



Working Lives in Black British Jazz

A Report and Survey
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Introduction

What is it like to work in UK jazz? This report explores the working lives of UK jazz musicians, and, in particular, the working lives of black British jazz musicians¹.

Why is this necessary? Firstly, in the UK, the growth of the cultural or ‘creative’ industries has become one of the more pronounced features of contemporary economic life, with the music industry playing a more than significant role. Yet jazz music barely features in discussions of the creative economy, despite making significant contributions to the nation’s economic and artistic wealth. It is important to begin to rectify this omission, by evaluating both the economic *and* cultural value of participation in UK jazz.

Secondly, if we wish to understand jazz as a cultural or creative industry then it is important to establish just *how* people undertake working in jazz – how they make a living and a viable career (or not, as the case may be). Indeed, from a policy perspective, the day-to-day struggle of musicians to survive is an important consideration. If it is to be effective, intervention to promote jazz needs to take into account the actual working lives of those at the heart of the music. Such experiences are not widely known about or understood.

Thirdly, how the jazz economy treats its black musicians – fringe workers in what is already a marginal cultural and economic practice – is also virtually unknown, outside of the direct experiences of musicians themselves. Black musicians ‘punch above their weight’ in British jazz, and bring important cultural experiences and musical influences to bear in their practice. Yet there remain unanswered questions about the treatment and inclusion of black musicians in the larger jazz scene.

This report therefore aims to raise awareness of three key issues:

- The role of jazz as an important component of the UK cultural or creative industries
- The *general* importance of understanding the working lives of musicians in UK jazz
- The *particular* experience of British black and other ethnic-minority musicians working in UK jazz

¹ This includes black and other ethnic-minority musicians, either born in Britain, usually as first or second generation children of Caribbean, African or Asian migrants, or else born overseas in these regions and then subsequently migrated to the UK.

Research Context – What is Black British Jazz?

In a very basic sense black British jazz is simply the jazz which happens to be made by black musicians in the UK. But as a recent AHRC funded research project showed², it is actually a good deal more than this.

In the first place black musicians, mainly from the Caribbean and Africa, have been bringing musical skills and influences to Britain since the early twentieth century. By the mid-1930s all-black swing bands were playing dance halls and high society venues across Britain. Despite its simplifications Stephen Poliakoff's drama series about a London-based American swing band, *Dancing on the Edge* (BBC, 2013), gives us a glimpse of the rich cultural significance of this moment³.

After World War Two, the Windrush generation of migrants from the Caribbean included many innovative jazz musicians. Perhaps the most important was saxophonist Joe Harriott, arguably responsible for launching so-called free jazz in Europe, quite independently of parallel developments in the US. The modern jazz avant-garde, it seems fair to say, begins with a black British musician.

By the 1980s a new generation of British-born black musicians was turning to jazz. The Jazz Warriors, a black big band, made a startlingly hybrid music with echoes of reggae and African pop as well as the US bebop tradition. And they brought it to thousands of young people who had never listened to jazz before. At the end of the decade it looked as though black British jazz musicians were going to do something unprecedented – make jazz a truly popular form. But a restless music industry was already moving on.

Today black British jazz is an exciting and innovative part of the national jazz scene. And in important respects black musicians continue to have an impact and significance beyond their numbers, and indeed beyond jazz itself.

² 'What is Black British Jazz? Routes, Ownership and Performance' was a two and half year project based at The Open University and Funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council as part of its Beyond Text programme.

³ The most popular British-based black swing musicians of the period were the trumpeter and bandleader Leslie Thompson (originally from Jamaica) and the bandleader Ken 'Snakehips' Johnson (born in British Guiana).

Part of this has to do with the cultural diversity of the music. Black musicians reinvigorate the jazz tradition by bringing musical influences from across the African diaspora - Caribbean reggae and calypso, African highlife and township, US hip hop. These 'translations' into jazz are crucial. But just as significant is the broad approach at stake here. Black British musicians tend to see jazz as a dynamic and cosmopolitan tradition, one in which the music is undoubtedly an art form, yet also belongs to the people. In an important sense, by bringing such an approach to their work these music makers look and listen forward to an inclusive multicultural Britain which has yet to be fully realised. They point to the future in other words.

And there is a strong practical side here. Black British jazz musicians are also at the cutting edge of music education and training, bringing their open and dynamic approach to jazz to young people in a variety of settings. Jazz, it seems from the evidence of these players' outreach work, can empower and transform young lives.

This is the context for the research presented here. It builds upon earlier work for the 'What is Black British Jazz?' project, funded by the AHRC and based at The Open University. That project tackled many important questions about the music, the musicians and their cultural impact. The present document deals with something slightly different; how the musicians themselves experience their working lives and how they 'fit' into contemporary jazz in the UK. As such, we hope it has some immediate practical significance for musicians, arts administrators, policy makers and the wider music industry.

Part 1 - Jazz as Cultural Industry

The value of music industry to the UK's economy has long been recognised. Since the 1990s, genres such as rock and pop, hip-hop and classical music have been widely promoted as symbolic of 'Creative Britain' (Smith, 1998) and as vital contributors to the health and wealth of our national cultural or creative industries (DCMS, 2014).

Yet, within this policy discussion, jazz has been largely ignored. We suggest that this neglect is both economic and cultural.

The jazz economy is widely perceived as small and insignificant. Yet this is surprising given that in terms of production, participation and employment, it ranks close comparison with both folk and opera, forms of music widely perceived to be commercially viable and vital components of the UK music industry. Also, in terms of revenues, Riley and Laing (2010) estimate that the annual turnover of the UK jazz sector in 2008 to be in the region of £85 million, including over £30 million in music sales and around £25 million in ticket sales. However, rarely has jazz been the target of significant commercial or public investment to further stimulate production, or develop its audiences and markets.

A major part of the problem is that - notwithstanding the few established major venues, labels, orchestras and performers - the jazz economy is quite informal, diffuse and difficult to measure and map. Nonetheless, estimates have consistently shown that audience numbers for jazz are equivalent to (and often exceed) those for art forms such as folk, opera, ballet and contemporary dance (DCMS, 2012; Riley and Laing, 2006). Despite this, jazz remains a largely 'hidden' economy, mainly taking place in small clubs, pubs, halls and arts-centres, ranged across the UK, and rarely enjoying any mass audiences or media exposure. Evaluating the economic significance of jazz is therefore a complex task, and supporting its practitioners and audiences fraught with difficulty. The jazz economy is not so amenable to analysis in the same way as other more visible or integrated branches of the music industry. Yet, as we've seen, jazz *is* economically significant, and deserving of greater attention as an industry, and as a source of work and employment.

At the cultural level, the neglect of jazz is no less depressing. Jazz has long suffered from being seen as an esoteric or minority pursuit, one that falls somewhat unsatisfactorily between 'classical' and 'popular' music. And unlike folk, with its impression of being indigenously rooted in UK or British national history, jazz is still often seen as a cultural

interloper – an American or African import, a form of music that is somehow alien or non-indigenous to the UK. Thus, jazz is rarely located at centre of our shared national imaginary – or at least as imagined by certain socially elite or establishment groups. As one of the musicians we interviewed suggested:

‘...jazz comes from black America, so considered to be underground, the dark part of life and not considered to be high art. The Queen doesn’t go to watch jazz...’

This cultural marginality has tended to mean that jazz hasn’t attracted its fair share of public subsidy or support. There has never been any explicit or systematic cultural policy focused on jazz music⁴. It was only in 1968 that the Arts Council of Great Britain first began to award small bursaries to jazz musicians. Today, Jazz Services – Arts Council England’s principal National Portfolio Organisation supporting UK jazz – receives a basic annual funding of around £300k to promote jazz and support touring musicians.⁵ Furthermore, jazz has only recently (and still somewhat sporadically) entered the elite music colleges – and is still regarded as largely subordinate to the classical tradition in music education. The BBC has long supported jazz, but, as others have argued, often in an ad hoc, piecemeal and somewhat ambivalent fashion, compared with its devotion to other genres (Carr, 1973; Nicholson et al, 2009). And beyond the national broadcaster, jazz barely receives any significant media coverage (Riley and Laing, 2009).

Jazz therefore does not have the same strong and well-supported institutions to lobby for it, nor to fully invest in its development and dissemination, as enjoyed by other musical genres. This has significantly limited its capacities to develop markets, grow audiences or invest in training, development and support for musicians - notwithstanding the significant and effective efforts of its existing advocates and institutions.

