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Jazz and Recording in the Digital Age: Technology, New Media, and Performance in New York and Online

Dean S. Reynolds
The Graduate Center, City University of New York

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JAZZ AND RECORDING IN THE DIGITAL AGE:
TECHNOLOGY, NEW MEDIA, AND PERFORMANCE IN NEW YORK AND ONLINE

by

DEAN S. REYNOLDS

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Music in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2017
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Dean S. Reynolds

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Music in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
ABSTRACT

Jazz and Recording in the Digital Age:
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by
Dean S. Reynolds

Advisor: Stephen Blum

This dissertation is a study of the uses of recording technologies and new media by jazz musicians in New York. It privileges the perspectives of professional musicians, gleaned through interviews and observation of their discourses and practices in live and recorded performances and in online new media spaces. Contrary to scholarly and critical approaches to jazz that privilege live performance, this dissertation argues that mediatization, through use of recording technologies, digital formats and platforms, and social media, is a vital mode of jazz performance in the digital age. Chapter 1 shows how formative encounters with jazz by musicians coming of age in the 1980s, ‘90s, and 2000s were often with recorded media, instilling in them positive attitudes towards the creative and professional opportunities presented by recording technologies. Chapter 2 presents the professional and artistic reasons why musicians make recordings, how they choose music to record, and how they fund their recording projects amid a traditional recording industry averse to developing jazz musicians. Chapter 3 describes the ways that musicians use the technologies of the recording studio, which increasingly challenge conventional distinctions between stages of recording, aligning instead with integrated practices of “production” central to studio-based genres like hip-hop, electronic music, and pop. Chapter 4 examines how musicians are using new media of distribution and promotion—often despite the exploitative practices of media companies—to release their recordings and cultivate social networks of fans and fellow musicians. Chapter 5 discusses some current trends in the
style of recording-oriented jazz under the aesthetic frameworks of *songs* and *beats* and considers how these frameworks accommodate the improvised solo, a hallmark of jazz. Chapter 6 interrogates the ontology and phenomenology of jazz recording, using the framework of *mediatized performance* to argue against the common notion that recording necessarily impoverishes improvised music. In closing, Chapter 7 reveals how mediatized performances have enabled jazz musicians to participate in social movements that themselves are highly mediatized. This dissertation contributes to our knowledge of contemporary jazz, the ways musicians are adapting to and innovating with new technologies and media, and the relationship between recording and performance in the digital age.
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I also extend my sincerest thanks to the musicians whose music lies at the heart of this dissertation. I am especially grateful to those musicians who took time out of their busy schedules to talk with me about their music: Johnathan Blake, Anthony Branker, Aidan Carroll, John Ellis, Jesse Fischer, James Francies, Irwin Hall, Remy Le Boeuf, Sylvester Onyejiaka, Chuck Staab, Colin Stranahan, Kevin Sun, and Ben Wendel. I am honored not only that they participated in this project, but that they have taken a keen interest in seeing the results and in continuing our conversations about jazz. Each of these musicians is dedicated to cultivating
vibrant spaces for jazz music in public culture, and I hope that this dissertation contributes to that project in some way, not the least of which is by shining a light on their incredible work.

My friends and colleagues at the Graduate Center have created a vibrant community of young scholars that was both intellectually stimulating and emotionally supportive. Thanks to Frank Meegan, Joseph Alpar, Emily Williamson, Joshua Katz-Rosene, Stephanie Jackson, Elizabeth Martin, and David DeMotta, who provided helpful feedback on early versions of this project. Prof. Evan Rapport at The New School has primarily been a teaching mentor, but he also gave me valuable advice on the dissertation process. The research for this dissertation was made possible by a Dissertation Fellowship from the Baisley Powell Elebash Fund, and I am very grateful to Prof. Jeffrey Taylor and the members of the fellowship committee.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ........................................................................................................................................ iv

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .................................................................................................................... vi

TABLE OF CONTENTS ........................................................................................................................ viii

LIST OF FIGURES ................................................................................................................................ xi

INTRODUCTION .................................................................................................................................... 1

Jazz and recording in the digital age: Not “everything,” not “nothing” ........................................... 4

Literature on jazz and recording I: The “perceived inadequacies” of recordings ......................... 8

Literature on jazz and recording II: New critical approaches to recordings .............................. 12

*Traces of process: Production-oriented approaches* ................................................................. 13

*Objects in circulation: Reception-oriented approaches* ............................................................. 16

Research fields and methods ........................................................................................................... 22

Chapter outline ............................................................................................................................... 34

A guide to interview transcription and citation ........................................................................... 35

CHAPTER 1. Checking out records: Early encounters with jazz .............................................. 37

Gateway music .............................................................................................................................. 39

Contexts for listening ..................................................................................................................... 49

CHAPTER 2. Going into the studio: Preparing for and funding recordings ............................ 58

Deciding to record .......................................................................................................................... 58

Selecting music and musicians ...................................................................................................... 69

Funding a recording ....................................................................................................................... 80

CHAPTER 3. Making records: Producing jazz recordings ......................................................... 97

Selecting a recording studio and recordists .................................................................................. 97
CHAPTER 4. Putting out records: Record release and new media ................................. 146

Media of distribution ........................................................................................................ 147

Record labels ...................................................................................................................... 147

Formats and platforms ....................................................................................................... 151

Supplemental materials ...................................................................................................... 165

Media of promotion ............................................................................................................ 172

Traditional media outlets ................................................................................................. 172

Social media ....................................................................................................................... 175

New media, the recording industry, and jazz .................................................................... 181

CHAPTER 5. Jazz style: Songs, beats, and solos .............................................................. 193

Songs ................................................................................................................................... 194

Beats ................................................................................................................................... 201

Interlude: Another model of melody and groove ............................................................... 217

Solos ..................................................................................................................................... 221

CHAPTER 6. Recordings as mediatized performances ....................................................... 226

Reproductions and representations, documents and works ........................................... 227

Repeatability and improvisation ....................................................................................... 230

Mediatized performance and liveness .............................................................................. 240

CHAPTER 7. Jazz recordings and social media activism .................................................... 250

Racial justice movements and social media ..................................................................... 251
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Screenshot (July 29, 2017) of Otis Brown III's Kickstarter campaign page. .............. 90

Figure 2. Some processes of overdubbing ............................................................................. 122

Figure 3. Front covers of Vijay Iyer albums on Act Music + Vision: Solo (2010), Tirtha (2011),
and Accelerando (2012) ........................................................................................................ 167

Figure 4. Screenshots (July 29, 2017) of Ben Wendel's The Seasons website ...................... 170

Figure 5. Back cover of Yesterday You Said Tomorrow by Christian Scott (Concord, 2011) .... 257

Figure 6. Front cover of Breathless by Terence Blanchard featuring the E-Collective (Blue Note,
2015) ...................................................................................................................................... 260

Figure 7. Screenshots (July 31, 2017) of Samora Pinderhughes’s The Transformations Suite
website ....................................................................................................................................... 276
INTRODUCTION

On September 23, 2014, Blue Note Records released *The Thought of You*, drummer Otis Brown III’s debut as a leader. The album was the first release by an imprint partnership between the esteemed jazz record label and an organization called Revive Music. Revive, founded by Berklee College of Music graduate Meghan Stabile in 2006, began as a live music promoter and spun off an online magazine in 2010. After moving to New York from Boston, the group quickly established itself on the jazz scene, publishing interviews, reviews, and other features, promoting new album releases, and organizing live events, including many by its eponymous big band, led by trumpeter Igmar Thomas.\(^1\) In 2013, Blue Note president Don Was tapped Stabile as an Executive Producer and formalized the label partnership.

Though ultimately “picked up” by the label, *The Thought of You* had humbler origins. In 2011, Brown raised money to make the album through the crowdfunding platform Kickstarter. As is typical for such campaigns, he produced a short video to entice potential “backers” of his project. In the video, he described himself, highlighting his education at The New School and his work as a sideman with many prominent jazz musicians, and he described the project, introducing the producer of the album, the featured musicians, and the studio where they planned to record it. In exchange for contributions, Brown offered rewards, such as his “sincere thanks and gratitude” for $1, a physical copy of the recording for $25, and an invitation to the recording sessions for $1,000. The campaign closed having raised $11,284, comfortably surpassing his fundraising goal of $10,000 and enabling the drummer to record the album.\(^2\)

In 2012, another jazz drummer, Mark Guiliana, released *A Form of Truth*, his own debut album as a leader. Rather than manufacture CDs, Guiliana made the album available only in digital formats through his online store hosted by Bandcamp, an independent music marketplace. After buying the album, listeners could download it in formats of variable size and sound quality, or they could stream it on the Bandcamp mobile app. Two years later, Guiliana launched his own record label, Beat Music Productions, and released two more albums, one under his own name and the other with his electronic music project, Beat Music. This time, through his new personal website, he sold the albums in both digital and physical formats along with other merchandise like Beat Music Productions t-shirts and custom drumsticks.

A former student of the jazz program at William Paterson University, Guiliana came to prominence touring and recording with bassist Avishai Cohen and has since worked with singer Gretchen Parlato, saxophonist Donny McCaslin, and pianist Brad Mehldau, among others. Guiliana is known for incorporating styles from various electronic music genres into his music. His bands often use analog and digital synthesizers, drum machines, looping stations, effects processors, and laptop computers, expanding the timbral palate of a more conventional jazz ensemble. When making recordings, he sometimes uses techniques like overdubbing and effects processing, allowing him to continue to craft the sound of his recordings after initial tracking sessions are complete. Guiliana has even adapted his drumming technique to allow him to “sound like” a sampler or a drum machine when performing in live, acoustic contexts.

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On January 26, 2014, the band Snarky Puppy and singer Lalah Hathaway won a Grammy Award for Best R&B Performance for “Something,” a track off the band’s album *Family Dinner, Vol. 1* (Ropeadope, 2013). The album was recorded in a theater, but the space was outfitted like a professional recording studio; the musicians and the audience members sat together on the stage, and all wore headphones. The session was professionally filmed, and the album was released as both a sound recording and a film—a CD/DVD combo. Shortly before the Grammy nominees were announced, the video for “Something,” which the band had also uploaded to YouTube, had gone viral. Although Internet viewers certainly appreciated the band’s prodigious musicianship, much of the video’s popularity was due to Hathaway’s remarkable vocal solo, especially her striking use of multiphonics. As is clear from comments on the video, viewers were delighted not only by the solo itself, but by the astonished and gleeful responses it elicited from band members and audience members alike, which undoubtedly matched their own.

Snarky Puppy was founded in 2004 by bassist Michael League and other members of the prestigious jazz program at the University of North Texas. Since its formation, the band has toured tirelessly, but they have extended their base of support further through their unique recordings. *Family Dinner, Vol. 1* was not the first album for which the band produced a film but rather the third in a sequence of now six albums that have been released as both audio and video recordings. This includes *Sylva* (2015), their ambitious collaboration with the Dutch Metropole.

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5 “Snarky Puppy feat. Lalah Hathaway - Something (Family Dinner - Volume One).” groundUPmusicNYC. Published September 23, 2013. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0SJIgTLe0hc. According to YouTube’s analytics, there was a spike in viewership from a few thousand to well over 160,000 in the span of only a few days around late October/early November 2013.
Orkest and their debut record for Impulse!, another historic jazz label that had been relaunched by Universal Music Group only one year before.

**Jazz and recording in the digital age: Not “everything,” not “nothing”**

What do these three cases suggest about contemporary jazz? At a minimum, they make clear that jazz musicians, listeners, and others still value recorded music. Musicians are dedicating time and energy to “making records,” they are innovating with recording techniques and musical styles, and they are building relationships with old and new music industry institutions; audiences, including online audiences listening to digital music, are responding with enthusiasm. Of course, since the origins of jazz, people have regarded recorded music as central to the “tradition.” Recording has allowed musicians to “capture” their music, to document it for posterity, to share it widely with listeners, and to earn at least part of a living by commodifying and selling it. Recordings have offered models of performance to aspiring musicians and historical and musical “texts” to scholars. For listeners, recordings provide access to musicians whom they might not be able to hear in person, and they enable repeated listening to otherwise ephemeral performances. Over time, jazz people have built a canon of “classic” records that is meant to represent the best of jazz; today, they continue to make, listen to, and discuss new recordings, which serve as touchstones for a young artist’s potential or an elder musician’s continued vitality.

Despite all they offer, however, jazz recordings are also regarded as severely limited. According to certain enduring ideologies about jazz authenticity, not only do records only represent a fraction of the musical and social activity that has constituted jazz, they are not even very good at doing that; as Travis Jackson has put it, “It is difficult to say that recordings are in
any way representative of what jazz musicians do and think” (2006:172). A truly representative experience of jazz is rather a live one, whether it occurs on a concert stage, in a nightclub, or during an informal jam session. Even critic Martin Williams—a leading architect of the jazz canon—once acknowledged, “every musician knows (and every critic should know) that there is no substitute for live performance” (1985:224). Live performance prominently features the defining characteristics of jazz that recording unavoidably obscures or destroys: the movements of performing bodies, the ephemerality of improvised solos, and the interactions of musicians and audience members, for instance. Recordings, by contrast, can at best be second-rate representations of live performance. Catherine Tackley has pithily summarized the distinction between these two views: “Jazz recordings have been shown to represent everything (the masterworks of the jazz canon) and nothing (poor simulations of live performance)” (2010:169).

To be sure, live jazz performances produce musical and social experiences that are both distinct from and often preferable to those produced by jazz recordings. Yet notions of the inauthentic record vis-à-vis the authentic live performance are often inconsistent with the discourses and practices of professional jazz musicians and listeners, as intimated by the cases above. Not only are musicians frequently and enthusiastically making records, they do not always regard recording as an exercise in merely capturing the experience of live performance. On the contrary, they see recording as an opportunity to use technological resources to make music, including that which they would not or even could not make live. Further, musicians use their recordings to participate in both physical and, increasingly, virtual social networks, where

6 Williams’ book The Jazz Tradition (1993) and his compilation The Smithsonian Collection of Classic Jazz (1973) are emblematic of the canonization of jazz musicians and recordings.

7 Elsewhere, Gabriel Solis has glossed these as the “fetishistic” and “nativist, Luddite” views of jazz records (2004).
they both advance their careers by selling music and building fan bases and participate in public
discourses about social and political issues.

In this dissertation, I show that recording technologies and new media are essential
outlets for creating, sharing, and listening to jazz, adapting to changing marketplaces, innovating
stylistically, and participating in social networks. This dissertation can be thought of as
consisting of two large parts. The first part is ethnographically-oriented and serves to give an
overview of recording practices among a cohort of jazz musicians in New York. I begin with a
discussion of musicians’ own listening habits, focusing on their early encounters with jazz
through recorded media, which shaped the attitudes towards jazz and recording that they carried
with them as they became professionals. I then discuss why these musicians choose to make
records, how they prepare for the recording process, how they choose recording spaces,
techniques, and collaborators, what happens during the initial recording sessions, how they
continue to use recording technologies after those sessions, how they choose where to release
their recordings and in what formats, and how they promote them. To a certain extent, my
overview tracks with the lifespan of a typical album, from conception to release. This structure is
mostly practical, however, as part of what I intend to show in this dissertation is that
recordings—digital recordings, in particular—remain open to remediation after their release in
ways that undermine a linear, closed-ended progression from “production” to “distribution” to
“reception.” In this sense, I echo David Novak’s observation that music cultures can be
constituted in part by the “circulation” of recordings and the “feedback” that such circulation
produces: “Describing circulation does not mean merely showing how cultural forms enter into
production in one place and emerge changed in reception somewhere else. Output is always
connected back to input in transformative cycles of feedback” (2013:17).
In the second part, which is analytically-oriented, I draw on the material presented in the first to discuss the “effects” of recording through three different lenses. First, I examine the relationship between recording techniques and jazz style, and I argue that contemporary approaches to jazz composition, improvisation, and performance resonate with aesthetic frameworks of other contemporary studio-based genres, such as hip-hop, electronic dance music, and pop. Second, I attempt to answer the question “What kind of thing is a jazz recording?” by considering the experience of listening to recorded music. Focusing on the issue of their repeatability, which has been especially vexing in the case of improvised music like jazz, I use the concept *mediatized performance* to conceptualize recordings, suggesting that it better characterizes the relationship between musicians and listeners mediated by recordings than do concepts like *reproduction*, *representation*, and *phonographic work*. Finally, I show how musicians use mediatized performances to participate in social networks, focusing on their contributions to recent movements against racial injustice. Contrary to the idea that recording attenuates the social power of music by alienating it from its intimate, social contexts, I argue that recordings offer unique instruments of activism within social justice movements that have themselves been highly mediatized.

This dissertation contributes to our knowledge of jazz, revealing the vibrant creative and professional practices of contemporary musicians in a genre that many in the broader public perceive as “irrelevant” or “dead.” It also contributes to our understanding of how creative musicians in general are adapting to cutting-edge recording technologies and new media to make

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8 My use of “effects” is adapted from Michael Chanan’s and Mark Katz’s, for whom effects are any “impacts” or “influences” that recording technologies have exerted on music, stylistically, culturally, politically, or otherwise (Chanan 1995, Katz 2010).
music, earn livings, and create communities, sometimes in opposition to the exploitative or predatory practices of powerful institutions in the broader cultural economy. Finally, it contributes to our understanding of performance in the digital age, critiquing categorical distinctions between “live” and “recorded” music and common assumptions about the musical and social possibilities of each.

**Literature on jazz and recording I: The “perceived inadequacies” of recordings**

A substantial, interdisciplinary critique of the problematic status of recordings in jazz began in the 1990s amid a broader reassessment of “the jazz tradition” as an historical narrative. The so-called New Jazz Studies largely fostered, as Catherine Tackley has put it, “negativity and frustration towards the perceived inadequacies of jazz recordings” (2010:167). Such inadequacies were largely of two kinds: (1) the inability of extant recordings to constitute a comprehensive or even representative historical archive; and (2) the incapacity of recording technologies to accurately “capture” or “represent” the music as it is performed. English writer and pianist Brian Priestley wryly summarized both inadequacies: “It is clear that the history of jazz on record is far from being the same thing as the history of jazz. It represents only a minuscule proportion (0.00001 percent?) of the music that has been played, and it is not even properly representative” (1988:xii).

The superabundance of jazz records, accumulating virtually since the genre’s inception, had indeed presented an irresistible historical archive. The contents of any archive, however, are determined by who has had the authority and resources to collect and preserve materials. Thus, historical narratives that relied heavily if not exclusively on recordings had marginalized or outright excluded musicians who lacked access to the necessary technologies of recording—not
to mention of manufacturing and distributing—especially those owned and operated by record companies. Jazz scholars came to acknowledge that, as Jed Rasula observed in a field-defining book chapter, “the specific challenge of jazz’s recorded legacy is to admit a broader range of media to the historical palette of memory” (1995:153). They began to expand their research archives to include oral histories, personal and business papers, newspapers, trade publications, other works of art (e.g., paintings, films, novels), and other historical artifacts. They did not abandon recordings entirely, but instead favored unreleased recordings, live bootlegs, and alternate takes over the established canon of commercially-released records.


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9 In fact, musicologist Lawrence Gushee had been arguing for the importance of such materials well before the idea took hold in the New Jazz Studies (1984). They were essential to his work on early jazz, especially the Creole Band (Gushee 1988, 1994, 2005).
these studies aimed simply to add unrecorded or otherwise marginalized musicians to the existing canon; scholars critiqued any approach to jazz history that continues to privilege “great musicians” producing “great works.” Many looked to other cultural spaces of jazz, including education (Ake 2002, Murphy 2009, Wilf 2014), criticism (Gennari 2006), and communities of fans (Prouty 2012, Greenland 2016), while others investigated the non-performance activities of musicians, especially as activists and political thinkers (Porter 2002, Monson 2007, Kelley 2012). Further, by drawing from the theoretical orientations of feminist, queer, black Atlantic, and literary studies, among other disciplines, scholars dismantled many prevailing jazz “myths,” such as its “colorblindness” or racially democratic essence.

The second major perceived inadequacy of records was in their capacity to accurately reproduce or represent the “actual nature” of jazz (Rasula 1995:144). In the middle of the twentieth century, as jazz became institutionalized as a legitimate subject of musicological analysis, recordings came to play the role that notated scores have played in the analysis of Western art music. As Travis Jackson has noted, this required “a rhetorical sleight of hand that turns recordings into timeless art works that transcend the circumstances of their creation” (2006:172). By the century’s end, scholars identified multiple problems with this “work” concept in jazz, most deriving from jazz’s nature as an improvised and interactive music. For one, the work concept occludes the fact that most recorded performances were merely one among many possible alternatives, none of which could be performed again in precisely the same form; as Rasula put the problem, “It is a perennial irony that we trace the legacy of an

\[10\] Arguably, this sleight of hand seemed not only reasonable but also progressive at the time, done in the interest of beating back racist presumptions of jazz music as instinctual or unserious.
improvised music by listening to ‘definitive’ performances on records” (1995:144). For another, any work concept akin to that of Western art music would not adequately account for the various musical and social interactions that most deem essential to jazz performance. In another important article, Matthew Butterfield argued that recordings attenuate the “erotic potential” of jazz—that is, its capacity to encourage participation and nurture interpersonal relationships; alarmingly, they have thus precipitated the loss of the “integrative social function of jazz performance practice” and “the dissolution of local jazz communities” (2001–2002:326).

Broadly speaking, this critique animated anthropological studies of jazz performance and other practices. The pioneering work of Paul Berliner and Ingrid Monson privileged the perspectives of musicians, describing the processes by which they acquire, hone, and use the musical and social skills necessary to become successful improvisers. In his 2012 book Blowin’ the Blues Away: Performance and Meaning on the New York Jazz Scene, Travis Jackson analyzed the interactions within jazz performance spaces (clubs, recording studios, etc.), not only those between musicians but between musicians and audience members. He described a community of insiders—musicians, fans, critics, and others—who make jazz meaningful through a shared network of signs, gestures, discourses, and practices. As he had argued earlier, “the meaning [of performance] is never solely in the sound; rather, it is in the interactions that make the sound possible and the ongoing adjustments of the sound to the context” (2000:71). These studies have been models for other ethnographies of jazz, including several in New York (Pellegrinelli 2005, Currie 2009, Blake 2013, Somoroff 2014, Greenland 2016).

11 As it happens, Gushee once again prefigured this critique, such as in his review of Gunther Schuller’s Early Jazz: Its Roots and Musical Development, which problematically treated recorded performances as “Works of Art” rather than as “a sample of a process” (1970:232).
Approaches that privilege improvisation and interactivity in performance have resonated with scholars who see jazz as music that is not only produced by communities but that produces communities. For Daniel Fischlin and Ajay Heble, for instance, “Jazz improvisation and creative improvised music have always . . . been about community building (rather than individual self-expression), about fostering new ways of thinking about, and participating in, human relationships” (2004:23). “When it works,” they assert, “improvised musicking celebrates human contact by reinvigorating our understanding of the possibilities of social interaction” (ibid:35). For some, such is the power of improvised, interactive jazz performance that it models possibilities for social change (Fischlin, et al. 2013, Rodriguez 2016).

**Literature on jazz and recording II: New critical approaches to recordings**

The foregoing interventions were essential to cultivating a more realistic view of what jazz recordings can do as historical documents and media of music, and they helped lay groundwork for new critical approaches to the continued study of jazz records. In the broadest strokes, scholars came to view recordings as cultural objects that are produced through the collective efforts of musicians, producers, and engineers and that circulate within communities of listeners, critics, and other musicians. This view was summarized by Gabriel Solis in his essential article on some live recordings by Thelonious Monk: “Recordings are sonic representations, or perhaps better, traces of a dialogic process of performance; but they are also significantly objects circulating among any number of people” (2004:342). In other words, recordings are neither autonomous works of art nor neutral historical documents, but rather artifacts that become meaningful only through the conditions of their creation and the interactions that people have with them.
Traces of process: Production-oriented approaches

Production-oriented studies of jazz and recording have been concerned with the processes of recording carried out by musicians, record producers, engineers, and other “recordists.” They often focus on the recording studio as the primary space of production, although some have addressed “live” recording as a distinct genre. These studies usually describe how recordists use the technologies of the studio, including how they adapt to the limitations that such technologies impose upon jazz performance conventions and how they use them to their advantage to craft satisfactory recorded performances. Others explain how recordists work to balance conflicting values and goals as they make decisions about what to record, how to record it, and what recordings to preserve.

These studies have been both historical and contemporary in scope. Drawing from extensive interviews, Dan Skea analyzed the innovative recording techniques of Rudy Van Gelder that allowed the legendary engineer to cultivate a distinct “sound” (2001–2002). Also drawing from interviews and oral histories, Nathan Bakkum discussed the in-studio musical interactions between bassist Richard Davis and drummer Tony Williams as they recorded a pair of albums for Blue Note in 1964 (2014). Travis Jackson’s aforementioned ethnography of the New York scene in the 1990s and 2000s includes a chapter on studio recording; he frames the various kinds of interaction between recordists and other participants (including himself as an observer) as “rituals,” and he analyzes how the recording studio and its technologies affect jazz performance conventions (2012).
This latter concern has preoccupied several scholars. Mark Katz has called the changes in music precipitated by recording technologies “phonograph effects.”12 Some effects are produced by musicians’ adaptations to the constraints of recording. In the case of early jazz, for instance, musicians were compelled to shorten the lengths of performances to fit the 78-rpm disc, and some may have even prepared their solos in advance rather than risk recording an uninspired improvisation. They also developed “phonogenic” techniques to compensate for the limitations of early technologies; the “slapping” technique, for example, helped overcome the inability of early transducers to record the attack of bass tones clearly (Katz 2010:72–84). Alternatively, effects are produced by musicians’ creative exploitation of the recording technologies. Steven Pond’s discussion of Herbie Hancock’s fusion albums shows how Hancock approached the initial recording sessions for the groundbreaking Head Hunters (Columbia, 1973) with the understanding that he would later overdub additional synthesizer parts; all of these parts together produced the characteristic “groove” of tracks such as “Chameleon” (2005:142–46).

Other phonograph effects arise during the inscription of sound by mechanical, electrical, or digital recording devices. These effects may also be regarded both positively and negatively—that is, they may be desirable and require specific interventions by recordists, or they may be byproducts of transduction that recordists strive to mitigate. As Skea has shown, Van Gelder achieved his signature sound in part by “close miking” the instruments (2001–2002). By contrast, John Crooks has argued that this and other standard recording techniques in jazz, such

12 The concept of the “effects” of recording on music was developed most notably by Michael Chanan in Repeated Takes: A Short History of Recording and Its Effects on Music (1995). Chanan took a largely negative view of these effects, suggesting, for one, that recordings stifle the creativity of musicians who feel obligated to reproduce performances to meet the expectations of listeners.
as using signal compression or panning instruments to separate channels in a stereo mix, alter or “distort” the timing relationship between bass and drums and therefore the sound of the rhythm section (2012).

