



UNDERSTANDING AUDIENCES FOR JAZZ

Heather Maitland

Briefing 6: Why do people attend jazz gigs? What stops them?

How to use this briefing:

This is an analysis of the focus groups, questionnaires and secondary research exploring:

- the motivations and barriers to attendance at jazz and at specific gigs
- the different ways that audiences experience jazz
- possible ways of persuading people to attend more challenging gigs
- the influence of family and friends on the likelihood of attendance
- what audiences think of the events promoted by EMJAZZ members

Use the information to get an insight into how audiences think about jazz and, in conjunction with Briefings 8 and 9, to understand how we can change our programming and marketing to persuade more people to come more often to our gigs.

Key points

- Audiences are motivated to attend by the emotional response they have to the music, the social experience of being part of the audience, the excitement of the live experience, the interaction between the musicians and between the musicians and the audience, and the atmosphere and convenience of the venue
- There are two different types of response to jazz: analytical and emotional. These two groups have very different levels of knowledge and need different kinds of information
- Educating Emotional Responders about jazz doesn't work. We need to help them make an emotional connection to the music
- Barriers to attendance are narrow definitions of jazz music, negative stereotypes of jazz attenders, perceptions that listening to jazz needs a high level of knowledge and the way jazz is generally marketed which reinforces those perceptions
- Jazz attenders' partners/spouses generally do not have a negative impact on the propensity to attend

- Friends who are not jazz enthusiasts only have a negative impact on jazz attenders' frequency and range of attendance where there is insufficient information available to persuade them to come along.
- Audiences generally feel positive about EMJAZZ members' gigs and venues. Getting them to come more often is about building atmosphere.

Motivations to attend

The JazzDev research identified four main reasons why people say they attend jazz gigs:

- the emotion
- the live experience
- the intimacy
- the rhythmⁱ

Our EMJAZZ project has also identified three of these motivations but with some important nuances and found one additional motivation: the social experience of being part of an audience of like-minded people.

It was clear that our audiences and the non-attenders open to giving jazz a try had something important in common: music is an important part of their lives. One focus group explored the views of non-attenders of jazz who had attended other types of music event at the venue. It was notable that those who were not open to coming to a jazz event did not have music accompanying everyday life:

Most days I don't have any music on, the house is quiet.

Wellingborough focus group participant

I don't have music on as background, I'd rather have a talk show on the radio. I listen to music because I want to listen to it.

Wellingborough focus group participant

Rhythm

The motivation that the JazzDev research identified but we did not is rhythm. Only one focus group participant specifically mentioned rhythm and this was in the context of other styles of music, not jazz:

I do like modern crazy interesting jazz that doesn't know where it's going. The more I don't know where it's going, the better it is. I love complex rhythms so I love African and Indian music.

Lincoln focus group participant

Two participants talked about tapping their feet to music but again in the context of styles that they did not define as jazz.

[Moishe's Bagel] is good to watch, it's finger-snapping, foot tapping

Wellingborough focus group participant

For something more off the wall you probably want a more concentrated atmosphere like The Collection. It's not about a relaxed atmosphere, it's not foot-tapping, it's for people who think they know what they're listening to.

Lincoln focus group participant

So why don't our audiences, selected to represent the whole range of levels of experience of jazz, talk about rhythm? It seems likely that it is because of the sheer range of music that can be defined as jazz. EMJAZZ members pride themselves on promoting a diversity of jazz that few other promoters have the resources, audiences and expertise to risk booking. This tends to be more complex than other styles of jazz and so perhaps rhythm is not the first characteristic that comes to mind.

Defining jazz

Focus group participants generally agreed that the 'jazz' label is problematic because it covers a huge range of styles that most people are unaware of:

People say "Oh, I like jazz", but after a couple of sentences you find that it's a certain small element of jazz they like - Acker Bilk because it was in the hit parade a hundred years ago or something. Jazz is a misused word.

Lincoln focus group participant

When I say jazz to people at work, they talk about Acker Bilk - that's what they think is jazz because they've seen it on TV.

Leicester focus group participant

Participants felt that the profile of jazz in mainstream media contributes to the problem. Although jazz-based styles are ubiquitous, only a small proportion is overtly labelled as jazz.

- I think its exposure as well. A lot of music - blues or whatever - has come down. We've got it watered down in the music that we listen to today. I know there's elements of jazz but ...

- It's not something we listen to every day. You don't go 'Oh, that's come from jazz' whereas we would say 'Rhythm 'n' Blues, it's come from there'.

Derby focus group participants

Even enthusiasts find the label unhelpful, because it is too specific and their tastes are much broader:

For me, jazz starts with Mozart and ends with Thelonius Monk. I'm up for anything in between as long as it's good ... [as long as] they are putting something of their own, of the atmosphere, into it.

Leicester focus group participant

or they have strong likes and dislikes within the spectrum of jazz styles:

I'm very suspicious of what they call modern jazz because we've been to a couple of things and didn't really like it. So where it says contemporary jazz, I've quickly put it away. I'm also not too keen on swing.

Nottingham focus group participant

Jazz is so diverse anyway. I can't stand trad., I'm sorry, but I'm the same when you get to the opposite extent with the very modern jazz, the squeaky, squawky - you've got to have a tune somewhere even if they are improvising. But people come and love it.

Leicester focus group participant

or they would describe their preferences in other terms and there happens to be an overlap with jazz:

I wouldn't class myself as a jazz fan at all. There are bits of music that might be described as jazz that I like ... Certain elements of world music fall into the jazz category. South Africa is one of the few places in the world where jazz is a popular mainstream music still. ... I quite like Latin American music, bits of which fall into jazz.