Yet, this report maintains that jazz is significant both economically and culturally, and ought to be regarded as both a component of our cultural and creative industries, and as a vital, indigenous art form in a culturally diverse UK. Making jazz visible – bringing it to the attention of different policy-makers, as well as potential new producers and consumers – remains a vital task. Just as British folk has enjoyed an impressive commercial and artistic

⁴ Though efforts have been made to bring jazz more centrally into cultural policy-making - see for example the history of reports and consultations undertaken by Jazz Services and affiliates at:

<http://www.jazzservices.org.uk/index.php/jazz-services-resources-reports>

⁵ Randomly, we might compare the support for Jazz Services with, say, the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra which *on its own* receives around £2.5 million p.a.

revival in recent years then, we might ask, why not jazz? This report makes a small contribution to the project of raising the profile of jazz in Britain by choosing to illuminate the working lives of black British jazz musicians – revealing a relatively hidden and informal world of cultural and economic production, in a music too often made invisible in the drive to refashion the creative image and economy of the UK.

The focus on black musicians is not simply a matter of social and cultural justice, important though that is. It is also to do, as we suggested earlier, with their vital contribution to the making of a uniquely *British* jazz, one which reflects the cosmopolitanism of the contemporary UK. Black British musicians enrich jazz cultural and musically, and in their educational work show how jazz can be an empowering means of uplift and inspiration for black and white youth.

As for focusing specifically on musicians as *workers*, the purpose here is twofold; firstly to bring to light the everyday difficulties of surviving as a professional musician, a significant problem often overlooked in creative industry policy-making, and especially difficult for black and ethnic minority workers; and secondly, to augment the barely-established literature on the UK jazz economy – not only with further survey data, but more fully with some detailed qualitative accounts of working lives in jazz.

Part 2 - Black Working Lives: Themes and Issues

This section reports on in-depth qualitative interviews undertaken with over 50 black British jazz musicians, the majority of whom were interviewed between 2009-2011 under the auspices of the parent project *What is Black British Jazz?*, with some final interviews added in 2013.

The significant majority of black British jazz musicians live and work in London, and secondarily in the large provincial cities of Birmingham and Manchester - though black musicians working in jazz can also be found nationwide. Our interviews were largely undertaken with London and Manchester-based musicians. Our parent project estimated (based on our own database and extrapolation from previous research) that there are, minimally, around 100-150 professional black British jazz musicians⁶ currently working in the UK.

The majority of these musicians were born in Britain, as children or grandchildren of economic migrants from the Caribbean. Others came to Britain as children from the Caribbean, or, secondarily, from West Africa or the USA. A growing number of black British jazz musicians are children of Asian or British-Asian parents who originally migrated from the sub-continent of India or Bangladesh. It is worth noting however that black Britons have been involved in jazz ever since the music came to our shores in the early part of the 20th century (McKay, 2005).

This section focuses on two broad themes – the **culture** and the **economy** of black British jazz, with some specific sub-themes addressed within.

⁶ That is to say, we estimate that there are this number of black jazz musicians who earn the majority of their income from music making and teaching, and who identify themselves as jazz musicians. For many of these musicians, jazz performance, although their preferred activity and genre, will not be the category of music making from which they make most of their income.

2.1 The culture of jazz

In this section we first reflect on the culture of jazz - the kind of family, education and cultural influences that have shaped the decision to work in jazz, and shaped its performance and undertaking by musicians.

2.1.1. Family and Home

For black British jazz musicians, particularly with Afro-Caribbean heritage, a culture of **extended families and friendship networks** often provided a tradition of **domestic music-making** and a supportive family environment for musical development. This was most frequently developed in the context of informal instrument playing, performing for family, or indeed listening to recorded music on disc, on the radio, and on television. As one musician offered:

'I was attracted to [jazz] partly by different things from my childhood. My dad played Jamaican records – ska, bluebeat, rocksteady [and] I was drawn to playing the horn after seeing Louis Armstrong blow on TV. Hearing Jamaican early ska and bluebeat was influential: black guys playing music acted as role models when there was little opportunity elsewhere [to hear them]. These were positive role models⁷.'

Some **technologies** were particularly crucial in the context of the home:

'My parents didn't play instruments, but there was a lot of music in the house. Every West Indian household had a Blaupunkt record player, huge thing, a gramophone, which they called the Blue Spot Grand...which you opened and there was a drinks cabinet inside and then you had your seven inches but also your 78's and all of that. And every time there was a party, this thing would spark up, you know and the sound was amazing, just amazing.'

⁷ All quotes are from musicians interviewed, who were granted anonymity. For the purposes of this report it was decided not to 'tag' musicians with any identifying markers - such as their specific ethnicity, age, gender or instrument - to avoid any possibility of public recognition, commenting as they are, on sensitive issues of UK jazz, work and race.

The everyday exposure to the radio, the gramophone, records, television, cassette tapes and local bands and sound-systems was important in the musical education of many black British jazz musicians. These home music technologies and cultures of listening provided an important connection to established music traditions, but also a way of making new ones. The cultural theorist Paul Gilroy (1987, p. 164) has notably emphasized that in the context of the generations under discussion, 'Black Britain prized records as the primary resource for its emergent culture and the discs were overwhelmingly imported or licensed from abroad' – thereby providing an important alternative for those without means of musical production, or access to significant mainstream musical venues and cultures.

Where paid-for music lessons may not have been an option in many instances, the care and guidance of parents and their interest in nurturing the musical and wider cultural development of their children meant that making links between **music and identity** began at home. One musician got into jazz after seeing Courtney Pine play at the *Free Nelson Mandela* concert on television in 1988. His mother, realizing this was an important moment for him, went and bought him a clarinet:

*'(...) the sound of jazz did kind of resonate in me and when I heard Courtney Pine's album *Destiny's Song & The Image of Pursuance*, it was bought for me by my mum after I saw him on the [TV] and she could tell I really liked it (...). I think straight away she was aware that it was important to see a black musician doing that and I made that connection as well.'*

Our research suggests that for the current crop of established black British jazz musicians (mostly born between the 1950s and 1980s), the earliest childhood exposure to jazz (and other music) was a social learning experience based initially in the family, and then only later in the school, workshop or academy. Most interviewees were children of parents from the Caribbean, who arrived in the UK in the late 1950s and early 1960s, and this clearly influenced their musical inheritances and cultural repertoires. At the same time the experiences of being born and (mostly) living in an emerging multicultural, inner-city Britain also significantly shaped musicians' cultural identities:

'Well, my father being a part-time DJ had really great taste in music so obviously we had music - the Caribbean stuff that my father would get, I guess at the time it was ska, blue beat, you know, sort of early forms of reggae but my dad also loved like jazz and blues (...) and then of course, in assembly we used to listen to, like Beethoven,

Bach and Stravinsky and those kinds of stuff, so I was hearing a lot of different types, I guess living in East London at the time, as well, you're exposed to all the kinds of different cultures, we were living in East London and that was full of, like, Africans, Asians, you are absorbing all this stuff as a young child.'

Questions of how jazz might express or articulate a sense of culture and identity were often important to our sample, and these took hold at an early age – and invited mature reflection on the part of our respondents:

'Music was, I suppose, once or twice a week, a way of escaping the pressures of being an immigrant.'

'I was born in England, in East London, so I identify with that because that's where I was born. But how do I express that, how do I relate to that, how do I really connect with it?'

2.1.2 The jazz 'calling'

While it was evident that many of our sample grew up in a 'musical household', where jazz sometimes featured, a more common theme in the interviews was that people 'came' to jazz, not necessarily through direct exposure from parents, but through gradual learning, often through some 'back door' or unusual routes, and often through self-seeking and through self-learning. In short, jazz was generally something *acquired* and not simply inherited or endowed.

Most black musicians came to jazz in their teens, through a combination of inspirational school-based teachers, community bands, local youth orchestras, or through moments of personal inspiration – less frequently did musicians become jazz players later in life, or at advanced stages of music education or career.

The strongest motivation for becoming a professional jazz musician was the **'love of jazz'**, often recollected as conceived in a moment of epiphany. Since most musicians were not schooled or initially exposed to jazz, they experienced a turning point or moment of transcendence that we characterised in our analysis as the **'jazz calling'** or the 'coming to jazz'; as three musicians here describe:

'I don't know how to explain but the music took me – that's it, it just took me.'

'So I bought this [Stan Getz] record, took it home, put it on the record player, and I just stared...I was totally, totally gone (...) I just went aaaah! Aaah! I've found it!'

'...Sonny Rollins playing Don't Stop the Carnival (...) that was quite an incredible thing, that was one of my first, sort of, saxophone experiences.'

Such accounts echo those commonly found in academic studies of the jazz musician's life. For example, the ethnomusicologist Paul Berliner (1994, p. 21) has described how jazz musicians commonly experience 'love at first sound'.

In addition to this notion of a sudden conversion to jazz, many musicians emphasized that while jazz was a kind of 'calling', it then had to be quite actively sought out and developed. Unlike soul or pop (or even reggae and funk), jazz is not so immediate, apparent and easily available; and unlike classical music it is not institutionally embedded, encouraged and made to appear 'standard'. We found that getting into jazz requires determination and some work – not simply mastering technique or style, but in finding teachers, bands and institutions with which to practice and perform.

