

Material Reflections

at

DOCUMENTING
JAZZ | BIRMINGHAM CITY UNIVERSITY
16 - 18 JANUARY 2020

A collection of short reflections
on jazz as material culture

Iain Taylor & Pedro Cravinho (eds.)

ABOUT

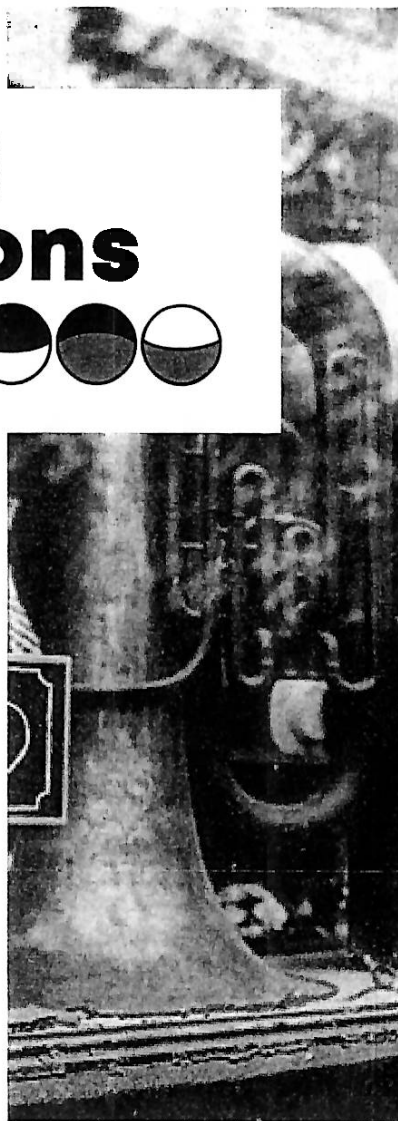
Material Reflections



Material Reflections is an ongoing project led by Dr Iain Taylor, within the **Birmingham Centre for Media and Cultural Research (BCMCR)** at **Birmingham City University**. It collects a series of short reflective pieces exploring the complex personal relationships that people form with material things. Bringing together perspectives from a range of academics, students, and cultural practitioners, the project seeks to highlight the breadth and plurality of ways in which material things impact upon our ideas, identities, research, and practice.

As part of **Documenting Jazz 2020**, delegates were invited to contribute their own **Material Reflections** on an object or artefact which is personally significant to their personal relationship with jazz, and its documentation. There were no limitations on which objects might be considered, however, participants were encouraged to think about things which have impacted upon their personal and professional identities, and / or have shaped their practice in some significant way.

Responses have been collected together in this special 'zine edition of **Material Reflections**.





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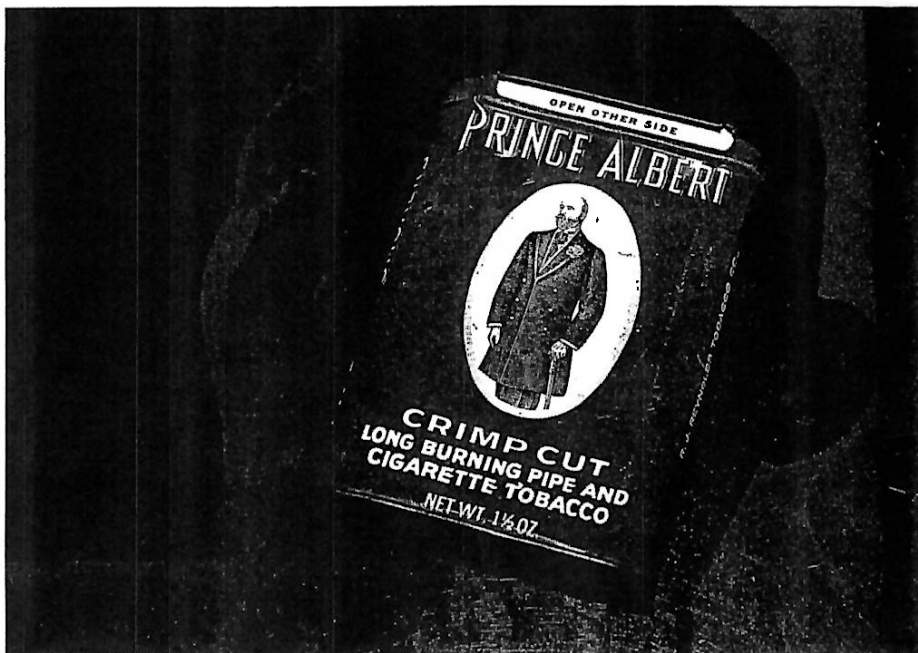
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'GIMME A CAN OF MISTER PRINCE ALBERT'