Leicester focus group participant

I think the problem with jazz is that there are so many elements from A to Z with all those things in the middle - blues, rhythm n blues, gospel...

Lincoln focus group participant

Participants recognised the diversity of tastes of jazz enthusiasts and struggled to find a way of describing jazz that encompassed the whole spectrum. The only way to explain it was to describe the history of its development:

All different types of jazz have the same beginnings if you go far enough back and that's why we all talk the same language. We might all like different people but it's all branches of the same music.

Leicester focus group participant

On the whole, they tended to find musical categories undesirable as they are not helpful when describing their own musical tastes:

We try too much to stereotype things, and fit them into genres

Nottingham focus group participant

This was even more marked among the participants aged under 30:

I have no idea how to answer your question. I don't really know. I know what music I like when I hear it but as far as genres go, I couldn't even begin to say what I like

Derby focus group participant

This means that potential attenders decide on a gig by gig basis whether they want to go. Three quarters of questionnaire respondents gave 'It sounded as though it would be an interesting / enjoyable gig' as a reason for attendance and 35% said it was their main reason for attending. Only 14% said their main reason was simply the artform: 'I see as many jazz gigs as possible'. The relationship with the venue and the promoter is much less important with 10% and 12% respectively saying this was their main reason for attending.

Emotional motivations

Focus group participants were eloquent about the kind of music they liked:

It's music that gets to you, music you feel

Leicester focus group participant

Many people use music to regulate our emotions in the same way as caffeine and alcohol: to get themselves going in the morning, to relax after work, to change our mood, to help us concentrate, to comfort us during emotional crises. They construct a soundtrack to accompany their day-to-day lives.

Mood dictates what I want to enjoy. I like all sorts of music but in certain situations. Sometimes I want to foot tap, sometimes I want to be reflective, sometimes I want to be cheerful, sometimes I want to be a bit quiet. And there's music for all that for me.

Lincoln focus group participant

This emotional response to music is real. Neuroscientists have measured the changes in cerebral blood flow, heart rate, respiration, levels of neurochemicals and electrical impulses in the brain when people listen to music – they cause the shivers down the spine or tingle factor that so many people experience when they listen to pleasurable music. These physical and neurological changes are linked to parts of the brain involved in reward, emotion and arousal. Most people know how to choose the sort of music that will have the effect they need simply because they have listened to a lot of music.ⁱⁱ

I definitely use music to boost my mood. If I've got something difficult to do I put on music that really makes me feel good so I've got confidence when I get there... If I'm feeling quite down and miserable I tend to put on - what's she called - she's Canadian and Country and Western - and she's really melancholy. If I'm feeling really miserable I put her on and I listen to the words and I may cry a few tears and I come out of it. It does help me - all sorts of music to bring moods on or turn them off.

Wellingborough focus group

People in a state of unpleasantly high arousal tend to prefer quiet, relaxing music and people in a state of pleasantly high arousal will prefer loud, energising music.ⁱⁱ

I hate it when I'm coming to jazz and I feel like talking to the people with me and chilling and it's one of those ones when you can hear a pin drop. I need to know what I'm buying into so my mood's right before I go.

Lincoln focus group participant

Some participants went to gigs because their emotional response is heightened:

That's why I like going to live concerts because you never get CDs with the emotion.

Nottingham focus group participant

For these participants, recorded music becomes a way of feeling those same emotions again:

It's nice to see a live performance but it's just as nice to take the music home with you because there's always bits you miss in a live performance. I do because I tend to watch the performers. You can relive it.

Wellingborough focus group participant

Knowing what to expect from a live gig is essential because people are choosing an event to match their mood or need to adjust their mood to match the event they are going to:

You gear yourself up for the particular performance you're going to or you decide at the last minute because of the mood you're in

Wellingborough focus group participant

The main reason why so many participants found 'modern jazz' so challenging was that they couldn't easily respond to it in an emotional way:

I like any music except for modern jazz. I have to sit there and imagine it myself, imagine the feeling and what's happening. It doesn't come easy and I have to really try hard.

Lincoln focus group participant

Analytic and emotional responders

Research has identified three different ways of engaging with music:

- emotional regulation: 'Listening to music really affects my mood' and 'Whenever I want to feel happy I listen to a happy song'.
- rational/cognitive: 'I often enjoy analysing complex musical compositions' and 'Rather than relaxing, when I listen to music I like to concentrate on it'.
- background: 'I enjoy listening to music while I work' and 'If I don't listen to music while I'm doing something, I often get bored'.

These different uses are strongly associated with different adult personality types. Open and intellectually engaged individuals, and those with higher IQ scores, tended to use music in a rational/cognitive way, while neurotic¹, introverted and non-conscientious individuals were all more likely to use music to change or enhance moods. The researchers conclude that it is possible that differences in personality and cognitive ability mean that different people experience music in different ways.ⁱⁱⁱ

There is certainly evidence that these different uses engage different parts of the brain. Researchers used brain scans to look at cerebral blood flow in different parts of the brain as volunteers listened to six versions of a piece of music with increasing degree of dissonance. The more dissonant the music, the more negative the emotions reported by the volunteers. The parts of the brain showing changes in blood flow were those in the right hemisphere associated with pleasant and unpleasant emotional states (but not emotions like fear which are left hemisphere dominant). These are different to the areas of the brain fired up during perceptual analysis of music and other cognitive processes.^{iv}

Appreciating [the music] isn't always the same as enjoying it.