2.1.3 Primary and Community Education

In addition to a musical education within families, **public education** at all levels, both within institutions and without, formal or informally undertaken, supported the acquisition of musical knowledge and opportunity. These opportunities ranged from beginner's steps in the school recorder group to weekend workshops, regional and national orchestras, to trips abroad, local college courses and university degrees.

For many of the musicians in our sample, the music policies adopted by metropolitan local education authorities - especially in the 1970s and 1980s - had a profound impact on their musical education, allowing them first exposure to an instrument, and to jazz. In particular, the then Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) was cited as an important influence by many in our sample, since its policy of generously subsidising musical instrument tuition for school-age children was what first enabled many black British jazz musicians access to the kinds of formal learning their economic circumstances wouldn't have ordinarily afforded.

Amongst those who were able to take advantage of this policy, the shaping interventions of state-funded (and, less frequently, private) music teachers were recognized as crucial for cultivating jazz love and skills:

'I guess, once I got to secondary school, I started to have some [lessons], I got a really good piano teacher there, and he started introducing me to Theolonius Monk, and so I guess by the time I was about 12 or 13, I started to write my own music.'

While enlightened, social-democratic education opened up opportunities for many of our sample, it should also be noted that in contrast to most white musicians, jazz education for black British musicians was a much more **community-generated** practice; much less structured and more informal than conventional music education. Musicians referred often to playing and practising with friends and members of neighbourhoods and communities, where exposures to soul, reggae and jazz were often combined. From the 1970s and 1980s many (especially London) musicians also learnt to play jazz in community workshops designed to bring jazz to socially-disadvantaged groups. Most well-known of these were the Weekend Art College jazz workshops (notable for the involvement of the trumpeter and band leader Ian Carr, and producing such alumni as Julian Joseph, Courtney Pine and Zoe Rahman) and John Stevens' Community Music project (also featuring Pine) which began in the 1980s.

Others took advantage of any community music outlets they could find. Here, the mother of one musician, in the process of undertaking her own (publicly funded) informal education, serendipitously encountered a youth band in Hackney that was to be particularly important for her son, as he described:

'She used to do a lot of evening classes...just about anything that was going...in the local church hall. She was there every week, all these youngsters [were] arriving and she could hear them practicing (...) she said to me 'There's these kids downstairs and they're always practicing. It's very organized and all of that and I think it would be something you'd be interested in. (...) I went a couple of weeks and was hooked...totally hooked. It was a local marching band, youth band and they played a load of different styles and things.'

Other musicians spoke of the significance of community workshops as providing fertile ground for talent to develop and connections to form:

'I used to get free lessons at a youth club, Jamaican youth club in Fulham.'

'I went along to the Music Workshop which is a community workshop in South London and the singer Anita Wardell was giving lessons there.'

'[I] started going to this workshop in Kentish Town, which was run by Ian Carr, and it was called Weekend Arts College (...) I was around 16 (...) So I joined there and I met people like Philip Bent, I met Wayne Bachelor who was there already, and then I met other people around there, Marian Jean-Baptiste, who's a very respected actress now, you know, does big American shows and movies, she was there too, and everybody, there was the dance part, the drama part, music part, all kinds of different things, so we were all mixed together and I met other people.'

It can be argued that the resurgence of black British jazz from the early 1980s took place in the context of significant state support for community arts⁸, an enlightened ILEA education policy (until its 1990 abolition), and a thriving economy of formal and informal community venues and clubs where jazz music could be heard and played. It is perhaps no coincidence that it was at this moment the significant and still most prominent cohort of black British jazz musicians – such as Courtney Pine, Cleveland Watkiss, Julian Joseph, Orphy Robinson, Gail Thompson, Steve Williamson – emerged. Members of this cohort were either part of the (still) most famous black British jazz band, The Jazz Warriors, or associated with some other high-profile projects and industry investments (including major label record deals) involving black British musicians. The musicians in our sample often referred to the 1980s as the high-point of black British jazz in terms of the number of opportunities to get signed to record companies, sell records, appear in higher profile and mainstream media and play more frequently in more prestigious, larger venues. The story since, however, is often presented as one of decline, stasis or neglect.

⁸ Particularly in London, under the Greater London Council of the early 1980s, which promoted a strong cultural and arts policy for economic and community development.

What have clearly declined are opportunities to learn jazz formally or informally in schools and in community contexts⁹. Cuts and fragmentation in local authority provision, have led to the relative decline of opportunity for music (and jazz) lessons amongst (particularly secondary) school-age children, a situation the current economic recession has only served to exacerbate; one musician wondered:

'...a good example in my own family, my niece, she's always wanted to play the saxophone but her parents can't afford to buy her one, [and] because there's no school instruments, where are these kids going to get to play? It's not a thing that kids don't want to play music; they've got no access to it.'

One of our participants also referred to a decline in the number of clubs and venues of the kind that would welcome and enable black jazz musicianship – and this ought perhaps to be considered in the context of the broader decline of black music venues in the night-time economy amidst more tightly regulated and administered systems of licensing and policing (e.g. see Talbot, 2004; Hancox, 2009).

Respondents also noted a more general decline of interest amongst young musicians themselves in jazz music, amidst the emergent popularity of hip-hop and other related genres and styles. Much community music policy and intervention now takes hip hop and urban dance music as a standard point of entry or engagement, further marginalizing jazz practice (one of our respondents and a jazz educator pithily referred to this as 'the curse of the DJ workshop').

It is against this background - a decline in community music projects, local authority music services and convivial venues and encouragement for young and black performers – which we need to see the training initiatives which have emerged from within black British jazz itself. Many projects, mostly small scale and ad hoc but also some longer term programmes, have been developed by black musicians since the 1980s. One of the most innovative, and with a wide reach, is Tomorrow's Warriors, initiated by bass player and educator Gary Crosby. Funded by Arts Council England, Tomorrow's Warriors has been extremely effective

⁹ 'Since the closure of the Inner London Education Authority music service in the 1990s, there has been no London-wide strategic agency for music education. While musical activity for young people is flourishing in some respects, provision is not consistent across the 32 boroughs and some aspects of music teaching, particularly instrumental and vocal tuition, that are difficult to access for those on low incomes. While early access is generally good, the increasing pressure on local authority budgets means it is harder to provide free intensive tuition and progression opportunities at intermediate and advanced level' (*Music Teacher*, March 2010)

in bringing jazz to teenage Londoners, and sometimes even inspiring young musicians outside its' base in the capital. Tomorrow's Warriors is also notable for including participants from a diverse range of class backgrounds and ethnicities. Its methods are innovative and, crucially, workshops encourage young people to be involved in musical and project decision-making. These are exactly the elements which according to a recent report on community music projects from the Institute of Education (Saunders and Welch, 2012) represent best practice.

Tomorrow's Warriors, together with other black-led music training initiatives, represent a vital strand in informal music education in Britain. Their potential to reach thousands more young people, given adequate levels of funding, is enormous. – But this latent potential does not override the sense amongst our sample of musicians that there has been a decline of opportunity (and therefore interest) amongst young black musicians in jazz.

2.1.4. Higher Education

While jazz appears to be increasingly marginal to many primary and community educational contexts, it has now achieved a small establishment in **music colleges and universities**¹⁰, with a few black musicians involved. This is quite a recent phenomenon.

Courtney Pine has elsewhere suggested that the roots of black British jazz in community music-making arose partly as a consequence of the fact that the academy in the 1970s and 80s wasn't ready or able to accommodate black musicians who wanted to play jazz:

'Many of the bands in the reggae scene had their own horn sections. Many of these guys were desperate to play jazz. In a short space of time I had enough players to form a jazz collective, The Jazz Warriors. This grouping of musicians was like a university for musical experimentation: In the 1980s the pathway for higher learning for me was also cut off. You couldn't even study saxophone as a main instrument in British universities at that time, you had to play the clarinet. Today things are completely different. I have been made an honorary doctor of music at the University of Westminster. We also have the situation where a lot of young players like Soweto Kinch and Denys Baptiste are university graduates' (Pine, cited in Smith, 2006).

¹⁰ Most prominently, jazz degrees are offered at Birmingham Conservatoire, Leeds College of Music, Middlesex University, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, Guildhall School of Music, Trinity Laban and the Royal Academy of Music.

The shift Pine describes is reflected in our own sample which revealed a seemingly highly-educated group, a number of whom had music qualifications at degree level. The Musicians' Union estimates that of UK professional musicians in general, over 60% have attended higher education and 40% have some form of a music degree. Our sample is suggestive of the fact that in absolute (if not relative) terms the expansion of jazz education in HE has enabled greater numbers of black and ethnic minority musicians to obtain places in the elite institutions. The picture has moved on *somewhat* since the 1980s, when one of our older respondents recalled her time at a leading music college:

'I was the only black person on the course, there weren't that many black people there at all, in the whole college, it's not typically the way that people of that ethnic background [got] into music.'