The effects of recording techniques on jazz performance conventions are sometimes so profound as to have merited special treatment as recordings that test the boundaries of jazz as a genre. Pond’s work on Hancock is exemplary in its approach to “the studio as an instrument” in jazz. He argues that recording technologies facilitated changes in Hancock’s approach to rhythm and his use of timbre, which aligned his music with popular genres like rock and funk and challenged the stylistic orthodoxy of jazz (2005). Marian Jago has investigated another unusual record—Lennie Tristano’s self-titled album, which famously uses overdubbing and manipulation of tape speed—and describes the controversy of authenticity that it provoked (2013). Darren Mueller has discussed the differences between George Avakian’s production of the famous 1956 recording *Ellington at Newport* and Phil Schaap’s production of the 1999 reissue. Avakian, hoping to propel Ellington’s comeback, used a variety of post-production interventions—tape splicing, most notably—to correct mistakes, compensate for poor recording equipment, and, ultimately, create an ideal version of the event. By contrast, Schaap, concerned with accurate historical documentation, aimed to “restore” the original recording so as to represent the performance exactly “as it happened,” mistakes and all (2014:22). Mueller shows how recording technologies are used to advance a variety of ideological stances on jazz authenticity, even including those that profess to value “liveness” above all else.

A final type of production-oriented approach has been to investigate how musicians have been responsive to economic conditions when making records. Brian Felix’s analysis of Wes Montgomery’s *A Day in the Life* (A&M, 1967) reveals how another producer, Creed Taylor,
shaped the sound of the album to cater to popular tastes, while Stuart Nicholson has argued that too few musicians have been responsive to the 21st century market for jazz (Felix 2014, Nicholson 2004). Jeremy A. Smith has warned against seeing commercialization as a homogenous process; he teases apart the marketing strategy of Miles Davis’s fusion recordings, highlighting the conflict between Columbia’s desire to sell them to a predominantly white audience and Davis’s own desire to sell them “black” (2010). Several scholars have investigated commercial and non-commercial radio and its effects on jazz record production (Johnson 2014). Simon Barber’s study of GRP Records suggests that the label adapted its production values to accommodate successful radio formats in the 1980s (2010).

**Objects in circulation: Reception-oriented approaches**

Paraphrasing culture writer Evan Eisenberg, Catherine Tackley has strongly advocated for scholarship that attends not to how recording is done, but rather to what recordings do, “foregrounding recipients rather than producers” (2010:169). Such scholarship has investigated records as media in circulation and assessed the range of cultural “meanings” that they produce for various listeners, “whose reception of the music may be influenced by particular historical, geographical and social circumstances as well as the more specific contexts of personal listening environment and situations” (ibid:183). Reception-oriented approaches have considered such aspects as album design, journalism and criticism, memory and transmission, marketplaces and fan communities—including the transformational impact of the digitalization of music—and the social and political conditions that affect how recordings are heard, to name just a few.

Tackley helpfully organizes reception-oriented approaches into three categories: “in retrospect,” “in history,” and “in the present.” “In retrospect” is generally the approach that
historians have taken, and it tends to run the greatest risk of applying contemporary aesthetic standards to past recordings. She advocates for the other two approaches, which aim to understand how recordings might have been interpreted at the time of their release and how they are interpreted by contemporary audiences. The “in history” perspective is generally the orientation of the ongoing Oxford Studies in Recorded Jazz series, especially of Gabriel Solis’s book on the Monk/Coltrane recordings from Carnegie Hall and Tackley’s own on Benny Goodman’s concert there in 1938 (Solis 2014, Tackley 2012). Elsewhere, David Ake has situated the ECM recordings of Keith Jarrett and Pat Metheny in the cultural history of the 1970s and ‘80s, arguing that, through sound, image, and discourse, these records constructed an idealized rural mythology in opposition to often racialized anxieties about urban crises (2007).

Other scholars have taken up the “in the present” approach. Some have attended to the ways that recordings can become models for future performances by the same musician or others and can even standardize certain tunes or styles. Bruce Ellis Benson has shown how jazz licks are “fixed” by recordings but also “made available” to other musicians, who personalize them by retaining certain properties and transforming others (2008). Bakkum has suggested that bass and drum partnerships since the Davis–Williams collaboration have emulated the ways the two musicians interacted with one another, “incorporat[ing] specific interactive logics from [these] prized recordings as elements of their own personal and collective musical identities”; in the

13 A focus on historical conditions of reception partially redresses another shortcoming of conventional jazz histories pithily expressed by Brian Priestley: “The convenient, but unhistorical, journalistic assumption that as soon as X made his first record, the world of jazz took immediate note and amended its musical habits accordingly” (1988:x).
14 Other books in the series include Brian Harker’s book on the Louis Armstrong Hot Five and Hot Seven recordings, Keith Waters’ on the Miles Davis Quintet recordings from 1965–1968, and Elsdon’s on the Keith Jarrett Köln concert (Harker 2011, Waters 2011, Elsdon 2013).
process, “momentary musical choices” solidified into “widely-held aesthetic standards” (2014:91). Similarly, Solis and David DeMotta have shown how contemporary jazz piano players form their concepts of, respectively, Thelonious Monk’s and Bud Powell’s styles by listening to their records and then selectively incorporating features into their own playing (Solis 2008, DeMotta 2014).

Other reception-oriented studies have revealed how records are central to the formation of social bonds between jazz fans, following David Ake’s assertion that jazz records still constitute “one of the few grounds for shared listening experiences” (2002:3). Tony Whyton has argued that recordings are essentially fetish objects that “fuel [the] desire to belong to a community of dedicated followers . . . Within this context, the recording becomes a sacred text that people own and consume ritually, to feel part of a collective whole” (2010:77). At the same time, he suggests, recordings mediate the relationship between jazz listeners and the musicians themselves, serving as a “conduit for the message” of the artist; in this sense, they “not only aid in the construction of symbolic jazz community, they also enable consumers to develop a sense of individual identity through identification” (ibid:78).

The role of recordings in the formation of jazz “communities” has been most productively explored by Kenneth Prouty. In his book *Knowing Jazz: Community, Pedagogy, and Canon in the Information Age*, Prouty proposes a notion of the jazz community as “imagined” in Benedict Anderson’s classic sense of the term, substituting “record capitalism” for Anderson’s “print capitalism” as the linking media apparatus, although Prouty suggests that this formulation does not adequately account for the “emotional currents” that recordings provoke (2012:30–31). Prouty argues further that recording is a process comprising “an entire spectrum of activities, from performing the music, to engineering it and manufacturing the media, to distributing it”
(ibid:39). He claims, however, that even “listening is not simply a passive act that serves to express an individual’s interest in the music,” but rather “a type of practice in and of itself, or at least a participation in a practice that begins with the act of playing or singing into a microphone in a recording studio, and ends with the listener hearing the same sound”; therefore, listening to recorded music “in essence, completes the process” of recording (ibid:39, 41). Because the listener acts on the same “recording–listening continuum” as the performing artist, listening creates a “deep, emotional connection” between the two; this runs contrary to the idea that recording disrupts the possibility of intimacy that inheres in live performances (ibid:43).

Prouty’s recording–listening continuum engages with Walter Benjamin’s concept of an art work’s aura, the authority it derives from its uniqueness to a particular time and place, which is destroyed by mechanical reproduction. Unsurprisingly, this concept has resonated strongly with ideologies of jazz that regard recordings as impoverished reproductions of live performances. Frederick Garber, for instance, compared rock music, an art form designed for reproducibility, to jazz, which is not: “In jazz the performance is privileged, in rock and roll the recording . . . To put it in terms of Benjamin’s examples, jazz finds analogy in all the stage actings of Faust, rock and roll its counterpart in the making of film” (1995:78). Prouty argues instead that, because most jazz records are indeed made to be listened to as records, aura is created by recording–listening practices, and that this aura accounts for the “emotional, visceral experience” that listeners often recount (2012:42).

15 See Coulthard 2007 for a thoughtful discussion of Benjamin and jazz.
16 Although he does not cite him directly, Prouty echoes Albin Zak’s discussion of aura and rock records: “For records and films represent not a shriveling of aura, but rather, a transferal of aura. And it is this transferal that is at the heart of the poetic process in the technologically mediated arts. The ‘audience’s identification’ is not with the camera—which ‘is the mind’s eye and nothing
The issue of aura turns in part on the question, as noted above, of what in jazz, if anything, constitutes “the musical work.” Is a jazz record a recording of a performance of a work, a recording of a work, or is it itself a work? Gabriel Solis has discussed the work concept in jazz in multiple publications, and he summarizes predominant perspectives in the introduction to his volume in the Oxford Studies series. He proposes a provisional “aesthetic ontology of jazz,” wherein the “work” indeed exists but operates at multiple levels. Albums (and their constituent tracks) are themselves musical works in the sense that a painted landscape is a work; quoting Albin Zak, Solis claims, “they are mechanically reproducible but ‘carry with them the physical traces of their making,’ and they cannot be reproduced exactly in performance” (2014:18). But the pieces that are recorded are also works in the sense that a symphony is a work, “that is, they are works that can be realized in any performance, and they are ‘equally authentic so long as they “comply” with the score’”—or, in the case of jazz, comply with the set of “precomposed, fixed elements” that identify them as this or that piece of music (ibid). Solis argues that works in this second sense, through “their repetition over time, within particular social relationships—playing networks, and the performer-audience relationships, themselves mediated by the industry, all of which, despite significant fluidity, are nonetheless a real part of more,’ as Susanne Langer puts it—but with the film itself. If the aura of the performer is missing, the aura of the work—whose making has involved a transferal and translation of the performer’s aura in the context of an articulated composition—is quite apparent. In this case, authenticity does not rely on the presence of a unique instance but on a unique arrangement of elements. All instances of the work are equally original as far as the audience—from the amateur to the connoisseur—is concerned” (2001:19).

17 Solis does not make these comparisons to painting and Western art music, but he uses philosopher Nelson Goodman’s concepts of “autographic” and “allographic” works as adapted by philosopher Theodore Gracyk. The comparisons are mine, based on Goodman’s examples.
making the jazz community,” have “a particular ontological status that is, in fact, peculiar to and
definitive of jazz” (ibid).

Georgina Born has made a case for a unique ontology of the work in jazz, which she
describes as “lateral and processural; it acknowledges and valorizes the movement or oscillation
between two crucibles or focal moments of creative practice”: the moment of interactive and
improvisational performance and the objectification and preservation of such moments through
recording (2015:144). These two musical events/objects generate one another cumulatively;
performances generate recordings, which are listened to, assimilated and become the basis for
new performances, which are recorded, and so on. Born describes this as “a circulatory
metaphysics in which both social and material mediation are conceived as generative of the
cumulative aesthetic evolution of the musical object, and as central to the nature of musical
experience” (ibid:145). She concludes:

Jazz’s ontology . . . effects no split between ideal musical object and particular
instantiation; nor does it construe a hierarchy between creator and interpreter.
There is no unchanging work that stands outside history, but a cumulative
historical chain of musical objects and events. In jazz, the sociality of music
making, its musical issue, music’s commodity form, recording technologies and
industry are all believed to bear agency and to contribute to the composite musical
object (or index).” (Ibid)

It is through the dissemination of the recording that jazz performances are “distributed across
space, time and persons,” where they can then be assimilated, taken apart, reconfigured, and
recomposed to produce the next performance.
Versions of this “peculiar” and “definitive” ontology have also been born out in case studies by some scholars. Peter Elsdon has shown that analysis of live recordings can reveal the emergence of a jazz work over time through repeated performances. Using analysis of several live recorded versions of John Coltrane’s “Chasin’ the Trane,” Elsdon argues that there is no “original” work that is played during each performance, but rather that the work is the composite of multiple performances that refer back to one another even as they differ (2010). In an exhaustive study of over 200 recorded versions of “Body and Soul,” José Antonio Bowen has shown similarly how musicians preserve features from prior performances or introduce new ones. Like Elsdon, he argues that a jazz tune is less a fixed composition than it is a history of performances (Bowen 2015).

Research fields and methods

The backgrounds in jazz of the musicians profiled in this dissertation are not dissimilar to my own. A brief account of my own formative experiences with jazz can illustrate some of the processes by which other musicians began their lives as jazz musicians while also explaining how I developed the relationships that became key entry points into my fieldwork. I began playing double bass around the age of ten, and I joined the school jazz band on electric bass in the sixth grade. For the next couple of years, my jazz training consisted primarily of learning big band standards and arrangements of light jazz and popular music, such as Henry Mancini themes and Manhattan Transfer songs. Meanwhile, I took an interest in my father’s fusion records, checking out Miles Davis’s Live-Evil (Columbia, 1971) and trying to transcribe bass lines off Stanley Clarke’s School Days (Nemperor, 1976). For the most part, however, I was interested in other genres of music, especially ska and punk rock.
In high school, I continued to play in the jazz band, but my first experiences playing small-group jazz came after I joined the New Jersey Performing Arts Center’s Jazz for Teens program. I first auditioned for the program on electric bass, but soon switched to double bass, and each fall weekend for most of high school, I took bass master classes, studied jazz theory, and played in small combos coached by professional musicians from New York, including tenor saxophonist Don Braden, drummer Ralph Peterson, Jr., and pianist and organist Mike LeDonne. By my final years in the program, I was playing in the top ensembles, and I was fortunate enough to play with several musicians who would go on to successful careers, including alto saxophonist Marcus Miller, guitarist Alex Wintz, drummer John Iannuzzi, pianist Alex Collins, and alto saxophonist Irwin Hall, who would become my classmate and frequent collaborator at Princeton University.\(^\text{18}\) The Jazz for Teens curriculum was strongly oriented towards bebop-derived jazz, emphasizing proficiency in swing and Latin rhythms, bebop and modal harmony, group interaction, and individual improvisation, as well as skills in transcription and memorization of repertoire.\(^\text{19}\) I fell in love with this music, and my father—who drove me to Newark, New Jersey every weekend and volunteered with the program—and I started to build our own collection of jazz records, including many of the “classics.”

\(^\text{18}\) Another alumnus of the program is multi-instrumentalist Tyshawn Sorey, who was recently appointed as Professor of Music at Wesleyan University, the post previously held by Anthony Braxton. Tyshawn and I did not overlap as students, but he returned to the program several times as a junior instructor during my years there.

\(^\text{19}\) I use the concept of “bebop-oriented” or “bebop-derived” styles throughout this dissertation. In such cases, I am referring to the stylistic features common to a collection of closely-affiliated jazz genres deriving from bebop (i.e., “hard bop,” “cool jazz,” “modal jazz,” “post-bop,” and “neo-classical”) which has become the stylistic orthodoxy of modern jazz, especially as it has been taught in schools.
I decided to attend Princeton for college in part because of the jazz program run by Dr. Anthony D. J. Branker, although at the beginning I was not sure that I would pursue a degree in music.\textsuperscript{20} During college, I took jazz harmony and performance classes, studied bass privately, and participated in three to four different ensembles every year, including the big band and various small groups organized conceptually around certain musicians, styles, or aesthetics; I also had opportunities to perform overseas and make records with some of these groups. Again, I was fortunate to collaborate regularly with the top musicians in the program; in addition to Hall, I played with drummer Chuck Staab, saxophonist Ben Wasserman, and pianist Julia Brav. These musicians also became friends, and our informal conversations about music—and about records, in particular—were as important to my development as a musician as in-class instruction and group rehearsals.

It was also during college that I began to build up my own jazz record collection. Before I left for school, I had “ripped” many of my father’s CDs onto my laptop computer’s hard drive, but with the unlimited Internet access I had at school, I started to build a huge library of music from the iTunes store (which had launched only a few months before I started college) and, admittedly, some of the peer-to-peer file sharing networks still operating in the wake of Napster. I also checked CDs out of Princeton’s Mendel Music Library, which had an impressive jazz collection. Occasionally, I made a trip to the famous Princeton Record Exchange, thumbed through their collection of used CDs and LPs, and took home both classic and obscure records. I often traded records with my friends, many of whom had more impressive and wide-ranging collections.

\textsuperscript{20} Branker is a graduate of the prestigious Masters of Music in Jazz Pedagogy program at University of Miami and played trumpet professionally with the important Spirit of Life Ensemble, which had a residency at the legendary Sweet Basil Jazz Club (later Sweet Rhythm, now defunct). He led the jazz program at Princeton for over 25 years.
collections than I did. By the end of my time at Princeton, my collection consisted of as much jazz-rock fusion and Afro-Cuban jazz as it did bebop and cool jazz.

Towards the end of my undergraduate years, I took an interest in ethnomusicology and decided to pursue it at the graduate level. After moving to New York, I played bass less often as I concentrated on my graduate studies, but I happily watched as many of my friends and former collaborators became professionals, and I continued to meet outstanding jazz musicians, such as pianist David DeMotta, who entered the ethnomusicology program with me.

Like me, many of the musicians profiled in this dissertation have extensive formal training in “the jazz tradition,” through which they gained historical knowledge of major styles, musicians, and recordings as well as musical proficiency within those styles, especially bebop and its progeny; they know “the standards” and they are skilled improvisers. Besides playing in school bands and taking private lessons, many participated in weekend educational programs or summer jazz “camps” taught by professional musicians. Many also attended secondary or collegiate jazz programs; among only the musicians I interviewed, programs include Princeton, William Paterson University, Rutgers University, City College of New York, The New School, Manhattan School of Music, Eastman School of Music, and University of North Texas. Some participated in other specialized training programs, such as the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz and the Brubeck Institute. It bears noting that some older musicians and critics see such programs as poor substitutes for apprenticeships with experienced musicians and on-the-bandstand education, which they believe have historically done a better job preparing young musicians for life as professionals. While some young musicians do agree that their collegiate

\[\text{A representative list of musicians and their recording projects is compiled in Appendix A.}\]
programs left them ill-equipped for sustainable careers in music, many others highly value their formal education. They appreciate the musical instruction and professional advice (e.g., how to negotiate a contract, how to open different types of revenue streams) that they received; perhaps above all, they cherish the opportunities that they had to meet other musicians, many of whom became regular and close collaborators.

Some of these musicians were born in New York, while others moved there to attend school. (Of the aforementioned programs, only Eastman and UNT are not in the metropolitan area; other prominent New York-area collegiate jazz programs include SUNY Purchase and Juilliard). Still others moved to New York after graduating from college (or dropping out) to begin their careers. As professionals, they all play as sidemen and most lead their own bands, which generally adhere to the norms of bebop-derived jazz instrumentation: a rhythm section including drum set, bass, and a keyboard instrument (e.g., piano, analog synthesizer) accompanying some combination of horns, guitar, voice, or another melodic instrument. They all have experience “gigging”—playing in jazz clubs or at late-night jam sessions or providing background music at restaurants or in hotel lobbies.

What distinguishes these musicians from many of their contemporaries is that they do not play jazz exclusively but rather are active in several genres of music, such as pop, hip-hop, gospel, R&B, and indie rock. Some may even earn a significant portion of their living by working as recording session musicians, producers, engineers, or members of touring bands for non-jazz artists; such work is often short-term and rather lucrative, supporting their jazz pursuits. Further, they often incorporate styles from these and still other genres (e.g., contemporary art music, “world” music) into their jazz playing, which may necessitate the use of digital instruments like drum machines, samplers, and laptop computers, as well as string quartets or
various “world” music instruments. Some, despite their training, may avoid the bebop-derived stylistic orthodoxy of jazz; in the often-pejorative judgment of many jazz purists, they often “don’t swing.” They all compose, and they favor recording original compositions or arrangements of non-canonical pieces above the performance of jazz standards.

All the musicians profiled in this dissertation perform live regularly, both in New York and on national and international tours, though many perform in venues that do not exclusively or even predominantly program jazz, such as rock clubs. Another way in which these musicians are distinct from their peers—and of greatest significance to this project—is that they are dedicated to making records. They conceive of recording projects with modern technologies and new media in mind, and they utilize them to the fullest throughout the recording process. They use a wide variety of formats—from vinyl LPs to HD video—to disseminate their music based on their artistic vision and their professional goals. They create supplemental materials, such as liner notes, music videos, and websites, and they promote and sell their recordings through traditional media outlets as well as social media. They do this despite a relatively small market for jazz recordings; Nielsen Music’s U.S. 2017 Mid-Year Report showed that “Jazz” album sales constituted 2.2% of total album sales (“Mid-Year Report: U.S. 2017”).

Demographically, these musicians generally represent the youngest one-and-a-half to two generations of professional jazz musicians, with birth years falling roughly in the last quarter of the twentieth century. This accounts for a great diversity of experience: a musician in his mid-40s is likely to have had very different life and professional experiences in terms of such factors as contemporaneous musical styles, recording industry conditions, and available recording technologies and media formats from those of a musician in his early 20s. Even so, nearly all these musicians grew up during or after what many have regarded as the figurative “death” of
jazz at the end of the 1960s (sometimes coinciding symbolically with the literal death of John Coltrane in 1967). They also all came of age—or at least were young professionals—during or after the massive proliferation of digital consumer technologies, including the personal computer, the compact disc, and, above all, the World Wide Web. The significance of these childhood and early professional experiences is discussed further in Chapter 1 and throughout this dissertation.

Although I did not collect hard data, most of these musicians likely come from middle-class backgrounds. This is especially likely to be true of those who attended collegiate jazz programs, although underprivileged musicians have sometimes had opportunities to join such programs on scholarships. Due in large part to the historic marginalization of women from jazz, these musicians are predominantly men. Many spaces of jazz are still unwelcoming if not openly hostile to women; they include not only live performance spaces and recording studios, but also the institutions (e.g., primary school music programs) and cultural representations (e.g., films about jazz)—to say nothing of broader gender stereotypes in American music culture—that introduce young people to jazz at an early age. Finally, they are predominantly black and white Americans, although many people of South and East Asian, Latin American, and European descent also participate. It can hardly be said that race and racism no longer affect the musical, social, and economic relationships that make up contemporary jazz; indeed, as I argue in Chapter 7, they play a major role in the ways musicians use recordings to participate in social and political discourses. However, it is just as common if not more common for ensembles within this population to be racially heterogeneous as to feature all white or all black musicians.

By no means is this cohort representative of New York jazz in its entirety. There are undoubtedly many other musicians in New York who identify as jazz musicians but would not recognize themselves in the creative and professional profiles that I present in this dissertation.
For one, there remain many musicians who are much more exclusively committed to bebop-oriented jazz styles and aesthetics; they may constitute a very wide range of musicians, from veterans of 1960s jazz who still perform regularly at major jazz clubs or theaters to recent graduates of collegiate programs who spend most their time playing background music in restaurants, attending late-night jam sessions, and trying to get gigs at smaller clubs. Many other musicians identify with a musical lineage that has been called “the avant-garde” or “free jazz” (or, as of late, “creative improvised music”) and perform regularly in art spaces or at “house sessions” in Brooklyn or on the Lower East Side. Still others perform regularly with big bands or Latin jazz ensembles. All such musicians—from the most conservative to the most experimental—may have little interest in recording, preferring to use live performance as their primary if not almost exclusive creative outlet.

The musicians profiled in this dissertation are therefore only a part of what many have called the “New York jazz scene,” which scholar Thomas Greenland has helpfully defined as “not a single, unified community, but many separate and overlapping communities, a multitude of porously bordered, constantly changing micro-scenes and social circles” (2016:16). In the most basic sense, scene identifies networks of people (e.g., musicians, listeners, critics), places (e.g., live venues, recording studios, schools, neighborhoods), and institutions (e.g., record industries, musicians’ unions, radio stations). Such networks are further oriented around a set of shared ideologies and identities, including, but not limited to, ideologies about musical style—

22 Besides Greenland’s Jazzing: New York City’s Unseen Scene (2016), other recent scholarly works invoking the concept of “scene” include Alexander Stewart’s Making the Scene: Contemporary New York City Big Band Jazz (2007); Jackson’s Blowin’ the Blues Away: Performance and Meaning on the New York Jazz Scene (2012); Daniel Blake’s “Performed Identities: Theorizing New York City’s Improvised Music Scene” (2013); Matthew Somoroff’s “Listening at the Edges: Aural Experience and Affect in a New York Jazz Scene” (2014).
and, by extension, identities like “a so-and-so musician”—which are continually (re)produced and (re)negotiated by participants. These networks are often multiple, porous, and contingent; musicians can move with relative ease between several different networks. Travis Jackson has defined scene as “a fluid space within which a variety of actors and institutions negotiate their relationships to each other and those outside their networks” (2012:67).

These conceptions of scene accord with some of the ways the musicians profiled in this dissertation use the term, although the scale of the relevant networks can vary drastically from person to person or even moment to moment. Sometimes it is used in a very broad sense: a musician who is “on the scene” may be any professional jazz musician of at least some stature. Some use “the scene” to denote the jazz musicians, venues, and other institutions that recall the jazz scenes of prior generations, when there were many jazz clubs that catered to enthusiastic jazz audiences every night; critics are often especially invested in this concept of scene, especially when lamenting its apparent dissolution. Musicians may also use scene with a qualifier to denote smaller networks of people and places, such as the “avant-garde scene” or even—referring to networks oriented around specific venues—“the 55 Bar scene,” “the Dizzy’s scene,” and “the SEEDS scene.”

Many, however, avoid the term, not finding it useful as a shorthand for the musical networks in which they locate themselves. To the extent that “scene” tends to identify a network of places, it does not easily accommodate the non-jazz-specific live venues (or their audiences)

23 Greenwich Village in southwestern Manhattan most closely resembles bygone jazz scenes. Venues like the Village Vanguard, Smalls, 55 Bar, Cornelia Street Café, the Blue Note, and Zinc Bar, among others, are within a short walking distance of one another and program jazz on a nightly basis. They feature both established musicians (including musicians on national or international tours) and up-and-coming musicians; Smalls and Zinc Bar host late-night jam sessions attended by jazz students from the nearby New School and other institutions in the city.
in which these musicians frequently perform or the ease with which they travel both nationally and internationally to perform live, teach, or record; most relevant to this project, it does not accommodate the diffuse, online spaces in which musicians frequently operate, especially when making and sharing recordings. To the extent that scene tends to identify a set of stylistic conventions that define its constituent genre (or genres), however fluid, it does not comfortably account for how musicians think of their artistic profiles, of which “jazz” may be only part. Due to these varying perspectives on the relevance of “scene,” I avoid using the term to generalize about my research population. Nevertheless, the musicians featured in this dissertation do indeed belong to the “multitude of porously bordered, constantly changing micro-scenes and social circles” that constitute New York jazz.