Lincoln focus group participant

This difference became a key element of the focus group discussions. It became apparent that participants talked in very different ways about the music and their response to it. Some discussed their 'best' and 'worst' gigs and their selection of gigs they would like to see programmed in terms of contextual references to particular musicians, instruments and styles. These have been termed *Analytical Responders* and are motivated by:

¹ Note that 'neurotic' is being used in a strictly psychological sense and is not a pejorative term

- Discovering unfamiliar music
- Seeing a favourite musician
- Musical/historical context
- Technical excellence
- Specific instruments or a combination

Well, bizarrely, I'm listening to a lot of Polish jazz at the moment and it seems to be quite influenced by Scandinavian bands. It's mostly regarded as jazz but it's mixed in with DJ stuff and kind of synths and new sounds and all that kind of stuff so it's quite dancy some of the time and elements of rock. It sounds like Cinematic Orchestra which is very much in there with young people but it is essentially jazz. It's massive in Eastern Europe as well as Scandinavia and there are quite a few bands here.

Nottingham focus group participants

Others did not have the knowledge to apply a musical or historical context and – crucially – did not want that knowledge. They resented being given information. Their response was solely emotional and so they have been termed *Emotional Responders*:

I wouldn't say I know much about jazz, I know popular jazz musicians, but I've got an ear for music and a lot appeals to me and really gets me

Lincoln focus group participant

- *This tells me nothing. I don't know what kind of music it is*
- *It does say Duke Ellington*
- *But I don't know who Duke Ellington is*

Lincoln focus group participant

They are motivated by:

- Feeling the music
- The whole experience of the gig, not just the music
- Atmosphere
- The people they are with

It is important to note that Emotional Responders were just as likely to be relatively frequent attenders of jazz gigs as the Analytical Responders. Analytical Responders were just as likely to be risk averse as Emotional Responders and, conversely, some members of both groups were open to experimentation:

Clare Teal wouldn't be doing the interpretations that I, with my conservative, dyed-in-the-wool stance, would like. My mind isn't open to hearing other interpretations. I like things the way I've got used to

Wellingborough focus group participant

But Emotional Responders are actively put off by the way jazz is described in publicity material:

I wouldn't go if you gave me a free ticket because it doesn't explain itself enough to me. I've no idea what sort of music it would be, personally.

Wellingborough focus group

Social motivations

People's self-esteem is raised by being part of a cohesive social group. One motivation for going to jazz gigs is the social experience:

If the music's good and the company's good then it can be a fantastic night out

Lincoln focus group participant

They enjoy listening to music recommended by others because such groups can be formed around common musical tastes.^v Even the judgements of music enthusiasts are heavily influenced by social influences.^{vi}

I've met quite a few people recently at gigs and things. You talk and you say 'I like this and I like that' and you swap music. And hearing what other friends are listening to. And then films and adverts.

Derby focus group participant

Their consumption of live music is actually an important tool for managing social relationships. This means that their choice of what to attend is affected by the knowledge that they are going to share the experience with friends and acquaintances – even if they are only going to talk about it with them rather than attend together.^v

I think you have to be quite sensitive. The last thing you want is to drag someone along to a concert and for them to be bored stupid and they'll never trust you again when you make a recommendation. It takes a fair amount of coaxing and playing them a little bit every now and then and talking up the value of seeing a live performance in a fairly intimate session.

Leicester focus group participant

The regular pulse and clear rhythm of music helps groups of people, large and small, co-ordinate their movements and emotions. These co-ordinated neural activities help people lose at least some of their sense of time and place ('lose themselves in the music') and even achieve altered states of consciousness.

If the evening engenders a really good atmosphere it takes you out of whatever humdrum problems that you have. It takes you over, it uplifts you, it takes you away

Lincoln focus group participant

Neuroscientists suggest that doing this in a group alters people's sense of interpersonal boundaries, so they feel at one with the group.^{vii} Being part of an audience focused as one on the music is an important part of EMJAZZ attenders' enjoyment:

One thing I think makes a difference is the actual attendance at concerts ... I went to see Clare Teal at Loughborough Town Hall and it was absolutely rammed. And she was a fantastic performer and a great personality and it was a fantastic gig. I came to De Montfort Hall to see Curtis Stigers, great performer, great night but it felt stifled because there were 500 in a 2,000 seater venue and we said "Oooh, wish we'd stayed at home watching the telly," because it killed the atmosphere a bit

Leicester focus group participant

The live experience

The emotional and social experiences are clearly important motivations for attending a live gig. There seem to be elements of the live experience that are essential in creating those emotional and social responses. These are:

- anticipation
- spontaneity
- the interaction between the musicians and between the musicians and the audience

-It's live

-It's real

-It's the ambience

-If you go to a performance you go into the theatre, it's the ambience, it's the musicians tuning up, it's the lights dimming, it's magical, it's exciting.

You can't get that on a CD

Wellingborough focus group participants

The emotion comes in part from a sense of unpredictability. People don't want live gigs to sound exactly like the CD.

There's such a thing as a player band, like a player piano where they even play the scratches on the original record

Leicester focus group participant

Some of them only enjoy jazz live:

Live, I'm quite fond of jazz music. I very, very rarely play anything [CDs] that I would class as jazz at home. As a live music, it's fine. If I go to see jazz I want to see some improvisation and it needs to have some flow and go somewhere.

Leicester focus group participant

This was particularly important to the newcomers to jazz who placed great emphasis on the improvisational nature of jazz:

- I didn't feel they were like taking any risks really in the music. I felt it was all very controlled and rigid.

- Jazz isn't meant to be like that, it's meant to be improvised.

- They were improvising but it all felt very clean and nothing new about it."

Derby focus group participants

They revel in the role that the audience can play in creating a great gig – and it's not necessarily about numbers:

-It depends on the audience. I've done gigs where there's been hardly anyone in but they've been up for it.

-You feel that. You feel the interaction, don't you.