But at the same time, black musicians remain significantly **under-represented** in music colleges (not just on jazz courses). It is estimated that less than 5% of jazz musicians are from black or ethnic minority backgrounds (Riley and Laing, 2010). And because we have seen a decline in the variety and scope of jazz schooling and publicly-funded 'community music' activity focussed on jazz - of the kind that has traditionally stimulated interest, and directed black musicians towards further study - it is not clear that this disparity is going to be overcome in the immediate future. Certainly, also, the shift in higher education funding, to place the burden of loan and debt onto students, might also further militate against black musicians undertaking university-based music qualifications. The issue here is that since major migration from the Caribbean in the 1950s and 60s black people have been disproportionately located in the working class. And it is class which is the key indicator of educational attainment for any ethnic group (Gillborn, 2009).

While higher education in music became an option for many black British jazz musicians, especially in the 1980s and 1990s, it is perhaps fair to say that very often the 'musical academy' has a different idea of jazz than one possessed by our sample musicians. Many musicians remarked how the black history and musical heritage of jazz was undervalued in the academy - as well as affiliated genres such as soul and reggae - which were considered non-serious popular cultural forms and, often, not worthy of serious study by tutors and academics. Others railed against the widespread assumption in the academy that black musicians were 'feel' players, rather than being technically and intellectually competent - these historically-enduring, racist assumptions about the 'natural' (in)capabilities of different

groups were perceived to explain why black musicians and educators were largely excluded from the academy; as one musician argued:

*'...there's this whole thing that [black jazz] it's enthusiastic and fiery but not too exact (...) it's this whole myth about great [black] players, great feeling but when it comes to the intellectual.. (...) Hang on a minute, who was the guy who created the chord changes for Giant Steps? John Coltrane, and if I remember **he** was pretty black. Who's got the most advanced harmonic sense of the piano **ever**? Art Tatum – pretty black to me!'*

One issue for black British musicians is that they've tended to be excluded from the kinds of intense, formal musical schooling often enjoyed by white, middle class children – so it is less the case that they are *incapable* of reading or approaching music in an 'intellectual' manner, rather they are less likely to have had much less *opportunities* to do so.

Others felt marginal, even once they'd made it into the elite courses in the academy:

'I think it was me and another black guy on the course and, I don't know, it's kind of, all of these guys had already been through some quite intensive music education before they'd got there, so I guess I, you know, and I was just, sort of, doing what I was doing from just, sort of, listening to the music, and, I don't know – so it kind of made me separate, I guess, from some of the other guys.'

Yet this is not to deny that more black musicians have entered the academy, certainly since the 1980s, and that once enrolled, have often been supported and encouraged to develop. We heard of charismatic or dedicated individuals, who motivated generations of musicians to have the confidence to be the best they could be; as one musician remembered:

'[Name of teacher] at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama made a tremendous effort to help talented black musicians without the same chances of formal musical education as their white peers, to get into GSMAD. This enabled several prominent black British jazz musicians to study there. This needs to happen again: too many black students can't get in to music degrees because they can't sight read to the same level as white students who have many years of formal musical training and parental support behind them.'

2.2 The Jazz Economy

To work as a professional jazz musician is to enter a **small and precarious world**, where ideas of regular, well-paid employment, a steady career path and strong public and institutional support are often dreamt about, but rarely obtained. This section looks at the basic elements of the experience of working in the jazz economy.

2.2.1 Income and status

The **average annual income** for the sample of musicians we surveyed is quite low – 50% of our musicians earned less than £10k per annum, and 70% less than £25k. This is comparable with the figures for all UK jazz musicians identified by Riley and Laing (see section 3.2) and the Musicians' Union estimates of 2012, which suggest that around 56% of all (not just jazz) musicians earn less than 20k per annum.

Our figures also indicate that working in jazz – even for the most educated, regularly employed and extensively trained of musicians – compares unfavorably with earnings in other genres, as well as earnings in other professional occupations outside of music that demand a requisite education and training. In the UK, in 2012, the average annual wage for the whole working population was £26.5k – a figure that over 70% of (our sampled) jazz musicians did not obtain.

The majority of our sample described themselves as full-time professional musicians. Yet, as with many professional musicians, a significant number relied on additional jobs to supplement their income. Most often this was **music teaching**, either in schools or privately, which was nonetheless seen as in keeping with a professional identity as a 'working musician' and not regarded as a job 'outside' the music industry as such. Indeed, being involved in jazz as a teacher was viewed as immensely *important* because it allowed one to pass on the practice of playing jazz to younger generations – so keeping it vital and alive (Banks, 2012).

Alternatively, most jazz musicians were versatile enough to branch out into work in other genres such as soul, pop, or funk as a means of supplementing their total income from music:

'I do lots of different styles, you know what I mean. I do everything from you know club dates, functions, concerts, little mini-tours, recording sessions, you know, demos, whatever, you know. And the teaching as well, so, yeah, but I mean most of my live work is jazz-based, traditional jazz-based. But you know (...) lots of variety, lots of different configurations.'

In these ways, it is perhaps possible to subsist as a professional musician within the music industry alone. But the costs of this are constant insecurity and uncertainty, and the need to invest significant effort into building contacts, networks and the kinds of self-promotion required to obtain even modestly paid forms of work. The constant demands to be always in or on the lookout for work come with no guarantee of financial security. The typical work pattern of a 'portfolio' musician is described here in the fieldnotes we jotted down in an interview with a Manchester-based player:

Once a week [he] organizes a residency and plays at a jazz club night in the city. He plays one night a week at another club, teaches eight hours a week in two different locations and if not gigging at the weekend, busks in Manchester city centre. He is still not financially secure: when asked what his career ambitions were, he answered, 'Just to be financially comfortable and be able to perform.'

But as with many musicians, jazz players also had to take second or third jobs outside the industry as a means of supporting their jazz practice:

'So I started my own band (...) doing all the bookings (...) writing my own music, saving money you know, I even had to get some jobs of my own to make sure I had the money to pay for the recording sessions. I was working at [an] airport, Toys R Us, selling ladies' perfume, all kinds of crazy jobs'.

'[I] moved up to London – which actually meant delivering pizzas and being, like, a cleaner and that sort of thing. It meant a lot of low-paid jobs, actually, to be honest with you (...) I keep running out of money and so at the moment I do IT support.'

While it is difficult to establish whether black musicians are paid any less than white musicians for bread-and-butter gigs - largely because in jazz almost *everyone* is on a bare minimum) - what they do lack is the range of work and employment opportunities made available to white musicians, as the following sub-sections discuss.

2.2.2. Live Performance

Typically, aside from teaching, **live performance** provides the basic subsistence income for the jazz musician. Yet, gigs are often difficult to come by with great regularity, or may only be one-offs, or form part of a relatively short or a seasonal contract. Major concert events, the full range of jazz festivals, and regular touring opportunities are available only to the few. Most typically, gigs in clubs, pubs and arts centres provide a small, staple income. Payment varies for different performances – ranging from around £50 for a small venue gig, to several hundred pounds for a larger venue or for work touring or supporting a major artist. Few musicians in our sample reported regular paid work in this latter category. As one musician (half) joked:

'The average classical musician can make 70 quid an hour. If a jazz musician gets a 70 quid gig, it's like, whoa! What have you been doing? They think you're suddenly a superstar!'

The jazz economy is indirectly subsidized by the labour of jazz musicians, since generally they can only afford to play jazz through undertaking other forms of employment.

Increasingly, musicians complain of being paid such a minimal amount that the actual costs of performing are not able to be met – effectively, they must 'pay to play'. This is not just the fate of the jobbing musicians – it is often even the case for the most well-known and successful of musicians. The manager of one successful and award-winning British quartet described the economics of travelling from London to play a gig in Manchester, where, after costs of transport, accommodation, promotional costs, and sundry expenses were calculated, there was insufficient money left to pay the musicians. Often this band are reliant on audiences buying copies of CDs at the gig to guarantee the whole event breaks even; if that doesn't happen (as happened in this particular case) the band end up out of pocket. Indeed, it is now not uncommon to find established musicians being asked to play for free; a growing problem for all musicians as the idea of playing 'for fun' or simply for 'love' is increasingly deemed to be reward enough in itself; but as this musician argued:

'Musicians get paid a pittance and are often asked to play for free. Why should I play for free?'

The problem of low (or no) pay and irregular, unpredictable incomes has knock-on effects for other areas of life. Musicians routinely identified the difficulties of accessing loans, mortgage finance, accruing savings, making pension contributions, having access to childcare, sick pay or enjoying the possibility of holidays in the same manner as other professionals. The picture for black British jazz musicians is much like that for musicians more generally, as suggested in recent Musicians' Union research:

'Musicians with children or dependents face additional financial barriers to working. Musicians earning low fees report that their fee barely covers the cost of childcare; after travel, tax and childcare there is little financial gain/incentive to work at all' (MU, 2012, p.14).