BRIAN HOMER

Brian Homer is a photographer, designer and writer. He is an active photographer documenting the jazz scene including a current project with Dr Pedro Cravinho at BCU. His photographs and reviews have appeared in Jazzwise Magazine, London Jazz News and UK Vibe

I bought this in 1975 on my first visit to the USA. Why this tin and why have I kept it when I don't smoke and I don't generally collect nick-nacks? Its significance comes from Alan Lomax's field recordings from the 1940s and first published as an LP in 1957 – Blues in the Mississippi Night.

I got to know the folk scene in Birmingham in the 1960s and at the Grey Cock Folk Club one of the regulars was Charles Parker who had produced the Radio Ballads with Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger. The central technique of the Ballads was the use of "actuality" – recordings made of the subjects of the programmes: railwaymen, miners, fishermen and travellers.

The final productions dispensed with the usual radio narrator and relied for their effect on the actuality edited and counter-posed with specially written and performed music. At their best the results were spectacular and the sound of ordinary people's voices was revelatory.

I took Charles Parker's WEA class on actuality and helped organise the Parkhouse Convention in Birmingham in 1974 at which Banner Theatre was formed. I then visited the Yorkshire coalfields with Don Perrygrove and recorded both miners and Arthur Scargill for Banner's first production A Collier Laddie. I also met Raphael Samuel the then Ruskin College historian noted for his development of "histories from below."

Around that time I heard about Blues in the Mississippi Night which was then out of print and was able to get a second hand vinyl copy from The Diskery. Rather like the Radio Ballads, but in a different way, the field recording are interspersed with songs and hollers from the three blues musicians being interviewed. It's a particularly powerful demonstration of the power of oral history and contains this passage towards the end:

Leroy: Well, what about that uh, Prince Albert Tobaccah you know?

Natchez: Well I do, I've heard of that in Louisiana.

Leroy: You couldn't, you know, if you go in a store, you didn't say, "Gimme a can of Prince Albert." Not with that white man on the tin.

Natchez: Well what would you say then?

Leroy: Gimme a can of Mister Prince Albert.

Sib: Good tobaccah!

Leroy: Mister Prince Albert tobaccah...That's what you say...I mean.

Sib: Where was that at?

Leroy: That was all down through Arkansas, down... Gould, Dumas, Yonquiplin...

So that's why I got the tin in 1975 as a symbol of racism and the power of oral testimony. I also got a copy of Working by Studs Terkel a book that was at that time unavailable in the UK. Terkel was a brilliant non-academic oral historian out of Chicago who as well as interviewing ordinary people about their lives also interviewed, for his radio programmes and books, jazz musicians. I edited oral recordings for the 1979 publication Talkin' Blues (Affor Birmingham) which was nominated for the Martin Luther King Prize and the techniques have informed my creative practice ever since whether in projects, writing and editing or in photography.

ARIA BY BOOSEY AND HAWKES



'This is the Boosey and Hawkes bass with me on tour with Fats Waller's guitarist Al Casey (actually in a pub in Newbury, Berks) in 1982. The altoist is Teddy Layton (veteran of Nat Gonella's band) and the drummer is Dave Evans.'

ALYN SHIPTON

Writer and broadcaster Alyn Shipton has been a jazz bassist since his teens. As well in playing in such traditional bands as Ken Colyer's, he currently leads the Buck Clayton Legacy Band. He presents Radio 3's Jazz Record Requests, and is a Research Fellow in jazz at the Royal Academy of Music.