Leicester focus group participants

Audiences are also sensitive to the relationship between the musicians. Talking about 'worst' gigs, one focus group participant commented:

... when the band's not into it at all. You can tell because the atmosphere just dies.

Derby focus group participant

This can become a barrier to enjoying the gig:

Because they were from Derby, it kind of broke down the barriers that come with jazz a little bit. But then you had the guy that was famous and he was kind of, not stand-offish, but he didn't know their names and he was like 'I'm really cool.' and that kind of put the barriers up again.

Derby focus group participant

The interaction between the musicians and the audience is equally important:

- Watching musicians playing live when you're standing close in a small venue is great.

- It depends on the characters as well. I've listened to some bands that sound really fun and then you get to the gig and they don't talk to you.

- We both like Seasick Steve because he really talks to you and it's more like an event than a gig. It's really interactive - he brings people up on stage. And then you get a CD and it's not as good.

- It's flat, isn't it."

Derby focus group participants

This was raised as a criticism in questionnaire responses:

Musicians not showing any enthusiasm. Just a job.

Leicester questionnaire respondent

Some participants felt that jazz has to catch up with other genres in terms of the musicians' willingness to engage with the audience:

-I think there has to be far more interaction between the groups and the people.

-I've been to quite a lot of gigs at Rock City over the past few years and the bands have been there afterwards selling CDs and signing them which they never would have got ten years ago. But they are all there now interacting with the audiences.

-I think the band should say more about the music, tell people what the music is about, how did this tune come about, what have we done before, where have we been - talk to people more. They come on, play their music and walk off.

Nottingham focus group participants

We've gone from formality to informality. [They] don't come on like Miles Davis or Karajan and go "I am it and you peasants are going to listen to this and keep your mouths shut and don't clap in the wrong places and no coughing."

Nottingham focus group participant

Intimacy

The relationship between the audience members, between the musicians and between the musicians and the audience is termed 'intimacy' in the JazzDev research.¹

The venue clearly has an important role in creating this intimacy.

There is remarkably little crossover between different venues promoting jazz. Convenience is obviously a factor:

The time I've got, the distance I have to travel and what facilities the venue's got

Nottingham focus group participant

Northampton also seemed to be perceived negatively by participants in the Wellingborough focus group who had been selected because they had attended music-related events at the Castle but not jazz:

*- Nothing whatsoever would make me go into Northampton.
- Someone would have to drag me along, someone who's been there before and says come along with us. I couldn't go there alone. Not of my volition.*

Wellingborough focus group participants

But this doesn't explain the lack of crossover between venues in the same city. This is more likely to be the result of audiences' preference for venues in which they feel they belong:

It's down to the kind of people I know are going to be there as well as the acoustics.

Nottingham focus group participant

Participants felt that particular sorts of audiences were associated with particular venues:

I asked the lady at the hairdressers - she's 46 or 47 - and she really tended to associate [The Castle] with a particular age group of people and hence the entertainment that particular older age group want ... She felt that the Derngate did more up to date [events] to suit her age group.

Wellingborough focus group participant

Although participants were reluctant to say that these perceptions were an important part of the decision to attend, it can clearly present a significant barrier:

Some people will go and listen to jazz anywhere - from London Underground to a white tie dinner dance. It's got little or nothing to do with the music. It's personal preference. If you appreciate that person's playing you'll go to the venue. But if it's at a venue you think you don't fit into or you don't want to go to or it's too far then it doesn't matter who's playing.

Nottingham focus group participant

Participants generally agreed that the venue needed to strike a balance between informality and formality. Where that balance lay depended on the type of music as well as the preferences of the individual:

The upper end of that intellectualising side of it, if that's the right term, certainly puts me off. I want the music, I'm interested in the music and I don't want somewhere that's filled with people who are drunk or just there because they want to drink, I want people there who are interested in the music. I'm not bothered about the venue. But what I don't want is to go somewhere it feels like 'Oh, we're going to church now.' Where everyone's got to hush because they've dimmed the lights - 'Oh, am I meant to clap now.' That's not the way [jazz] ever began and I don't see that's the way it should be now. We're there to have a good time.

Nottingham focus group participant

The church analogy seemed to be sparked by the idea of sitting in rows as well as the hushed atmosphere. Certainly many participants felt a cabaret style seating layout added to the informal and intimate atmosphere:

*- [The Y] is very good because they do the cabaret seating where you can have a drink around tables rather than sitting in rows
- I quite like it when they put the tables out, but the tables are so big! They have these massive tables ... And there's hardly any room to sit*

Leicester focus group participants

This also appealed to the participants in the non-attender focus group none of whom were aware that Northants Contemporary Jazz gigs were set out like this.

It may not suit everyone, though, as two questionnaire respondents, one at a Lincoln Drill Hall gig and one at a Castle gig, commented that they didn't like sitting at small tables.

Lighting is important in creating atmosphere:

It's somewhere you can eat, drink, sit round a table, listen to a band. It's fairly low lit which I think is good for a jazz club.

Lincoln focus group participant

This was raised as a criticism of Deda and Derby University lecture hall:

Great sounds; Too bright

Derby questionnaire respondent

Again and again, though, participants raised issues of convenience:

Actually, I quite like the Djanogly small recital space. I don't go to a pub to listen to things and I think I would quite like all of them to be here. It's very accessible and very convenient and quite small and intimate enough for these things

Nottingham focus group participant

They'd all go well at the Bonington because I live in Arnold and I can walk there in ten minutes.

Nottingham focus group participant

Barriers to attendance

Of the people responding to the DCMS Taking Part survey who had not attended an arts event in the past 12 months, 31% gave the main reason as 'not really interested'^{viii}.