Yet while institutions, promoters and venues are largely held responsible for low pay, there is also the problem that many new entrants – those searching to get a foot on the ladder – are often complicit in being *willing* to play for free or the bare minimum in order to obtain work – as one musician pithily put it:

'The worst part about jazz isn't the racism; it's when people play for £5.'

Location of work is also a crucial issue. While the majority of paid work is available in metropolitan centres (London principally) – there are difficulties associated with having to work and live in such cities:

'The centre of London (...) no provision is made for parking for artists or for getting stuff out of vehicles. Getting in and out of venues can be a nightmare, particularly if you are a percussionist. The logistics of playing a gig at Pizza Express in London, for instance is really difficult (...) Parking costs a lot too.'

But getting to work isn't perhaps the most significant problem. Several of the musicians we interviewed have had to move out of central London, far away from regular work, in able to afford to buy or affordably rent a home. Travel costs are increased, and abilities to network, and be present on the scene, are thereby diminished.

Mobility is also an issue in terms of finding work beyond London. Most of the major UK cities have some kind of small jazz scene and at least one or two clubs. One musician who had lived in Manchester and now resides in London made the point that the reduction in work opportunities and limited public subsidy for jazz, now almost makes it impossible for jazz bands to work *between* cities as they once used to. He said:

'Payment for gigs is now so low that it won't fund, properly, a band with several members to make a trip to Manchester from London.'

Funding cuts and stagnation or deflation of wages and fees have exacerbated the perceived divide between London and the provinces in jazz, making the creation of intercity links between musicians difficult, if not impossible.

Additionally, because the provincial scenes are micro-scale and even more poorly paid than London, the most ambitious or talented musicians will eventually move to the capital to try and secure better work opportunities. One musician, even though he felt Manchester was a *'supportive'* city for jazz musicians, suggested he often felt *'provincial, on the periphery'*. The pull of the capital has the effect of draining talent away from the regions, further undermining the viability of locally-based scenes.

While geographical considerations were uppermost in the accounts of many respondents, this was not just at the regional scale. Not only was London considered *'a hard place to be'* compared with other European cities, with exceptionally high rents and high cost of living generally, the UK itself was seen as inimical to the growth of a jazz economy. There were suggestions that the UK should construct a networked jazz infrastructure similar to France and Germany and Scandinavian countries - where more substantial levels of public support for jazz artists, higher pay rates and greater work opportunities, as well as the perception of a more general *'respect'* for the jazz musician than in the UK, appeared attractive. For example, Berlin, it was noted by one musician, has more of a jazz culture, in its support for *'mixing and matching things'*, whilst the Netherlands offered subsidized housing for artists.

These were all considered to be useful examples of policies for growing and stabilizing jazz cultures and making it easier for the musician to make a living.

2.2.3 Music industry

It is fair to say that perceptions of the **music industry** tended generally towards the negative:

'The music industry doesn't care about jazz. They only care about money and massive selling...jazz doesn't sell. They may have a 'Department of Jazz', but that's just to tick a box somewhere.'

This neglect of jazz, both as an art form and a popular music saddened and angered many musicians:

'The music industry treats us with indifference. It's an industry. Jazz doesn't make money so they are not interested. They are about making money, so they are not interested in us. They have a different agenda. Jazz is about art, using art to educate and make the world a better place. The music industry is about making money.'

While the 1980s saw a number of black British jazz artists signed to major record labels, this has declined markedly. Now, few black artists are signed and most have to make a living touring and performing, and be self-sufficient in terms of managing their own careers, recordings, releases and means of distribution – often with temporary or one-off partnerships and deals with small labels, distributors and promoters.

None of the musicians we interviewed had significant record deals or contracts with established record labels. Some had had such deals in the past, or else existing short-term or one-off agreements with small labels and distributors to help produce and circulate their work. Payment for studio work, other fees or royalties were not significant sources of income for musicians in our sample.

One of the responses of musicians to financial precarity and the lack of interest from the broader industry has been to develop a **DIY culture** based around small communities of musicians, audiences and institutional networks. In some ways this is a continuation of the

same, previous do-it-yourself ethic that had first led to the emergence of black British jazz in the 1980s, as one musician described:

'The Jazz Warriors brought a lot of people together. We were spurring each other on and influencing each other. We could go somewhere, everywhere, each night and hang out...The Jazz Warriors was really about being self reliant, doing things yourself, DIY style and that's what (...) was happening. We were getting a lot of gigs ourselves and in the process (...), a lot of media attention.'

Today, there are still some projects with a reflexively black DIY ethos – Orphy Robinson's Blacktop, or Gary Crosby's Jazz Jamaica, for instance. However, black musicians tend to support each other more by simply playing with each other. The fact that some black musicians tend to play in all black, or partly black, bands is testament to the continuing need experienced by black players for cultural solidarity and self-reliance – though some (especially younger) musicians are less programmatic about this necessity.

That said, public support is to a limited extent helping to establish footholds in the music industry for young players. The Tomorrow's Warriors project discussed above has in effect developed the DIY tradition in a new multicultural context while also receiving support as an Arts Council National Portfolio Organisation.

Similar ventures include work undertaken by Serious, a London based-company that (with Arts Council England support) promotes UK jazz artists, events and educational programmes with a strong emphasis on ethnic diversity and inclusivity. All this suggests that, while black British jazz no longer has the high-profile it had for a brief period in the 1980s, it still retains some significant presence in UK jazz, and recognition at a grassroots level. Yet, a common feeling persists of isolation and a lack of support for artistic production; this combines to inhibit the sense of collective 'voice' black musicians might possess, or an ability to advocate and promote black British musicianship in the jazz field.

The digital age has widened the DIY brief to include the possibility of internet-based, self-sufficient production. New technology means that musicians can, at least, distribute their music through Facebook, Sound Cloud or similar sites. Online retail opportunities have expanded allowing direct sales by artists of CDs and MP3s. Indeed, around 65% percent of our participants were using the internet to market and sell their music, in line with wider MU (2012) estimates of 64% of musicians in general across the UK.

One musician enthusiastically described how this digitization is reshaping the jazz world:

'Labels, promoters, broadcasters and so on are all being phased out. They are obsolete. [We are] moving into a period where musicians are doing it for themselves. I look forward to that. [It means] you are accountable to yourself; you can shape your own destiny. [We can] build venues, get our own promoters and radio stations. Technology is pushing us all in that direction.'

However, while opportunities undoubtedly exist to 'phase out' the intermediaries and to become economically independent – the current size of the jazz market, and the hard work involved in selling one's work (and promoting one's self) certainly do not make this an easy or always viable solution to many of the problems identified above. As one musician reminded us:

'I do a lot of stuff online, I'm quite active on MySpace, Facebook, Twitter (...) [t]he only thing is, online, you have to reach out [to] them one person at a time, and it's very time-consuming I can tell you. I spend a lot of time just being online [but] if I had a slot, say, on Jools Holland [a BBC TV music show] you're talking about a million people seeing you. If you're doing it online, you're doing one at a time (...) the odds are definitely against you. Most jazz artists do not get a chance to be on Jools Holland.'

2.2.4 Race and the jazz economy

Thus far, many of the issues raised in this section could reasonably be said to be common to the experience of *all* jazz musicians, in so far as low pay, precarious and irregular work and significant lack of support from the music industry are generic problems faced by jazz musicians regardless of race or ethnic background.

But, as we've already intimated, issues of race and ethnicity *do* play a significant role in shaping economic opportunities in UK jazz – and this subsection outlines more precisely what these issues might be, according to the accounts of our research respondents.

The issue of **race and racism** was both an implicit and explicit part of every conversation with black British jazz musicians.¹¹ We discussed the situation within UK jazz in the context

¹¹ On the other hand certain leading white jazz musicians have expressed the strong opinion that race and racism are *not* an issue in British jazz, and further suggested that the existence of a research project addressing the question 'What is black British jazz' is an inappropriate use of public money. See Sawyer (2010).

of individual experience and at an institutional level. Questions about the latter referred to infrastructure, public funding and media coverage of jazz, and here problems of racism were regarded as pernicious. The following quote sums up the feeling of many respondents:

'I always say you can tell jazz is definitely black music cause of the fact it doesn't get any money!'

Yet musicians were often reluctant to answer questions about racism experienced on an *individual* level, and responses were often characterized by a rueful *'what d'you expect?'* and accompanied by a resigned shrugging of the shoulders. Many musicians did not deny the existence or persistence of racism but often expressed views that it was best to *'get your head down and get on with it'*, or to focus on *'concentrating on everyday life, rather than discrimination'*, as two musicians put it.