As I began this research, I interacted with these musicians in a few different ways. I attended live performances at venues throughout New York, following musicians whose work I already knew (and which, in some cases, animated the research questions of this project). I found myself frequenting venues like Rockwood Music Hall, Le Poisson Rouge, and Subculture, which do not program jazz exclusively, as opposed to established jazz clubs like Smalls and the Village Vanguard. I also spent the summer of 2015 attending most of the performances at The Jazz Gallery, a performance space where musicians often workshop new ensembles, compositions, or stylistic directions. At live performances, I chatted with musicians informally before, between, and after sets. On-stage banter also proved enlightening, as musicians frequently talked about active or forthcoming recording projects to audiences. This was especially so at “album release” shows, which I made a point of attending.²⁴

²⁴ A representative list of live performances is compiled in Appendix B.
At the same time, I conducted formal interviews with musicians. To begin, I drew on my friendships with musicians: Irwin Hall, who had just recorded *Afro Physicist* (Masterworks/OKeh, 2014) with trumpet player Theo Croker, gave me my first interview, and he introduced me to Jesse Fischer and Sylvester Onyejiaka; Chuck Staab put me in touch with Aidan Carroll, whom he had hired to tour with Melody Gardot; and I met Johnathan Blake through David DeMotta, who knew him from their time together in the jazz program at William Paterson. Between these connections and others made at live events or through email or phone contact, I conducted formal interviews with 13 musicians. I am extraordinarily grateful for their time, energy, and interest. I had expected most of my interviews to last about 30–45 minutes, but nearly all of them lasted longer, and some went over two hours. Our conversations were wide-ranging, covering childhood and educational experiences, contemporary recording practices, and perspectives on the future of the recording industry and of jazz. My own background in jazz facilitated these conversations. Historic jazz recordings served as important shared points of reference when discussing things like early listening experiences and recording techniques, and my knowledge of a wide variety of active musicians and music made it easier for my conversation partners to situate themselves in contemporary music cultures, including not only jazz but other genres as well.

Some of my requests for participation were either politely declined (sometimes, in the case of especially prominent musicians, by managers) or went unanswered. In these cases, I sought out published or broadcast interviews conducted by third parties, usually journalists or critics. (I consulted such materials for some musicians whom I did not directly invite to participate as well.) Most difficult was securing invitations to recording sessions, where time is often so precious that musicians are reluctant to have anyone present who is not directly
participating in the recording process. I am enormously grateful to Jesse Fischer, who invited me to the tracking session for his album *Day Dreamer* (Ropeadope, 2015), which generated an essential fund of knowledge early in the research.

In addition to informal conversations and interviews, I also consulted musicians’ own writings or other forms of public communication. These include album liner notes and essays on websites as well as comments, status updates, or live video streams on social media accounts, where much of the discourse around recording projects circulates. Further, I relied on the discourses of critics, fans, and other jazz people presented in trade publications or on social media. In short, to account for the web of real-world and virtual activities that constitute contemporary recorded jazz practices, I approached this project as, in David Novak’s formulation, an ethnography not only “on the ground” but also “in the circuit” (2013:27).

My guiding research questions are similar to those that animate other studies of record production from ethnomusicology and the relatively recent field of the art of record production. These studies are concerned broadly with how musicians make recordings, attending to the personnel involved in recording, the spaces in which they work, the technologies they use, and their activities during multiple stages of the recording process (e.g., tracking, post-production, album design, etc.). They often reveal how the sonic features of recordings were produced, not only by specific recording techniques, but by the interactions of people with the space, with the technologies, and with one another and by the negotiations of various and sometimes conflicting musical and social goals. At the same time, my approach resonates with studies of recorded

media in circulation—especially within digital spaces—from ethnomusicology, popular music studies, and sound studies. Such studies investigate how and where recordings are sold, bought, traded, or given away, what kinds of supplemental materials or discourses are attached to them as they circulate, and how the paths they traverse are shaped by power structures within local and global musical and technological economies. They usually shed light on the various ways that people make recorded music meaningful, not least of all through the simple act of listening to them.26

Chapter outline

Chapter 1 shows how young musicians’ formative encounters with jazz were characterized in large part by media, in such forms as sampled records, radio broadcasts, CDs, and YouTube videos, and often by jazz styles from the 1970s and after, such as jazz-funk, smooth jazz, jazz rap, M-Base, and others that have typically been marginalized from the “jazz tradition.” In Chapters 2–4, I show how these experiences shaped musicians’ approaches to recording today, discussing in detail the processes of “making a record.” Chapter 2 presents the professional and artistic reasons why musicians record, how they choose material to record, and how they finance their recording projects amid a changing record industry. In Chapter 3, I discuss how musicians use the technologies of the recording studio not merely to “capture” jazz performance but rather to create it, focusing on the discourses and practices of “production” adapted from studio-based genres like hip-hop, electronic music, and pop. Chapter 4 examines the life of a jazz record after it is formatted and duplicated for distribution, attending primarily to

the circulation of recorded music on the Internet—that is, in online music stores, on streaming services, and through social media. I show how musicians negotiate the tensions between the creative and professional opportunities of Web 2.0 and the unstable economy that has grown up around it. Chapter 5 analyzes some prominent trends in contemporary jazz style, organizing them into two aesthetic frameworks: songs and beats. These stylistic innovations are attributable in part to musicians’ uses of recording technologies that are adapted from other production-based genres of music, such as hip-hop, electronic music, and pop. In Chapter 6, I argue that jazz recordings are best understood as mediatized performances, performances that are not just mediated but that depend on mediation for their significance. I suggest that this framework better accounts for the experiences of repeated listening to recorded music and sheds new light on the ostensible incompatibility between repeatability and improvised music. Finally, Chapter 7 examines some of the ways that jazz musicians have used mediatized performances to participate in social and political arenas. I discuss their involvement in recent movements for racial justice, arguing that recorded music provides them with unique and effective tools to participate in social activism that can often be paired with live performance.

A guide to interview transcription and citation

- Interviews with me and recorded interviews transcribed but not conducted by me (e.g., interviews from podcasts) were edited for length and clarity, although I strived to retain the idiosyncrasies of each speaker’s voice and conversational manner. When an in-text citation indicates “emphasis added,” italics denote my emphasis on a speaker’s words. When an in-text citation does not indicate “emphasis added,” italics denote words that a speaker stressed him- or herself.
Excerpts from published interviews (e.g., interviews from online magazines) appear unedited. The use of italics is retained from the original, except when I emphasize a speaker’s words, in which case the in-text citation indicates “emphasis added.”

A quotation from an interview with me is set off by double quotation marks; one that exceeds four lines of text is set off in block text without quotation marks. The interviewee is cited as the author.

A quotation from a recorded interview transcribed but not conducted by me or a published interview is also set off by double quotation marks; one that exceeds four lines of text is set off in block text without quotation marks. Both the interviewer and the interviewee are cited as authors.

A quotation from an interview of any kind that includes multiple speakers (e.g., the interviewer and the interviewee) is set off in block text; each speaker’s full name is indicated for his or her first quoted line, followed by initials for each subsequent line.

A quotation within a quotation is set off by single quotation marks within double quotation marks, unless it constitutes the entire quotation, in which case it is set off by double quotation marks; the speaker is indicated in the text, the author of the source is cited as the author, and the citation indicates the quotation is “quoted in” the source.
CHAPTER 1. Checking out records: Early encounters with jazz

During the 2014 Winter Jazzfest in New York, the Revive Big Band headlined a concert at the nightclub Le Poisson Rouge in Greenwich Village. Near the end of the set, bandleader and trumpet player Igmar Thomas introduced special guest organist Dr. Lonnie Smith in an unusual way: “You know his music through samples!” While jazz aficionados probably know Smith from his run of innovative soul jazz albums in the 1960s, Thomas bet on this particular audience’s greater familiarity with such hip-hop tracks as A Tribe Called Quest’s “Can I Kick It?”, which features samples from Smith’s version of “Spinning Wheel,” or Madvillain’s “Figaro,” which features samples from his debut record, *Finger-Lickin’ Good* (Columbia, 1967).  

This moment encapsulates two generalizations about the relationship that many contemporary jazz musicians and listeners have with the music. First, they came to know the history of jazz music and musicians through recordings. Although they certainly value histories related by older musicians—as well as those written by scholars and critics, albeit to a lesser extent—musicians often acquire their knowledge of the distant and recent past through their encounters with jazz records. Such encounters have entailed browsing records at brick-and-mortar stores, inheriting family collections, trading CDs with friends, listening to terrestrial radio, downloading digital music from iTunes or other online music stores, and streaming music from services like Spotify or YouTube. Such encounters are not only with original recordings, but, as demonstrated by the anecdote above, also with remediations of recordings, for instance, via the sampling or remixing techniques used by hip-hop, electronic, and pop music producers.

1 A Tribe Called Quest, *People’s Instinctive Travels and the Paths of Rhythm* (Jive, 1990); Lonnie Smith, *Drives* (Blue Note, 1970); Madvillain, *Madvillainy* (Stones Throw, 2004).
Second, and I will argue relatedly, many musicians developed an affinity for musical styles that have been marginalized within or outright excluded from mainstream narratives about what jazz has been and continues to be today. Such music is often perceived as belonging to a fusion or crossover genre, such as Smith’s brand of soul jazz, jazz-rock fusion, jazz-funk, and even smooth jazz. Or, it may be perceived as falling entirely outside the spectrum of jazz practice, belonging instead to genres like funk, gospel, electronic music, or pop. Anti-canonical impulses also extend to musicians who have indeed played more orthodox, bebop-derived jazz styles but never became venerated “masters,” including musicians working within local music scenes or journeyman session musicians who played on many recordings but never led their own bands. In any case, young jazz musicians today very often recognize this music—marginal to conventional histories of jazz—as *central* to their own perception of jazz and their personal development as jazz musicians.

With these general observations, I do not wish to imply that young musicians do not highly value live performance. On the contrary, they fondly recall formative experiences of live music, continue to attend performances by their colleagues, mentors, and heroes, and, of course, regularly perform live; to be sure, live performance may command the bulk of their own time and energy, and it is quite often their primary source of income (although perhaps not live performance of jazz exclusively). Nor do I wish to imply that they do not respect and enjoy the music of the jazz canon; admiration of Dr. Lonnie Smith does not come at the expense of Thelonious Monk. What I do intend to argue, in short, is that, through their early encounters with jazz records, many aspiring musicians developed concepts of jazz that generously accommodate both recorded media and non-canonical jazz musicians and styles.
This chapter lays the groundwork for the first part of this dissertation by discussing these encounters. I detail the musicians, recordings, and styles that introduced aspiring musicians to jazz, that served as an entry point to the genre or “gateway” to the music. I also outline some contexts through which these encounters took place, focusing not only on listening to recordings but also on early performance experiences. This chapter is in a sense both too broad and too narrow: too broad because not every musician has had significant experience with or even been interested in all this music; too narrow because it still does not account for the entire spectrum of music that contemporary musicians have cited as central to their development. Instead, it represents major patterns of interest and affiliation—a constellation of music and musicians—that I observed over the course of my fieldwork.

**Gateway music**

*I didn’t know a lot of people that knew a lot about jazz. My dad exposed me to a lot of classical music, because that’s what his background was [in], and folk music. And my mom would listen to the Beatles and the Stones and things like that. But everything else was literally me going to the record store . . . So that’s how I learned about music: going to the record store, pulling out records that looked interesting, and going home and listening to them.*

- Jesse Fischer (2014)

Pianist and producer Jesse Fischer’s statement describes a common experience of aspiring musicians. Although they were often introduced to jazz performance through school bands or concerts at local theaters, many attribute their initial explorations of jazz to records. Importantly, such encounters were not necessarily guided by institutional pressures to begin with
“the essentials.” Instead, musicians, often took rather circuitous routes through jazz. Some, like Fischer, found themselves motivated by curiosity and the joys of discovery. Others were guided by family members, friends, or local mentors to “check out” certain records. When a record captured a musician’s interest, he often looked for others by the same musician, on the same record label, or from the same scene. Some were even motivated by “completist” tendencies like those exhibited by hobbyist record collectors who endeavor to acquire all the recordings on a short-lived imprint or in a certain format.\(^2\) A few, developing an interest in music production at an early age, liked to “dig in the crates,” obsessively searching through obscure recordings for the briefest moment of musical magic.\(^3\)

Especially for those growing up in the 1990s and early 2000s, musicians were empowered to “discover” and acquire vast collections of recorded music by digital and Internet technologies. The degree of access to recorded music grew exponentially with the development of audio file compression (e.g., MP3) and the emergence of online music marketplaces (e.g., CDNow, Amazon), peer-to-peer file-sharing platforms (e.g., Napster) and, most recently, streaming music services (e.g., Spotify, YouTube). At the same time, digital file sizes shrunk while storage capacity ballooned, enabling users to accumulate exorbitant stores of music.

Although many contemporary musicians came of age prior to the ascendency of these technologies, others grew up with them; some have lived their entire lives in a world where it has been possible to buy a CD on the Internet. In any case, whether in brick-and-mortar record stores

\(^2\) See Shuker (2004) and Petrusich (2014) for discussions of record collecting. Such tendencies in jazz have been associated with record collectors but also jazz discographers, in which case actual ownership of records may be of secondary importance to knowledge of them (Gabbard 1995).

\(^3\) See Pray (2002) and Schloss (2014) for discussions of “digging” in hip-hop cultures.
or on YouTube, quotidian practices of searching out and acquiring recordings were primary avenues by which many aspiring musicians entered the world of jazz.

Hip-hop served as an especially common gateway to jazz. Drummer Otis Brown III explained its central place in his own early listening profile:

I grew up in Newark in the ‘90s. I ended up studying jazz, both of my parents are musicians so I was exposed to a lot of different music, but there was a lot of hip-hop in what a lot of people would call ‘the golden era.’ I grew up not far from where Naughty By Nature was from, Queen Latifah and Flavor Unit. That era of hip-hop was just so amazing to me, from Tribe [Called Quest] to Redman. There’s so many people I could name, but all of that stuff is what I was listening to.

(Peterson and Brown 2014)

This “golden age” of hip-hop—roughly from the late 1980s to the early ‘90s—is known for innovations in music production, including a broadened catalog of material for sampling.

Previously, hip-hop’s stable of source material primarily included R&B, soul, and funk recordings, à la James Brown. In the golden age, innovative hip-hop producers—in New York, particularly—dug deeper into the crates and often pulled out jazz recordings. Hip-hop fans like a young Otis Brown III were then exposed to these recordings, and many went on to track the originals down. Singer José James noted the pivotal role of sampling in introducing him to jazz: “In high school, I was listening to all this hip-hop and rock music, and through figuring out that hip-hop was using samples of jazz, I started listening to jazz” (Hinojosa and James 2015).

Bassist Alan Hampton echoes James: “I grew up listening to the popular music of the ‘90s . . . I also got into a lot of hip-hop and a lot of Tribe Called Quest and De La Soul, which was kind of the gateway for jazz” (Naser and Hampton 2014).
Listeners became increasingly enamored with the work of hip-hop producers issuing from the so-called “alternative hip-hop” world. They included beat makers like Prince Paul, who produced for the rap groups Stetsasonic and De La Soul in the late 1980s; Q-Tip, a member of A Tribe Called Quest, whose *Low End Theory* is widely regarded as the apotheosis of this genre; DJ Premier, one half of the duo Gang Starr; and Pete Rock, who became known for his use of samples of particularly esoteric jazz recordings. Much of this work originated from the crucible of New York, but hip-hop collectives like The Pharcyde and Freestyle Fellowship from Los Angeles and Hieroglyphics from Oakland were also innovating with jazz-based beats around the same time. Such was the predominance of jazz samples in certain beats and on certain albums that people began to refer to them as “jazz rap.” The practice of sampling jazz recordings extended to some of the most mainstream hip-hop as well, including Dr. Dre’s West Coast G-Funk sound of the early 1990s.4

So as not to stray too far from hip-hop’s aesthetic values, producers generally searched for jazz recordings that shared stylistic characteristics with R&B, soul, and funk. They found many such recordings in the genre of “soul jazz.” Soul jazz was performed primarily by hard bop musicians of the late 1950s and the 1960s, who incorporated into their music stylistic features from the blues, gospel, R&B, and mainstream soul music—straight rhythmic feels, gospel-

4 Justin Williams has described how jazz rap was often contrasted with mainstream “gangsta rap” by contemporaneous critics, and he has argued that “jazz codes” signifying sophistication and artistry partially enabled this juxtaposition (2013). It is important to bear in mind, however, that gangsta rap producers like Dr. Dre also sampled liberally from jazz recordings, although the overall aesthetic—and the lyrical content especially—were indeed markedly different from alternative rap. Examples of classic G-Funk recordings that sample from jazz recordings are “Rat-Tat-Tat-Tat” from Dr. Dre’s *The Chronic* (Death Row, 1992), which features a sample of Lou Donaldson’s “Pot Belly” (*Pretty Things*, Blue Note, 1970), and “Tha Next Episode,” an unreleased track intended for Snoop Dogg’s *Doggystyle* (Death Row, 1993), which samples Les McCann’s “Go On and Cry” (*Another Beginning*, Atlantic, 1974).
oriented harmonic schemes, and bluesy melodies—which distinguished it from bebop-oriented
styles favoring a hard swing feel and more complex harmonic progressions. Prominent soul jazz
musicians include Jimmy Smith, Cannonball Adderley, and Lee Morgan, but hip-hop producers
were especially interested in lesser-known recordings. They sampled liberally from recordings
by organists (Dr.) Lonnie Smith, Jimmy McGriff, Shirley Scott, Reuben Wilson, and Ronnie
Foster, pianist Les McCann, guitar players Grant Green and Kenny Burrell, saxophonists Lou
Donaldson and Stanley Turrentine, trumpeters Eddie Henderson and Donald Byrd, flautist Bobbi
Humphrey, and others. The 1960s recordings of the Los Angeles-based label Pacific Jazz, the
1970s Blue Note recordings produced by Larry and Alphonso Mizell, and, perhaps above all, the
catalog of Creed Taylor International (CTI) and its subsidiary Kuru, were especially valuable. 5

A related genre that served as an entry point to jazz was “jazz-funk.” As with soul jazz,
select jazz-funk recordings have been canonized, such as Freddie Hubbard’s Red Clay (CTI,
1970) and Herbie Hancock’s Head Hunters (Columbia, 1973), but, once again, young listeners
often prized lower profile recordings and artists. Those cited commonly include the early 1970s
jazz-funk experiments of vibraphonist Roy Ayers and drummer Idris Muhammad, as well as
records by musicians from the Jamaica, Queens music scene of the late 1970s and early 1980s,
such as Tom Browne’s Browne Sugar (GRP, 1979), Bernard Wright’s ‘Nard (GRP, 1981), and
Don Blackman’s self-titled album (GRP, 1982). Pretty much any recording featuring electric
bassist Marcus Miller, another product of that scene, was worth a listen. 6

5 Favored artists on Pacific included The Jazz Crusaders and The Gerald Wilson Orchestra; on
Mizell’s Blue Note recordings, Byrd, Humphrey, and Gary Bartz.
6 Miller is best known in jazz history as the last great bassist to work with Miles Davis. But
Miller had been a highly-regarded sideman (with Bobbi Humphrey, Lonnie Liston Smith, and
others) prior to working with Davis, and has since established a prolific career as a session
Young listeners were often exposed to jazz-funk by hip-hop records, but of course they may just as easily have been steered to them by their interest in other black popular music of the 1960s and ‘70s. Musicians have cited initial interests in James Brown, Sly and the Family Stone, Earth, Wind, and Fire, Chaka Khan, Parliament-Funkadelic, Mandrill, Gloria Gaynor, Chic, and The Jacksons as sparking the curiosity that eventually led them to jazz-funk. A similar trajectory led other musicians to “jazz-rock fusion.” Rock—classic rock and then progressive rock—helped introduce bassist Aidan Carroll to jazz-rock fusion of the 1970s and ‘80s:

My real getting into jazz came in high school. I had been playing drums. I had a classic rock trio, a band with some buddies. And I just started getting more into complex music, like progressive rock. I was really into Yes and Rush. Those kinds of bands. I just worked my way backwards. I found fusion. I found Return to Forever, Chick Corea. And I heard a ‘70s Stanley Clarke upright bass solo, and I was like, “Whoa.” (2015)

My first encounter with jazz—Miles Davis’ Live-Evil (Columbia, 1971)—came in the immediate wake of listening to my father’s collection of psychedelic and blues rock records by Jefferson Airplane, Cream, and Mountain. Young listeners discovered The Tony Williams Lifetime’s Emergency (Polydor, 1969), Miles Davis’s Bitches Brew (Columbia, 1970), Mahavishnu’s Birds of Fire (Columbia, 1973), Return to Forever’s Light as a Feather (Polydor, 1973), and Jaco Pastorius-era Weather Report. But they also checked out guitarist Larry Coryell, keyboardist George Duke, including his work with Frank Zappa and The Mothers of Invention, and Dreams, a short-lived ensemble led by drummer Billy Cobham.

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bassist and composer. As discussed at the conclusion of this chapter, contemporary musicians are likely to value Miller’s work as a sideman at least as much as his work with Davis.
Another common entry point to jazz was “smooth jazz.” Rather than via hip-hop samples or crate-digging, such encounters often came via the radio. Scholar Anthony Johnson has described how, beginning in the 1970s, styles like bebop and cool jazz were gradually relegated to noncommercial radio stations, leaving pop-oriented radio formats like “Quiet Storm” or “adult contemporary” to take control of the commercial market by the 1990s (2014). Quiet Storm stations featured “soft R&B vocal music from artists like Luther Vandross, Sade, Anita Baker and Marvin Gaye, or crossover AC [adult contemporary] hits from pop artists like Celine Dion and Mariah Carey,” as well as a heavy rotation of smooth jazz or “instrumental pop” played by such artists as Joe Sample, Grover Washington Jr., George Benson, David Sanborn, Dave Koz, Boney James, and Chuck Loeb.

The disdain with which many jazz people view smooth jazz is so notorious that it needs no further elaboration here. There have been a few recent efforts within jazz studies to interrogate this animosity that often locate smooth jazz’s origins in early “crossover” projects by musicians who could have a much stronger claim to jazz legitimacy. Chris Washburne (2004) situates smooth jazz within an broad lineage that comes out of jazz-rock fusion, initiated by *Bitches Brew*, followed by Weather Report and Mahavishnu, and taken up by Grover Washington Jr., George Benson, and the Crusaders; critic David Adler once even gave a fair shake to Kenny G (2012). Young musicians also sometimes aim to “legitimize” some smooth jazz by noting its considerable overlap with soul jazz, jazz-funk, and jazz-rock fusion. Here, labels often play a significant role; association with labels like CTI and GRP, home to some of the most venerated jazz-funk and fusion records, can lend a certain amount of credibility to artists and recordings.
that might otherwise be pilloried. Further, musicians often locate smooth jazz firmly within the broader tradition of black music. Kamasi Washington exemplified this perspective in comments to journalist Adam Shatz:

“"I don’t have an aversion to it,” [Washington] said. In fact, he went on, he liked some smooth jazz, notably the saxophone player Grover Washington Jr. (no relation). Gently taking me to task for my snobbery, he noted that [saxophonist] Najee, like many smooth-jazz players, had roots in gospel—and that in any case, no musical genre is entirely devoid of value. (2016)

Indeed, during my conversations with musicians, few described smooth jazz in disdainful or even predominantly negative terms—that is, in terms of what was sacrificed from “real jazz” in pursuit of crossover success. Instead, they noted its admirable traits, such as its simple, soulful melodies, its slick production qualities, or its connection to cherished institutions like black radio and the black church.

To be sure, genres of music other than hip-hop, funk, and progressive rock provided young musicians pathways to jazz; musicians have cited recordings of jam band music, electronic dance music, mainstream pop, and contemporary classical or “new music” as entry points to jazz. Whatever the route, these pathways of discovery, which often moved from outside the genre to the margins and only then to “the tradition,” instilled in musicians a kind of anti-canonical concept of jazz. In other words, they did not consider genres like soul jazz and jazz-rock fusion as deviations from “real” jazz, because they did not have a rigid concept of “real” jazz in the first place. Interestingly, this anti-canonical orientation also manifested in a preference

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7 See Carson (2008) and Felix (2014) for further discussion of the innovations of Creed Taylor and his label’s early roster of artists, including Montgomery, Washington, and Benson.
for jazz styles since the 1970s that more closely adhere to bebop-oriented aesthetics. This is still more music which is often overlooked by the “official history,” proliferating after jazz’s purported demise (or move to Europe) at the end of the 1960s.

One especially celebrated genre has been variously called “spiritual jazz,” “Afro-jazz,” and “freedom swing.” In general, spiritual jazz is characterized by an adherence to deep grooves (swing, funk, Latin, or otherwise), experimental yet bluesy improvisation, and Afrocentric or Afrofuturist aesthetics. Among the musicians most frequently cited as progenitors of spiritual jazz are Alice Coltrane, Archie Shepp, Pharoah Sanders, Sun Ra and the Arkestra, Horace Tapscott and the Pan Afrikan Peoples Arkestra, McCoy Tyner, Joe Henderson, and the Liberation Music Orchestra (led by Charlie Haden and Carla Bley). Several record labels specialized in Afro-jazz: Strata-East, founded by Charles Tolliver and Stanley Cowell; the short-lived Black Jazz Records, an Oakland-based label; and the twin Italian labels Black Saint and Soul Note, of which the former, since its founding in 1975, has also been the preeminent record label for the black avant-garde.8

Another highly regarded movement in post-1960s jazz is M-Base, a collective founded by Steve Coleman and several collaborators in the 1980s and ‘90s. Prominent participants included Graham Haynes, Geri Allen, Cassandra Wilson, Robin Eubanks, Marvin “Smitty” Smith, Matthew Garrison, Don Byron, and Greg Osby. Coleman’s recordings with the Five Elements for Novus in the first half of the ‘90s, Wilson’s two Blue Note albums—Blue Light ‘Til Dawn (1993) and New Moon Daughter (1996)—and recordings by Osby and others on the Berlin-based JMT Records (eventually absorbed by Winter & Winter) are frequently cited by

8 Importantly, Strata-East and Black Saint were both artist-owned labels, and have served as models for the many young musicians today who start their own labels.
musicians as landmarks of M-Base and important models for their own work. Coleman has insisted that M-Base is not a style of music *per se* but instead a way of thinking about music. One musician that I spoke to proposed that Coleman has been the most original voice in jazz since the 1960s.