Paid and unpaid working time impacts on leisure time. For every hour worked in paid labour, the time spend on leisure diminishes by 40 minutes. For every hour spend on household tasks the decline in leisure time is about 30 minutes.^{ix} 29% of the Taking Part non-attenders gave the main reason as 'It's difficult to find the time'.^{viii} Research specifically investigating the impact of individual time constraints on arts attendance, however, has found only minor effects of working hours.^x Could it be that respondents feel that lack of time is a more 'acceptable' reason for non-attendance than lack of interest?

The barriers to overall jazz attendance that have emerged from careful probing during the face to face elements of this research project are:

- Narrow and negative perceptions of jazz music (see page 3)
 - *It's how often the music is out in the public eye but it's not on television*
 - *It is, but it's not recognised as jazz by other people*
Leicester focus group participants
- Negative stereotypes of jazz attenders (see Briefing 2)
- Perceptions that listening to jazz needs a high level of knowledge (see below)
- The way jazz is described which reinforces negative perceptions of elitism (see Briefing 9)
- The difficulty of getting information about what live jazz is available (see Briefing 9)

Note that ticket price doesn't appear in this list. The reasons for this are explored in Briefing 10 on pricing.

Persuading people to listen to unfamiliar music

Many of the focus group participants, including frequent jazz attenders, were wary of what they termed 'modern' jazz. Even the enthusiasts' attempts to make it seem more palatable to the other participants are ambiguous:

Modern jazz was the next stage after traditional jazz and this has gone even further. So in 50 years time it will be accepted as perfectly normal because there will have been something even worse come along after it.

Wellingborough focus group participant

The focus group participants would seem to believe that you need to have the characteristics of an Analytical Responder to appreciate it:

- *They're all the same, you've got modern art, modern classical music and modern jazz. And they all can be exceptionally difficult to appreciate. But there is something in there. The last concert I went to was all squeaky gate music and I must admit I did fall asleep before the end - it had been a long day - but when I was awake, I was appreciating what he was doing, just not enjoying it. The playing was staggeringly good*
- *Would you go again*
- *[Long pause] Probably not.*

Leicester focus group participants

To identify effective ways of persuading more people to listen to challenging music, we need to answer this question: Are we born with musical preferences or do we learn to love different kinds of music through exposure to culture?

The answer matters because if we acquire our musical preferences, we can learn to love 'difficult' music: Schoenberg argued that if people heard it enough, atonal music would become just as popular as tonal music.

Dissonance

Neuroscientists have found that we tend to prefer music from our own culture so clearly some aspects of preference are learned. But on the other hand, we know that dissonant music triggers activity in brain areas associated with unpleasant stimuli and several studies found that babies show a preference for consonant melodies. That would imply that these preferences are inbuilt. It's difficult to be sure because we know that adults and children prefer musical stimuli they have heard before so it could simply be that the babies have been exposed less to dissonant music both before and after birth.^{xi}

People are less likely to remember dissonant music. Neuroscientists believe that emotions are used as a kind of indexing system for memories. Emotional verbal and pictorial stimuli are remembered better than non-emotional ones. This is also true of music. People better remember music that they rate as happy and peaceful than music they rate as unemotional or emotional in a negative sense. Whether a piece of music is exciting or relaxing has no significant effect (although some studies have found that people better remember exciting music).^{xii}

Emotional responses

At least some of the cues that trigger emotional responses to music can be perceived across cultures. The triggers seem to be tempo, melody, rhythm and pitch range. But this doesn't apply to major and minor keys. They are usually associated respectively with happy and sad feelings but are not linked to moods by children under six. They are perceived, however, by children aged six to eight which seems to imply that these emotional links are learned.

People need to be exposed to music in order to develop music comprehension skills. Even so, there is evidence that suggests that we are born with a preference for the octave and some simple ratios between pitches because 'tonal' melodies are processed by the brain in a different way to atonal ones regardless of how much we are exposed to music. 'Tone deafness' is, in essence, difficulty in perceiving pitch and appears to be caused by impaired neurological function.^{xi}

Familiarity

Music is meaningless when we can't perceive and react to music as being 'coherent, interrelated, unified, and sensible'.^{xiii} This means we tend to like music that is familiar but not too familiar and strikes a balance between simplicity and complexity. We prefer music that is similar to music we already like because our brains have already build neural pathways to musical memories that have been processed in a similar way, have triggered similar emotions and are stored nearby.ⁱⁱ

So, sorry Schoenberg, but it looks as though we have to help people overcome some inbuilt barriers if they are to appreciate challenging music.

So how can we influence peoples' preferences?

Simply making them listen to it won't work.^{xi} In fact, people express an aversion to music they have no control over although jazz and blues creates the lowest levels of aversion.ⁱⁱ Other research shows that music only reduces stress and anxiety if the individual listens to the styles of music they prefer.^{xiv}

I felt it was like 'Sit there and be subjected to this jazz. Sit there and be jazzed.' There was no choice.

Derby focus group participant

Music appreciation courses have an impact on participants' knowledge and their ranking of favourite composers but not on their likes and dislikes for particular pieces of music.

To me, if I didn't like a piece of music and someone spoke to me about what it meant, I still wouldn't like the piece of music. It doesn't matter to me how much I understand it because if it speaks to you, it speaks to you and if it doesn't, it doesn't. And people would feel bad if they don't understand it, when it's about getting people not to feel bad about not liking it or not understanding it. If someone breaks down the musical theory you think 'Oh, it's quite clever but [it still doesn't speak to me]'

Derby focus group participant

Pre-performance talks only seem to have an impact on the musical preferences of some audience members. Almost all audiences enjoy them, but it doesn't necessarily change what they like. The key factor appears to be age. In this study, people under 40 who heard a pre-performance talk rated particular pieces of music more highly than those who did not but the over 40s who heard the pre-performance talk rated them less highly than those who did not. However, the impact of the talks was relatively small and it could simply be that for listeners whose musical preferences are already formed, musical knowledge has far less impact than social influences.

