

## Impact case study (REF3)

<b>Institution:</b> 10007140 Birmingham City University		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 34 – Media and Cultural Studies		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Changing approaches to programming and the audience experience at Cheltenham Jazz Festival.		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2013 – 2020		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Prof. Nicholas Gebhardt	Professor of Jazz and Popular Music Studies	2013 – present
Dr. Craig Hamilton	Research Fellow	2014 – present
Dr. Sarah Raine	Research Fellow	2015 – 2020
Prof. Tony Whyton	Professor of Jazz Studies	2015 – present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 2015 – 2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)		
<p>A five-year partnership with Cheltenham Jazz Festival (CJF) has resulted in several significant changes in their approach to audience engagement, festival programming and artistic commissioning. Working closely with CJF's senior management, along with the marketing team, BCU researchers co-designed a set of activities that enabled the Festival to better understand its audience, redefine its relationship with performers, create original artistic work, and evaluate some of its key principles and organisational practices. Impact was achieved through the development of a mobile application, and collaboration on a series of artist-based workshops and industry-focused public events.</p>		
<b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)		
<p>This case study is about a five-year research initiative developed in collaboration with the Cheltenham Jazz Festival (CJF) in the United Kingdom. Through a diverse programme of activities, BCU researchers focused on some of the major issues currently facing European music festivals: how to better engage with and measure the experiences of their audiences, the role of digital technologies within festival environments, and the challenges of programming, organisational practices and artist relations.</p> <p>The under-pinning research by Gebhardt, Hamilton, Raine, and Whyton emerged from a long-term and substantial body of jazz research and knowledge exchange at Birmingham City University (BCU) (R04, R05, R06). Since 2015, the BCU team has undertaken several funded projects including the Joint Programme Initiative (JPI) Heritage Plus-funded Cultural Heritage and Improvised Music at European Festivals or CHIME (2015-2018) – led by Prof. Whyton and including Prof. Gebhardt and Dr. Hamilton – and the AHRC-funded Jazz and Everyday Aesthetics research network – led by Prof. Gebhardt and including Dr. Raine. These projects involved researchers from 10 universities across Europe, as well as 8 key industry partners and cultural organisations, and addressed themes such as musical value, cultural inheritance, technological change, mediation, historical understanding, equality and diversity, and individual and collective identities (R01, R02, R03, R04, R05, R06).</p>		
<b><u>Understanding Audiences</u></b>		
<p>In 2015, BCU researchers collaborated on the design of a CHIME mobile application (CHIME 'app') that responded to concerns within the CJF about how to improve the mediation of their festival sites, encourage greater audience interaction, and expand their audience into a new generation. This work revealed the way that digital and app technologies are now key elements in the audience experience at festivals, and experimented with ways in which these technologies could be incorporated into the communication strategies of music businesses (R01). The technology was further enhanced with the addition of a Content Management System (CMS). The</p>		

scheme was extended in 2020 to include the other three Cheltenham Festivals (Science, Literature and Music) as well as being made available to members of the Europe Jazz Network (EJN), the main industry organization for jazz promoters, festivals and producers. While festival activities were temporarily suspended due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, work on developing the app has now resumed (R01, R02, R04).

### **Performer relationships and original artistic work**

The BCU team's research assisted CJF to explore new creative ideas and collaborative processes. In 2018, BCU designed a Hack the Jazz Festival event to push the boundaries of CJF's commissioning process (R01, R02, R04). Eighteen practitioners, who usually worked in competition, were brought together to produce treatments for new festival commissions within a 'data hack' environment. Hamilton and Whyton established the 'fail fast/fail often' rationale and intellectual framework for the workshop to condense the commissioning process and make it collaborative, accelerating the development of ideas. They also evaluated the resultant artistic proposals ready for presentation to CJF (R01, R06). As our published research shows, such processes enable participants to discover the potential of intensive decision-making and collaborative problem solving (R03, R04, R05, R06).

### **Organisational practices in relation to equality, diversity and inclusivity**

The collaborative relationship with Cheltenham was then extended into areas of programming and organisational practice (R01, R02, R04). This included an AHRC-funded Creative Economy Engagement Fellowship (CEEF) led by Gebhardt, with Raine as the named fellow. This research addressed issues of gender equality in festival programming as part of the PRS Foundation Keychange initiative (R03). Dr. Raine completed 10 interviews with female jazz musicians that provided new insights into the challenges faced by women within the industry. As part of this work, as well as coordinating four workshops that identified potential solutions to gender discrimination (R03). These workshops provided the pathways to impact within the festival. Raine found that many of the issues that emerged were systemic within the way festivals programmed their musicians and work with them at an operational level. She set out the changes in operational behavior and programming processes that would be required in CJF's existing approach to enable a shift in gender representation (R02, R03, R04). Her recommendations formed the basis of CJF's ongoing commitment to the KeyChange pledge, particularly at the level of policy and procedures.