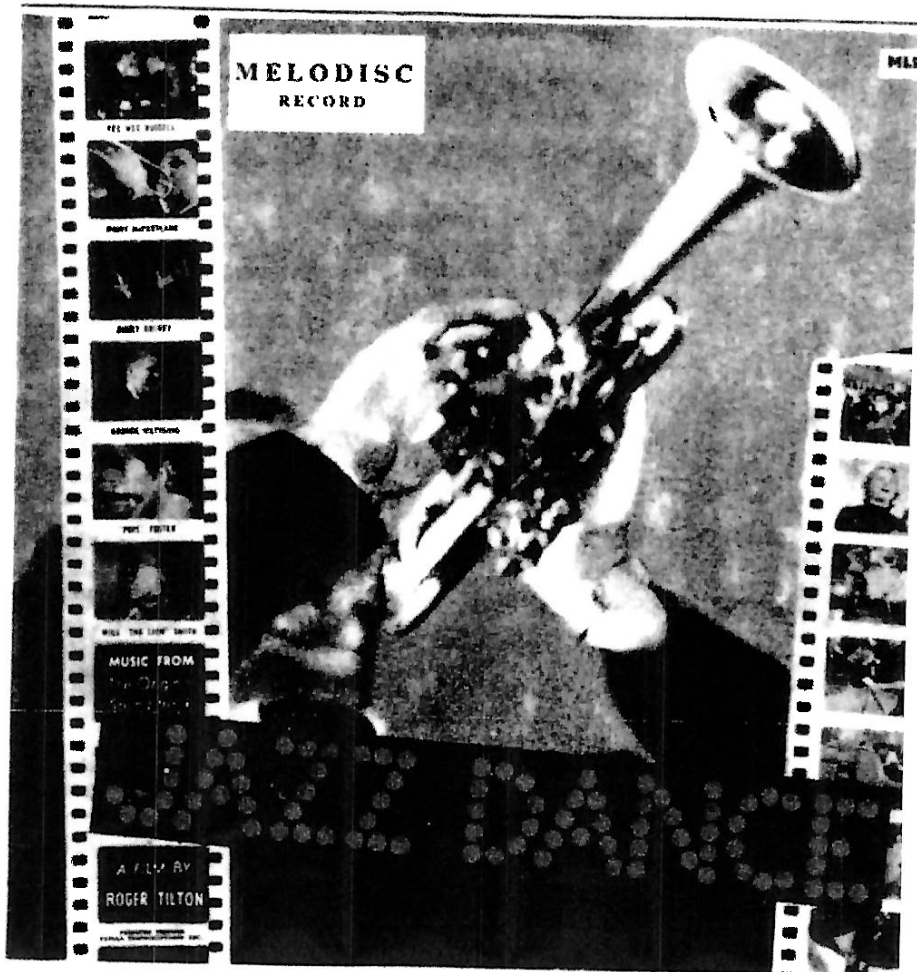
My first double bass came from a shop in Aldershot where old army instruments were sold off. It didn't have much of a sound, and things got worse when its neck was broken in a collision with a pram. So when I heard that the bassist in Barry Martyn's New Orleans band, Wes Starr, was leaving Britain to move to America and wanted to sell his bass, I stumped up the twenty-five quid and bought it. It was early 1973.

It was a classic Boosey and Hawkes 'Aria' student bass, made of plywood, but with a huge resonant sound, which it still has, even after British Airways dropped it off a plane in Milan and the bits were put back together by a rather reluctant luthier in Oxford. Wes had played it on a record with the legendary New Orleans pianist Alton Purnell, so maybe the student version of me thought it had magical powers by association. Certainly I tried to make it as close to what I thought an "authentic" New Orleans bass should be, copying the height of the action and the gut strings from "Slow Drag" Pavageau's instrument, which lived in a cupboard at Preservation Hall. When offered it to play at a concert in Purley, Red Callender rejected it in disgust, asking for a "proper" bass. But also on the bill, Kid Ory's former bassist, Ed Garland was happy to play it, as it was set up just the way traditional basses always had been.

I got interested in later styles of playing, so restrung it with steel strings, and a better bridge. And it became my passport to working with my heroes from the early jazz and swing era. This increasingly knocked-about old instrument has been my companion on tours with Bud Freeman, Benny Waters, Al Casey, Herbie Hall, Don Ewell, Snub Mosley, Louis Nelson and a host of others. Once you're sharing a bandstand or transport, the stories start to flow, and friendships start to build. I've learned as much about jazz from playing and travelling alongside such players as I have from books and records, and I could never have done it without this humble-looking but still great-sounding instrument.