[I would have felt less awkward if there was] something educational because - OK at the end of the day, music is music - but I didn't really understand it. So something to help me understand where the music is coming from. Some idea of what it was that made it different, why so many people like this music.

Derby focus group participant

An explanation can also be framed around the concept of Analytical and Emotional responders. The ability to make an analytical response is dependent on having done a lot of listening because knowledge is, in essence, about the ability to perceive similarities and differences. Analytical Responders have a context within which they can make

sense of new musical experiences – there is a lot they can compare it with. And they relish getting more information:

I think people like music for different reasons and in different ways. Some people would like [getting more information].

Derby focus group participant

Giving information to Emotional Responders without that context just highlights how much they don't know.

I think jazz has created an intellectual, elitist divide to it.

Derby focus group participant

The pre-performance talks in the study described above focused on giving information about the composer's life, information about the specific piece and contextual information to help them make an emotional connection to the piece. Significantly, the focus group participants in our project were clear that they did not want too much factual information but were looking for emotional and social relevance:

- Tomorrow's Warriors was a good argument for not talking about the music at a live concert. Torturous is the adjective.

- It was a dissertation.

- It went on and on and on about it with the tiniest, minute detail.

- That reminds me about Tony Kofi coming on and saying the next tune is going to be in this time signature and that type of stuff and that also was too much detail.

- I want to know what has led them to create that piece of music, is it related to something personal, or whatever.

- Show a little respect and just help us a little bit.

- You don't want a lecture though. Just enough.

Nottingham focus group participants

Repeated listening to a specific piece of music does have some impact on preference as long as the complexity of the piece is greater than that usually preferred by the listener. The level of preference continues to rise to a peak and then declines.

The researcher concludes that we need to catch them when they are young, recommending that music educators focus on introducing primary school children to as wide a range of music as possible. Once they reach secondary school it is too late so he recommends focusing on young people who express a spark of interest in particular forms of music and developing that interest into enthusiasm. Their interests may then be broadened by introducing new musical styles related to the one already of interest.^{vi}

If it's really bad music then I don't think there's a lot anyone can do about it. If I'm like 'Oh, I'm not quite sure,' if it's intrigued me a little bit, then I can be steered different ways by learning new information about it.

Derby focus group

What influence do friends and family who are not jazz enthusiasts have on the decision to attend?

Some EMJAZZ members felt that an individual's family context could be a barrier to attendance at gigs.

Couples

Researchers analysed the cultural participation of over 3,000 Dutch couples participating in the government sponsored Family Survey. Overall, they found no significant difference in cultural consumption between couples where both partners are in paid work and couples where only one partner or neither partner is in paid work. So work is not a barrier to arts attendance.

There is a difference, though, between different types of working couple. Couples where both partners work full-time consume significantly less culture than couples where one partner works full-time and the other works part-time, particularly if the partner working part-time is male.^x

Leisure activities undertaken by one spouse are often accompanied by the other^{xv} but van Gils and his colleagues didn't find any reduction in the amount of culture the couple consumes together. It's the individual consumption that drops.

So couples have a positive effect on each others' arts attendance.

The more years of education an individual has had, the higher the probability of attending cultural places of interest. Further, males as well as females tend to borrow educational skills from their spouse for their own cultural participation. Attending cultural activities is more frequent with a higher educated spouse^{xvii}.

There is a well-established theory that our ability to appreciate culture develops because of the influence of our family when we are young.^{xvi} But what happens when we grow up? A study of over 1,000 married couples carried out by the US Census Bureau for the National Endowment of the Arts showed that the arts attendance of many married men and women is predicted as strongly by their spouse's educational attainment and childhood experience of the arts as by their own, whether they are attending together or on their own. The influence of women on their husbands' attendance is stronger than that of men on their wives' attendance.^{xvii}

In neither study is there any evidence that the partner with least education or childhood experience of the arts has a negative effect on their partner's arts attendance. The influence is positive - to increase arts attendance.

The couples in our focus groups demonstrate the same positive influence. The jazz enthusiasts in these couples included both men and women. Their partners positively enjoy sharing their partners' interests as it gives them a new perspective on music:

- *We have our own interests if you like but we're both reasonably open-minded so there's a bit of compromise. We have joined up interests as well. In couples it's a good thing because you open each other's minds.*
- *It's a good thing, like going shopping with someone else because they suggest colours that you would never consider.*

Lincoln focus group participants

Couples have a good understanding of where their own tastes overlap with their partner's and where they don't:

- Quite boringly because we're an old married couple, I would also [choose] the Duke Ellington and the RAF Swing Band but I'd also have the medieval and renaissance [concert]...*

Wellingborough focus group participant

There is an expectation from all participants, not just the couples who attended, that partners will want to share each others' enthusiasms:

He's really into it and his wife isn't necessarily so but obviously she comes along.

Lincoln focus group participant

Some of the couples participating in the focus groups put aside their own tastes and came with their partners to events they believed they would not enjoy. They strive to better understand jazz and, although they sound reluctant and even anxious about coming to gigs they perceive as difficult or challenging, they are willing to give the music a try and are sometimes pleasantly surprised that the music is more enjoyable than they expected.

My husband would go to this [sample gig]. I interpreted abstraction as being abstract and kind of like a mixture, no, no not a mixture, what I term no rhythm to it. I don't understand it when he plays things like that to me - it's really abstract. I'd go if he wanted to go. I might be wrong you see and I might enjoy it.