Other musicians cited a slightly younger generation of New York-based jazz musicians as important models for their musical development. The Greenwich Village-based scene centered around clubs like Small’s (established in 1993), The Jazz Gallery (established in 1995), and the abiding Village Vanguard, and led by musicians like Mark Turner, Joshua Redman, Chris Potter, Roy Hargrove, Brad Mehldau, Larry Goldings, Jason Moran, Christian McBride, Kurt Rosenwinkel, Adam Rogers, Avishai Cohen, and Stefon Harris, broke much of the ground on which subsequent generations of musicians perform today. Turner, Mehldau, and Rosenwinkel, especially, are credited with developing original and often copied jazz “vocabularies.” Many of these musicians were trained in collegiate jazz programs, including Berklee College of Music, Manhattan School of Music, and The New School, and others became well-known for forming long-lived bands with a stable membership and distinct identity: The Brad Mehldau Trio, featuring Larry Grenadier and first Jorge Rossy and then Jeff Ballard, Jason Moran’s The Bandwagon, featuring Tarus Mateen and Nasheet Waits, and The Bad Plus—Ethan Iverson, Reid Anderson, and Dave King—are praised for their seeming instinctive interactivity resulting from years of collaboration. This is a generation of musicians closest in proximity to young musicians in New York today, and, indeed, they collaborate with one another regularly.⁹

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⁹ Some of these musicians and others like Don Byron, Dave Douglas, and David Gilmore have also been affiliated with the “downtown” scene of the late 1990s and early 2000s, centered around clubs like the Knitting Factory and Tonic.
Finally, it would be a mistake to imply that the foregoing music constitutes the whole of young musicians’ experiences with jazz and that they are uninterested in or, worse, averse to the jazz “canon.” Even those musicians and recordings that have become almost cliché have been powerfully instructive in the musical development of contemporary musicians. Drummer Colin Stranahan, for instance, told me that hearing *Kind of Blue* (Columbia, 1959) was extremely significant; in particular, he was taken with the sound of Jimmy Cobb’s ride cymbal, and he still looks to it as a model for his own playing (2015). As for the “neo-classical” movement typified by Wynton Marsalis and Jazz at Lincoln Center, many young musicians have rather ambivalent attitudes. They acknowledge and/or make their own legitimate criticisms of this world—especially its adherence to conservative interpretations of jazz history and its failure to hire women—and yet give it credit for propagating a model of jazz education from which many of them benefitted.\(^\text{10}\) And while many musicians (not to mention critics) deride its corporate patronage, many welcome opportunities to play at Dizzy’s Club Coca-Cola, which generally programs more eclectically than the JALC Orchestra. Thus, although they share a commitment to destabilizing conservative notions of the “jazz tradition,” they distinguish themselves from those who unreservedly pillory Marsalis and JALC for promulgating such notions.

**Contexts for listening**

*[My mother] was a singer, and literally every day of the week she sang at a different club in a different genre of music: country, R&B clubs, jazz clubs, church on Sunday morning where she was the music director, pop hits, soft rock. She loved Broadway, Liza Minelli. I grew up listening*
to all this music, so it was never one thing for me. When my friends were listening to hip-hop or R&B, I was in the crib listening to Billy Joel and Michael Bolton, Luther Vandross, and Oscar Peterson. And she was always, “Yes, that's who you are. It's everything.” So I got that confidence to stick with that and not be ashamed of it from super early.

- Robert Glasper (Blickenstaff and Glasper n.d.)

As the keyboardist Robert Glasper attests, the household is one of the most important contexts in which musicians encounter music. Fond memories of childhood soundscapes and family record collections can encourage strong attachments to certain genres of music. During a recent concert, drummer Nate Smith explained that, when he was growing up, his father routinely played “instrumental R&B” by artists like Quincy Jones. Jazz blogger Anthony Dean Harris has described how he came to admire smooth jazz:

The branch of the jazz tree on which I was raised was the smooth jazz branch. My love and adoration of Joe Sample began because this is the music that my parents instilled in me . . . My upbringing was around smooth jazz because those were the kind of folks who surrounded me at the time. It was my foothold into the larger genre proper and there are still parts of me . . . that will still like that sound. There’s a community that supports that music, and it’s still here. (N.d.)

Importantly, Harris doesn’t couch his fondness for smooth jazz in a discourse of “legitimacy” by relating it to more respected jazz artists or genres; for him, it is authenticated as jazz by his personal experience of it as such. The guidance of an older sibling can be impactful as well. Michael League recently shared “5 Albums That Changed [His] Life,” noting that each of them had been given to him by his older brother; they ranged from XTC (the British New Wave band)
to drummer John Molo’s jazz fusion project Modereko, on which League said he based Snarky Puppy (Pinkard and League 2016). Household soundscapes and family listening habits have been important contexts in which young musicians encounter and develop their concepts of jazz.

Some musicians were introduced to jazz through members of their immediate family who were or are professional musicians. Drummer Johnathan Blake told me about his father, John Blake Jr., an accomplished violinist. For starters, he had an expansive music collection:

I have his whole collection. He had a studio built in the basement of our house, and he had records going around the studio . . . He had a great turntable, a great stereo system, so I would go down there at an early age, checking out records. And, you know, he had a lot of stuff from the ‘70s: Earth, Wind & Fire, Stylistics… And then he had John Coltrane, he had Charlie Parker, Miles, you know, all the heroes. So, I was being exposed. I was just always curious, always checking to see what he had, even if I didn’t know who these people were at the time: “Well, what does this sound like?” (2015)

But John Jr.’s collection also consisted of his own recordings. He appeared on the landmark 1972 Archie Shepp recording Attica Blues, made records over multi-year stints with Grover Washington Jr. and McCoy Tyner, and recorded with avant-garde innovators Cecil McBee and Muhal Richard Abrams in the 1980s. This extraordinarily diverse range of jazz styles became the foundation of his son’s exposure to jazz.

Outside the home, the church was another powerful context for early entry points to jazz. Saxophonist Sylvester Onyejiaka emphasized the church’s role in his early musical training in

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11 Incidentally, League’s brother is ethnomusicologist Panayotis League.
Austin, Texas. His mother directed the church choir, and gospel music formed a significant part of the soundscape of his childhood. He himself joined the choir at age ten, a year before he picked up the saxophone and before pursuing an interest in jazz (2014). Glasper has noted that socialization to music through the church is widespread among black musicians:

I grew up in church. That’s how most young African American musicians learn how to perform. You could be six years old and playing organ or drums in front of thousands or hundreds of people. You’re performing every week . . . You’re in charge of emotion, and bring certain things to fruition, and bringing all the spirit in. And it’s a real thing. I was playing drums in church when I was six. Then I picked up the piano when I was 11 or 12. (Blickenstaff and Glasper n.d.)

As teenagers, some musicians found regular work in churches, playing upwards of four or five days per week. Musicians born and raised in large cities with substantial gospel scenes—Dallas, Houston, Chicago, Philadelphia—have even had opportunities to perform church music in both ritual and commercial contexts. Some continue to play in church bands today, and a few work as musical directors or sidemen for high-profile gospel musicians; keyboardist Shaun Martin, for example, was the longtime musical director for megastar singer Kirk Franklin.

The church was often one institution within a broader local music culture that shaped the ways that young musicians encountered jazz. The Dallas–Fort Worth metroplex is an instructive example. Besides the vibrant gospel scene that produced Martin and Franklin, “DFW” is home to the University of North Texas (in Denton), which boasts the first jazz degree program in the

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12 Less inspiring for Onyejiaka, in fact, was smooth jazz. When I asked him what kinds of music he heard in his household as a child, he chuckled: “Smooth jazz, unfortunately” (2014).
nation and continues to attract and nurture talented students from around the country. In addition to their institutional performance commitments, many of these musicians integrate into the local music culture. While at UNT, for instance, Michael League of Snarky Puppy performed regularly with bands in Dallas’s Baptist churches. There, he met and played with other prominent Dallas musicians, including members of jazz trumpeter Roy Hargrove’s band and soul singer Erykah Badu’s band (Johnson and League 2014). Badu and her collaborators were affiliated with Dallas’s 1990s hip-hop scene, which produced few mainstream acts, but which was widely influential on DFW residents and local musicians of all genres. Musicians from gospel, jazz, and hip-hop worked frequently together and cultivated a distinctively “Dallas” musical identity.

Within such local music cultures, especially those that are relatively small (compared to New York, at least), single figures can have a tremendous impact on the musical development of a generation of players. Consider League’s comments about his mentor in Dallas, Bernard Wright:

“Really, the school that I think Snarky Puppy comes from, if you want to nail it down—while the [Pat] Metheny Group is definitely an influence and Weather Report is definitely an influence—we’re more from the school of Don Blackman . . . He played with Miles and loads of people, and had a solo career. But my mentor is a guy named Bernard Wright, who also recorded with Miles. He grew up as one of the Jamaica boys, with Marcus Miller and Lenny White. So Nard was my mentor. Donald Blackman was Nard’s mentor and a guy named Weldon

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13 Sylvester Onyejiaka is a graduate of this program.  
14 Hargrove and Badu are both graduates of the Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing and Visual Arts, another elite arts educational institution in the DFW area.
Irvine was Donald Blackman’s mentor. . . . It all goes back to this Jamaica, Queens, black thing of really knowing jazz but also really knowing how to groove and how to play r&b. It’s this weird school that is super unknown, but its influence is felt second-hand, in a big way.” (Quoted in Woodard 2016:24)

This micro-lineage of jazz comprises three musicians—Irvine, Blackman, and Wright—and two local scenes—Jamaica, Queens and Dallas—all of which have been marginal to orthodox jazz histories, if recognized at all. But their individual and collective impact on the musical development of some contemporary jazz musicians is singular, arguably more important than the impact of the more celebrated figures of jazz history.

Dallas is but one local music culture that has socialized aspiring musicians into the jazz world in this way. Many young jazz musicians in New York come from another Texas city, Houston, and from its celebrated High School for the Performing and Visual Arts, in particular. Houston’s other local music—its unique style of hip-hop known as “chopped and screwed” (derived from a remix technique in which an existing beat is dramatically slowed down) and its own gospel scene—impacted the musical development of these musicians. Elsewhere, Philadelphia, with its own prominent arts magnet school and local music (so-called “neo-soul”), has produced other highly influential jazz musicians who remain rooted in local music practices. Washington, D.C., Richmond, VA, Detroit, MI, Oakland, CA, and many other cities

15 Prominent graduates of HSPVA include jazz musicians Chris Dave, Robert Glasper, Alan Hampton, Eric Harland, Jason Moran, Mike Moreno, Kendrick Scott, Walter Smith III, and Helen Sung. Keyboardist and composer James Francies, one of my informants, is one of the most recent graduates of HSPVA. (The high school’s most famous alumna is undoubtedly pop superstar Beyoncé.)

16 The Philadelphia High School for the Creative and Performing Arts has produced several notable jazz alumni, including organist Joey DeFrancesco, bassist Christian McBride,
have their own unique jazz cultures that, along with other local music genres, constitute distinctive musical identities. Most recently, Los Angeles, relatively marginal to the dominant narrative of jazz since the “cool” era, has reemerged in the national consciousness as an epicenter of jazz, primarily in the form of the West Coast Get Down collective, with Kamasi Washington as its figurehead. This jazz culture is inextricable from the recent history of The World Stage performance and art space, founded by drummer Billy Higgins in 1989, and the contemporary hip-hop and electronic music cultures, led by artists like rapper Kendrick Lamar and producer Flying Lotus.

* * *

In this chapter, I have aimed to outline the robust constellation of music that constituted musicians’ formative encounters with jazz as well as the kinds of people, communities, and institutions that have been important contexts for these encounters. Such encounters were instrumental in shaping contemporary musicians’ attitudes towards the relationship between jazz and recording as well as their stylistic preferences and aesthetic principles, which I discuss throughout this dissertation. Importantly, these attitudes often overlapped with one another—that is to say, musicians often developed preferences for musical styles that were in fact dependent upon certain recording techniques. In large part, these preferences concerned the work of record producers and engineers. In the case of hip-hop, for instance, they developed an affinity for not

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guitarist Kurt Rosenwinkel. The relationship between jazz and neo-soul has been especially rich, epitomized by Roy Hargrove’s collaboration with singer D’Angelo for his genre-defining album *Voodoo* (Virgin, 2000) and Robert Glasper’s work on his New School classmate and singer Bilal’s debut album *1st Born Second* (Interscope, 2001). Native Philadelphians—Bilal, singer Jill Scott, and others—continue to collaborate with jazz musicians, and drummer and producer Questlove—arguably the architect of the late ‘90s/early ‘00s neo-soul scene in Philadelphia—is mentoring young musicians, including James Francis.
only the music that producers sampled, but also for sampling itself, along with other
“production” techniques of hip-hop beat makers. They came to appreciate the “sound” of
recordings—like the distinctive sounds of 1970s CTI records or 1980s GRP records—and
acquired an analytical vocabulary that could account for the ways producers and engineers
shaped such aspects as timbre or texture at least as much as the performing musicians did.

Musicians internalized a mutually constitutive relationship between recording practices
and approaches to composition, improvisation, and performance in other ways as well. Many
developed a strong appreciation for the work of recording session musicians, those whose names
rarely appeared on album covers, but who possessed prodigious musicianship that they strove to
emulate. Names like Dennis Chambers, Vinnie Colaiuta, James Genus, and Fima Ephron are
unlikely to appear in jazz textbooks, but these musicians are as likely to be models for
performance to some young musicians as the “masters.” For musicians acculturated in the
church, admiration for session musicians was reinforced by their own experiences there, where
music demanded attention to things like “groove” and sensitive accompaniment above all else.17
In any case, many of these early experiences fostered an almost workmanlike attitude towards
music-making.18 Further, recorded music instilled in many musicians an appreciation for the
elegance of relatively simple compositions, especially songs. Tuneful melodies, uncomplicated

17 “[Church is] the best place to learn,” Kamasi Washington’s father attested. “You play every
week and you’ve got to play a groove. It doesn’t come any other way but with a groove” (quoted
in Shatz 2016).
18 Another context for this kind of work is late night television, which has featured jazz
musicians since the days of Clark Terry and Doc Severinsen in the Tonight Show band; some
musicians who have worked in various late night bands and are highly respected among young
jazz musicians include Genus, Will Lee, Michael Brecker, Matt Chamberlain, Branford Marsalis,
Kevin Eubanks, Kenny Kirkland, Kenny Davis, Marvin “Smitty” Smith, Jeff “Tain” Watts, and
even David Sanborn, who led his own band on the short-lived Sunday Night program.
forms, and danceable rhythms characterized many of their favorite commercially-oriented jazz records. Musicians recognized that long songs with extensive, “notey” solos were not always easily accommodated by recorded media, and less often appeal to a radio programmers (or YouTube surfers, for that matter).

Finally, access to recorded music has inculcated in young musicians an omnivorous musicality. Musicians are eager to learn styles of music from other genres and incorporate them into their playing, and many easily blur boundaries between genres. If the jazz legacy of this foregoing constellation of music can be distilled to a single characterization, it is perhaps the technologically mediated hybridity poetically described by critic Greg Tate:

By the 1970s, Sun Ra had already pioneered the introduction of electric pianos and Moog synths into serious freedom jazz: Miles Davis had strapped a wah-wah pedal to his horn and was in the studio making vicious breakbeats with tape loops, tabla players, and live handclaps on electronic jazz masterpieces like On the Corner and Get Up With It. Students of Miles—like Herbie Hancock, Chick Corea, and Weather Report—soon followed, with sublime composition, improv chops, and grooves steady enough to yank in hardcore disciples of James Brown, Sly Stone, and Funkadelic. Meanwhile, Maurice White’s Earth, Wind & Fire so wickedly blurred the line between avant-garde soul and electronic jazz as to render distinctions between the genres patently absurd. (2016)

As Tate goes on to point out, recent, breathless declarations from journalists that young musicians have “saved” jazz or “made it cool again” by embracing recording technologies or mass media are well off the mark. If anything, people have finally begun to understand what jazz musicians have been doing for years.
CHAPTER 2. Going into the studio: Preparing for and funding recordings

In this chapter, I discuss the planning stages of making a jazz recording, focusing mainly on the process of recording an album.\(^1\) Alternative formats, such as singles and EPs, are becoming increasingly popular for reasons that I will discuss in Chapter 4, but albums remain an especially popular format, and the practices their production entails are representative of recording practices in general. In addition, I focus on the perspective of the bandleader, as most jazz albums are still released under the name of a single leader, who generally oversees the process, composing the music, securing funds for the recording, hiring the band, and organizing promotional material; for other configurations—duos or nominally leaderless bands—the processes of recording an album are similar, though the various responsibilities may be shared among members. In what follows, I discuss three early stages of the recording process: (1) deciding to record an album, (2) selecting the music and musicians, and (3) funding the recording. Although these stages do occur in this order for many projects, they need not; musicians may raise money to make a record before they have recruited musicians, or they may decide to record after developing an album’s worth of music with a particular ensemble.

**Deciding to record**

When I asked musicians why they make recordings, I generally received two kinds of answers. Some gave reasons why it is important for jazz musicians to make records as leaders or sidemen, and some discussed their motivations to make a specific recording, including the goals

\(^1\) Musicians often use “record” in lieu of album (e.g., “Crescent is my favorite Coltrane record” or “I’m getting ready to make my first record”). I will use them interchangeably. Alternatively, I will use “recording” more generally to refer to any piece of recorded music, including singles.
that they hoped to achieve. Both types of reasons could be either professional—that is, related to sustaining or advancing one’s career—or artistic—that is, related to fulfilling creative desires. In theory, a musician could make recordings entirely for professional reasons—to earn money or to have recording credits to his name, which might be beneficial to his career even if the recordings are not artistically satisfying to anyone. Or, a musician could make recordings entirely for artistic reasons—to produce works of art or document moments in her musical development, which can be creatively fulfilling even if nobody purchases the recordings. In reality, most musicians have a combination of professional and artistic reasons both for making albums in general and for making specific recordings.

One professional reason for recording an album is to increase the likelihood of “getting gigs.” For bandleaders, records can help secure performance opportunities at clubs, theaters, or other venues. Booking agents often want to hear a band before they book it, especially if the bandleader is not well-known. Also, venues often refer to records in promotional materials, and recently released records are likely to be more effective than those that have been available for a while. Thus, even well-known musicians expecting to play premier venues can benefit from making new records. One musician I spoke to was rather cynical about this state of affairs: “All I want to do is invite a bunch of guys into my living room and play. Problem is, the guys I want to get don’t have free time to just hang out and play. The only way I can get them is if I hire them. The only way I can hire them is if I have a gig. The only way I can book a gig is if I have a new record. Hence, I have to make a record.”

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2 “Gig” can refer either to a live performance (e.g., “Come out to my gig at Dizzy’s next week”) or to a job in a band or other performance context (e.g., “I got a gig playing bass in Chris Potter’s band”). When referring to the prospect of “getting gigs,” musicians typically imply both senses of the term.
Records can also help musicians get gigs as sidemen—that is, they can be hired by another musician on the strength of their performances on recordings. Sometimes, musicians can pinpoint recordings that led to specific gigs; more commonly, they regard recordings as a means of putting their music into “the ether,” publicizing their performing or composing abilities and, hopefully, garnering new opportunities. This can become a source of frustration for musicians, however. A musician may find that one of his records raises his profile considerably but is unrepresentative of the full range of his abilities; he may find himself pigeonholed as a player and called only for certain kinds of gigs. While musicians rarely begrudge this work, they do sometimes compensate by more overtly highlighting their well-rounded abilities whenever possible, such as when recording as bandleaders.

Musicians sometimes liken records to “business cards.” In one sense, they mean that records can convey information about a musician (e.g., composition and performance abilities) to potential employers (e.g., booking agents, other musicians) in need of services. In another sense, they mean that records can confer an aura of legitimacy on a musician; a professional-quality record might signal to potential employers that the musician is accomplished enough that someone (e.g., a record label) was willing to invest in them. Many musicians maintain that the barriers to entry to the record industry have lowered so much in recent years that simply having a record no longer assures quality or even, in the view of some, basic competency. This can become another source of frustration, if such musicians feel that booking agents, critics, or others cannot tell the good from the bad in an increasingly oversaturated market. Even so, musicians still see the value in having records with institutional support, such as that of a famous record label (e.g., Blue Note), to their name, or they hope to benefit from others’ assumptions about the meaning of a record, faulty thought they may be.
At one point, musicians expected that making records was a reliable way to earn a relatively substantial part of their livings. Today, the recording industry is in such a state of flux that there is an increasingly common perception that to make money from record sales is not a good reason to record. “I don’t think anybody makes an album anymore and expects any kind of financial return,” one musician told me. Another said that he usually embarks upon recording projects with the expectation that he will lose money, at least in the short term, and is happy if he ultimately “breaks even” over time. Selling one to two thousand copies of a record is generally considered a great success, although many musicians hope that they will eventually join the ranks of the handful of jazz musicians who sell in the tens or hundreds of thousands, perhaps actually garnering a profit. Even those with a more modest outlook are hardly resigned to a music economy in which records have little to no monetary value. On the contrary, as I discuss in Chapters 3 and 4, they are innovating a wide variety of strategies to make money from their recordings, and they are active in campaigns to secure artists’ rights in the new music economy.

Still, recordings can be indirectly lucrative by helping musicians grow the size or enthusiasm of their audiences. Echoing many of his colleagues, saxophonist Sylvester Onyejiaka told me that making recordings is “all about building the hype” (2014). As I discuss in Chapter 4, musicians can build hype with recordings in several ways, such as by securing airplay or positive reviews from radio stations or music critics or by working on their own to create “brands” around themselves and their records to appeal to audiences via social media. Hype can help to attract larger audiences to the musician’s live performances, which remain a significant and

3 Jazz musicians who achieve this level of success in the marketplace tend to be “superstars” with household name recognition or musicians with significant crossover appeal. Occasionally, a musician becomes a “breakout” star, having tremendous and perhaps surprising success with a record; singer Gregory Porter is a recent example.
reliable source of income, and in some cases, it can cultivate celebrity or simply a “buzz” about a musician, which can lead to other professional opportunities.

In the meantime, a sober view of the market for recorded music has encouraged musicians to follow through on their more explicitly artistic motivations to record. They may make recordings to “document” moments in their artistic lives—a repertoire, a working band, a stylistic period, etc. Trumpet player Theo Croker and saxophonist Irwin Hall spent around two years working together in Shanghai, China, “workshopping” a repertoire—composing music, performing it four to five nights per week, and refining arrangements—that would eventually be recorded on *Afro Physicist*. “It was inevitable that we were gonna record that music,” Hall told me. “We had been working on it and workshopping it for so long, we were gonna record it one way or the other . . . We needed to record it. We needed to have a documentation of what we were doing, what was happening” (Hall 2014). Similarly, when jazz blogger Noah Fishman asked pianist Aaron Parks about plans for his next recording, Parks responded: “I’m doing a tour with Ben Street and Billy Hart in October in the UK. I’ve got some repertoire that’s specifically written and adapted for that band. I’d really like to get a chance to document that and see what we find” (2015). Musicians express this creative desire through other metaphors as well. Drummer Colin Stranahan told me that “a record is like our portfolio of our life. It’s a snapshot at a certain point in your life” (2015). Onyejiaka said that a record is like “a snapshot. You know, it’s kind of like, ‘On this day, at this hour, this is what we were feeling’” (2014). Jazz critic Mark Corroto used metaphors from both still and motion-picture photography: “Jazz musicians need snapshots or freeze-frames of their lives. These take the form of recordings” (2014).

The desire to document or take a snapshot of a creative moment often coincides with the end of its perceived lifespan. In an interview with jazz journalist Natalie Weiner, drummer Eric
Harland said about his album *Vipassana* (GSI, 2014), “This is the first record that’s really capturing our sound, taking everything we’ve done and really packaging it. Saying, ‘This is the direction we’re taking.’ I mean it’s probably not going to be the direction for that much longer, because it’s a voyage, and it’s supposed to expand and include other ideas” (2014). Indeed, some musicians treat recording as a necessary final step towards a new project. Saxophonist Ben Wendel told me: “When you record a body of work and you release it into the world, it gives you a certain sense of completion that allows you to creatively move on to the next thing” (2015). Sometimes the desire to document is accompanied by a feeling of urgency. Saxophonist Kevin Sun told me that he and his quartet Great On Paper felt compelled to document some of their repertoire because it was becoming more difficult for the band to play together regularly after one of their members moved away (2015).

Documents and snapshots also serve posterity. Recordings can be mementos for a musician—like photographs in a family photo album—as she grows and evolves throughout her career, and they can perpetuate a musician’s legacy—like documents stored in an archive or displayed in a museum. Musicians are keenly aware of the personal and communal legacies that records leave behind, for better or for worse. As saxophonist Remy Le Boeuf told me: “[Recording is] really important to me as an artist; it’s going to last forever. Or, not forever, but it’s going to serve me through the course of my life. Or the opposite: It’ll be embarrassing for the course of my life [laughs]. Or, both, I guess” (2015).

Besides the desire to document or take a snapshot of a project or repertoire or ensemble, musicians often feel the desire to express an artistic “identity”—a sense of “who they are” as musicians. As discussed above, this desire can be partly professional—that is, in the interest of
getting new gigs by making known their abilities. But recordings also allow musicians to share their personal identities with an audience. Ben Wendel expressed this feeling to me:

I think releasing a body of work and having a discography is a great way to show people who you are as a musician and show them your world. And I think the more music you release where people have a chance to actually sit with it, listen to it repeatedly . . . it allows them to get a sense of who you are, so I actually think it’s a really important part of the processing in establishing one’s voice. (2015)

Speaking about his goals for his album *Original Vision* (*Lyte/Truth Revolution*, 2015), bassist Aidan Carroll said that he wanted to make “a blueprint of my creative process that brings together how I compose, improvise and envision sound. Creating the album . . . allowed me to present something that was truly my own” (quoted in Helary n.d.). Carroll elaborated to me, “I play bass. I play jazz. But, I really do a lot of other things. I have other interests. I wanted to somehow include that, and that’s kind of the overall concept” (2015).

Some musicians view recordings as an effective way to “say something” not only about their artistic identities but also about their political stances. “I feel like a record is a response to what’s going on in the world,” pianist James Francies told me:

With all the shit going on in Syria, with all the shit going on in America… Like, “you don’t have anything to say about this?” . . . I feel like a record is reflective of what’s going on in a moment. Say something, you know? Have a certain concept come through. That way it will be relevant . . . Someone studying, “What was going on in the early 2000s? Let’s listen to this record and see what this artist was saying.” Yeah, that’s my whole thing about recording a record. (2015)
Francies echoes one of his mentors, pianist Robert Glasper, who has similarly said, “I like my albums to document a time period, and this time period—there’s so much shit happening right now, and you can’t ignore it” (quoted in Shahabian 2015). The desire to respond to sociopolitical issues may grow over the course of a recording project. As trumpeter Terence Blanchard said regarding his 2015 album *Breathless* (Blue Note), “*Breathless* didn’t start out to be a statement record, it started out as something we wanted to have fun with just playing music. But it’s hard with my background to turn a blind eye to what’s been happening” (Blickenstaff and Blanchard n.d.). Blanchard’s and many other musicians’ uses of recording to participate in social movements are discussed in Chapter 7.

Recording sessions can also provide opportunities for musicians to work together who would not otherwise do so. Young or inexperienced musicians may invite one or more distinguished musicians to appear on all or part of an album. Experienced musicians may use recording sessions as opportunities to work in unusual configurations. Drummer Johnathan Blake first assembled the band for his album *Gone, but Not Forgotten* (Criss Cross, 2014)—tenor saxophonists Chris Potter and Mark Turner and bass player Ben Street—for an impromptu performance at The Jazz Gallery. “Hearing those two horn players together was really special,” he told me. “So, maybe a few months later, I was like, ‘You know, maybe we could expand on this. Do a record.’ And so I approached them all and they were all down to do it” (Blake 2015). Although musicians also assemble unusual bands for one-off live performances, recording sessions may be preferable, allowing musicians to document a rare collaboration. Besides, not only are invited musicians paid for their time, but they earn a recording credit.