It got frightful scratches on the varnish when lent to veteran bassist Melvin Yancey in 1977 and the back changed colour after a soaking tour of Holland when I played alongside guitarist Fapy Lafertin. It rescued Lucky Millinder's former bassist John B. Williams when his electric stick-bass fused during a thunderstorm in Switzerland, and it helped out Fats Domino's one-time bass player Frank Fields on a UK tour when his hired bass was unplayable. But most of all, it has created indelible memories for me. Backing up Bud playing "The Eel", swinging the blues with Al Casey and Franz Jackson, or just playing in duo with my good friend and co-author Danny Barker, singing "Save the Bones for Henry Jones". I could never bear to part with it.

THE MEDIA STRUCTURE OF JAZZ



Doing research on Roger Tilton's film "Jazz Dance" for Documenting Jazz 2020, we came across an OST of that same film. Here we see the sleeve, with some film stills and the text pointing at the record as an OST. This is intriguing as Tilton's film is all about audiovisualizing jazz music and dance, "an experiment which attempted to both record and film jazz in the flesh," as James Asman writes on the back side of the sleeve. Yet, most of the flesh is gone without the film. The OST is a somewhat doubtful media product, perhaps even nonsensical at the first glance. Tilton made a film to audiovisualize jazz via filmic procedures focused on musicians playing and the audience reacting and dancing. His brilliant effort, however, seems to be in vain, if we are left with the audio alone. Is this an attack on Tilton? Is this in praise of the audio component of the film? Is this a hidden critique on OST as a genre? Is it a souvenir for fans of the film? Or is it just capitalism spinning of a product to maximize profit?

We do not have an answer, but the image respectively the record is a good question. How are the media related here? What is the music without the film? Can it stand alone? Listening to the record is probably for most of us a minimizing experience when we have seen the film before. One feels a bit robbed of. This leads us to Tilton's achievement, audiovisualizing jazz in a way that produces a holistic experience, combining music, dance, and visual images, so we get a complete media structure built of these components. Quite some jazz music is based on with this kind of media structure. Sometimes one forgets it, sometimes an OST can remind us of it, of what jazz as dance music could be.

HOLGER & CORNELIA LUND

Cornelia Lund is an art, film and media theorist and curator. Holger Lund is an academic in art, design, and music as well as a curator and dj. Both have founded fluctuating images in 2004, a platform for the presentation of and reflection on art, design, and music. Publications: Audio.Visual (2009), The Audiovisual Breakthrough (2015), lundaudiovisualwritings.org (2017).

THE BLACK FEDORA



JACQUELINE SINCLAIR

Ms. Sinclair has been a member of the Joel Hall Dancers for thirty years and is currently the Artistic Director. She launched a codified teacher's certification program, *Joel Hall Jazz Breathing Floor Barre*. For more information visit joelhall.teachable.com. Ms. Sinclair holds a BA in Dance from Columbia College of Chicago, and an MA in Theatre from Northwestern University. www.joelhall.org or www.jackisinclair.com

At 21 years old I started my professional dance career with *Joel Hall Dancers*, the Chicago-based urban jazz company of my dreams. I was thrown onto the Marley with dancers of serious artistry, fierce commitment, and the ability to add the ingredient of funk to any movement. I worked quietly in the back of rehearsals to make sure not to step on anyone's toes, and not in the literal sense.

A few months into the rehearsal process Joel Hall decided to create his new work, *El Gato Negro*, and my intuition told me to buckle up. Part of the costuming would be a black fedora with a white band. So, one day after a late rehearsal I accompanied my fellow dancers on a thrift store hunt. We scavenged all the hippest, and cheapest, stores in the city until I finally found it: a Dobb's 5th Avenue felt fedora that had a stamp on the inside that read The Palace Clothing Company, Topeka, Kansas. It was my size and the right price, so I took it home to start its transformation. With instruction from my senior company members, I carefully stitched the white band around the brim. Next, I stitched the two elastic bands that would secure it in place as I danced the choreography. One went under my chin and was carefully measured so it could be placed behind my ears. The second was sized to slip underneath my hair bun. The combination of the two bands allowed me to hit isolations and be thrown into the air without the hat losing its slightly tilted angle on my head.