Few were prepared to identify particular instances of overt racism on the part of individuals and institutions (with one or two exceptions). Yet most insisted that some degree of racism persisted, if in largely oblique or unspoken ways, making life frustrating and awkward. One described meeting one of the bosses of his former record label who *'didn't even look at me, didn't want to touch my hands'*. Some musicians, when jobs were denied them for instance, did wonder whether racism was in play, but felt they could never know for sure, even if they suspected it might well have been a factor. *'Casual'* racism, such as that experienced by one musician, who, when working as a performer at one prestigious London venue, arrived for work only to be directed to the kitchen, and on another occasion found himself mistaken for a bodyguard, were not unusual experiences and most often provoked a wry smile, rather than anger. One person spoke of racism *'being in the air'* in most music industry contexts, and so while the majority typically felt and admitted that *'things were better than they used to be'*, race and racism were regarded as persistent and enduring influences affecting the availability and quality of work opportunities.

For example, a number of our respondents claimed that while there is some (relatively) significant industry support for major white jazz artists (most often cited were Jamie Cullum, Joss Stone, Clare Teal) equally talented and creative black artists tend not to receive the same backing. And while there is never any overt public *disavowal* of black artists – the bare fact remains that there is not same level of industry investment in black British jazz performers. Black jazz musicians tended to feel they were considered as less *'marketable'* than white artists, part of an ethnically-identified *'niche'*, and somehow perceived to lack

appeal to the 'mainstream' jazz audience, despite often working within similar traditions and styles to white artists. We might note that the lack of support from institutions, promoters and record companies leads to reduced opportunities to perform, a low public visibility and to diminished sales – and so the myth that black jazz artists are 'not commercially popular' is reproduced from within:

'It's all about (...) the promotion and the support (...) they [black musicians] wouldn't get the same support as Jamie Cullum got.'

Even when promoters or labels do venture to take on a black artist, as many have described, they tend to be marketed as 'minority acts', specialists deemed only attractive to members of the ethnic group they are assumed intrinsically to represent. One musician suggested that jazz festivals also tend to avoid taking on too many black or ethnic minority artists on the grounds that they operate some kind of unofficial 'ethnic quota':

'...when I called somebody up to say can we have a gig, at this jazz festival, they said, Oh, no, we've got [names black British jazz band] on already. And I said, So? And he said, Well, you're both Asian [and] that's kind of how it is. It's not that it's tokenism but it's almost like, you know, 'one in, one out', really, isn't it? We can't put you on 'cause we've got something else that's kind of 'ethnic'.'

Breaking out of a perceived ethnic 'niche' can also be more difficult for identified black artists:

'It's not easy to cross genres, you know, and I think it's not easy to cross genres especially if you are of an ethnic minority. I think other people are freer to do that, make those choices. I think when you're black British or British Asian you almost expect to fit in to the particular way.'

'I'm not going to name any names, but [when] they [the label] heard us, they said they didn't know how to market it to an Asian audience. The point being that they didn't hear that, actually, [jazz] is quite a universal language, and it's just music and stuff, and it almost felt to me, it clicked, it almost felt that, kind of, like, if you're white, you can pick and choose what influences you have, and you do, and it still gets supported and still be thought of as interesting.'

Another musician compared the different fate of two talented jazz artists, he knew, one black and one white:

[The black artist] as soon as he dared to start trying to do something a bit different, suddenly found himself off the label (...) whereas [names white artist] he's been able to branch into all sorts of areas.'

In this way not only does the jazz economy appear relatively closed to black entrants, but even when it allows entry, tends to restrict the possibilities for accessing the variety of economic and creative opportunities enjoyed by white musicians. Musicians in our sample tended to perceive limitations in the economic opportunities they could access, and frequently felt stereotyped as personifications of certain types or categories of (often ethnically-marked) jazz that they might well support or find congenial, but just as likely, can find limiting or difficult to break away from.

This is not to say that *all* musicians agreed that identifying as a black or ethnic minority jazz musician ought to be of primary concern or interest. Indeed, for certain musicians, there was a degree of ambivalence about supporting the idea of a black British jazz community or ethnic identity. Some did not want to be judged as black musicians, but rather just as good musicians in general while others wanted to stress the importance of publicly recognising the *individual* talents of musicians, and not just their ethnic background or status as community 'representatives'. As one musician put it:

'I wouldn't group Courtney Pine and Steve Williamson in the same bracket as Cleveland Watkiss or Gary Crosby (...) or Joe Harriott, I think it's kind of demeaning (...) to kind of take what they did and put it into a general movement just because they happen to be black.'

Notwithstanding these important concerns, during our research the issue of race, ethnicity and British jazz took an interesting – and unexpected turn with the emergence of a **facebook discussion group** entitled '*When are we going to see more black UK jazz musicians on UK's jazz stage?*' It is worth considering this online discussion in more detail because it opens up issues of race and the jazz economy in an illuminating way.

This Facebook group was launched on 2nd September 2011 and was extremely active for a period of about ten weeks for before becoming much quieter. In what follows we examine

this active period when a serious, sometimes celebratory, sometimes rancorous, discussion about racism, jazz, and black identity took place. The group was launched initially, as a response to a perceived lack of opportunity for black jazz musicians at a prominent London jazz venue, but developed almost immediately to more widely encompass issues of employment and representation for black musicians in UK jazz. As the initial posting put it, this was to be a:

'..discussion group, talking about issues relating to the disproportionate lack of presence of black UK artist in jazz clubs and festivals, schools and education institutions across the UK. What can we do help bring about change? Have your say...'

Respondents did indeed have their say, often in a forthright fashion. The group also grew quickly with over four hundred people signing up in the first two weeks of its existence. Several key points and themes emerged from our content analysis of postings in the active phase of the group:

- A number of first-hand accounts are given of experiences of racism, specifically at venues but also in relation to the wider music industry. There is often a good deal of detail in these accounts, and *prima facie* they do seem to suggest some institutional racism. But it is difficult to assess the level of this, or indeed its effects on opportunities for black British musicians as a whole.
- There is good deal of discussion of lack of opportunities for playing jazz. These kind of comments are not, then, really about race at all, but rather speak to the more general problems encountered by jazz musicians and enthusiasts across the UK.
- The point that jazz is by dint of its emergence and history a black musical form is made in several places. This relates to a larger theme in the group about black cultural identity and its continuing significance in jazz. One prominent musician quoted the words of the great African-American saxophonist Sonny Rollins: 'Being a black musician, in fact being a black person – everything you do is political whether you want it to be or not. That's the problem. I don't want to be political but the world puts me in that place.'
- Notwithstanding such views, there is also a certain amount of what might be described as 'post-racial' commentary, including from white participants. Here, the argument is that focusing on race diverts attention from the common problems faced by all jazz musicians. Debate between those taking this sort of position and those who want to deal specifically with race and racism became very heated.

- There was also some dispute between younger and older black British musicians, with the former sometimes complaining that they were being sidelined by the generation which had come up in the 1980s. A further division opened up when a participant suggested that certain of the most prominent black jazz musicians had not joined the group because they feared involvement would jeopardise their established positions. This was strongly refuted by other discussants.
- However the group came together around the idea that there should be a renewal of the DIY, self-help ethic which had been so important in the 1980s. One young musician actually began organising music workshops for youth in a working class area of south London and announced this to the group. There were also proposals for letter writing to venues, and lobbying of the Parliamentary Jazz Appreciation Group, about exclusion of black musicians from British jazz.

In sum, then, for the black musicians and others interested in the scene who participated, *When are we going to see more black UK jazz musicians on UK's jazz stage?* expressed a strong sense of pent-up anger and disappointment about limited opportunities for black musicians.

However, while there did seem to be some evidence of institutional racism in British jazz infrastructure it is difficult to assess the extent of this. One reason is that the sense of being marginalized or excluded may derive from other factors, as well as any racism encountered specifically within the jazz scene. So, the fact that in Britain jazz as a whole is marginalized (see the discussion in Part 1 above) no doubt contributes to feelings of disappointment. And continuing structural racism in Britain, which has reduced life opportunities for successive generation of black Britons - including jazz musicians and their families – likely plays a part too (Toynbee, 2013).

In terms of issues of race, then, our overall conclusion, from both our own survey and interview material and from analysis of the Facebook group discussion, is that there is some institutional racism in the British jazz scene. However the precise extent of this is difficult to assess, partly because it is usually implicit and rarely explicit, and partly because black British musicians encounter overlapping forms of discrimination by dint of belonging to two groups which are known to be marginalized in Britain: *jazz musicians* and *black people*.

Part 3 - Making a Living: Jazz Employment Survey

This section reports on a quantitative employment survey undertaken with 20 black British jazz musicians. It uses broadly the same questions as those used in surveys of all UK jazz musicians undertaken by Mykaell Riley and Dave Laing for the two *The Value of Jazz* reports produced for Jazz Services (2006 and 2010).