### **3. References to the Research (indicative maximum of six references)**

**R01:** Hamilton, C. (2019) The Harkive Project: Popular music, data, and digital technologies, in Barlow, H. and Rowland, D., Eds. Conference proceedings: The experience of listening to music: methodologies, identities, histories, Open University Press.

[https://ledbooks.org/proceedings2019/2019/02/24/harkive-project/#sec\\_1216\\_h2\\_the-harkive-project](https://ledbooks.org/proceedings2019/2019/02/24/harkive-project/#sec_1216_h2_the-harkive-project)

**R02:** Whyton, T. (2018) Space is the place: European jazz festivals as cultural heritage sites. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, pp.1-11. DOI:

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13527258.2018.1517375>

**R03:** Raine, S. (2019) Keychanges and Cheltenham Jazz Festival: Issues of gender in the UK Jazz Scene, in Strong, C. & Raine, S. (eds.) *Towards Gender Equality in the Music Industry*. DOI:

<http://mr.crossref.org/iPage?doi=10.5040%2F9781501345531.ch-014>

**R04:** Gebhardt, N. (2015) "Let There Be Rock!" Myth and Ideology in the Rock Festivals of the Transatlantic Counterculture." In McKay, G., editor. *The Pop Festival*. London: Bloomsbury. DOI:

<http://mr.crossref.org/iPage?doi=10.5040%2F9781501309038.0010>

**R05:** Gebhardt, N. (2018) "A Time for Jazz: History and Narrative in Alan Lomax's *Mister Jelly Roll*." In Fagge, R., and Pillai, N., editors. *New Jazz Conceptions: History, Theory, Practice*. London: Routledge. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315267463>

**R06:** Whyton, T. (2014) 'Song of praise: musicians, myths and the "cult" of John Coltrane', in: *Popular Music Fandom: Identities, Roles and Practices*, Routledge Studies in Popular Music, Routledge, New York. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203795125>

**Grants**

2015-18: Cultural Heritage and Improvised Music as European Festivals - CHIME (JPI, €650,000)

2016-2018 – Jazz & Everyday Aesthetics (AHRC, £42,000)

2019: AHRC Creative Economy Engagement Fellowship – KeyChange 2022 (AHRC, £41,000)

**4. Details of the impact** (indicative maximum 750 words).

The jazz research team's knowledge exchange work with Cheltenham Jazz Festival was enabled by BCU's international reputation for impactful collaborative partnerships with the music industry, including major jazz festivals, venues, and industry bodies. This impact work responded to key challenges facing the sector in the areas of audience engagement, artistic development, and organisational policy. The practical and artistic elements of the research that the team produced, along with the recommendations they made, had a direct influence on decision-making and are core to the solutions that CJF management has devised in response to the above challenges.

**CJF's understanding of its audience was enhanced.**

The CHIME mobile application (CHIME app) developed by the BCU team is now central to the CJF's digital strategy (S01; S04; S09). The data gathered from users in 2016 and 2019 (which included focus groups as well as general users) revealed the CHIME app's effectiveness as a medium for better understanding the CJF audience (S02). During the 2019 pilot, the CHIME app was made available from the first day of the festival and it was downloaded 512 times (S01). These users engaged with the festival site more actively and navigated the festival programme more effectively. As one user stated during a focus group, *"this app has been very good because it's, not only the schedule, but the map to show me where everything else and the venue list to describe the venues, so it has really been very, very useful indeed for somebody that doesn't know Cheltenham and hasn't been to the jazz festival before, it's superb"* (S02). The app also contributed to consolidating the festival's identity and revealing important new information about its audience. As the Head of Programming at CJF observed, *"we try to foster a sense of community around our festivals, but understanding and quantifying that had proved extremely difficult, particularly during the busy periods before, during and after festivals. Because of the app we were able to measure and observe this for the first time"* (S04).

**The research influenced CJF's creative programming**

The research team also shaped programming decisions and artistic policies (S04). Musical Encounters was launched by CJF in 2015 to engage a more diverse and younger audience and to push the boundaries of the festival experience. The research team became an integral part of this programming initiative and in 2018 implemented a hackathon methodology to facilitate the commissioning process (S03; S04). This led to the development of *"Jazz Puddles"*, which was a light and sound installation that was premiered at the festival in 2019 (S04). One of the workshop participants stated that: *"This was an entirely new way of thinking creatively about the commissioning process and it was great to work in collaboration with others to pool ideas rather than submitting bids in competition. We all learned a great deal also seeing the internal mechanisms of how Cheltenham consider awarding new work."* (S08). The success of this event in establishing a model of creative co-commissioning has resulted in a Jerwood Trust-funded 3-year programme with BCU as a key partner in the delivery of the project. CJF's producer in charge of the Jerwood project, setting out its components, identified the importance of BCU's involvement: *"The programme seeks to equip artists with the skills and contacts they need to develop bold new work. It includes R&D funding, in-depth mentoring and a Creative Lab hosted by the BCU research team, which will enable us to experiment with presenting jazz in unusual spaces and the digital realm."* (S09)