There is always a transcendence that occurs when a dancer puts on a costume. The costume or mask or hat breathes its life into your physical form. It seeps into your body resulting in a change of emotion and this, therefore, informs the soul. In return, the soul instructs the body on how to fully express with freedom and authenticity. It is a beautiful cycle where the body's energy and the soul's energy become less distinguishable and peace and truth to emerge.

The black felt fedora became a source of magic. Like Frosty the Snowman it made me come alive. With every performance, I entered the stage and the lights hit the fedora, which cast a shadow on my face. This signaled my moment of transformation. It changed me into the black cat character with access to the true essence of jazz and the ability to capture the aesthetic of the cool. The vibrations of raw jazz grew and intensified under the teardrop crown until it poured into the top of my head, where it found its way in and out of my spine and limbs. The energy translated out as jazz rhythms and jazz conversations with my fellow cool cats. Over the many years and stages, under that black fedora, I experienced countless sweaty epiphanies. As I later turned into a senior company member, the hats were replaced with younger ones purchased from a costume shop. Today, the Dobb's black fedora sits in the archives with dry-rotted elastic, a brim wrinkled from years of sweat and my name faded from the inside crown.

(BACKSTAGE) PRESERVATION (AT KIMBALL) HALL



TONY BUSHARD

Tony Bushard is Associate Professor of Music History and Chair of the Theory-History-Composition Area in the Glenn Korff School of Music at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln. His work on jazz and film music has been exhibited and published in numerous regional, national, and international venues.

For jazz historians, recordings occupy a central place in how we view jazz's development. A recording label can often define an artist's sound (e.g., Miles Davis on Prestige vs. Columbia). Moreover, admittedly problematic labels like "West Coast" or "Hard Bop" can even become associated with record companies (e.g., Pacific and Blue Note). Dating back to my childhood in the late 1970s/early 1980s, I have always been fascinated by records. The crackle and pop of needle placed on vinyl felt like striking a match to start a fire. Poring through album covers in department stores while waiting for Mom to shop offered early, subliminal exposure to cultural topics like sexuality, race, gender, and religion, as well as an introduction to modernist and post-modernist art and graphic design.

As I grew older and formats changed, I lost touch with LPs and gravitated towards more "accessible" digital formats for my personal music consumption. Yet in my academic pursuits, records were never too far away. LPs were a crucial part of studying for undergraduate academic music exams. In graduate school, working in the music library, teaching music appreciation courses, or moderating lab sections often meant engaging with records. It was also during this time that I discovered my future father-in-law's record collection. The affair with LPs was rekindled.

The "material" in my "material reflection" consists of several hundred records in my office at work, the vast majority of which are jazz recordings. When I began work in 2006 at my current institution, I was pleased with the ample jazz collection, especially for a smaller Research I university in the Great Plains. Yet, there were many holes in my first year of teaching jazz history to music majors that were plugged with hundreds of personal dollars spent on iTunes. Fortunately, in Spring 2008 I learned of a cache of records that was discovered in the backstage area of Kimball Recital Hall (to this day I have no idea how they got there). Expecting a handful of LPs, I was amazed when I saw the spreadsheet listing nearly 1000 records (LP and 78 RPM). The recordings were first offered to the music library, but they refused citing insufficient storage. Professors in the Glenn Korff School of Music were then notified and I ran to the abandoned practice room to sort through nearly twenty boxes filled with LPs. I obtained as many out-of-print, rare releases, landmark recordings, and personal favorites that I could find, ending up with about half of the entire collection. Even though we removed record players from classrooms five years ago, whenever I teach a jazz history course—or any course aided by an LP—I bring pertinent recordings from my collection to class. Recently, my oldest son received a record player for Christmas and while I don't know if I'll ever get my Miles Davis or Earth Wind & Fire records back, I think that with its skips, pops, and hisses, life itself might be a record moving at 33 1/3 RPM.

DISCOVERER OF JAZZ ELUCIDATES IN COURT

DISCOVERER OF JAZZ ELUCIDATES IN COURT

"Kid" Tells How He Wrote
"The Livery Stable Blues"
in Burst of Genius.