These *Value of Jazz* reports provide the most systematic research to date into the economy and cultural industry of UK jazz. As such they provide important benchmarks and comparators for this present research and for future investigations into the UK jazz industry.

Riley and Laing identified around 2000 working UK jazz musicians. While they estimated that around 5% (or around 100) of these musicians were from an ethnic minority background, it was beyond the scope of their research to provide any specific profiling of the composition of this group, or analyse patterns of employment for black or ethnic minority musicians, compared with white jazz musicians. By only surveying musicians from recognized black and minority-ethnic groups, the present research profiles a particular sub-sample in the wider community of jazz musicians, the findings from which might be usefully compared and contrasted with the findings from the broader sample identified in *The Value of Jazz* reports.

From *The Value of Jazz* research, and from our own parent 'What is Black British Jazz?' project, we estimate that there are actually around 100-150 black British musicians currently making a living in UK jazz. The sample size for our employment survey (20) therefore represents (no more than) 20% of the total number of these jazz musicians. As such, it cannot be said to be wholly representative or comprehensive in its coverage or its findings - nonetheless we argue that it might be strongly *suggestive and symptomatic* of some of the range of possible employment conditions and experiences of black British jazz musicians.

Below we set out some key statistics from the survey in table form.

3.1 Profile of Musicians

Age

Age	%
Under 25	5
26-35	20
36-45	25
46-55	45
56-65	5
66 +	0

Comments:

The table reflects the typically 'middle-aged' profile of professional jazz musicianship; it reflects the findings of *The Value of Jazz* reports in identifying a 'peak' in the 46-55 age bracket. Comparatively, Joan Jeffri's (2003) research in the USA context also identified the average age of the working jazz musician as 52 years old.

Gender

Male	80%	Female	20%
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Comments:

This reflects our understanding of the wider gender profile of black British jazz, and jazz more widely. Women are in a minority, and tend also to be employed in particular roles – often as singers, less frequently as instrumentalists and/or band leaders. Gender issues are outside the immediate scope of this survey – but there is some evidence in the qualitative material and evidence in our parent project that sexism and gender inequality continue to pervade British jazz. Some of the female musicians we interviewed (particularly instrumentalists) recounted examples of how gendered assumptions and sexist behaviour persist in jazz. This often combined with racist assumptions about the musical capacities of black women also. To be a woman, and black, and working in jazz is undoubtedly to know discrimination.

Ethnic Group

Ethnic Group	(tick one)
Black or Black British Caribbean	60%
Black or Black British African	20%
Mixed- Black Caribbean/ Black African	5%
Mixed – White /Black Caribbean	5%
Mixed – White/Black African	5%
Asian or British Asian – Bangladeshi	0
Asian or British Asian – Pakistani	0
Asian or British Asian – Indian	0
Asian or British Asian – Other	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0
Asian –Other	0
Other (please specify) - 'Mixed white/Arabian' 5%	

Comments:

It is widely known, and our sample confirms, that the majority of ethnic minority musicians in UK jazz are from black British or British Caribbean backgrounds, with the majority being born in Britain as first- or second-generation children of Caribbean migrants. A significant majority nationally, as our sample further suggests, are migrants or the children of migrants from African countries. The absence of any musicians who identified as Asian or of British Asian background should not be taken as evidence of a total absence of these ethnicities – musicians of Asian background have long work in UK Jazz, notable examples including Amancio D'Silva, Zoe and Idris Rahman, Shez Raja and Arun Ghosh. Our 50 qualitative interviews, if not the 20 employment surveys, also included musicians of British-Asian background.

Place of Residence

London and Greater London	50%
Home Counties (surrounding London)	25%
Manchester and Greater Manchester	20%
The Midlands	5%

Comments:

As mentioned, the majority of black musicians live in London and the wider South-East, with (though not shown significantly here) some clustering of activity in other cities such as Manchester and Birmingham, Cardiff and Liverpool. This echoes Riley and Laing's findings.

Professional status

Full time professional	85%
Semi-professional	15%
Amateur/non-professional	0%

Comments:

The vast majority of musicians identify themselves as music professionals, earning a living from either playing or teaching music; even when reliant on other jobs or sources of income. Here, 'jazz musician' was considered to be the paramount and principal occupation.

Number of years as working musician

1-5 years	10%
6-10	15%
11-15	5%
16-20	20%
21-25	25%
25-30	10%
>30 years	15%

Comments:

Drop out is likely high but some jazz musicians do persevere; and while the profile here tends to reflect the age profile of musicians, others have also found that there is some longevity in jazz careers, and music careers in general, despite their tendency to offer only meagre rewards (Jeffri, 2003; Riley and Laing, 2010; MU, 2012).

Styles of Jazz played

Styles	No. of persons
Modern	17
Funk	15
Free improvisation	14
Soul	14
Latin and Caribbean	12
Big Band	11
Swing	8
Fusion	6
Mainstream/Smooth	5
Traditional ('Trad')	3
Hotclub	2

Comments:

Each musician plays in a variety of styles; different types of jazz were played by individuals in our sample, with most of the respondents making the claim to be playing some 'modern' jazz (17), closely followed by 'funk' (15) and 'soul' (14), 'free improvisation' (14), 'Latin and Caribbean' (12) and 'Big Band' (11). This was a difficult question for some, since genres of jazz are often hybridized making it difficult to tell where one ends and another begins. For instance, for some, 'blues' or 'swing' might well be regarded as some component part of *all* 'jazz' that is played, irrespective of particular genre. Nonetheless, the tendency in black British jazz is towards 'modern' (post-bop) jazz, funk/soul and free improvisation – and less towards 'trad', swing or mainstream styles.

Instruments played

Instrument	No. of persons
Saxophone	8
Voice	6
Piano	6
Trumpet	6
Keyboard	5
Guitar	5
Clarinet	4
Bass guitar	3
Flute	3
Percussion	3

Instrument	No. of persons
Vibraphone	2
Double bass	2
Flugelhorn	2
Drums	1
Conductor	1
Strings	1
Melodica	1
Balafon	1
Marimba	1
Thumb Piano	1

Highest level of formal education

Secondary School (up to 16 years)	0%
Secondary School (up to 18 years)	0%
Post 16 FE (vocational)	15%
Higher Education (diploma)	15%
Higher Education (degree)	50%
Postgraduate Degree	20%

Comments:

Interestingly, 50% of our sample cited their highest level of education as degree level. This is impressive, but slightly lower than the MU (2012) average calculated for all UK musicians, of 61%. Of the musicians who had obtained degrees in Higher and then Postgraduate Education, all but two of them had studied music as their major subject.

Most important sources of musical education

Source of education	No. of persons
Mainly Self-Taught	15
Private Tuition (paid for or free)	14
Secondary school	9
Higher education	9
Community	9
Further education	4

Comments:

Musicians were asked to identify the most **important** sources through which they'd acquired their musical training and education. Most prominent were self and private tuition. Other notable sites for acquiring musical knowledge and practice were secondary schools, though some found such school provision 'woeful' and 'excluding'. The public and community provision of music education outside of formal schooling and education was clearly important, with family ties, local bands, youth orchestras and community music services being significant. Such sources were judged to be of equal significance as Higher Education, for example. Given that just under half our sample had studied music at degree level (see Table and comments above) it is interesting how few among this group saw HE as their principal source of music education. This probably reflects the jazz ethos of self-reliance in musicianship.

3.2 Work and Income

Gross annual income from music (including teaching) per year

Annual Earnings	Our sample (2013)	All jazz musicians (VofJ II 2010)
Less than £5,000	13.3%	30.6%
£5,001-10,000	40	21.3
£10,001-15,000	6.6	11.4
£15,001-20,000	13.3	9.9
£20,001-25,000	0	7.3
£25,001-30,000	6.6	5.8
£30,001-35,000	0	3.5
Above £35,000	20	10.2

Comments:

This was a difficult question both to ask and to answer. The proof of that is that nearly 25% (5) of respondents didn't feel able to answer. For those that did, the income cited is very low indeed. Over 70% of the sample earned under £25,000, much less than the 2012 UK average full-time wage of £26,500. 50% of musicians also earned less than £10,000 a year from jazz. In the higher earnings bracket, one person earned between £40 and £45,000, another between £45 and £50,000 and only one above £50,000. The small sample size ought to be recognized as generally problematic, and as likely skewing the > 35k average. Nonetheless, and while acknowledging this caveat, it is generally evident that being a jazz musician is not a lucrative form of employment. Note also that the figures for our sample are broadly consistent with *The Value of Jazz II* findings published in 2010. Interestingly, the comparison suggests that few black jazz musicians are 'middle-rank' earners - at least according to our sample. These figures are also broadly comparable also with findings for the USA by Jeffri (2003).