Finally, jazz musicians make recordings because they want to use recording technologies as instruments of music making. In other words, they want to make records that are not merely
“documents” of a certain repertoire or ensemble configuration that exists—or at least could exist—independently of recording processes but rather are only possible to begin with due to the affordances of recording technologies. There is a tremendous range of studio recording techniques that musicians now regard as necessary to making the kind of music that they want to make. They are often referred to as processes of “production,” and they include techniques like overdubbing, mixing, effects processing, sampling, and others. These techniques are discussed in detail in Chapter 3. Relatedly, some musicians are interested in innovating with album formats, especially video, as well as developing other kinds of multimedia projects that include an element of recorded music. Some such projects are discussed in Chapter 4.

Musicians often express reasons why they have elected not to make recordings. Many speak of not being “ready” or waiting for “the right time” to record. By “ready,” musicians typically mean that their compositions have matured, that their performance abilities have been honed, or that they have gained a stronger sense of their artistic identity or have developed a compelling album concept. “This is a record that I’ve wanted to do for a very long time and I wasn’t ready,” keyboardist and producer Mark de Clive-Lowe said of his album *CHURCH* (Mashibeats/Ropeadope, 2014). “I wasn’t ready in so many ways. It took [for] me to go through all the experiences I went through to make this record the way I made it. Had I made it two years ago, it would have been a completely different record compositionally, musically, and as a player” (Reyes and de Clive-Lowe 2014b). About why he did not release his own solo record until age 33, guitarist Matthew Stevens said, “Everybody has their own timeline and you can’t fight it. I was very aware of wanting to take the time to sift through a lot of different stuff and come out with something I could stand behind 100 percent” (quoted in Murph 2015). He elaborated to online magazine *Life + Times*:
Well, it’s sort of a natural evolution for me. I started recording a lot of my own music in the last four years in different situations with different people. I was really just trying to not rush things and work with a timeline that felt natural to me. It’s easy to get ahead of yourself and say, “I have to have something out now or this year or next year.” Or, “I have to have something with this person or that person.” Really, there’s so many different avenues to get your music out these [days] and there’s no rush. I felt like I was really learning a lot about how I wanted my music to sound and how I wanted to present myself. I had a lot of new experiences in the last few years with a lot of really wonderful musicians, and I think that all of those contribute to having a sense of what’s important to you and refining yourself in terms of how you write and present your music. I just didn’t want to rush it. (Peterson and Stevens 2015)

Notably, Stevens acknowledges the pressure that some musicians feel to make records for professional reasons, such as to maintain a high level of productivity or to work with certain musicians, but he feels that artistic desires should not be subordinated to them. In a rather extreme case, guitarist Kurt Rosenwinkel took a decade to develop his album Caipi (Heartcore/Razdaz, 2017): “My sons are 10 and 12 now, so they’ve been living their whole lives with this music . . . For years they’d say, ‘When is Caipi coming out? When, when, when?’ And I’d always tell them, ‘It’s coming, it’s coming’” (quoted in Milkowski 2016).

While de Clive-Lowe and Stevens are modest about their own “readiness,” other musicians—especially older, more experienced musicians—often use discourses of readiness to express their frustrations with changes in the recording industry. While they often offer friendly advice to young musicians, they may also warn them against making records too early in their
careers. At a discussion of artist-founded record labels at the 2015 Jazz Connect Conference, the panelists expressed concern that the jazz scene had been “saturated” by recordings of poorly developed music. Saxophonist Greg Osby suggested that many projects are being released “prematurely,” and drummer Willie Jones III warned, “everybody’s not ready” to make a recording. Jones advised young musicians to “be honest” with themselves, and bassist Mimi Jones (no relation) similarly encouraged them to “pace” themselves. Elsewhere, saxophonist Joshua Redman generalized:

It’s so easy to make a record today, and sometimes it sounds to me like a lot of jazz musicians think, “I wrote these tunes and they’re really hip and I can play really well over them.” So it’s a demonstration of ability and proficiency within a certain vocabulary; it’s impressive, but I think there needs to be an attitude of: I’m here to deliver something. You can deliver a message that’s less on the melodic side – if there’s a certain energy in the music that has the potential to connect.

(Stryker and Redman 2014).

One musician I spoke to was particularly blunt about musicians who are not ready:

You can quote me: most jazz records are irrelevant . . . No one wants to hear you record “What Is This Thing Called Love?” . . . Musicians today are like, “Oh, let me just play some standards. I’ll play this one tune that sounds cool in 3/4. That’s one of my originals.” What’s the point? Chances are if your mind is like, “Well I gotta record a record to get gigs” . . . It’s like, [pauses] you’re probably not gonna get gigs.4

4 I interpreted “you can quote me” as a turn of phrase rather than as genuine consent and have decided not to identify this musician.
Like Matthew Stevens’s, this musician’s comments suggest that professional motivations to record (e.g., to get gigs) should not interfere with an honest assessment of whether one’s music has matured enough to warrant recording. In general, the discourse of readiness speaks to tensions that can exist not only between musicians in a competitive market, but also internally to the musician, as they weigh their professional and artistic motivations: Are my compositions mature enough to record? So-and-so is in town next month and said he’d be willing to play on a few tunes, but have I found the right bass player? If I don’t have a record by the spring, will I miss another opportunity to book a summer tour? Especially for young musicians, balancing these considerations can be fraught. I spoke to two musicians after a gig at the Jazz Gallery, one veteran and one younger musician. The younger musician was considering compiling some recently recorded material and releasing it as his first album, which he felt was overdue. But he had another suite of music that he was more excited about and was eager to record. The veteran musician recommended that he record that music and eliminate some of the older stuff or release them together as a double CD. “Everyone’s going to remember your first album,” he warned. “So, don’t rush it.”

Selecting music and musicians

When choosing repertoire for a recording project, musicians are especially considerate of the balance between original and non-original compositions. At various stages in jazz history, records tended to feature many compositions from the latter category, especially those identified as “standards,” including Tin Pan Alley songs, show tunes, and evergreen jazz compositions.\(^5\)

\(^{5}\) There is no definitive list of standards, although there are many compositions that most if not all jazz musicians would agree deserve the designation. See Gioia (2012).
Today, many musicians include only one or two standards, if any, on their albums. Even then, it is often only if they have created a unique arrangement (although as indicated above, some musicians regard certain arranging techniques—simply transposing to an unusual time signature—as themselves somewhat hackneyed). However, while many musicians refrain from recording standards, they certainly still value them as jazz musicians always have: as an appealing repertoire of compositions that facilitate group performance, especially during jam sessions and musicians’ “hangs.” In comments to journalist Scott Timberg, drummer Matt Mayhall summarized this perspective:

“I think the most important thing we can do is write our own music,” says Mayhall. His generation — he’s 34 — is not interested in standards. When his trio plays, they only perform music they’ve written themselves. “It’s never ‘Bye [sic] Bye Blackbird,’” he says. “It’s not that I hate that music — I love that stuff. I just don’t think the world needs any more recordings or performances of it.” Musicians need to make a statement, he says. “It’s like, ‘Who are we and what do we have to say?’” (2012)

Instead of standards, musicians record either other types of non-original compositions or, most often, original compositions. Non-original compositions may include non-standard compositions by jazz musicians. For example, Johnathan Blake’s Gone, but not Forgotten features compositions by friends, colleagues, and mentors who had recently passed away:

It kind of turned into a tribute record to some of the musicians that we’ve lost over the years. So, it was Cedar Walton, Mulgrew Miller, Frank Foster, Frank West, Jim Hall… A lot of the musicians that I paid tribute to by doing their music, I had affiliation with. I had gotten to play with Jim Hall two or three times right
before he passed away. It was a kind of tribute to some of the Philly musicians: Charles Fambrough, who I played with; Trudy Pitts who I also grew up playing with; Frank Foster, who I got to hang and talk with; Frank West, who I got to hang out with. So, it was very personal to me too, even though it wasn’t necessarily my music \textit{per se}. It was still music that I grew up with. I got to play with Mulgrew Miller. He played on my father’s last record, and I played a couple times with his trio and with the Wingspan group. So, it was a very personal thing for me. (2015)

For some projects, musicians intend to promote the work of an underappreciated musician or composer; unsurprisingly, these tend to be compositions originating in the various genres discussed in the previous chapter. Harpist Brandee Younger, for instance, included two tunes by Dorothy Ashby on \textit{Wax & Wane} (self-release, 2016). Some also explore compositions from early jazz, as with singer Cécile McLorin Salvant’s recordings of minstrel songs and “jungle music.”

Other common non-original compositions are popular music songs that are reinterpreted or “covered” by jazz musicians. These may come from any genre of popular music, but jazz musicians tend to favor songs from genres like indie rock, singer-songwriter, neo-soul, electronic music, hip-hop, and some pop. One might observe an emergent core of artists who seem to have a special appeal to jazz musicians. A reasonable list might begin with The Beatles, Joni Mitchell, Michael Jackson, Nirvana, Aphex Twin, Radiohead, J Dilla, and, most recently, Kendrick Lamar. Versions of some of their tunes appear on a few different albums, causing some to speculate about the development of a repertoire of “new standards.”

\footnote{See Lomanno (2014) for a good discussion of McLorin Salvant’s recordings of “Nobody” and “You Bring Out the Savage in Me.”}
Musicians think carefully about whether to record non-original compositions for their albums, because doing so can have both positive and negative consequences. Covering a popular song can be artistically satisfying, of course, especially if it is a personal favorite. It can also attract new listeners, including fans of the artist whose song was covered. But covers can overshadow a musician’s original compositions. Pianist Vijay Iyer described this problem in the online magazine *Innerviews*:

There are still some covers on [album] *Break Stuff*, but when we did those ACT albums, they were more like 50-percent covers, instead of 25-percent covers. All of the writing about the ACT albums was about the covers. The critics would focus on “Human Nature,” “The Star of a Story” and “Mystic Brew.” They wouldn’t say anything about my original music. I remember when Steve Lehman made a trio album. I said “Be ready. The critics aren’t going to talk about any of your original compositions. They’re only going to talk about the covers.” No matter how much time or work you put into your own pieces, critics are going to ignore them. That’s because they don’t actually know how to talk about music, period. They don’t have the tools to talk about music on its own terms. They can only talk in terms of comparing music to other music. So, when you cover a piece, they can always compare it to the original or another version. But if it’s an original piece, they don’t know where to start. (Prasad and Iyer 2015)

What’s more, musicians must pay a compulsory licensing fee to the song’s rights owner, adding to the expenses of the album. Ultimately, the tangible and intangible costs and benefits of recording non-original compositions can vary greatly from one musician to another. A musician without the high profile of Iyer may not expect much attention from critics anyway, and thus
include a cover of a well-known song to create hype. Musicians who are particularly savvy with promotion may decide to release covers as one-off singles instead of including them on albums, taking advantage of any possible crossover audience, while avoiding the problems of criticism that Iyer describes. Such promotional strategies are discussed further in Chapter 4.

These days, original compositions generally comprise most of the music included on jazz records. Musicians favor original music for several reasons. At the most basic level, they may feel that their own compositions are best suited to the broader goal of projecting their artistic identities as discussed above. They might not even finalize the selection of compositions to record until the recording sessions begin, replacing older compositions with more recent ones that better represent “who they are” at that moment. Saxophonist Walter Smith III attested to this when describing preparations for his album Still Casual (self-release, 2014): “[The recording session] got delayed for almost a year. In that time, I kept working on that music. I wrote some new stuff, and some of the stuff I wrote since that delay ended up being on the record” (Naser and Smith 2014).

Original compositions featured on an album might also have a more specific relationship to one another. They may be connected to a specific moment in a musician’s life, as were Theo Croker’s compositions on Afro Physicist; similarly, Mark de Clive-Lowe selected the compositions for CHURCH from the repertoire that he developed during residencies in New York and L.A. over a period of several years. Most commonly, compositions are oriented around an album “concept.” Concept refers to a cohesive artistic vision, aesthetic, or playing style; an album with a concept is more than just a collection of compositions, but rather an integrated musical statement. Robert Glasper has made this distinction: “The kind of ‘jazz way’ is just doing another album the same way with different songs. But I like to wait until I have a nice
concept” (Blickenstaff and Glasper n.d.). Colin Stranahan echoed this sentiment in our conversation, although he did not use the term directly: “In my own projects, we’re definitely trying to think, ‘How can this be a completed statement?’ Instead of, ‘Oh, here’s a few songs, or here’s one song’ . . . It really depends on what you’re doing, of course, but I tend to focus on the album, the whole record aspect” (2015). Eric Harland’s concept for Vipassana, for instance, was thematic: “the threefold being of an individual—whether you call it mind-body-spirit, or id-ego-superego, or here-there-the space in between” (Weiner and Harland 2014).

Album concepts can also be formal. Le Boeuf Brothers had a literary concept when composing the music that was eventually recorded for imaginist (New Focus/Panoramic, 2016). Not only did they incorporate existing literature (Franz Kafka’s short story “A Dream”) directly into their compositions, but, as Remy Le Boeuf told me, they also planned for the sequence of compositions on the album to imitate the structure of a book (2015). Aaron Parks conceptualized the compositions for his album Invisible Cinema (Blue Note, 2008) as constituting an “aural film” (quoted in Brady 2008). Similarly, trumpet player Ambrose Akinmusire invented characters—a Vietnam War veteran, a homeless man, a child queen—on which to base his compositions for The Imagined Savior Is Far Easier to Paint (Blue Note, 2014). Saxophonist Ben Wendel’s The Seasons project was based on the formal structure of Tchaikovsky’s set of piano pieces of the same name; the concept was to compose, record, and release one duet a month during the calendar year of 2015.7

Decisions about what compositions to record—original and non-original alike—are frequently inseparable from decisions about who will record them. Often, musicians use their “working” bands, those with whom they regularly perform. Johnathan Blake recorded his debut record *The Eleventh Hour* (Sunnyside, 2012) with his working quintet at the time. As he related to me, he wanted to cultivate a “band sound” before entering the studio: “I didn’t want to rush to put out a record. I wanted to really get a sound—like a band sound—and then go from there” (2015). Aidan Carroll featured two of his working rhythm sections on *Original Vision*; he told me that he felt fortunate to feature both rhythm sections because it has become difficult to keep even one working band in New York (2015). Even if all or most musicians have not regularly played as a group, each musician typically has a working relationship to the bandleader. Matthew Stevens recruited musicians for his debut album *Woodwork* (Whirlwind, 2015) with whom he has close musical relationships:

I knew I wanted to have Gerald Clayton play piano – we first started playing together with Ben Williams and then with NEXT Collective, and we just developed a friendship and great musical relationship. [Bassist] Vicente Archer is someone I met playing with Jamire [Williams] with ERIMAJ at first. We were hanging around [the studio in Brooklyn] and spending a lot of time together, talking about music, playing together a lot, so that happened naturally. Eric Doob, the drummer, is one of my oldest friends. Him [sic] and I just have a real rhythmic kinship, I feel. (Peterson and Stevens 2015)

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8 Pianist Kevin Hayes, bassist Ben Street, alto saxophonist Jaleel Shaw, and tenor saxophonist Mark Turner.
9 Pianist Sullivan Fortner and drummer Joe Dyson; pianist David Bryant and drummer Justin Brown.
Musical “kinship” is especially advantageous when recording, as it not only generally produces strong performances but also can make the recording process more expedient. Using his working band “made it a lot easier in the studio,” Johnathan Blake told me. “The session was very relaxed. There were no real uptight moments or anything. We basically knocked the record out in a day” (Blake 2015). Importantly, an efficient recording session is not necessarily an effortless session; on the contrary, members of a working band with close relationships can also challenge one another to work harder for the benefit of the music. Singer Sarah Elizabeth Charles featured her working quartet on her sophomore album *Inner Dialogue* (Truth Revolution, 2015).\(^\text{10}\) Christian Scott, who produced the album, described their dynamic in the studio:

One of the great things about her having the band that she has . . . and the way the band communicates . . . There’s always this inner dialogue between the musicians, a lot of back and forth and banter about how they can always be better or make something better. What are we trying to communicate? Why is this section here? What do we mean when I put this phrase here when this is happening over that chord? Why is this rhythm better than that rhythm? They’re constantly challenging themselves. (Naser, et al. 2015)

Some bandleaders are so invested in cultivating a band sound that they are keen to feature their collaborators as *de facto* co-leaders. Drummer Kendrick Scott described this dynamic in comments about his band Oracle.\(^\text{11}\) Discussing *We Are the Drum* (Blue Note, 2015), Scott noted:

I think everybody had a strong voice in the beginning, and I think the individual voices are getting so much stronger and everyone has a function in the band.

\(^{10}\) Pianist Jesse Elder, bassist Burniss Earl Travis II, and drummer John Davis.

\(^{11}\) Pianist Taylor Eigsti, bassist Joe Sanders, guitarist Mike Moreno, and saxophonist John Ellis.
Everyone has – I don’t want to say “crystallized” because that means it’s stopped growing – everybody’s function in the band is growing. The leadership transfers to every person from moment to moment. That’s why I love my band the most, because sometimes the leadership comes from one person and there’s a directive that they go for and it’s beautiful. I love the uncomfortability of letting somebody else lead, and not knowing where they’re gonna take the music, and I afford the guys that opportunity every time we play. I think that we’ve all gotten better at serving the music first, and that helps us to play together better. I think that’s just a thing of getting older and trying not to prove anything. (Wrenn and Scott 2015)

Recording the album, Scott’s priority was not to assert his authority as a leader, but rather to highlight the unique, cultivated sound of the band as a unit.

A band may have such a deep working relationship that the leader begins to compose music expressly for the individual musicians in the band. Johnathan Blake is a member of trumpeter Tom Harrell’s quintet, with which he has recorded five albums for HighNote.¹² He described to me his perception of the connection between Harrell’s compositions and each member of the band:

It’s interesting to watch how [Harrell has] learned how to write specifically for the members in the band. I can’t hear anybody else but Wayne Escoffery playing those lines. I can’t hear anybody else but Danny Grissett playing those chords. I can’t hear anybody else but Ugonna Okegwo playing those bass lines. So, you know, he’s really crafted a band sound. (Blake 2015)

¹² Blake, pianist Danny Grissett, bassist Ugonna Okegwo, and saxophonist Wayne Escoffery.
Bandleaders might also favor musicians for their own compositional talents. Kendrick Scott invited the members of Oracle to contribute compositions to both of the band’s albums. In rarer cases, leaders may prepare no compositions as such for the recording session, relying instead on the group’s collective capacity to compose in the moment of performance. For *Beat Music: The Los Angeles Improvisations* (Beat Music, 2014), drummer Mark Guiliana brought no formal compositions to the live recording sessions. Instead, the group improvised around a small set of directives: combinations of instruments, metered and unmetered forms, etc.\(^\text{13}\)

There are, of course, times when musicians recruit collaborators with whom they do not regularly play or have had no prior professional experiences. As discussed above, these may be times when young or inexperienced musicians recruit distinguished musicians to feature on an album. All musicians may recruit peers with whom they have not performed, but whose work they admire or who are recommended to them by another musician. Aidan Carroll hired John Ellis on the recommendation of bassist John Patitucci, Carroll’s teacher:

> I of course knew [Ellis’s] music and knew of him as a player, but John Patitucci also had used John on some of his trio gigs . . . So, he actually suggested him to me. I like tenor; I didn’t really want trumpet or guitar. And John did a gig with me and just ate up the music and spit it out. He just played his ass off, and I thought he was a great addition. (2015)

In some cases, musicians may meet for the first time in the studio, as when trumpet player Dave Douglas recorded *High Risk* (Greenleaf, 2015). Douglas had worked with Mark Guiliana and

\[^{13}\] Keyboardist Jeff Babko, bassist Tim Lefebvre, and electronic musician Troy Zeigler.
bassist Jonathan Maron, but had not played with electronic musician Shigeto until the one-day recording session.

On some occasions, musicians may need to make a last-minute substitution for one of the band members. One musician I spoke to had to replace a musician on the day of the recording session because someone became unavailable at the last minute; the substitute learned the music and recorded it the same day. This kind of situation can be frustrating for bandleaders who may have heavily invested in a recording session and also have little to no flexibility in their schedule; it can be especially frustrating if—as is increasingly the case—the music is complicated and difficult for even elite musicians to learn. On the other hand, musicians who have been “stood up” at a recording session can benefit when it happens to someone else, as they themselves may be called to substitute for a no-show. Two different musicians had to postpone interviews with me on short notice because they were called to substitute at recording sessions.

Unless musicians record with their working bands, extensive rehearsals are not a luxury they expect to have. Most musicians will try to arrange one full-band rehearsal before the recording session or, at the very least, rehearse with band members in pairs or small groups. Because musicians expect to be paid for their time, a bandleader may instead try to schedule a live performance, during which the band will “read down” the music. Some venues in New York feature this kind of performance with some regularity. As noted in the Introduction, the Jazz Gallery has often served as a testing ground for new music; a gig there might even be promoted as a “pre-recording show.”

Even if a rehearsal or gig is arranged, it is not uncommon for the

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14 Such shows are typically quite casual. The audience expects some mistakes during performance—a flubbed melody, a missed entrance—and the musicians will rarely make efforts to disguise their unfamiliarity with the music; they might silently finger melodies between pieces
full complement of musicians to play together for the first time at the recording session. It is a testament to the skills and professionalism of contemporary musicians that bandleaders trust one another to record their music with relatively little preparation and with high stakes.

Finally, with respect to choosing to record original compositions, it must be noted that musicians are incentivized to compose and record their own music by the norms of the music industry. A recording of a composition produces at least two copyrights: rights to the sound recordings, which are generally held by whoever funded the recording, such as the record label, and rights to the musical compositions, which are generally held by whoever wrote the music. By recording original compositions, musicians activate several different revenue streams, including various kinds of licensing arrangements (“sync license” fees paid to use a recording/composition in a television show, for instance), which may be especially appealing if they do not have the rights to the sound recordings. Compositions must be registered by a music publisher, and many jazz musicians who compose now establish their own publishing “companies.”

**Funding a recording**

It used to be that a jazz musician signed a contract with a record label, and the record label would advance him the funds needed to record an album. If the album sold well, the label would recoup its expenses and, hopefully, turn a profit, part of which went to the musician. This arrangement, colloquially called a “record deal,” is no longer the norm. Things changed not because jazz labels no longer exist; on the contrary, new labels are launched every year, or whisper directions in one another’s ears. Far from detracting from the performance, these interactions can even enhance it. Audience members may be impressed by how masterfully the musicians navigate new and challenging music.
including many artist-owned labels, and there has even been a rebirth of some of the classic jazz labels that had gone out of business or were acquired by larger conglomerates (“the majors”).

Rather, in response to years of poor sales, most labels take far fewer risks on jazz musicians who are not already proven sellers. “The profits are so low . . . They only [advance money] when they know they’re guaranteed big, big, big, big money success,” Irwin Hall told me. “[That] doesn’t necessarily foster… Well, it just changed the game, let’s just put it like that” (2014).

Some independent labels, especially larger, long-standing labels, still do sign recording contracts with artists and advance them at least some money to pay for production costs. Such labels are able to keep their overhead costs low, often by requiring artists to use “in-house” resources, including specific studios or personnel (i.e., engineers or producers). The label is also likely to hold the copyright to their original sound recordings (“the masters”), which produces revenue streams for the label and ensures them that no one else can sell the recordings in competition with their release. For newer or smaller independent labels, investing in a recording project in this way can be very risky; to do so may require motivations other than profit. Jana Herzen, the founder of Motéma Records, was motivated to start a record label once it became clear to her that the major labels had generally given up on signing and developing musicians:

But I also do have a commitment to working with upcoming musicians who have an incredible vision. I mean, I try to work with people with a very fierce

15 “The majors” consist of Universal Music Group, Sony Music Entertainment, and the Warner Music Group. Universal, the largest of the three, is also the most active within the market for new jazz. It owns the Verve Music Group, which consists of Verve, GRP, and the recently reorganized Impulse!, and it acquired Blue Note after its blockbuster purchase of most of EMI in 2012. Sony recently revitalized another classic label, OKeh, in 2013, within its Sony Masterworks division. Warner is the least active within new jazz space; most releases are attached to its subsidiary Nonesuch, and that label is not exclusively jazz.
individual vision and incredible artistry. They have to have a lot of drive, and they need to do a lot of the work themselves, because we’re small. We can’t do that much, but what we do is we help focus their efforts, focus their careers. (Moran, et al. 2014)

The risks can pay off, however, as Herzen discovered when singer Gregory Porter “took off,” selling records in the hundreds of thousands worldwide. Such artists may then leave for more other, perhaps bigger labels, but the boon can be reinvested in other musicians.

By and large, however, the demise of the “record deal” as the industry norm has resulted in the burden of funding production shifting almost entirely to the musician. The stresses of this burden are discussed below, but there have been countervailing changes in the music industry that have enabled musicians to continue producing records on their own. For starters, professional-quality recording tools are as accessible as ever. Many technologies of production and post-production that were once exclusive to professional studios can now be reproduced on home computers at a fraction of the cost, and many musicians are taking on the roles of producer and engineer themselves. They may also take on the roles of graphic designer, liner notes author, and still others, and many recruit family members or friends to donate services—photography, for instance—or provide them at a discount. Nevertheless, making a record is still expensive. Home production tools alone cannot replicate recording studios, which feature controlled acoustic environments, high quality microphones, and elaborate mixing consoles, and band members must be paid for their work. Ultimately, few bandleaders can pay for the costs of recording entirely out of pocket. Many do pay for at least part of their records from personal savings, but to cover the rest, musicians have turned to other sources of funding, such as grants, fellowships, or commissions and, most recently, crowdfunding campaigns.
The vicissitudes of New York’s economy have been unkind to live jazz in recent decades. Skyrocketing rents and zoning policies that favor land developers have forced many jazz clubs to close, downsize, or relocate, and the already modest number of musicians who could earn a comfortable living from performing live has plummeted. The financial crisis of 2008 added insult to injury, compelling those clubs that were not forced to close to change or diversify their programming, and causing restaurants and other venues that hired jazz musicians for entertainment to cut those expenses. Even musicians who are only relatively recent arrivals to New York notice dramatic changes. Aidan Carroll, who moved to New York in 2006, told me, “You don’t make any money playing gigs in the city. Not anymore. Unless you’re out every night playing a restaurant gig or a club. But that’s a tough life” (2015). Colin Stranahan told me that he does well enough to “pay the rent” by working “every night” as a sideman on recording sessions and live gigs in addition to leading his own band (2015). But even those musicians who earn enough from playing gigs in New York are likely to need to raise money from other sources to make records.

Touring also used to be a profitable venture for jazz musicians. For a few musicians, leading their ensembles on national and international tours can still be a lucrative enterprise. For most jazz musicians, however, including many reputable, experienced musicians, touring is much less profitable than it once was. The reasons for this change are many, but two major disruptions within the last couple of decades have had an adverse impact on touring. First, the financial crisis of 2008 devastated consumers and small businesses in cities and towns across the country. Audiences shrank, and some venues were forced to change their programming or close.