ANIMALS INSPIRED 'TUNE'

The Jazz Kid himself, the giddy boy whose brain fired out the big idea, the same fancy, truthfully before Federal Judge Campbell today. The judge was whether the Jazz Kid or a better known for the name of Alvin Karpis actually wrote "The Livery Stable Blues." Well, the Jazz Kid was there, answering in deep tones to the voice of President Le Roy.

Before questioning the Kid to decide right in the courtroom, his attorney rehearsed the points at issue, explaining that Mr. Le Roy was the composer and Mr. Karpis was a collaborator. Daniel Joseph Graham was the defendant.

All right, out in a pair of steel-tipped patent leather, a purple velvet shirt and a green waist, the Jazz Kid looked like the cartoonist as the genuine Co. of the Jazz Kid, Mr. Le Roy, Karpis of the Jazz Kid, Graham was told the following details:

Graham worked in a factory. You see, the Jazz Kid wasn't always what he is now. Not always did the lawyer advise of the eliminate the right. There was a time when he was in a factory in New Orleans, and when he was in the coal mine, he was in the coal mine.

PHILADELPHIA

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PRESIDENT'S LUNCH AT FRONT

French and Portuguese (There Have
Meal in Washington Conference)

VENICE, France, Dec. 10 (Associated Press)—The president of the French Republic, Raymond Poincaré, accompanied by the French premier, Aristide Briand, and the French foreign minister, Georges Clemenceau, left for the French capital today for a two-day visit.

Katherine Leo is an Assistant Professor of Music at Millikin University in Decatur, Illinois. Holding both a Ph.D. and J.D. from The Ohio State University, her research investigates the intersection of music and legal histories in the United States, with emphases on musical authorship and forensic similarity analysis in copyright.

KATHERINE LEO

THE SO CALLED
HISTORIANS PLAYED
THIS UP

"If you're a music professor, why did you go to law school?" I'm often asked this question, not just by new colleagues and students, but also friends and family. Although I don't often carry visual props, my best answer involves a newspaper article, an artifact of the story that launched my research on early jazz and forensic musicology.

As a new graduate student, I wanted to study jazz, but my research vision lacked clarity. I spent hours in the cell-like basement microform rooms of my University's music library, scanning through decades of old newspapers hoping to find critiques, advertisements, letters to the editor—anything. I kept reading until I saw a headline in the Chicago Daily News on October 11, 1917: "Discoverer of Jazz Elucidates in Court."

Nearly one hundred years later, this provocative journalism caught my attention. Who discovered jazz and how was that even possible—as historians and listeners, we know to be suspicious of such singular claims to the origins of a style. But to have this discussion in court? A trial meant there should be legal documentation, possibly even transcript, so I might be able to read what this "Discoverer of Jazz" actually said.

A month later, I found myself at the Chicago branch of the National Archives and Records Administration, elbow-deep in archive boxes that held flimsy type-written court records for the case of *Hart v. Graham*. This federal copyright lawsuit featured claims made by the Original Dixieland Jazz Band (ODJB) to sheet music for "Livery Stable Blues," a song featured on the B-Side of their Victor 18255 disc, commonly recognized as the first commercially successful jazz record. The documents remain incomplete, but among those that have been preserved, some were collated by the court in blue paper wrappers; others were arranged by archivists into folders; and more fragile documents were tucked into clear page protectors. It was a sublime encounter filled with inexperienced anxiety, excitement, and awe. I could barely make sense of the specialized, procedure-driven court records, but what I could understand was spectacular. Transcript featuring the "Discoverer of Jazz"—whom I later identified as infamous ODJB leader Dominic James LaRocca—was unavailable. Yet transcript from other musicians was nevertheless illuminating. Including a description of "Livery Stable Blues" as a "fox-trot with a slow and lazy like yawning with no direct harmony, sort of freak harmony."

As my work on the case and early jazz continued, I resolved to take courses at the University law school, which led to an application to their Juris Doctor degree program. My broader studies of copyright law have since placed the ODJB's legal dispute in the context of compelling discussions about music as property ongoing since the nineteenth century, carried out by diverse cast of musicians and legal professionals. These courtroom dialogues offer rich musicological subject matter, but this particular newspaper article endures as a material reflection of the incredible story that elucidated the direction of my research.