Principal source of income (in previous year) – as a % of total income

Source of income	Our survey sample	All jazz musicians (VofJ II 2010)
Live performance fees	37.6	45.3
Teaching	28.0	24.2
Broadcasting fees	1.9	1.3
Composing and Arranging	4.6	2.8
Royalties	4.0	3.7
Other music employment	13.8	6.0
Non-music employment	8.6	12.6

Comments:

As previously suggested, our sample size is not sufficient to be able to compare significantly with *The Value of Jazz* reports. Nevertheless, it is interesting to place our findings into the context established by Riley and Laing's research. Indicatively, black musicians appear to earn proportionately less from performance and more from teaching than jazz musicians as whole, yet also slightly more from royalties and composing. The categories of 'other' or 'non' musical employment are difficult to specify for some musicians, though it seems musicians in our sample are less reliant on non-musical employment than the norm. The category of 'recordings' used in *The Value of Jazz* reports was also missing from our questionnaire, likely this was subsumed into 'other music work' which might explain its relatively high percentage compared with *The Value of Jazz*. Overall, black British jazz musicians appear to earn a greater share of their income from teaching and affiliated activity ('other musical employment') than performing; but we must be cautious not to extrapolate too much from what is only a small, snapshot sample.

Performance venues in which employed in past year

Venue	% of musicians
Festivals	90
Jazz Clubs	90
Concert Halls	90
Pubs	55
Theatres	50
Hotels & Restaurants	30
Corporate Functions	30
Ballrooms	10
<i>Other</i>	30

Comments: Live performance work in jazz is quite dispersed and diffused across different venues and employers – most commonly between festivals, jazz clubs and concert halls, with pubs and theatres playing a secondary role. In terms of frequency and intensity of work, festivals and clubs tended to be more regular than large concert hall performances. It is unusual to find jazz musicians playing more than one or two gigs per week, or more than one or two festivals per month. In the table, ‘other’ tended to mean paid performance work in schools or other educational contexts.

Venues providing the greatest income in the previous year

Venue	% of musicians
Concert Halls	33
Festivals	21
Jazz Clubs	18
Theatres	9
Pubs	6
Hotels	3
<i>Other</i>	9

Comments: While work was distributed fairly evenly across different venues and employers, it was identified that Concert Hall and then Festival performances were the main sources of live performance incomes. While there were less frequent opportunities for black musicians to perform in these venues (see the qualitative data in Part 2), if work was obtained, it could be relied on to provide the majority of annual income earned from jazz – a significant contributor to the small gross earnings.

Online presence

Media	% of musicians
Facebook page	70
Own website	65
MySpace page	60
Any other social networking site (e.g. Twitter)	45
Part of a business network (e.g. LinkedIn)	35
Featured on Jazz Services website	35
Other	25
None	10

Comments:

Being online on a personal website and using social media is now a very important facet of being a jazz musician. Over half the respondents had their own website; the majority had previously established their own MySpace page. However, the latter was now largely redundant, (even though respondents ‘had’ it, it wasn’t used), as people had migrated to other media such as Facebook and Twitter. Some were part of a business network, most, if not all, signed up with LinkedIn. Only around a third had their details on the Jazz Services website. Two people seemed to be offline altogether.

Membership of industry bodies

Performing Right Society	75%
Phonographic Performance Ltd.	55%
Musicians Union	40%
Incorporated Society of Musicians	0

Comments:

Most of the respondents were members of the PRS (75%), and the PPL (55%), significantly higher than the estimates for musicians identified by the MU in 2012 (38% and 33% respectively). However, money from collecting societies was not listed as a significant source of income, despite the diligence of our sample in securing membership. Only 40% were MU members, noting that black and ethnic minority musicians have tended to be under-represented in this organization.

Grants or support received from public bodies or organisations

(e.g. Arts Council, Jazz Services, other funding agencies)

Yes	55%
No	45%

Comments:

Over half of the respondents had, at one time received money from public bodies or organisations. This was typically small grants to aid touring, or other subsidies for single or one-off projects and performances. Funding was viewed to be difficult to obtain and somewhat meagre and piecemeal in its provision. Several of the respondents lamented the state of the 'jazz infrastructure' in the UK, arguing that when they traveled to continental Europe their treatment at venues was better and that the touring path was better organized and funded. 'In Germany, France, jazz is everywhere. It's respected. Here it's different. There is no jazz on the TV apart from Jamie Cullum', one lamented.

Part 4 - Summary and Recommendations

In this section we sum up the key findings from our research into the working lives of black British jazz musicians, and based on these findings make a series of recommendations.

4.1 Jazz as Cultural Industry

Jazz is an important 'cultural' or 'creative' industry. Yet, there is a lack of recognition of British jazz as an indigenous genre and culture by the music industry and public institutions. Its economic value and potential are significantly under-estimated. While there is nationwide interest in jazz, current developments tend to be strongly London-centred at the expense of the provinces.

Recommendations:

- Jazz is as important for British culture as, say, folk music or opera, but crucially it needs to be made more 'visible'. Key institutions need to recognise the economic and cultural value and potential of jazz; there is likely to be a multiplier effect here, whereby greater official recognition will lead to greater interest through a virtuous cycle of development.
- To this end public support for jazz needs to be increased, with a particular focus on audience development, access and widening participation in jazz; jazz is a genre which bridges art and popular culture, and this is a premium rather than a problem as it is sometimes made to appear.
- Policy initiatives both nationally, but perhaps more importantly at regional or city level need to focus on rebalancing British jazz so it is less London-centred. Jazz could and should be made more prominent in city and regional cultural strategies across the country.
- In order to reach more homes, jazz needs to be more firmly embedded in British broadcasting and especially the BBC; the nature of jazz as an indigenous multicultural music and a 'bridging' genre, spanning both art and popular culture, needs to be recognised and celebrated.

4.2 Black Working Lives: Themes and Issues

The experience of black musicians in coming to jazz suggests that family and home environments are crucial for fostering creative engagement with music. Black musicians often come from backgrounds where a wide range of music, especially popular, was heard. Their coming to jazz was thus informed by an open and hybrid approach to music.

Formal and informal education has a major role to play in developing appreciation and creative engagement with jazz. Many black musicians benefited from school education which prioritised music making (as with ILEA in the 1970s and 80s for example). Yet today there is less support for this, while opportunities at HE level, despite having grown for jazz as a specific style, remain limited for young black and working class people more generally. Black musicians themselves have an excellent track record as educators, inspiring a younger generation and fostering co-operation and creativity in those they work with.

More than the sum of its parts, black British jazz represents a distinct tradition and approach to music making and education. Cosmopolitan, hybrid and democratic, black British jazz encapsulates cultural diversity and inclusion in Britain. Through their educational and outreach work musicians foster this creative and inclusive approach among young people from a wide variety of backgrounds.

Yet, black musicians suffer from particular problems associated with being black. The extent to which this is due to racism inherent to the British jazz scene *specifically* is unclear – though there is evidence of a reluctance to embrace and develop black jazz performers. More widely, persisting structural racism in the UK (evidenced in lack of educational and employment opportunities, stereotyping and social exclusion) plays a large part in shaping the lives of black musicians.

Recommendations:

- A systematic approach to instrument tuition and loans should be brought back into British school education at primary and secondary levels. As well as being a good in itself, learning to play music is of enormous civic and educational value.
- Access to higher education, and to HE music courses particular, needs to be opened up much further to working class, and black and Asian people.
- Public support for black British jazz community and educational projects should be increased. The social and cultural dividend from such projects is potentially enormous. Learning to play jazz in a creative, co-operative context builds cognitive

and leadership skills; black British jazz educators have a strong track record of reaching young people across race and class divides.

- Black British jazz needs to be more widely recognised as being *British* jazz as well as black.
- As elsewhere, individuals and organisations in British jazz need to be aware that deep structural racism makes being black a potential problem in many situations; this is not a matter merely of ‘political correctness’, but rather of everyday decency and respect.
- It may be beyond the scope of this report, but we should continue to fight racism and the way it continues to be structurally embedded in British society.

4.3 Making a Living: Jazz Employment

Like British jazz musicians more generally, black musicians work in a scene whose economic base is fragmented, and where pathways and livelihoods are poorly supported. Low wages and poor career prospects, endemic to the wider music industry, are especially pronounced in jazz. While the music industry tends to under-invest in jazz - and black British jazz especially - there is evidence that with appropriate support the kinds of DIY initiative currently being shown by musicians might translate into greater commercial success.

Recommendations:

- Greater tour support (complementing the existing Jazz Services support), but also venue support, needs to be provided to give jazz a greater reach in the provinces, but also to encourage wider access across social class and cultural divides.
- Campaigns for fair wages and for better terms and conditions of jazz employment ought to be nurtured and supported, in collaboration with wider industry initiatives in this area.
- Industry and public investment in (not just black) jazz performers, and in the development of jazz audiences, has the potential to reap the kinds of cultural and economic dividends provided by folk and opera – genres with equivalent audiences and levels of participation.

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