16 Carroll’s decision is partly a personal preference—that is, his other professional and personal commitments prevent him from playing jazz gigs every night.
completely, leaving musicians with smaller audiences, fewer tour stops, and even more meagre earnings. As Colin Stranahan described, “We really have to tour in order to make a living. So, we have to travel, and, you know, it’s tough out there. There are certain places right now where I play regularly that are not really bringing in a lot of people. They’re dealing with financial issues similar to what we dealt with [in 2008]” (2015). Second, and perhaps counterintuitively, the collapse of the market for recorded music means that musicians can no longer expect to sell their recordings on the road. Record sales once accounted for a significant percentage of total tour earnings. They were especially valuable because they had a higher profit margin than retail sales; shipping costs, for instance, were eliminated. Musicians may still make some money selling records on the road, but it is not nearly as gainful as it used to be: “We usually make a little bit, or we break even,” one musician told me. “We never really lose money on tour. We make a little from [selling] CDs [on tour], but it’s so much work that it’s hardly worth it.”

Nevertheless, many musicians still commit to busy touring schedules, treating them as career investments rather than as profit-makers. Following a model typically associated with rock music, jazz musicians cultivate a loyal fan base through extensive touring—to college campuses, small festivals, and other venues. As their profiles gradually grow, they find that they can book larger and larger venues to accommodate audience demand, and they may even notice an uptick in record sales, because their dedicated fans are willing to support them. Not all musicians are able to make this kind of sacrifice, however, depending on their other personal and professional obligations or goals, which may prevent them from leaving the city for much more than a month or so at a time. In a conversation with podcaster and drummer Dave Varriale, for example, Mark Guiliana discussed his hesitation to commit to lengthy touring schedules because they could adversely impact his commitment to his family (2013). For such musicians, it might
be more appealing to tour not as leaders but as sidemen with elite artists. Such tours typically require a more limited commitment—from a few weeks to a couple of months—and they pay well. Aidan Carroll toured with popular singers on short stints; he toured Europe with singer Melody Gardot and then the United States with singer Lisa Fischer, and he was able to put money he earned on these tours towards making his debut album (2015). In a recent feature about how jazz musicians in New York make their livings, The Village Voice reported that bassist Linda Oh invests the money she earns from high-profile tours—including a recent stint with Pat Metheny—directly back into her own projects (Agovino 2016a).

Many musicians have found lucrative work with non-jazz artists. Several of the musicians I interviewed for this project have toured with pop, hip-hop, R&B, or rock bands: Jesse Fischer plays with rapper LunchMoney Lewis, Sylvester Onyejiaka played with Prince and Taylor Swift, and Johnathan Blake played with Q-Tip and Japanese acid jazz star Monday Michiru. Other musicians whose work I followed during this project have had similar gigs: saxophonist Kamasi Washington toured with Snoop Dogg, saxophonist Lakecia Benjamin with Alecia Keyes, saxophonist Bob Reynolds with John Mayer, Allison Miller with Natalie Merchant, Mark de Clive-Lowe with Miguel, Robert Glasper with Maxwell, drummer Sput Searight (of Snarky Puppy) with Justin Timberlake and Kendrick Lamar, and saxophonist James Casey with Meghan Trainor and Trey Anastasio. Importantly, most musicians do not regard these kinds of gigs as “necessary evils” that they must suffer to fulfill their own creative desires, nor do they regard them as musically mundane. On the contrary, they find this kind of work both professionally and creatively fulfilling, and they treat it as an opportunity to learn new styles that they might then incorporate into their own music. Their willingness—eagerness, even—to
embrace this music is partially attributable to the tastes that they cultivated through the early listening habits described in the previous chapter.

Even if a musician can earn a comfortable living through some combination of these strategies, they must still often turn to other sources of funding to make records. Some rather promising sources as of late have been grants, fellowships, and other awards; a musician told me that such sources at the moment are the most lucrative “hustle” in jazz. There is great diversity among the kinds of awards musicians receive, differing by amount as well as restrictions on how the money can be spent. Not all awards can be earmarked for recording costs; some are awarded for composing an original work and presenting it live, and musicians are very careful to abide by the rules of their awards. Even so, awards that cover the costs of composing can free up other funds, which can then be put towards a recording; at a minimum, compositions funded by grants or commissions can be included on future recording projects. The Le Boeuf brothers have been successful grant recipients; Pascal won an Edward and Sally van Lier Arts Fellowship to contribute to the making of their album In Praise of Shadows (Nineteen-Eight, 2011), and Remy won a New Jazz Works grant from Chamber Music America to compose “A Dream,” which was eventually recorded for imaginist. Other jazz musicians have been successful recipients of grants from the Aaron Copland Fund, the Jerome Foundation, the Pew Center for Arts & Heritage, the ASCAP Foundation, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, and the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, among others.

17 “Hustle” is a colloquialism that, for some, has a negative connotation, implying a shady or illegal money-making scheme. In urban slang, the connotation is more ambiguous; someone with a successful hustle may be respected for their entrepreneurialism and tenacity, regardless of whether the scheme is illegal and especially if the person is perceived to have overcome substantial challenges. Jazz musicians have adopted its positive connotation, using the term to refer to a steadfast dedication to financial stability despite the dismal state of the music economy.
Many musicians also aspire to receive commissions from museums, festivals, or other arts presenters. Critic Nate Chinen recently observed that receiving commissions is now “standard practice” for musicians in “jazz’s upper echelons.” He attributes this shift to the increased willingness of jazz musicians to create interdisciplinary artworks that are more appealing to arts presenters, and he identifies Jason Moran as a trailblazer (2016b). The “Fats Waller Dance Party,” a collaboration with bassist Meshell Ndegeocello, was commissioned by Harlem Stage in 2011, and the two reimagined the project for the album *All Rise: A Joyful Elegy for Fats Waller* (Blue Note, 2014). In fact, musicians without the name recognition of Moran have been and continue to be eager to create such works. John Ellis, for example, collaborated with playwright Andy Bragen on *MOBRO*, a narrative chamber piece commissioned by The Jazz Gallery in 2011 and then recorded a few years later (*MOBRO*, Parade Light, 2014).

Jazz musicians’ successes in grant competitions and programs have touched off debates about the worthiness of winners, especially in the case of major awards like the MacArthur Fellows Program (the “genius” grant), the Doris Duke Performing Artist Award, and the Guggenheim Fellowship. An especially contentious debate arose when Vijay Iyer was awarded a MacArthur grant in 2013. Kurt Rosenwinkel took to Facebook and, in a widely circulated and controversial post, questioned Iyer’s credibility as a jazz musician (Hum 2013). Some musicians questioned not Iyer’s worthiness but rather the Program’s choice to honor Iyer before saxophonist Steve Coleman, whom many regard as Iyer’s progenitor. (The Program awarded Coleman a Fellowship the next year.) For his part, Iyer is sensitive to the perception that the $500,000 award is a king’s ransom for a jazz musician, but has pointed out that it is disbursed in increments over five years and is rather more like a salary than a lump-sum prize (Prasad and Iyer 2015). Even so, the apparent concentration of wealth at the top is a source of consternation.
for many musicians who are struggling to make ends meet, compounded by their feeling that the honor bestowed by one award may be treated as a qualification for others, narrowing the range of artists who ultimately receive them.

The most recent and likely fastest growing method of funding recordings is crowdfunding. Crowdfunding is a type of crowdsourcing whereby people contribute money to a “campaign” in exchange for benefits, sometimes called “perks.” Although crowdfunding is now commonplace across nearly every industry, its birth and development in music is in fact rather closely tied to jazz. In 2004, the Maria Schneider Orchestra released Concert in the Garden, the first album funded by fans through the platform ArtistShare. Founded by Schneider’s friend Brian Camelio in 2000, ArtistShare was one of the first crowdfunding platforms to come online, and the model garnered widespread interest when Schneider’s album won a Grammy Award. Since then, ArtistShare has been overtaken in popularity by platforms like Indiegogo, Kickstarter, and PledgeMusic, each offering a slightly different mechanism for crowdfunding.

Some jazz musicians launch crowdfunding campaigns after they have completed some initial stages of the project, such as recording basic tracks in the studio. They may need additional funds to cover post-production costs like mixing and mastering, graphic design, manufacturing CDs, or publicists. Others begin earlier in the process and try to raise all of the money they need, including for studio time and musicians’ fees, although they may or may not

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18 Johnathan Blake created an Indiegogo campaign to raise $8,500 to cover post-production costs of The Eleventh Hour. His campaign story reads in part, “I pretty much ran out of funds after I paid all the musicians. I still need to pay for the studio time and mixing, master the recording, have the jacket designed, and so forth. That’s where you’ll come in! Please help me get the music out of the vault and into your hands.” See “Jazz Drummer Johnathan Blake’s Debut CD.” Indiegogo. https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/jazz-drummer-johnathan-blake-s-debut-cd#/ (accessed September 1, 2017).
have already earmarked other funds to partially fund the project. At a minimum, they will already have composed most of the music to be recorded for the album, recruited the musicians and possibly a producer, reserved studio time, and perhaps even recorded a demo of one or two songs. Such initial steps are essential to making a compelling case to potential contributors that their money will be spent quickly and in clearly defined ways.

Once a musician has determined how much money he needs to raise, he chooses a platform to launch the campaign. Kickstarter campaigns must have a fixed funding goal, which means that if the goal is not reached in the allotted time (usually 30 days), contributors are not charged and the musician collects no money. Indiegogo, alternatively, offers “flexible funding” goals, which means that musicians will collect whatever money they raise, even if it falls short of the goal. PledgeMusic offers both fixed and flexible funding goals. While it may seem more advantageous to choose a flexible funding goal, musicians must be confident that they can fulfill all the perks promised to contributors even if they do not raise all the money that they hoped to. Since these perks are sometimes tied to the project itself (e.g., advanced copies of the recording), musicians who choose flexible funding generally plan to make the recording regardless of the outcome of the campaign, covering any shortfall in some other way or scaling back aspects of the project to meet their new budget.

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19 Aidan Carroll created an Indiegogo campaign to raise $6,000 to cover production and post-production costs of his debut album Original Vision. His campaign story reads in part, “RATHER than record this music and have to stop halfway through to ask for help (as most do), I am preparing for what lies ahead financially by asking now at the beginning of the process.” See “Aidan Carroll’s Debut Album.” Indiegogo. https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/aidan-carroll-s-debut-album#/ (accessed September 1, 2017).
The campaigns can be a lot of work for musicians. They must advertise them, whether at live performances, on social media, or by reaching out to family and friends. “You’re selling yourself in a way,” Johnathan Blake told me. “It’s like doing it from the grassroots. So, I was on the phone talking to people, just trying to get the word out about it” (2015). If a campaign is successful, musicians must then fulfill all the perks. Some are relatively easy to fulfill, such as advanced downloads of the recording, invitations to the recording session, or tickets to a live show. Others—autographing and mailing CDs, teaching private lessons, composing songs—can be time-consuming. If the turnaround time between the conclusion of a campaign and the fulfillment of perks is long, musicians often provide regular updates to contributors via email or video. Altogether, crowdfunding campaigns can be quite gainful, but they are not effortless. Before electing to crowdfund, musicians must be sure that fulfilling all potential obligations to contributors is a justifiable use of their time and energy. In general, if a musician is strategic with the kinds of perks that he or she offers, the total cost to the musician can be relatively little
compared to the benefits; if that is the case, crowdfunding may be preferable to drawing from personal savings or investing time and energy in a grant proposal.

There are benefits to crowdfunding that go beyond money needed for a specific project. Crowdfunding can give musicians the creative freedom they might not have if they were supported by a grant agency (or a record label, for that matter). About deciding to crowdfund a record, one musician told me:

I wanted to have a say in how I wanted it done: how I wanted it to look and how I wanted it to sound. I knew the only way to do that was to do it myself. Because when you get these record companies involved, a lot of times they have an idea of what they want: how the record should sound or how the record should look. And I didn’t want that. I wanted to have a say in how [it was] done. And I was very proud and very happy with the way it turned out.

Crowdfunding also allows musicians to cultivate relationships with their audiences. If Maria Schneider is to be believed, Camelio’s vision for ArtistShare was more about promoting this kind of artist–fan connection than it was about raising money:

His idea was that you not only crowd-fund [a project], but that you share much more than the record: You share the whole process of writing music and making a record. You let people into your world and really create relationships with your fans. If you’re not into fostering those relationships, if you’re just looking for cash for your project, it might not be right for you. But if you’re willing to share with your fans, it’s an amazing business model. (Quoted in Morrison 2016:31)

Johnathan Blake echoed these sentiments:
It was a beautiful thing because, when traveling like I do and performing in different venues, you meet people and these people become fans. A lot of times fans want to be involved as much as they can in the artist’s life. I felt like [crowdfunding] was a way to connect with a lot of the fans. I was getting donations from Europe, I was getting donations from Asia. I think it was a way to connect with these people even more. Because sometimes you don’t get to do that. You usually get to play the gig, leave, and you’re on to the next. So, a lot of times, the fans, they’ll see you and they don’t get a chance to interact with you.

But this was a way that they could really be involved. (2015)

John Ellis related to me a conversation he had with a fellow musician who argued that the model is about building up and investing in a fan base and not really about money at all (2015).

As a contributor to several crowdfunding campaigns myself, I can attest to the feeling of having a personal investment in a recording project. You feel good that you are helping a musician put out a record, especially if you think it might help him get the recognition that he deserves but has not yet gotten. When musicians are especially committed to apprising contributors of a project’s development, you get a window into their creative processes through email updates, video footage of the recording sessions, or even rough mixes of the recordings. In a unique case, saxophonist Dayna Stephens polled contributors for their opinions on which of three tunes to record for the album. 20 By cultivating intimate relationships with audience

20 See “Peace.” PledgeMusic. https://www.pledgemusic.com/projects/peace (accessed September 1, 2017). This particular campaign—which ultimately produced Peace (Sunnyside, 2014)—was also unique because the saxophonist was battling a rare kidney disease while he worked on the project. Several of the video updates he shared with contributors were filmed from his hospital bed, where he awaited an organ transplant. I felt an even stronger investment in the project due to my awareness of his perseverance over the course of the project.
members, crowdfunding can help musicians develop a larger or more loyal fan base, which can itself produce longer-term benefits to musicians.

Musicians do have reservations about crowdfunding; one flatly rejected it, calling it “gross” (though he did not begrudge other musicians who do it). They are concerned by the lack of transparency in some crowdfunding models. First, although some musicians itemize their expected costs in their campaign’s promotional materials, others do not, and, in any case, contributors may not have an easy way of ascertaining whether the fundraising goal matches the actual cost of recording. Second, although some crowdfunding platforms prohibit musicians from lowering their fundraising goal or extending the deadline in the middle of the campaign, at least one does not (one musician described this as “moving the goalposts”). This model may be misleading to supporters, who may participate with certain assumptions about the relative weight of their contribution that turn out to be unrealistic.

Another criticism is that crowdfunding is exploited by musicians who already have significant resources for funding an album, such as personal wealth, a record deal, a major grant, or at least the stature to obtain such funding. As one musician asked rhetorically, “Do you need the money. Or do you just think that you can get it?” Indeed, there was some skepticism within the jazz community about Miguel Zenón’s Kickstarter campaign to raise $20,000 to produce his multimedia album *Identities are Changeable* (self-release, 2014), in part due to the alto saxophonist’s relatively recent MacArthur Fellowship. In reality, the project was more ambitious than a typical album, and, in any case, the term of Zenón’s fellowship had ended the

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previous year; nevertheless, there was still the perception among some musicians that he did not need the money.

Skeptics also suggest that crowdfunding campaigns often exude self-importance. One musician told me that he never assumes he even has “fans,” and, if he does, he already feels indebted to them simply from their support as listeners. Another said that it is presumptuous to think that people are so eager for your album that they are willing to pay inflated prices for perks like a “thank you” video message, a 30-minute Skype lesson, or a dedicated composition. One musician was adamant that the jazz icons would never have crowdfunded; he imagined what it would have been like if John Coltrane had crowdfunded *A Love Supreme*: “At the $500 level, you get a lesson with Elvin!”

Finally, many musicians, including some who have done crowdfunding campaigns, are concerned about normalizing the model in the new music economy. New relationships between record labels and crowdfunding platforms, for instance, are a cause for both celebration and concern. Blue Note partnered with ArtistShare in 2013, advertising it as “an additional channel for Blue Note to help nurture and promote up-and-coming young jazz artists, while creating a platform that offers a unique opportunity for fans to become directly involved with the creation of new music by tomorrow’s jazz stars” (2013). There are several major benefits of such partnerships to the artist: the distribution tools (manufacturing, promotion, etc.) of an established record company, the prestige of the label, and, unlike other contracted musicians, the rights to their master recordings. The label, of course, adds an album to their catalog with practically zero production costs to them. But some musicians fear that the more successful these partnerships become, the fewer incentives the record labels will have to sign artists and invest in the production stages of their recordings, which are already rather low. As an alternative, these
musicians would like to see the music economy recover to the extent that labels can rebuild A&R (artists and repertoire) departments and become reliable sources of funding for their rosters of artists, taking the burden of raising money off the musicians.

A broader concern about the normalization of crowdfunding pertains to the broader relationship between arts and society. Advocates celebrate the model as a decentralized mode of production in which costs are distributed across a group of people. Crowdfunding is generally regarded as part of the “sharing economy,” which many see as a promising alternative to corporate control over various industries, including the arts. However, if crowdfunding disempowers some private corporations by empowering individuals, it also enriches others, not the least of whom are the owners of the crowdfunding platforms themselves. Further it lets public institutions off the hook. In an article for the leftist publication *Jacobin*, Miranda Campbell warns against adapting this model for the arts:

> When the problem of earning a living is presented as an individual story, it’s easy to dismiss it as the failing of the individual. Artists are expected to reinvent themselves, turn to crowdfunding, and hustle their way out of their predicaments. But we cannot crowdfund our way to broad public support for culture or to more sustainable approaches to cultural production. We need to move from narrating individual struggles to discussing community-wide challenges and collective solutions. (2015)

Campbell further suggests that charitable foundations should consider redirecting money away from individual artists towards community initiatives and public services, such as shared workspaces and affordable housing (ibid). Moving forward, jazz musicians might prefer to see
the MacArthur Foundation spend $500,000 by developing a performance space that features the work of many musicians rather than by providing a yearly salary to one.
CHAPTER 3. Making records: Producing jazz recordings

In this chapter, I discuss the production stages of making a jazz record, focusing again on the processes of recording an album from the perspective of a bandleader. These processes mostly take place “in the studio” as opposed to a live event space, although it will be clear that “studio” may refer to one of several places—sometimes up to three or four for a single project—in which recording technologies are used for some aspect of production. I begin by discussing factors that weigh into a musician’s decision about where and with whom—other than the band members—to record. I then discuss the process of tracking—what might be called the “actual recording”—when all or most of the recording’s featured musicians gather in a studio to record a basic set of tracks. Finally, I discuss post-production, which includes editing or otherwise manipulating those tracks, primarily through techniques of overdubbing, mixing, and mastering. In closing, I show how jazz musicians have adopted the practices and discourse of music “production” from genres like hip-hop, electronic music, and pop, in which the studio and its technologies are essential instruments of making jazz music as opposed to mere mechanisms of “capturing” performance.¹

Selecting a recording studio and recordists

Increased access to professional recording tools on personal computers has untethered many practices of recording music from professional studios. Musicians are sometimes able to

¹ In addition to interviews with musicians about their recording practices, my observations of the recording session for pianist Jesse Fischer’s album Day Dreamer constitute a major source of data for this chapter. The session took place on July 16, 2014 at Kaleidoscope Sound in Union City, NJ. Kyle Cassel engineered the tracking sessions, and Fischer produced, mixed, and mastered the album.
make “one-off” recordings entirely at home or to complete some post-production tasks (e.g., mixing) using Digital Audio Workstation (DAW) software on their personal computers. Even so, musicians still largely depend on access to professional recording studios for their major recording projects, including albums. For starters, even small professional studios generally have enough floor space to comfortably accommodate a jazz ensemble, allowing bands to track an album as a group. Additionally, studios are outfitted with top-of-the-line recording technologies that are still largely cost prohibitive to the home recordist, such as sound absorption, isolation booths, high-quality microphones, multitrack recorders, mixing consoles, and monitors.

As with the live music scene, the health of the studio ecosystem in New York is volatile. Skyrocketing rents in Manhattan have made it difficult for studio operators to afford the necessary space.2 Nevertheless, New York and the surrounding area is still home to many recording studios. Favorites among jazz musicians include Avatar and Sear Sound in Manhattan; Systems Two, Brooklyn Recording, and The Bunker in Brooklyn; Kaleidoscope Sound in Union City, New Jersey; and Dreamland and the Clubhouse in upstate New York (in Kingston and Rhinebeck, respectively). In addition to these mainstays, small studios continue to open, such as the Breeding Ground, operated by producer Tariq Khan and filmmaker Nikki Birch, which opened in 2011, and Electrik Indigo Sound, which pianist and producer Jesse Fischer opened in 2015. In general, musicians do not seem to have major problems getting reasonably priced access

2 The building that housed the legendary Avatar Studios (“The Power Station”) was put up for sale in 2016; while the owners intended to sell only to prospective buyers interested in keeping the studio open, many feared for its survival (Chaban 2015). Mere days before this dissertation was deposited, The New York Times reported that Berklee College of Music had purchased the building and would revamp the studio as both a commercial and educational space (Light 2017).
to studios. In fact, the reallocation of some recording tasks to musicians (or to other, dedicated studios) may have allowed recording studios to turn over clients more quickly.

Without the limitations traditionally attached to recording advances from record labels, most jazz musicians are free to choose their preferred studio. Timing and location are key considerations. Bandleaders often must schedule around their band members’ touring schedules or other professional obligations. While many bandleaders opt for the convenience of Manhattan or Brooklyn studios, some decide to record upstate, and they may approach the tracking sessions like a musical retreat away from the bustle of the city. The studio’s space is also a critical consideration, especially the characteristics of the “live room,” the large room where musicians play while tracking. Size is important, but so are shape, building materials, and layout, which together contribute to what musicians typically refer to as a room’s “sound.” Finally, the equipment—microphones, recorders, mixing consoles, etc.—might weigh heavily in a bandleader’s choice of studio. Most musicians trust that a reputable studio will have high quality gear, and its exact specifications are not a major concern, but not all studios are equipped for certain types of recording. Also, the studio may provide desirable in-house instruments, such as a superior grand piano or vintage synthesizers and drum sets.

Throughout the tracking session, bandleaders collaborate closely with the chief recording engineer and any assistants, who will set up the studio and operate the equipment during the session. Many studios have in-house engineers—some of them are owned by engineers—and they too may be a major reason why a bandleader chooses a studio in the first place. A chief

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3 Mike Marciano and Max Ross (Systems Two), Chris Allen (Sear Sound), John Davis (The Bunker), Andy Taub (Brooklyn Recording), and Bob Power, among others, have developed strong reputations as recording engineers for jazz recordings.
engineer may also be brought into a studio, hired as if they were another member of the ensemble. Some jazz labels still do arrange recording sessions with preferred studios and engineers, which can be convenient for bandleaders, but has on occasion created conflicts for those who dislike that particular studio or engineer’s work. A musician I spoke to told me that a certain label’s chief engineer has a reputation for carelessness when tracking, mixing, and mastering. Some musicians have intentionally avoided working with that label; that it remains popular among musicians is evidence that studio and engineer choice is just one among many factors that musicians weigh when making a record.

Alongside the bandleader and engineer, a producer may oversee and manage the tracking session, providing creative and logistical direction. Like engineers, producers may join a project through their affiliation with a record label. It is also common for musicians to bring in producers whose artistry they feel will enhance the project; these may be dedicated producers or other musicians, including those primarily working within non-jazz genres. Finally, many bandleaders produce their own albums, if not alone, then at least in collaboration with another, more experienced producer. This is likely due in part both to the rise of production costs to musicians and to the diversification of skill sets that they are bringing into the recording studio; their familiarity with recording technologies permits them to be their own liaison between the musicians and the engineers.

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4 Bruce Lundvall at Blue Note (and his successor Don Was), François Zalacain at Sunnyside, and Manfred Eicher at ECM are among label executives who also work as in-studio producers. 5 Matt Pierson is a highly sought after jazz record producer on the New York scene. Saxophonists Casey Benjamin and David Binney, trumpet player Christian Scott, and bassist Derrick Hodge are musicians who have worked as record producers for their colleagues. R&B bassist Meshell Ndegéocello and singer-songwriter Jesse Harris have produced jazz albums. Noted pop and rock producers Jon Brion and Tony Visconti have dipped their toes in jazz as well.
Most bandleaders will have decided ahead of time on what type of recording they want (or need) to do for a project and how they prefer musicians to be configured in relation to one another in the studio’s space. Some musicians prefer to approximate the configuration of a typical live performance, putting all musicians together in the live room. They feel that this setup is most conducive to good jazz because it allows the musicians both to see one another and to hear the “natural” sound of each instrument (as opposed to the sound of the instrument passing through a microphone, the mixing console, and a pair of headphones). Some musicians feel that recording together in the live room also produces a desirable “openness” on the recording that is more elusive when musicians are sequestered in isolation booths.6 Speaking about Gone, but not Forgotten, drummer Johnathan Blake told me:

I did . . . a concert setting. We were all in one room. You know, I like that, because you get the closeness. Sometimes when you have separation—everybody in a booth or whatever—it changes the sound of the record. It makes the drums seem a little more ‘boxy’ and stuff like that. I like the openness of a live concert. So, if I can get that kind of setting [when] recording, for me, it’s great. (2015)

Tariq Khan and Nikki Birch intentionally facilitated this kind of configuration when designing their space, “modeling the studio so that [they] could do live performances and capture [them] in studio quality” (Stabile, et al. 2016).

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6 Capturing openness can be a challenge in a recording studio even when all musicians are together in the large live room. Recording studios are often designed to absorb as much sound as possible, which prevents interference by reflected sound.
The preference to record in the live room often goes together with the desire to use two-track recording, a type of recording wherein the full band is recorded to only two tracks. Besides being logistically simpler (although not necessarily easier), some musicians believe two-track recording has a “vintage” quality that suits certain projects. Drummer Colin Stranahan explained his preference for using two-track recording for Limitless (Capri, 2013):

Colin Stranahan: What we like to do with recording, we like to be all in the same room, and if we can record it as acoustically as possible—like we’re playing a concert—then we try to record that way.

Dean Reynolds: So, no isolation booths or anything like that?

CS: Right, right. No. Depending on the music, again. But, this particular record we just played live and recorded to two-track, and it was great.

DR: What’s the reason you like to record in the room together like that?

CS: Um, it’s a musical thing. You’re able to communicate. It’s like playing in a concert. And, specifically that way of recording to two-track… Live to two-track has got this sort of vintage sound that I really like. (2015)

Importantly, recording this way mostly precludes both overdubbing and extensive mixing during post-production. These processes are discussed in detail below, but in brief, they include manipulations of existing audio tracks that require the ability to isolate individual instruments from the overall texture, which is not possible when recording to two-track with all instruments together in the same room. This places a substantial burden on both engineers and musicians.