**Organisational practice was reshaped by the research at CJF.**

The BCU team drew on their research to design the set of initiatives identified above, including Hack the Festival, the KeyChange workshops and the mobile app pilots, that provided the conceptual and practical resources for CJF management to implement change in organisational

practice. As the evidence provided shows, these resources enabled the management to think and reflect on their principles and values and provided the tools for them to alter their practices (S04; S09). This extended to greater integration of the festival's digital systems via the CMS and a deeper understanding of how to engage their audience. The Head of Programming at CJF explains: *"Issues of audience engagement and diversity in programming are perennial problems... Working with BCUs researchers provided us with the space to experiment with solutions that would work for us at a local level whilst also considering the national picture"* (S04). The further impact of this change in organisational practice will take effect when the CJF returns to normal operation, currently scheduled for their 2021 season.

Raine's report on gender equality at jazz festivals has also contributed to the development of CJF's policies and procedures for training stage management and other artist-facing staff working with female musicians (S04). It is clear from the experiences of women musicians that these changes in training and artist communication have already been effective and have altered the perception of the festival amongst these musicians. A female jazz vocalist, who performed at CJF 2019, reflected on what these changes meant to her: *"it was really great to see that the insights developed by the research had been taken on board by the festival – even down to the gender balance pledge being mentioned in their email signature. It was things like this that made the project feel real. Not only that, but the project was very useful to me professionally. I came away from the workshops with some really useful information about how to market and promote myself at future festivals"* (S07).

#### **The research informed strategic planning beyond CJF**

The Jazz Promotion Network (JPN) – the main industry organisation for jazz in the UK – explicitly cites BCU's research and knowledge exchange activities as one of the key determinants of their recent strategic planning. Our work has been particularly influential on their current audience development initiatives (S05; S06; S010). The approaches set out in the BCU research formed a key component of a £90,000 application by JPN to Arts Council England. The successful award made in 2020, will enable BCU to work with JPN to extend our work at CJF to promoters across the whole of the UK.

As a JPN board member and Artistic Director of the Manchester Jazz Festival said, *"We have seen from their work with Cheltenham how effective this approach can be, but their involvement with JPN always provides something useful for our wider membership to consider and to enfold into their own planning. For these reasons I was delighted when, in 2020, we were able to formalise our relationship with BCU further when JPN was awarded over £90,000 by Arts Council England to deliver a multi-strand programme of work focussing on developing the jazz workforce across the UK and Ireland. Part of this programme includes a partnership with BCU on a 2-year longitudinal research project looking at current and potential jazz audiences about which I am extremely excited"* (S05).

We are also extending our reach outside the UK as the team's work has been vital to informing debates and policy within the European jazz festival sector. The Communications Manager from the Europe Jazz Network, which represents 156 organisations in 35 countries, has noted, *"it is clear from the evidence of their work at Cheltenham that BCU's work has provided huge benefits to our member organizations, and it is pleasing to see our members begin to partner with them"* (S06).

This work has produced beneficial impact for CJF, its audiences, performers, and the wider Jazz festival sector. Impact was achieved through the research-led, co-development of practical and artistic solutions that addressed challenges related to audience engagement, artistic development, and the development of organisational policy.

**5. Sources to corroborate the impact** (indicative maximum of 10 references)

**S01:** CHIME Mobile Application – Download statistics and links **[Named Corroborator 1]**

Screenshot and links to CJF Mobile App on Apple store, plus download stats

Screenshot and links to CJF Mobile App on Google store, plus download stats

CHIME Mobile App 2019 Demo

**S02:** Cheltenham Jazz, App Pilot – User feedback

2016 CJF CHIME App Pilot – Feedback sent via application interface

2019 CJF CHIME App Pilot – Feedback sent via application interface **[Named Corroborator 1]**

2019 CJF CHIME App Pilot – Focus Group transcripts

**S03:** Hack The Jazz Festival, 2018 – Participant Feedback

Participant feedback and survey screenshot

**S04:** Testimonial Letter, Head of Programming, Cheltenham Jazz Festival

**S05:** Testimonial Letter, Head of Programming, Manchester Jazz Festival

**[Named Corroborator 2]**

**S06:** Testimonial Letter, Communications Manager, Europe Jazz Network

**[Named Corroborator 3]**

**S07:** Testimonial Letter, Jazz Vocalist, Performer at Cheltenham Jazz Festival

**S08:** Testimonial Letter, Cheltenham Jazz Festival artist and Hack the Festival participant

**S09:** Testimonial Letter, Producer, Cheltenham Jazz Festival **[Named Corroborator 4]**

**S10:** Jazz Promotion Network Press Release around audience development work

Screenshot of JPN Press Release, plus link **[Named Corroborator 3]**