Lincoln focus group participant

Although they are open to attending gigs that they may not enjoy, they do not want music they find unpleasant to invade their personal space. Going to gigs makes experimenting with music an acceptable risk, as the exchange with this couple illustrates:

*- I've always gone to give it a go. Where we clash is where we've seen something that's really off the wall and he wants to get the CD and I go "No, I don't want to hear that at home"
- And I get the CD anyway but it's only me that listens to it...
- Sometimes I get it really wrong. I say "I'll go but I don't think I'm going to like it and a couple of times it's been really good.*

Lincoln focus group participants

Other couples, however, attend gigs that are nearer the common ground between their musical tastes:

We do compromise. He'd like to go to the really outlandish modern [classical] composers but he's very considerate so we normally go to the easier listening ones. It's the same with my jazz.

Lincoln focus group participant

In these couples, the jazz enthusiast moderates the amount of risk they are willing to take when choosing which gigs to attend. It's worth noting that in these couples both partners were music enthusiasts whereas the partners putting aside their own tastes to share their partners' interests were not themselves music enthusiasts.

The focus groups of course included only couples in which the non-jazz enthusiast was willing to come along and talk about jazz. However just one focus group participant said that his wife refused to attend gigs with him. He had, however, found a 'gig buddy' to accompany him on a regular basis.

I come with my brother in law - my wife hates jazz. She likes some jazz - Michael Buble, Jack Jones, the singers.

Lincoln focus group participant

Friends

There is plenty of evidence that many EMJAZZ attenders act as ambassadors for jazz:

A key factor at the Y is how much evangelising goes on, how much one person brings two or three others, because that makes a huge difference to the numbers. I always try and do that by whatever means I can to coax them along. Doesn't always work, though.

Leicester focus group participant

As I'm single, I would come with single friends and each time they've been different.

Lincoln focus group participant

To persuade non-enthusiast friends, participants said they needed to explain what kind of music to expect.

You think is it the kind of jazz you like and is it the kind of jazz they might like and you say "It's so and so and it's like this and I like it and I think you'll like it.

Lincoln focus group participant

Focus group participants commented that it was often impossible to persuade other people to come along because they didn't have a clear enough idea of what the music would be like:

With jazz, because I'm not particularly musical, I just like listening - there's not a fear factor as such - but if it's way off the wall, I'm just sitting there. And as a single person that's the problem with getting other people to come with me. I don't know what it's like so they say let's go to the cinema.

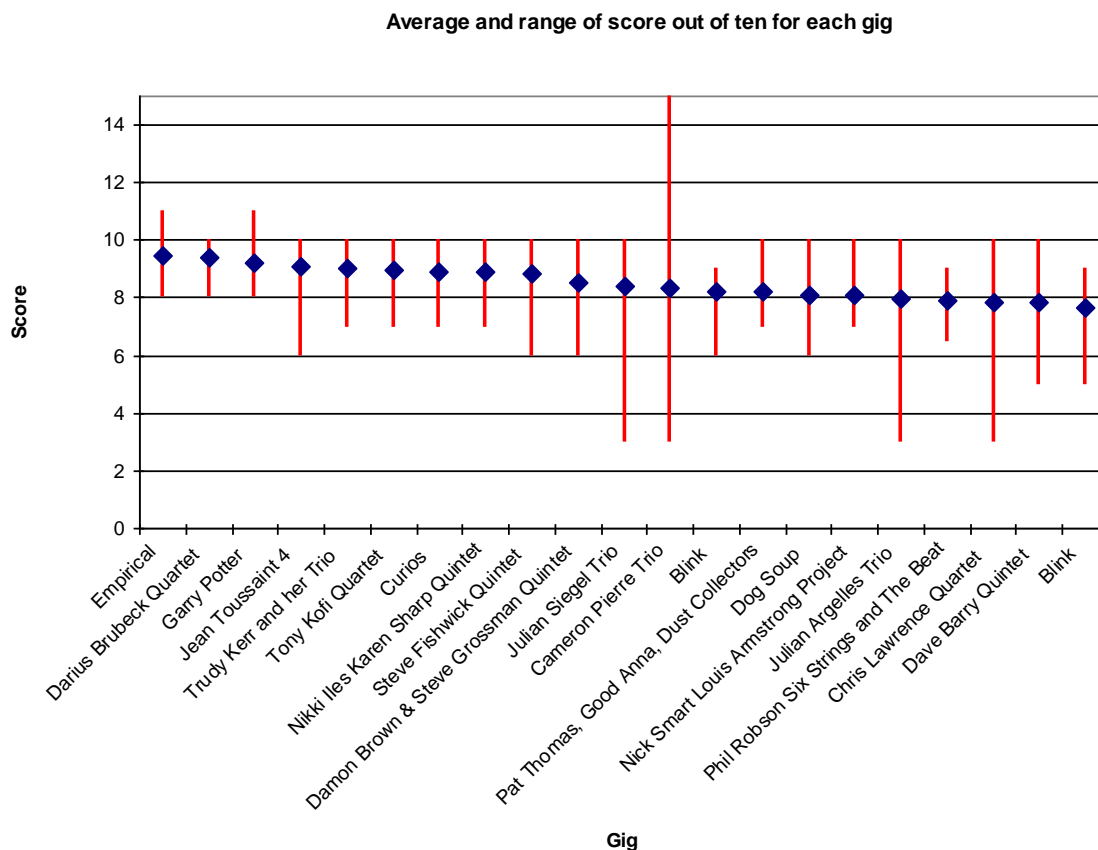
Lincoln focus group participant

What do audiences think of EMJAZZ members' gigs?