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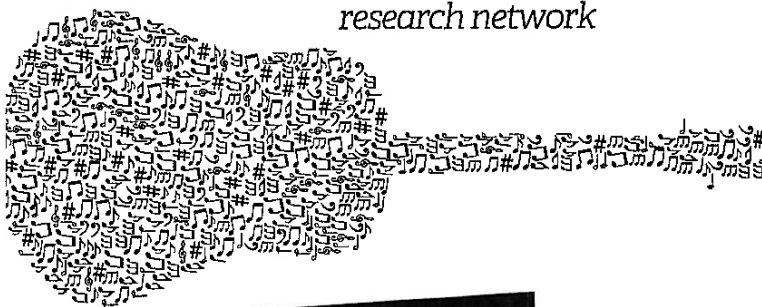
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songwriting studies

research network



Songwriting Studies Research Network

The Songwriting Studies Research Network is a two-year AHRC-funded project which unites scholars, industry workers and practitioners in a forum for the exchange of ideas about songwriting. It is led by Dr Simon Barber of Birmingham City University and Dr Mike Jones of University of Liverpool, UK.

We aim to:

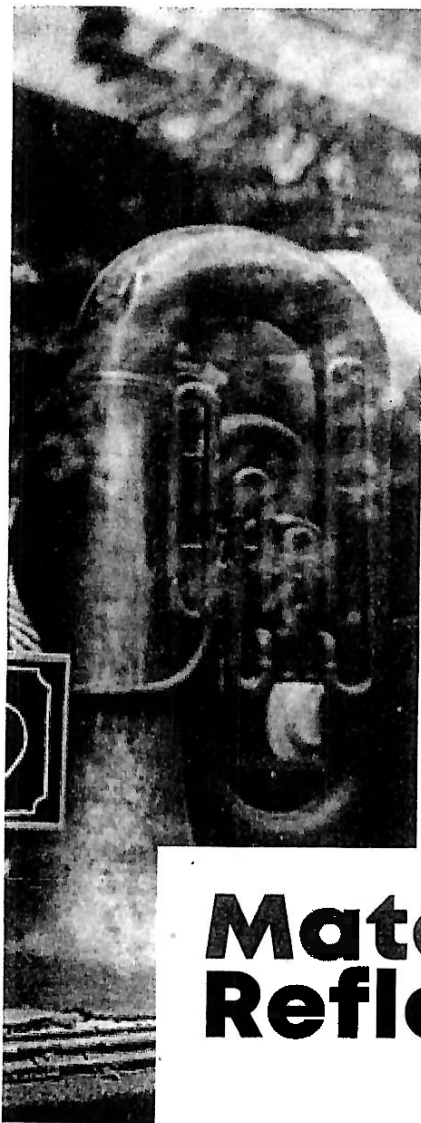
- Establish songwriting studies as an interdisciplinary field in its own right by bringing together diverse groups of participants.
- Foster relationships between academics, industry workers and practitioners through the provision of a space for the sharing of ideas and approaches.
- Produce new insights related to songwriting by exploring key issues, questions and themes.
- Share this knowledge through publications, projects and other initiatives.

Connect with us online:

Twitter: @songstudies

Instagram: @songwritingstudies

Web: <https://songwritingstudies.com>



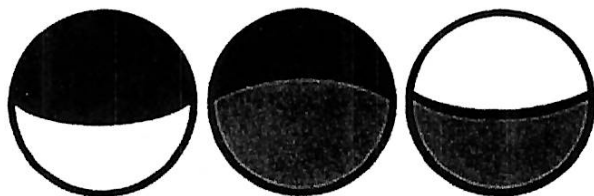
Dr Iain Taylor, project lead for **Material Reflections**, and Dr Pedro Cravinho, Conference Chair for **Documenting Jazz 2020**, wish to thank all of the delegates who shared their material reflections as part of this collection.