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7 Two-track recording is distinct from stereophonic recording, for which only two microphones are used to record. During two-track recording, one or more microphones can be recorded to each track.
during the tracking session. The engineer must be precise with microphone placement and do much of the mixing (e.g., adjusting levels) while recording. Musicians must perform without the assurance that they will be able to correct errors; any substantial mistakes in performance would require re-recording the entire piece. This is why musicians often refer to two-track recording as “live to two-track.” Unsurprisingly, in addition to a preference for communication between members and vintage sound quality, many musicians and engineers favor this type of recording precisely for these limitations; they believe that the high level of risk encourages concentration in performance and recording.

Recording this way is also conducive to tracking in front of a studio audience, what is sometimes called “live in-studio” recording. Incorporating studio audiences comes even closer to reproducing the conditions of a club or theater gig. According to saxophonist Irwin Hall, recording with a studio audience “just changes the nature of [the recording]. It gives you more energy because you have more people to feed off of, which is awesome . . . It’s casual and you have energy, you’re getting fed energy, but it’s not a gig” (2014). Similarly, pianist James Francies told me that he plans to record his first album as a leader with a studio audience because he believes it enhances the “energy” of the session (2015). Musicians recording albums that derive from unique live performance experiences may have strong preferences for studio audiences; Esperanza Spalding’s Emily’s D + Evolution tour incorporated costumes, dance, and theater, and Spalding brought a small audience into the tracking sessions to capture as much as possible the atmosphere of those performances, even though the visual elements would not themselves be accessible on the recording (Lutz 2016:32). Recording with a studio audience as opposed to recording in front of an audience on a gig (i.e., making a traditional “live” record) allows musicians to retain all the acoustic and technological advantages of the studio. This
includes the ability to control extraneous noise; live in-studio recordings generally do not feature audience chatter or clinking glasses.\textsuperscript{8} 

A rather different type of recording is multitrack recording, wherein each instrument or small group of instruments is assigned to a separate track, usually necessitating that they record in isolation from one another.\textsuperscript{9} To isolate each instrument, most studios have one or more isolation booths, small rooms sectioned off from the live room by soundproof walls and glass. At the recording session for Jesse Fischer’s \textit{Day Dreamer}, for instance, the band set up with the acoustic bass player in an isolation booth, the drummer in another isolation booth, the horn players (varying from one to four at a time) in a third booth, and the vocalist or violinist in a fourth. The electric bass player and Fischer played in the live room, but the electric bass amplifier was also set up and miked in an isolation booth, so Fischer’s piano was essentially the only instrument recorded in the live room.

Multitracking with sound isolation has distinct advantages. Principally, it allows for manipulating the sounds of individual instruments or groups of instruments without affecting the others, such as by re-recording an entire part, correcting a flubbed note by “punching in” a short section of music during tracking, and adjusting levels and adding effects during post-production. Sound isolation also gives the musicians and engineers greater control over the initial recorded sound of each instrument. Microphone type and placement can significantly affect the quality of

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\textsuperscript{8} It is important to note that even recording to two-track or in front of a studio audience does not necessarily make a recording live. Some musicians expect a properly live studio recording to have also been recorded in “one take”—that is, each track is performed only once, in accordance with the norms of live performance.
\textsuperscript{9} Two-track recording is technically a type of multitrack recording, but musicians typically use “multitrack recording” or “multitracking” to refer to recording techniques using more than two tracks; two-track recording would be specifically designated as such.
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the recorded sound. Drummers, for example, can be particularly exacting—or, as Colin Stranahan described himself, “picky”—about microphones (2015). Johnathan Blake praised the engineer of Systems Two because he knows how to mic Blake’s unusual drum set-up (his drum heads and cymbals are parallel to the floor and in roughly the same horizontal plane, and he sits relatively high above them). For some instruments, multiple microphones or a combination of microphones and transducers (“pickups”) can be combined to capture a precise sound. At the *Day Dreamer* session, violinist Zach Brock recorded with both a microphone above the sound hole and a pickup on the bridge of his instrument; he and chief engineer Kyle Cassel worked together to find the optimal blend of the two sound signals.

With all the variables in setting up a recording studio and the number of people involved in a project, conflicts can arise. One moment of the *Day Dreamer* session illustrated how musicians, engineers, and producers negotiate competing preferences regarding studio set-up. While recording in an isolation booth, singer Sarah Elizabeth Charles was “overloading” her microphone, which means the audio signal was distorting, especially when she sang sibilant or plosive consonants. (“My S’s and P’s are crazy,” she quipped in self-deprecation. “They’re an engineer’s nightmare.”) Charles, Fischer, and Kassel considered several solutions to the problem, including having Charles stand further back from the microphone to reduce the input level, using signal compression to reduce the level of the signal from the microphone to the recorder, and even inducing her to sing at a lower volume by turning up the volume of her headphones. They also discussed changing the microphone entirely; Charles expressed her preference for a tube condenser microphone, generally thought to have a “warmer” sound than the solid state
condenser microphone that Fischer favored. Charles ultimately ceded to Fischer’s preference: “It’s your baby,” she told him. This exchange reveals that, though they work towards a common goal, each person involved in making a record has different priorities, which may lead to different opinions about the best recording techniques. Musicians may be concerned with how the choice and placement of microphone will affect their comfort while performing, while the bandleader and engineer may be thinking about how these decisions will determine the possibilities for post-production. Although they generally have the final say, bandleaders still welcome these negotiations, which can be productive and ultimately improve the recording; indeed, musicians choose collaborators precisely for their own personal artistry and vision.

Musicians do acknowledge drawbacks to multitrack recording with sound isolation. Isolation booths can obstruct the visual connections that musicians value in live performance. At the Day Dreamer session, the piano was centrally located in the live room to optimize Fischer’s own sightlines, but some of the band members were unavoidably out of his view during performance, requiring Fischer to spin around—sometimes while playing—to see and communicate visually with them. Some members of the band were simply unable to see at least one other musician. Some studios have compensated for poor sightlines by installing closed-circuit televisions in the isolation booths, but these are really only effective for broad gestures like hand cues; they cannot capture subtle gestures, let alone enable eye contact.

Sound isolation also requires musicians to wear headphones to hear the rest of the band. Many dislike the sound of headphones; they’re used to the sound of their instrument from the perspective of their own ears, and headphones replace it with the sound from the perspective of

10 The Neumann U 67 and U 87, respectively.
the microphone or pick-up. Likewise, how musicians hear the band when each instrument is passing through the mixing console and into the headphones differs substantially from how they hear it during live performance. Headphones can also cause technical disruptions to the recording session; they can be faulty or broken, and repairing or replacing them can waste precious time.\textsuperscript{11} Lastly, musicians may dislike the feel of the headphones; they can fit poorly, they may constrict a musician’s natural movement, or the cable may get in the way.

Headphones do have advantages. Most studios equip each isolation booth with small mixing consoles that allow musicians to control the level of each track in their headphone mix. Some musicians take the opportunity to balance the composite sound of a group in a way that they cannot when performing live, which may be advantageous for some pieces of music. Also, headphones greatly facilitate the use and recording of electronic instruments. Electric basses, electric guitars, and electronic synthesizers, for instance, can plug directly into the mixing console instead of using an amplifier and a microphone; this technique is arguably more faithful to the natural sound of the instrument as it eliminates an extra step of signal processing.\textsuperscript{12} Thus, headphones may be preferred even by musicians who record without sound isolation. Snarky Puppy is a paradigmatic example of this recording technique. The band sets up all in one room (either in a recording studio or another location outfitted as such), but all band members (and

\textsuperscript{11} One unusual problem is that medium-quality or faulty headphone cables can pick up nearby radio signals; at one point during the \textit{Day Dreamer} session, some musicians started to hear the faint sounds of a local Latin radio station; drummer Adam Jackson amusingly played a merengue beat along with the music.

\textsuperscript{12} “Hard” (hardware) synthesizers are those with dedicated hardware (i.e., all analog synths and digital synths with components external to the computer, e.g., a keyboard). By contrast, “soft” (software) synths are computer programs that run entirely off the computer; some are simulations of vintage hard synths.
studio audience members) wear headphones to hear the full instrumentation, which typically includes many different electronic instruments.\textsuperscript{13}

The tension between a musician’s performance habits and the necessity of headphones to some types of recording was captured on Snarky Puppy’s recording of “Outlier” from \textit{We Like It Here} (Ropeadope, 2014).\textsuperscript{14} During his solo, tenor saxophonist Bob Reynolds rocked forward and backward with increasing intensity. At one point, he leaned so far forward while drawing a breath that his headphones slid over his ears and onto the neck of his horn. Reynolds quickly tried to put them back on before reentering, clearly altering his melody to accommodate the unanticipated, prolonged pause. In his haste, however, he did not secure the headphones in place, causing the trumpet player to lean over and reposition them for him as he played. The whole sequence elicited smirks from the simultaneously amused and impressed band and audience members. Regardless of personal feelings about headphones, jazz musicians today recognize that playing with them is an important skill to learn. Speaking to a group of students, veteran bassist Larry Grenadier encouraged them to practice playing with headphones; “that’s a whole different animal,” he warned (Hum, et al. 2014).

It is often assumed that sound isolation and headphones invariably produce lesser performances by impinging on the openness and communication between musicians; this is especially true of jazz, which relies fundamentally on these dynamics. For some musicians, the

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\textsuperscript{13} See Williams (2012) for further discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of recording with headphones and in isolation booths.
\textsuperscript{14} “Snarky Puppy - Outlier (We Like It Here).” groundUPmusicNYC. Published March 17, 2014. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Qo1NFwMhBA.
best recording conditions are those that make them feel that they are actually doing a live performance. As pianist Aaron Goldberg described:

The challenge of being in the recording studio is partly that you have to do this thing during the day that you usually do at night \([\text{laughs}]\) . . . To be at your best at ten in the morning is much more challenging than being your best at ten at night.

Certain things can make it easier: working out in the morning before you go to the studio, playing with your friends—that obviously makes it easier—playing in a studio that’s comfortable, on an instrument, a piano that you feel comfortable with. It makes it much, much easier. But the ideal state in the recording studio is not to be aware that you’re recording, to have it feel exactly like either a rehearsal or, ideally, a concert. But it’s almost impossible without a studio audience, to recreate the atmosphere of a concert . . . It’s very difficult the first hour or two in the studio, and then what inevitably happens if you stay long enough in the studio is you just settle into it and you forget what you’re doing and you just concentrate on the music and the music comes out, just like in a good conversation. (Rentner, et al. 2015)

Even so, many musicians feel extremely comfortable recording under multitracking conditions, perhaps as comfortable as they are recording in a live room without headphones or playing live in a nightclub. Many musicians have developed these skills not only through recording jazz, but, as noted in Chapter 3, also through extensive work as session musicians in non-jazz contexts like hip-hop, R&B, and pop, in which multitrack recording with sound isolation is standard. As participants in various recorded music cultures, musicians have adapted to the conditions of the
recording studio and found ways not only to overcome the challenges but also to take advantage of the opportunities.

**Tracking**

Conventionally, tracking comprises the bulk of the “actual recording”—that is, the process of “capturing” musical performances on a set of tracks, which are then subjected to processes of post-production, namely, mixing and mastering. For jazz recordings, most tracking sessions unfold over the course of two to four days; they may be back-to-back or spaced out over the course of several weeks if not months. Some projects are tracked under stricter time constraints—perhaps entirely in one day, as was the case for Jesse Fischer’s *Day Dreamer*. In rarer cases, musicians spend a week or more in the studio. In a recent and rather extreme example, a collective of young Los Angeles musicians rented a recording studio for a month in late 2011 and tracked upwards of 200 different pieces; saxophonist Kamasi Washington’s three-disc album *The Epic* (Brainfeeder, 2015) was the first product of these sessions, and several more albums are due to be released under the names of his collaborators.\(^\text{15}\)

Whether musicians have one day or one month in the studio, the most consequential aspect of a tracking session is not the allotted time but rather the “vibe” of the session. In jazz, an event’s vibe is its atmosphere or energy, a feeling shared among participants that enables or inhibits social and musical interactions, and, in turn, can be enhanced or degraded by good performances. In live performance, the attitude and behavior of the audience can greatly impact

\(^{15}\) These sessions seem akin to the famous week-long BYG sessions in Paris in 1969, which produced a spate of acclaimed avant-garde albums by Andrew Cyrille, Grachan Moncur III, Archie Shepp, Dave Burrell, Jimmy Lyons, Sunny Murray, and the Art Ensemble of Chicago.
the vibe; in the studio, the vibe is mostly produced through the social interactions of the musicians and the level at which they perform. For some musicians, the conditions of the studio—playing in isolation booths, for instance—make it more difficult to create a good vibe, but, as noted above, many acclimate to these conditions quickly and easily.

Thus, a primary goal for a tracking session is to “get a vibe” on the music as quickly as possible. Johnathan Blake’s descriptions to me of three recording experiences are instructive.

About a recent tracking session with pianist Kenny Barron’s trio, he noted:

> We finally did a trio record. I’ve been with him almost like ten years now. So, the working trio has finally recorded a record, which was great . . . Kenny’s just so relaxed. It’s like, “Alright, let’s just play.” We did one quick rehearsal, maybe like an hour and a half or two hours the day before the session, and we knocked out like 19 tunes in two days . . . I have to say that was probably one of the most chilled sessions I’ve ever done in my life. It was just like, “Alright, let’s do a take.” “Okay, cool.” (Blake 2015)

He also described the vibe during tracking sessions with trumpet player Tom Harrell’s quintet:

> The last record, it was wild . . . We get to the studio and it’s all new material . . . He said he really wanted to challenge the band and see if we could get, you know, our vibe with brand new music. And honestly, it was a great experience. There might have been one or two tunes that we played before, but the rest was stuff we had never seen. And we were just getting a vibe on it in the studio. “Let’s get in here and see how this works,” and it was great. It was a great experience. (Ibid)

Finally, Blake described a similar experience with organist Dr. Lonnie Smith’s band:
It was music that he had just written. We did a couple older tunes, but [it was] the same thing [as with the Harrell session]. We were trying to get a vibe on it in the studio. So, we would try it, and he’d say, “I don’t know if I like this, but let’s try this” . . . We were really just in the studio playing some of these tunes for the first time and really trying to get a vibe on them: trying to find the right groove, trying to find the right tempo. But it was still smooth. You didn’t feel any kind of…

There was no pressure, you know what I mean? It just seemed very relaxed in the studio. (Ibid)

Blake’s experiences represent three different scenarios: a working band playing familiar music; a working band playing unfamiliar music; and a newly configured band playing unfamiliar music. While the latter scenario may seem less conducive to quickly establishing a good vibe, this is not necessarily the case. Jazz musicians have always been prodigious at adapting quickly to new music and new ensembles, and experienced musicians generally do not find unfamiliarity with either music or musicians to be an impediment to creating a good vibe. On the contrary, the novelty of an ensemble or the newness of a composition can itself significantly enhance the vibe.

Other than making the tracking session conducive to strong, interactive performances, a good vibe facilitates the bandleader’s ability to work with his collaborators on compositions and arrangements. Indeed, bandleaders often choose musicians and producers precisely because they value their artistry and expect them to contribute ideas for composition and arrangement during

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16 Blake had been touring with Dr. Lonnie Smith’s core trio (with guitarist Jonathan Kreisberg) prior to the recording sessions, but the various ensemble configurations in the studio—featuring changing combinations of trumpets, saxophone, piano, and a second drummer—were new.
the tracking session. Drummer Kendrick Scott described this process with respect to tracking sessions for *We Are the Drum*, beginning with its title track:

I bought [*sic*] in the seed, the chant “we are the drum,” and then we kind of built everything from that . . . We just kind of sat in the studio and built it. It was a crazy session. It seems like that’s what recording used to be, and it seems like that only happens when you have a huge budget now. When you can go in the studio and you can just sit there and say, “Man, let’s make something.” Usually jazz recordings are: you come in with the music, — you’ve got what, eight hours? You say, “Ok, let’s play this tune, let’s play this tune, and let’s play this tune.” Then you record it and you leave, you know? This was a session where I bought [*sic*] in little small seeds of ideas and said “OK, let’s work this out.” And again, that tells you the trust that I have in those guys that we could come up with something, because I wanted to make this record not about just my music and what I do. Not only did I write with the guys, but I included their music too . . . You want to engage the other people in the band. Not only in their playing, but in their thinking, their composing, and their humanity. It adds to yours because you never know what’s going to come out. That collective creativity is something that I crave now. (Wrenn and Scott 2015)

These collaborations extend to the producer, who can be instrumental in keeping the musicians focused and pushing them to develop ideas:

When we all kind of got stuck in the collective composition process, [producer Derrick Hodge] would push us in one direction. He would just say, “Check this out.” Like, in “We Are The Drum,” he brought in a little section and was just like,
“What would it sound like if we did this?” Then he’d sit down and play something, then that spurred everybody else’s creativity, and everybody else said, “Oh ok, let’s go.” (Ibid)

Even bandleaders who enter the studio with quite detailed compositions and arrangements rely on the contributions of their collaborators. Bassist Aidan Carroll described the importance of striking a balance between his own plans and expectations and the new ideas presented by band members during the tracking sessions for his debut album:

That’s the thing about this record and these musicians. I trust them and I knew that they would play at a certain level in a certain way with these tunes. So, you have to just trust the process, just let people do what they do. That’s the really hard thing about band leading . . . That fine line is [between] saying too much and not saying anything, you know, kind of the Miles [Davis] way of not really giving any direction, just letting the guys do their thing. I think that’s part of [a successful tracking session], too: having the tunes and getting them down as best you can, and the rest you leave up to the musicians. That’s what we do as improvisers. (2015)

Similarly, saxophonist Walter Smith III learned to nurture this balance during the recording process of his album *Still Casual*:

I had 100% of [the album] planned out. I think that whenever you’re the one bringing it, whether you admit to it or not, you have an ideal on some level of how you want everything to be. I think the way you make it successful is if you’re open to whatever comes up. If we start playing something and it’s not working, or it’s not going the direction I want, I’m not going to stop and say “You know what,
can we just do it this way?” If someone has an idea, I’m not going to not try it. I think that’s another part of playing with people you really know well; I don’t think anyone thinks twice about saying whatever’s on their mind. There [sic] not worried about hurting someone’s feelings or how someone will react. It’s just like, “Dude, I don’t really like what you’re doing there.” “Oh! That’s cool, I won’t do it.” It’s not like you say something and then someone gets depressed and then for the rest of the time they don’t really play. It would actually be hard for me to say what percentage I went into it with and how much it stayed true to that. A lot of little things are said at a moment where something’s not working. Maybe Taylor [Eigsti] will say, “You know what, why don’t we not repeat that.” Then it’s like “Yes, that will fix it.” Then we move on, and it is what it is. A lot of that stuff happens. Or even little stuff, like I know Matt [Stevens] made some suggestions like “This chord seems weird here, can we leave it out?” So we would sit there and make it function. I’d say everybody had a 50/50 say versus what I brought in at some point. (Naser and Smith 2014)

Carroll and Smith both entered the studio with highly developed expectations about how their tracking sessions would unfold, but both learned to open spaces to allow their collaborators to contribute to composition and arrangement.

When it comes to actually recording the music (“putting it to tape,” literally or figuratively speaking), recording sessions generally proceed by recording a sequence of “takes” with intermittent short rehearsals and breaks. A take is generally thought of as a start-to-finish recording of a piece of music, tracked with the expectation that it could be included on the album. It is tempting to assume that bandleaders prefer to do as many takes as they can in their
allotted studio time. However, many musicians believe that some desirable qualities of their performances will diminish with repetition; thus, they often deliberately limit the number of takes they do for each piece, even if none was note-perfect. As Johnathan Blake described the tracking sessions with Tom Harrell:

> In the studio, [Harrell] doesn’t like to do too many takes. You know, we almost set it up as if we’re doing a live concert. We have a set list, basically. We have tunes written out that he wants to do. And we don’t do too many takes. I think he feels that it kind of loses the honesty and the freshness of it if you’re doing too many takes. And plus, you know, chops, too . . . It’s hard to keep up the chops if you’re doing take after take. (2015)

Another one of Blake’s collaborators, Dr. Lonnie Smith, spoke more abstractly about the same approach for his album *Evolution* (Blue Note, 2016): “When we hit it, we played it down once, and that was it. We didn’t waste time in the studio at all. I just like to play it down, and that’s the way it is. When you try to make it perfect, it’s not real. I want to keep it real” (Charity and Smith 2016). Doing multiple takes also runs the risk of trying to meet the standards of a previous or idealized performance. As Larry Grenadier and drummer Jeff Ballard saw this issue:

> Grenadier: I’m really a fan of first takes. After the first take, you always have the memory, the residue, of the first take. And you’re trying to recreate aspects of it. Which is not necessarily a negative thing.

> Ballard: If you’re worried about it, it is. (Hum, et al. 2014)
Drummer Chuck Staab likened this experience to “chasing the dragon,” a metaphor for the pursuit of an ideal experience that cannot be recreated. In short, many musicians value the freshness of first takes, even if—with in reason, of course—the performances are not flawless. Indeed, many believe that such flaws make a recording more honest and “real.”

Even so, bandleaders often find cause to do multiple takes of each piece of music. Recording multiple takes allows the musicians some time to get acclimated to the studio without wasting time on unrecorded and thus unusable rehearsals. As Aidan Carroll attested: “The studio . . . always feels different. I just spent three days . . . recording, documenting everything we’re doing live. Man, did it feel different in the studio after doing it live” (2015). Repeated takes also afford the engineer opportunities to adjust the recording equipment, such as microphone choice and placement. Also, while many musicians will trade a mistake or two for the benefits of a “fresh” first take, they still understand that the permanence and repeatability of recorded music can make mediocre performances or small mistakes significantly more consequential, especially with respect to professional advancement. “The thing about the studio is it’s a microscope,” Carroll told me. “That room for error and whatever weird musical decisions you might make... All that comes off in a different way on recording” (2015). Doing multiple takes allows musicians the chance to correct (or avoid) problems with previous takes, but it also

17 This metaphor typically refers to a drug addict’s futile attempts to recreate the experience of the first high.
18 Acclimating quickly to the studio is increasingly seen as an acquired skill. New School instructor and bassist Alexis Cuardado organized a “Jazz Hackathon,” challenging a group of student musicians to compose and record an original song within seven hours. (A “hackathon”—a portmanteau combining “hack” and “marathon”—is an event in which a group of people meet to collaborate on large-scale computer programming projects over the course of several hours if not days.) The 2014 experiment simulated the “pressure-cooker environment” of “a real-life professional recording session and its demands for a lightning fast turnaround” ("Hacking Into Creative Potential, Jazz Students Produce New Song in Seven Hours")
alleviates some of the pressure of playing flawlessly the first time around, which can discourage experimentation. Instead, it encourages musicians to take risks while improvising, as they understand that they will have another chance if a particular choice turns out to be a bad one.

As discussed in Chapter 2, bandleaders may enter the studio with either embryonic compositions that need to be collectively composed and arranged or fully developed compositions, such as “through-composed” instrumental pieces or songs that are built upon sophisticated metrical or tonal structures. In the former case, doing multiple takes allows the musicians to work through different ideas, developing promising ones and trying alternatives to unsuccessful ones. In the latter, it allows the musicians to home in on difficult passages and perfect fine details. As drummer Mark Guiliana characterized one of the pieces on *A Form of Truth* (self-release, 2013), “‘Public Interest’ was actually fairly through-composed in advance, so that was just a matter of getting the best take and the best performance that captured the composition” (quoted in Johnson 2013). The need for repeated takes of complicated compositions is captured in Michael Agovino’s report on the tracking sessions for bassist Linda May Han Oh’s album:

Back at the Brooklyn Recording Studio, it’s been a long, enervating day, and as the afternoon turns into night, you can feel the energy lagging. But Oh, the bassist, the engine of the band – and today, the leader – drives the session forward. They’re on the fourth take of an Oh original. It’s a difficult piece in two parts, with shifting time signatures and a mournful opening, with Wendel’s tenor sax and Stevens’s guitar in conversation with each other, followed by a gathering intensity in the second part of the diptych. In the previous three takes, Oh had stopped the players before they embarked on part two, but this time they've finally
reached that kind of musical telepathy that I'm jealous of, and Oh signals them to continue. (2016a)

Regardless of the nature of the compositions and arrangements, multiple takes can help musicians achieve the goal of creating a mature performance of a piece of music in accordance with the expectations of the bandleader and the satisfaction of all musicians.

Ultimately, deciding how many takes to do for each piece of music is a balancing act; musicians try to limit the number of takes to that which best balances freshness and precision in performance, or which, according to Aidan Carroll, produces “the combination of enough of a vibe of that ‘live’ feeling, but also [the feeling that we] played the tune well enough that it didn’t sound sloppy” (2015). I watched bandleader and producer Jesse Fischer negotiate this balance with his bandmates during the Day Dreamer tracking sessions. On one piece, “Suite for the Blue Planet,” Fischer and the band rehearsed a few key sections and then recorded three takes, each apparently more satisfying than the previous. Fischer then requested a fourth take, asking the horn players to arrange some background figures to play at the end of his piano solo. At this point, some musicians demurred, suggesting that they would be unlikely to recapture the “energy” or the “fire” of the early takes if they played another one. Still, they recorded the fourth take. When the band assembled in the control room to listen back to the music, they discussed which of the four sounded the best. Some preferred the third take, but Fischer and a couple others preferred the fourth; musicians in both camps justified their opinions based on their own preferred balance between freshness and precision.

As with negotiations over studio set-up, negotiations over the number of takes between recording personnel is usually friendly and constructive, as it was in the case of “Suite for the Blue Planet.” Sometimes, however, young musicians can frustrate older, more experienced
musicians in their determination to track “perfect” performances. One musician I spoke to reflected honestly on the tracking sessions for his first album as a leader. He reported doing “a million takes” of one piece, which irritated some of the older and more experienced members of his band; he told me that he has since come to weigh the freshness of first or early takes more heavily in his recording processes, even if they are imperfect. Indeed, many musicians regard restraint in recording as a sign of musical maturity. This is clear from the experiences of Johnathan Blake discussed above, as Kenny Barron, Tom Harrell, and Dr. Lonnie Smith are all seasoned veterans, to put it mildly.

Once one or more promising takes have been tracked, the producer or bandleader may decide to overdub, a technique of tracking new performances on existing or additional tracks while some or all the initial tracks play back. During the tracking sessions, an especially common type of overdubbing is known as “dropping in” or “punching in.” Musicians use punch-ins to correct errors (e.g., missed entrances, flubbed notes) on an existing track. This can be a challenging procedure for analog recording, but for digital recording, it is usually quite simple for the engineer to isolate the section of the track that needs replacing. At the Day Dreamer sessions, the three-part horn section was dissatisfied with their group phrasing during a short section of a piece. The band otherwise liked the take, so the horns rehearsed the section a few times to agree on phrasing, and then punched it in, preserving the rest of the take. Punch-ins can be used by individual musicians if they are isolated to their own track. Thus, one of the distinct advantages of multitrack recording with extensive sound isolation is that it gives the bandleader maximum latitude to correct mistakes without having to scrap an entire take.