Audiences at a total of 21 gigs in January and February 2009 were asked to complete a questionnaire that included the opportunity to rate the gig and the venue. Overall, respondents were positive:

- They gave at least one ten out of ten to all but three gigs
- They gave all but five gigs a mean score of at least eight out of ten
- The lowest mean score was 7.7 out of ten
- The gigs that attracted the lowest marks also attracted the highest.

A chart summary of the scores is overleaf.



Note: the top of each vertical line represents the highest mark given and the bottom of the line the lowest mark. The diamond represents the mean score.

88% of respondents made wholly positive comments; 1% made positive but unenthusiastic comments; 5% made comments in which some aspects were positive and some negative and 6% made wholly negative comments.

Out of the 42 negative comments, 15 were about aspects of the music, eight focused on the challenging or difficult nature of the music, four were about the behaviour of other audience members and the remainder were a range of complaints about the venue and atmosphere eg:

Give us a guitar solo or two; would someone please take the large cymbal away from the drummer?

Questionnaire respondent at Cameron Perre Trio, Deda, 9/1/2009

Too contemporary for our taste

Questionnaire respondent at Nick Smart's Louis Armstrong Project, The Castle, 26/2/2009

Very good but spoiled a little by a young couple in front of me constantly kissing & cuddling!

Questionnaire respondent at Garry Potter, Buddha Jeas, 13/2/2009

Extremely enjoyable; got a bit too hot!

Questionnaire respondent at Darius Brubeck, Lincoln Drill Hall, 16/1/2009

Venues were rated highly too, with at least two thirds of respondents giving the highest rating for all aspects except comfort:

Very welcoming	68%
Very easy to get to	79%
Very organised	75%
Very easy to buy tickets	81%
Very comfortable	53%

Only 12% of respondents said that they were somewhat uncomfortable or very uncomfortable.

Audiences seem to have some minor issues connected with comfort at the Terry O'Toole (temperature) and Deda (the hard chairs), organisational issues to do with bar staffing at The Castle and ticketing issues at The Y. These issues did not appear to affect these customers' overall rating of the gig.

Getting bigger audiences

The most effective strategies for building audiences are to persuade more Musical Omnivores to include jazz in their menu of options and to build confidence among the Emotional Responders dipping into jazz.

The way to do this is to turn concerts into events with a welcoming and engaging atmosphere. The key factors in this are:

- Informal, friendly venues
- Seating layout
- Lighting
- Food and drink
- Interaction with the musicians
- Interaction between audience members
- Interaction with the promoters as 'hosts'

References

ⁱ Morris, G. and McIntyre, A. (2000), *Barriers to Attendance: the industry's view, the audience's view*, JazzDev

ⁱⁱ Levitin, D.J. (2007), 'Life Soundtracks: the uses of music in everyday life' consulted at levitin.mcgill.ca/pdf/LifeSoundtracks.pdf 24/3/2009

ⁱⁱⁱ Chamorro-Premuzic, T. and Furnham, A. (2007), Personality and music: can traits explain how people use music in everyday life?, *British Journal of Psychology*, 98(2), pp175-185

^{iv} Blood, A.J., Zatorre, R.J., Bermudez, P., and Evans, A.C. (1999), 'Emotional responses to pleasant and unpleasant music correlate with activity in paralimbic brain regions', *Nature Neuroscience*, 2(4), 382-387

- ^v Gainer, B. (1995), 'Ritual and Relationships: interpersonal influences on shared consumption', *Journal of Business Research*, 32(3)
- ^{vi} Hugh, B. (2000), 'Can Musicians Alter the Music Preferences of Their Audience?: the effect of pre-performance informational presentations on music preference', doctoral thesis consulted at brenthugh.com/piano/musicpreference.pdf 22/3/2009
- ^{vii} Trehub, S.E. (2003), 'The Developmental Origins of Music', *Nature Neuroscience*, 6(7), 669-673
- ^{viii} Taking Part, the National Survey of Culture, Leisure and Sport: arts opportunities workbook, DCMS, consulted at <http://www.culture.gov.uk/images/research/TP-artsOpp0607.xls#AO14!A2>
- ^{ix} Nock, S. L., & Kingston, P. W. (1989). The division of leisure and work. *Social Science Quarterly*, 70(1), 24-39
- ^x van Gils, W., Kraaykamp, G., and Ultee, W., *Cultural Couples: Differentiation in arts attendance from a couple perspective*, paper prepared for Spring Meeting RC28, Nijmegen, the Netherlands
- ^{xi} McDermott, J. and Hauser, M. (2005), 'The Origins of Music: innateness, uniqueness, and evolution', *Music Perception*, 23(1), 29-59
- ^{xii} Eschrich, S., Münte, T.F., Altenmüller, E.O., 2008, 'Unforgettable film music: the role of emotion in episodic long-term memory for music', *BMC Neuroscience*, 9(48),
- ^{xiii} Hash, P. (2002), 'Introducing Unfamiliar Genres: Recommendations Based on Music Preference Research', *Update: Applications of Research in Music Education*, 21(12)
- ^{xiv} Salamon, E., Bernstein, R.B. et al (2003), 'The effects of auditory perception and musical preference on anxiety in naive human subjects', *Medical Science Monitor*, 9(9)
- ^{xv} Kalmijn, M., & Bernasco, W. (2001), 'Joint and separated lifestyles in couple relationships' *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 63(3), 639-654
- ^{xvi} Bourdieu, P. (1984), *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, London: Routledge.
- ^{xvii} Upright, C.B. (2004), *Social Capital and Cultural Participation: spousal Influences on attendance at arts events*, Princeton University Center for Arts and Cultural Policy Studies



Supported by
**ARTS COUNCIL
 ENGLAND**

