international settings; blog posts for BBC History, Cheltenham Festivals, the British Film Institute, Critical Studies in Television, London Jazz News and Birmingham City University; and has advised on a curated series of screenings of jazz television at BFI Southbank.

For a popular audience, Pillai writes liner notes for Blu-ray releases by the BFI and Arrow Films (*Paris Blues*, *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore*, *Kansas City*, *Woodfall: A Revolution in British Cinema*, *Yentl*, *Les Demoiselles de Rochefort*). He is now working on a series of comic-book 'reconstructions' of lost 1960s jazz television with the artist Nick Prolix.

BCMCR

Birmingham Centre
for Media and
Cultural Research



BIRMINGHAM CITY
University

Designed and produced by
Chris Pearson Creative Communications
www.chrispearson.net



Arts & Humanities
Research Council