A short run of physical 'zine issues of this collection will be available exclusively at **Documenting Jazz 2020**. A digital version will be available online following the conference at <http://documentingjazz.com>

For more information on the **Material Reflections** project, please visit the BCMCR website: <https://bcmcr.org/research/category/materialities/> or email iain.taylor@bcu.ac.uk

Material Reflections





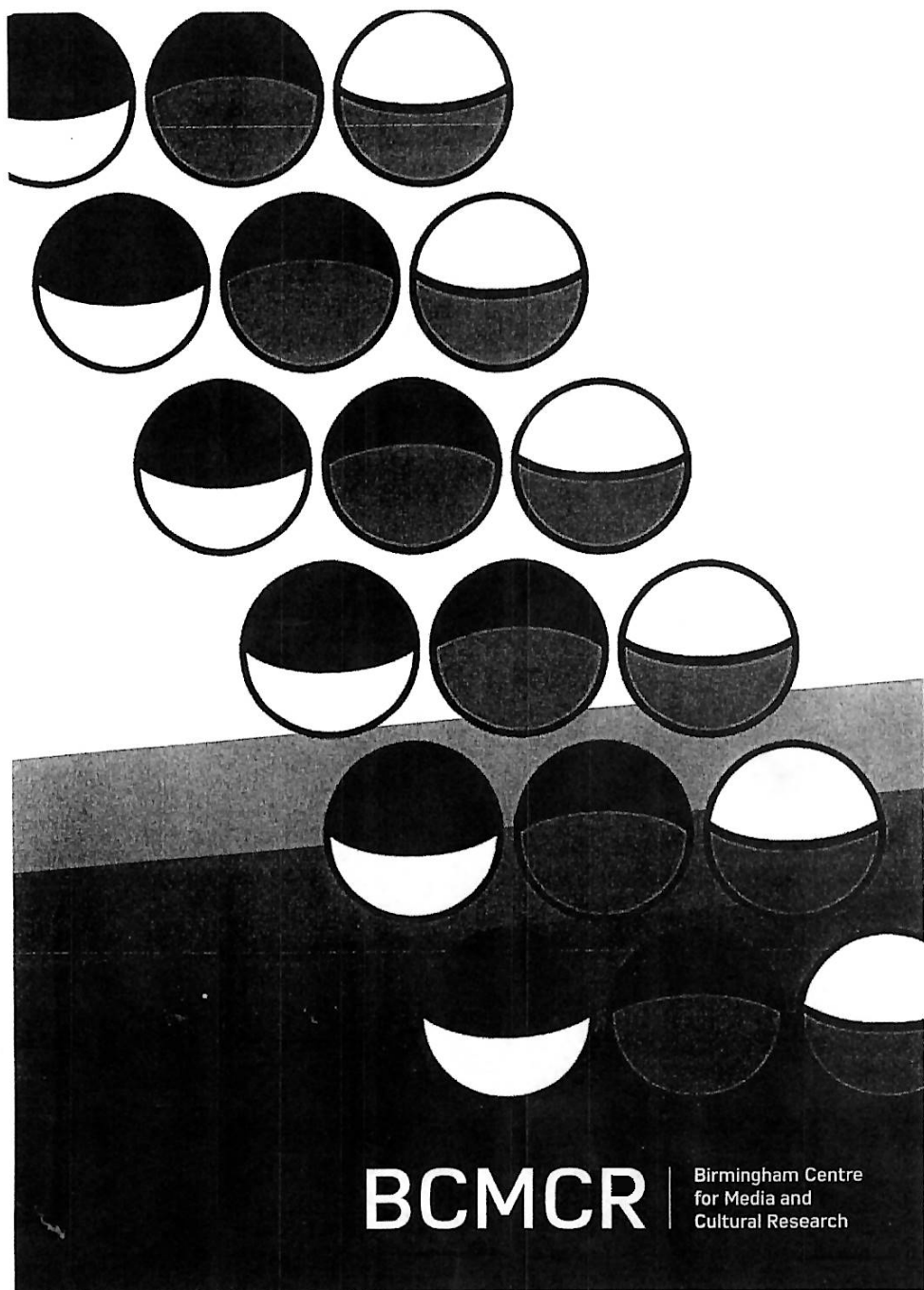
For more material reflections, and further information on
the project, please visit

<https://bcmcr.org/research/category/materialities/>

or email Dr Iain Taylor on
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