On some occasions, the entire ensemble does not perform a section of a piece up to the bandleader’s liking; perhaps they did not play a passage with enough dynamic range. Some
bandleaders might opt to do another take, but, again, if they feel that the original take was exceptional in some way—perhaps someone played an inspired solo—they might ask the whole ensemble to punch in that section. A unique challenge in this case is that there are no initial tracks to play back in the headphones as they are recording because they are all being discarded. This means that the band must internalize the tempo from the section before the punch-in and match it when they enter.\textsuperscript{19} At the Day Dreamer sessions, the entire ensemble punched in the closing section of “Heading Home.” The engineer set the recorder to begin overdubbing at a precise time code and then began playback from a few seconds before it; the band internalized the tempo as the music played and then entered seamlessly as the recording started.

One way in which jazz of today differs rather substantially from its predecessors is that bandleaders today embrace overdubbing not only as a corrective but as an essential component of the recording process. The option to overdub can incentivize a bandleader to compose or arrange music featuring the same band member playing multiple, simultaneous parts. For example, one musician might be hired to record on tenor saxophone with the group and then overdub a soprano saxophone part immediately afterwards. Musicians may develop ideas for such arrangements during the tracking session; a producer may ask the keyboardist, who played piano during the initial takes, to then overdub a Fender Rhodes part, doubling the flute melody and comping underneath the trumpet solo (or his own piano solo, for that matter). In another common case, a bandleader may know that he cannot get all musicians together during the initial tracking sessions due to either time or space limitations and therefore may rely on a second

\textsuperscript{19} In some cases, especially in pop-oriented jazz, the band (or perhaps just the drummer) tracks with a “click,” a metronome track played in the headphones. In those cases, punching in full ensemble sections can be relatively easy, because the click can be played during the punch-in.
tracking session to overdub fundamental parts; guitarist Chris Parrello, for instance, did not
attend the initial tracking sessions for *Day Dreamer*, but later overdubbed guitar parts on two
pieces. Bandleaders may even compose new parts around the basic tracks, which are then
themselves tracked at one or more additional sessions. Kamasi Washington composed and
recorded string orchestra and choir parts around the material he tracked with his band during the
2011 sessions mentioned above. In fact, these approaches to overdubbing blur easy distinctions
between “tracking” and “post-production,” since they may not even occur to musicians until after
the initial tracking sessions. In the concluding section of this chapter, I argue that they may be
more properly thought of as techniques of “production” in the sense of the term associated with
other recorded music genres like hip-hop, electronic music, and pop.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tracking session</th>
<th>Overdubbing session</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>After take</strong></td>
<td><strong>After overdub</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A B C D E</td>
<td>A B C D' E</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>D' replaces D (&quot;punching in&quot;)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>A B C D E</td>
<td>A B C D E F G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>F and G played by musicians who played D and E</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A B C D E</td>
<td>A B C D E F G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>F and G played by musicians who missed tracking</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A B C D E</td>
<td>A B C D E F G H I J</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>F–J newly composed based on A–E</em></td>
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*Figure 2. Some processes of overdubbing (letters represent individual tracks)*
Post-production

The next stages in the recording process are mixing and mastering. Mixing is essentially the practice of combining multiple tracks into one, but it also usually involves some degree of manipulation of the audio signals of the constituent tracks before they are combined. Sometimes, the recording engineer also does the mixing, but it is more common for bandleaders to employ a separate mixing engineer, who likely has a dedicated studio featuring more specialized equipment (e.g., specialized playback monitors). Mixing engineers might work independently of the bandleader to some degree—many are hired not only for their technical skill but also for their artistic ear—but it is quite common for bandleaders (and producers) to join at least one mixing session, especially at the beginning of the process. At a minimum, if there are multiple takes of each piece of music, the bandleader works with the mixing engineer to determine which is (or are) likely to produce the best album track.

For some recordings, the mixing process is relatively simple. This is usually the case for live to two-track recording; because instruments recorded to the same track cannot be manipulated independently of one another, their levels and other characteristics are basically set as they were recorded during tracking. For multitrack recordings, a battery of basic mixing tools is used to fine tune each track and to create a desirable balance between them. Faders are typically used to bring levels up and down in the mix, such as when a bandleader decides to end a piece with a fadeout. Compressors are generally used to raise or lower the level of any track that surpasses a predetermined threshold; an engineer might want to attenuate the maximum loudness of cymbal crashes if they are overwhelming other instruments. Equalizers divide a track into separate frequency ranges, each of which can then be independently amplified or attenuated; a producer can boost the bass frequencies of a saxophone track to give it a rounder timbre. The
engineer might also use some very basic *effects*, such as *reverb*, which adds “ambience” or “depth” to a track.

It is during the mixing process that musicians and producers work extensively with the mixing engineer to craft the “sound” of the record. In my conversations with musicians, the idea of a record’s “sound” came up repeatedly, and musicians frequently identified it as figuring centrally in their appreciation of recorded music. For some, it was even on par with the quality of the performances, including featured improvised solos. As Irwin Hall related to me:

> When you record an album, you spend a lot of time with the engineers in the mixing room tweaking sounds. “I need the low end on this part,” “I need the high end on this part,” . . . “I need this kind of reverb on the singers,” “You gotta take this reverb off the saxophone player.” You know, those kinds of considerations are considerations that can be had in a recording, that are harder to do in a lot of settings to the same degree. Every musician that I know that’s recording music—or recording music that I like to listen to—pays a lot of attention to that. I’m a big stickler for that. I think even amongst the people I work with, I’m always like, “Sound sound sound sound sound sound.” It *has* to sound good. It can’t just be, like, “Oh, you played all these cool notes,” or, “Oh, you sang all these cool riffs,” or “The words were so great.” I mean, that’s all fine and dandy, and that’s also extremely important, but also extremely important is the quality of the sound. Does it give me that… Does it hit me in the heart? Does it hit me in the chest? Does it have that hump to it? Does it have that bump? Playing with those aspects of recording is equally if not more important than what you’re actually recording. Because, the layman connects with that more than anything else on
subconscious level . . . So if you’re able to tap into that, then I think you’re hitting something. (2014)

Musicians can be very particular about crafting the sound of the record; it is not uncommon for them to talk about striving to get their recordings to “sound right” during the mixing stage. Pianist Aaron Parks told a journalist in August 2015 that he was “still in the process of mixing [the recording] and trying to get it right” (Fishman and Parks 2015). This process can become incredibly time- and labor-intensive and, depending on who is doing the mixing, expensive. “I just wanted the music to come out how I heard it, to just get everything to sound right,” Aidan Carroll told me. “We spent so many hours mixing. I spent so much money. I came back… You know, I looked through my calendar to see how many times I came back and paid Mike [Perez-Cisneros], the engineer. It’s spread throughout the whole year, 2014” (2015). Several musicians told me that trumpet player Christian Scott is particularly fastidious about sound, spending a year mixing Christian aTunde Adjuah (Concord, 2012).  

Musicians rely on engineers and producers for both their technical expertise and their artistry during mixing. Carroll credited Perez-Cisneros and his assistant Simon Solvang for shaping the sound of Original Vision (2015). Kendrick Scott emphasized the indelible contributions of his producer Derrick Hodge during both the tracking and mixing processes of We Are the Drum:

20 Scott implied his sensitivity to the craft of making a record when discussing his work on Sarah Elizabeth Charles’s Inner Dialogue: “Even though the musicians are great and the bands are great, a lot of times you end up in situations where you realize you have to hone your craft and be really diligent in terms of the amount of work you put in to building a record, and that it is a completely different mode of operating than when you’re building a band or just trying to get your music out there. To be able to make a really good record is a very difficult thing to do” (Naser, et al. 2015).
We spend most of the time in the studio trying to get the music to feel right. You can play the music and it can be ok, but if you don’t hear that sound – if the kick drum isn’t punchy enough, if the bass isn’t punchy enough, if the piano doesn’t have enough air, if the saxophone doesn’t have enough breath in it, and the guitar doesn’t have the punch – then you’re not gonna feel it the right way. So me and Derrick spend a lot of time trying to get the sounds right so the music can be felt a certain way. It’s almost immeasurable, his contribution. (Wrenn and Scott 2015)

During mixing, producers, engineers, and bandleaders use high quality studio monitors, but they also may simulate the consumer’s experience of listening. That could mean listening to the music not only with studio monitors, but with earphones and perhaps even in a car, trying to optimize the master for all possible listening contexts. This occasions yet another opportunity for the bandleader to strike a balance, this time between his or her own preference for the sound of the recording and what they imagine would be most satisfying to the everyday listener.

Musicians, producers, and engineers sometimes look to models of sounds that they imagine will suit their projects. Sometimes, this entails emulating a live sound, even if they did not track the album live and did make extensive use of overdubbing. Because many recording studios—and virtually all isolation booths—are “dead” spaces, where there is little to no reverberation, engineers often apply some light reverb to the mix to fabricate the “open” sound of a club or theater. Alternatively, many look to emulating the sound of notable albums or labels. In producing harpist Brandee Younger’s recordings, saxophonist Casey Benjamin aspired to

21 This strategy is used in many genres of music, perhaps most famously in G-Funk productions, which were sometimes called “jeep beats” due to Dr. Dre’s habit of mixing music to suit car audio systems.
capture the sound of CTI records from the 1970s, which, as noted in Chapter 1, is iconic for many musicians. Other musicians, like trumpeter Mathias Eick, aspire to the “sound ideal” of ECM albums (Conrad 2008).

The mixing engineer may also master the record, but some artists hire yet another dedicated engineer. The tools of the mastering engineer are essentially the same as those of the mixing engineer, but the mastering engineer focuses on creating or maintaining consistency across the entire album. He will also work with the bandleader and producer to finalize the sequence of tracks. In many cases, musicians already have a plan for sequencing; it may be dictated by the compositions or by the bandleader’s overall album concept. Bassist Meshell Ndegeocello, for instance, said that she sequenced the tracks for *All Rise: A Joyful Elegy for Fats Waller* “so that it progressed like a jazz funeral” (Russonello 2014). Other times, the bandleader and producer might negotiate the order. According to Vijay Iyer, he and ECM Records producer Manfred Eicher “went back and forth for months” about the sequence for *Break Stuff* (2015) (Prasad and Iyer 2015). Finally, the engineer will prepare the recording for duplication, depending on the media formats in which the album will be released. For compact disc releases, for example, track start and end points are encoded and, if necessary, silence is inserted between tracks. The completed recording is then converted to a “master” medium (e.g., CD-ROM, tape) for mass production, again, depending on the intended end-user formats.

It is often the case that some of the music recorded during the tracking session and perhaps even mixed will not make the final album. There are several reasons why a bandleader may decide not to release certain recordings. They may not be happy with any of the takes, or

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22 Benjamin produced Younger’s album *Wax & Wane* and the single “Dorothy Jean,” which was released on the *Supreme Sonacy, Vol. 1* (Revive/Blue Note, 2015) compilation.
they may want to save the recordings for possible release down the road, perhaps due to concerns about their fit within the album concept or worries about the total length of the album. Irwin Hall told me that “four or five really killing songs” tracked during the *Afro Physicist* sessions “didn’t go on the record” (2014). Of the upwards of 20 tunes that Johnathan Blake recorded with the Kenny Barron Trio, only ten of them made the album. It can be risky for musicians to hold onto unused recordings for too long, however, because, as discussed in the previous chapter, they may begin to feel that the music no longer represents “who they are.”

“Production”

In a recent profile of the jazz musician Pete Mills, writer Mark Corroto described the mixing and mastering process as one of faithfully representing what happened in the studio during the tracking session: “Mixing and mastering a recording is a mysterious and undetectable art that reproduces the music actually played in studio, onto the discs. When done correctly, the listener's experience is three-dimensional and sound is projected as if the quintet is performing in the listener's space” (2014). This view is typical in jazz, resonating with what Michael Jarrett has called the “self-effacing producer,” who uses a “non-intrusive” or “inaudible” style of mixing to “enable and to record sounds that, when we hear them, will give every impression of having escaped the clutches of production and the constraints of recording technologies” (2004). In other words, at most, mixing and mastering should enhance the sound of the recorded music, but not manipulate it to the extent that the listener can no longer imagine that they are hearing it “as it happened.” Note that this approach does not necessarily entail a lack of sound manipulation by

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23 *Book of Intuition* (Impulse!, 2016)
the mixing engineer, but only the perception thereof. That is, a mixing engineer may use equalization on each individual track to alter the sound of each instrument, but the listener, not knowing exactly what each instrument sounded like to begin with, would not necessarily know that any equalization had been applied. In fact, some mixing techniques, such as reverb, are used to make the recordings sound more “real.”

While this approach to recording remains essential for some contemporary jazz projects, it is increasingly the case that musicians no longer seek to conceal the use of recording technologies when making records. In other words, they no longer regard the “correct” use of mediation as one that conveys to the listener the feeling of “being there.” On the contrary, they use recording technologies as instruments of music-making unto themselves, which can and do allow them to make music distinct from that which is or can be performed live. In doing so, many musicians have come to identify with the role of “producer,” a composer, performer, record producer (in the traditional sense), and engineer all in one, who uses recording technologies to compose, track, and mix music using a combination of acoustic and electronic instruments and existing media. This role predates the digital age, most notably in genres like rock, reggae, and hip-hop; indeed, the concepts of rock “tracks,” reggae “dubs,” and hip-hop “beats” reveal the distinction between more traditional work concepts (e.g., “compositions,” “songs,” “tunes,” etc.) and those that are dependent upon the creative contributions of recordists in addition to (or instead of) composers and performers. In the digital age, “producer” often refers more narrowly to one who uses a computer, generally equipped with DAW software, as the primary interface for production, although he or she might also have skills in pre-digital

24 See Zak (2001), Veal (2007), and Schloss (2014) for accounts of producers and production techniques in rock, reggae, and hip-hop, respectively.
recording techniques as well; this role is most strongly identified with genres like hip-hop, electronic music, and commercial pop. In what follows, I describe how this role is becoming increasingly prominent in jazz through the recording practices of musicians.

A predilection for production techniques in jazz can be observed in musicians’ comments about the unique creative resources of the studio. Irwin Hall clearly articulated this as he described his approach to making albums:

Irwin Hall: It’s just a different animal . . . As a studio album, you can go in and you can fix things and you can change things. I think if you’re going to make a studio album, you should take advantage of that. If you’re gonna make a live album, then, you know, you set up a couple of mics at the gig, and you play the gig. If it’s a good gig, if it works out, you put it out. Boom. Done. Mix it, try to get the levels right, and you’re straight. But, if you’re gonna do like a proper studio album, and you have the opportunity to utilize all the studio offers you, then, you know… that’s a different thing.

Dean Reynolds: You mean making cuts, or adding something in?

IH: Yeah, making cuts and going back in to…

DR: “I squeaked there.”

IH: Or not even to fix errors per se, but you can add more color. There’s more opportunity to add color. Maybe you want to add additional harmonies on something. You could do that. Maybe you want to change harmonies on something. Maybe you want to overdub extra percussion, or maybe you want to add an extra singer. Maybe you want to change a verse. There’s just so many… Maybe you want to slow something down. There’s just so many options.
DR: And those ideas might come in the process of making a record? You might hear something and want to harmonize this melody…

IH: You might hear something three months later! After you’ve cut the album, and you were like “Aw man, wouldn’t it be cool if I did this?” And you could do it! . . . And those chances, those opportunities are dope. It’s making full use of the studio. (2014)

Saxophonist Ben Wendel echoes Hall’s praise of the resources that the studio provides:

“Recorded music has to be compelling in its own way. Whether that be through things like producing the music in a way that you couldn’t actually recreate live, whether it be with different effects through plug-ins, whether it be through overdubbing and layering or manipulating the sounds of the instruments to sound like something you couldn’t recreate live” (2015). Aidan Carroll shared some specific places on Original Vision where he incorporated production techniques:

It was really sort of an organic discovery as I went along. I wanted to put a little vocals in certain places, so I picked some spots where I thought it would be good. I’m not the most amazing singer, but we were able to get it just good enough . . . I wanted to do some synth overdubs. In that studio, they don’t really have any hard synths, so they don’t have a lot of physical keyboards outside of Rhodes, Wurlitzer, and Korg. And actually all three of those were used on the record. Simon [the engineer] helped pick some sounds, some softsynths, which, you know, before going into the record, I didn’t even know what that meant. “What is a ‘softsynth?’” He was mostly using Omnisphere, I believe, or Arturia plug-ins. We just went through and found some sounds that I liked, and I overdubbed.
There’s some synth on “Overture” and the tune “For Now” at the beginning and at the end. Actually, there are several spots on that tune. That one’s really different because I originally wrote that tune to be more straight-ahead, you know, swinging and a little bit more upbeat in some ways. But I put synth stuff, like lead and bass sound on the beginning and then in the middle. I did a little vocals. And then, during the bass solo, if you listen with headphones, I did these really quiet synthesizer melodies. On the intro I played Rhodes, upright bass, electric bass, vocals, percussion, and cymbals. That was all post. That was all after full-band recording. I played Wurlitzer on “Sundays” . . . [On] “Shamanistic” I did a synth thing that almost sounds like a chorus of voices. (2015)

Saxophonist Remy Le Boeuf was similarly detailed about the process of making In Praise of Shadows:

Remy Le Boeuf: We recorded this album completely in the studio, improvised, with all the glorious in-the-moment stuff that you’d want in a jazz album. We were trying to kind of recreate that live spirit, but with the knowledge that we were going to go back and add some more layers to it. And so one of the things that I did on some of my songs is take parts of the music that were improvised and adjust the arrangement to highlight those things. Instead of, you know, planning someone’s solo for them, I’d basically reshape the composition [around their solo]. I did that a little bit to some comping [figures] on Pascal’s piano solo on “Circles.” I added a bunch of string parts that fit the recording. My favorite

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25 Here, Le Boeuf certainly meant to say his own saxophone solo, not “Pascal’s piano solo”; this is corroborated by the liner notes to the recording.
that we’ve recorded is “Calgary Clouds.” That was a song of Pascal’s that I added strings, bass clarinet, and saxophones to... The production ideas were things that he did, but I kind of wrote into the music. “You should do this here,” and “This should happen here.”

Dean Reynolds: But you’re saying you had a lot of this in mind prior... leading up to the actual session?

RLB: Yeah, leading up to the session. But a lot of that was still in the hands of Pascal to be creative with it. Once we recorded the music, we did a lot of mixing. We did a lot of recording ourselves in Pascal’s apartment or my apartment. On “Red Velvet,” Pascal had a plan for it, and the sax solo I recorded in my apartment at the time, just on my computer. (2015)

A similar balance between the “in-the-moment” studio recordings and the “layers” added through production techniques is expressed by drummer Mark Guiliana in his description of the various recording techniques behind his EP Beat Music, responding to a question about its balance between music recorded “live” and “overdubbed”:

The songs “Please Hang Up,” “Public Interest,” and “Spirit Animal” came from a trio session of Jason Lindner, Tim Lefebvre, and me. We set up in the same room, and we improvised a great deal, but with specific parameters. “Public Interest” was actually fairly through-composed in advance, so that was just a matter of getting the best take and the best performance that captured the composition. But for “Please Hang Up” and “Spirit Animal,” I brought in specific parameters that I wanted to work within, which were more general guidelines of a sonic realm that I wanted to communicate. But really, in both of those
performances, those takes, as they appear on the EP, are a product of us playing in
the same room, creating in the moment. Then I took that session home and did a
good bit of editing, but I didn’t add any additional performances. I added quite a
bit of samples and electronics and more ambient things, but the performances
were all captured live, and we were all playing together.

On “I Have an Idea,” that’s actually a MiniDisc recording from a duo gig that Tim
Lefebvre and I played. I really loved that minute and a half, and I actually enjoyed
the timbre that the recording had. It was pretty low-fi, but it had a lot of character.

Then the song “Coin Castle” is a live drum performance, but the rest is synths that
I played, so that was kind of production heavy; I had to go back and do the synths
at a later time. (Quoted in Johnson 2013)

The key distinction in these examples between the traditional work of the mixing
engineer and the contemporary work of the producer is that the producer not only mixes and
optimizes the previously recorded tracks for playback but also manipulates them and adds
additional material—much of which may have been conceived after the initial tracking sessions,
based on what was recorded then. In this sense, the producer (who, again, might also be the
musician him- or herself) essentially becomes a member of the ensemble, whose contributions
are distributed across the stage of “post-production” rather than made during the tracking
session. Donny McCaslin attested to fellow saxophonist Dave Binney’s essential role in making
Fast Future (Greenleaf, 2015):

I can’t overstate the significance of his contribution to this project. And, he’s been
producing a lot of my records over the years, and... and this one more than any
other he’s just so deeply involved in. So essentially we do the basic tracks, he
takes the files to his house and he works on it. And I maybe come over once or twice and, you know, like with “No Eyes,” for example, actually that saxophone intro and the choir of saxophones we did it at his house. That was post-production, you’d say. And the interlude in the middle with all the different horns, that was something again that I did at his house. Um, but he just spends, you know, hours and hours and hours on, you know, doing the post-production, and he does an amazing job. (Douglas, et al. 2015)

In cases like these, distinctions between terms like “composing,” “tracking,” and “post-production” are muddled. Remy Le Boeuf makes a distinction between Pascal’s “production” and the things that he “wrote” into the music, but also noted that his brother got “to be creative with it.” McCaslin identifies all work done after recording the “basic tracks” as “post-production” work, even though his recording new saxophone parts (as opposed to manipulating existing tracks) is technically additional tracking. Although these terms retain some valence to the traditional stages of the recording process, the practices associated with each—conceiving of new music, recording it for the first time, manipulating those recordings—all inhere in “production.”

These practices coalesce especially starkly when producers use electronic instruments (e.g., synthesizers, drum machines) or digital sample libraries to produce jazz. Of course, some of these instruments—analogue keyboard synthesizers, for instance—are not new to jazz, nor are they unique to recorded music.26 However, certain electronic and virtual instruments are strongly identified with production, such as Roland TR series drum machines (especially the 808), Akai

26 See Glock (2013) on Paul Bley’s early adoption of a Moog synthesizer.
MPC samplers, and the instrument packs compatible with popular DAWs like Ableton Live, FL Studio, Logic Pro, ProTools, and Reason. These tools actually allow musicians to *produce* the “basic tracks” of a recording and *then* overdub acoustic instruments during a more conventional tracking session, inverting the typical process. Saxophonist Marcus Strickland recorded some tracks for his album *Nihil Novi* (Blue Note, 2016) this way, as described by *DownBeat*:

> The album began as “beats” created in Strickland’s Pro Tools rig, followed by pre-production at [drummer and co-producer Charles] Haynes’ studio in Boston. Then [bassist and co-producer Meshell] Ndegeocello, Strickland and his Twi-Life crew coalesced at Kaleidoscope Sound, where they recorded live tracks and added further coloration to Strickland’s software-treated compositions. (Micallef 2016)

Revive founder and Blue Note producer Megan Stabile and deejay Raydar Ellis discussed Strickland’s process:

> Meghan Stabile: Marcus Strickland is a bad, bad dude. You know, he’s also a producer, not many people know about that. So this wasn’t just an arrangement, this was a, a production . . .

> Raydar Ellis: We were kickin’ it. We were in rehearsal and he broke out his laptop and started playing me beats. He was like, “Yeah man you know, I got the drum pad, the drum machine.”

> MS: His beats are insane.

> RE: Yeah, some of those joints off of *Nihil Novi*, those were some beats that he reinterpreted with the band. (Stabile, et al. 2016)²⁷

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²⁷ Stabile is credited as a producer (in the traditional sense) for *Nihil Novi*. 136
Notable in this testimony is that Strickland is identified as a producer (in the contemporary sense) as well as a saxophonist.

DAW-produced tracks also facilitate unique kinds of collaboration among musicians. Pianist James Francies described the process behind an album he is currently working on with drummer Eric Harland. Much of the recording process entails the musicians passing digital files between them:

Yesterday, we were bouncing a Logic file back and forth, because I have an interface at home where I just record. I have keyboards and stuff, and I’ll send him like a scratch mix or something . . . When we were on tour, we had a tour bus, so we were just driving on these long, long trips, and I had a MIDI keyboard and Logic, so we would record some stuff just as placeholders; he recorded some MIDI drums with his hands. I took [the files] and I re-did some of the bass sounds, then added some of the core keyboard sounds, replaced the Logic sounds. Then I sent it to him and he was like, “Oh, yeah, I’ll put live drums to it.” I sent it to him yesterday and he recorded live drums and sent it back to me: “Yo, what do you think about this?” So now it’s my turn to do some tweaking, and then I’ll send it back . . . We both have so many tunes. We’re just bringing in our own compositions, like little Logic files, like little ideas, so it’s like, “Maybe not this,” you know, or . . . “Okay, let’s add this twist to it.” So it’s always just about evolving, growing. (Francies 2015)

Here, any semblance of the conventional stages of a recording process is obliterated, and the activities associated with each are reorganized under the framework of production. Francies and Harland compose, re-compose, program, track, re-record, overdub, and mix their music
collaboratively and independently, both within the recording studio but also at their computers, at home or on the road.²⁸

In addition to adding new parts, producers also sample material that was recorded during the tracking session. Such techniques may involve clipping a short segment of one or more existing tracks (which producers typically refer to as “stems”), applying effects, looping it or combining it with other clips, and inserting it somewhere else in the mix as a new track. Remy Le Boeuf played me selections from *imaginist* before it was released, and guided me through some of the sampling techniques that his brother Pascal used. One notable instance was a drum groove that Pascal produced by sampling and manipulating an inadvertent recording of drummer Justin Brown messing around on his kit between takes. Similar techniques are central to the recent collaboration between the ensemble Kneebody and the producer Daedelus (Alfred Darlington) on *Kneedelus* (Brainfeeder, 2015). As saxophonist Ben Wendel stated, Darlington had “free rein to bring his producer and sound aesthetics to the music in post-production” (quoted in Panken 2016). Bassist Kaveh Rastegar described the process in more detail:

> I think it was a few years ago when we started this project. We were all in the studio together, working on this music. Everybody had brought in pretty fully formed songs, and just as we do with Kneebody, we recorded them. We learned the music, we recorded it. Alfred was there, and we knew this was going to be

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²⁸ This kind of remote file exchange is widespread across music genres, not least of which is pop. Pop and rock producer and engineer Warren Huart described: “‘Working remotely is probably a good half of my business . . . I play keyboards on most of my stuff, but I also have a programmer I use who lives elsewhere. We just email backwards and forwards all day’” (quoted in Hayes 2014). Software “plug-ins” (software that adds features to an existing program) facilitate cross-compatibility between different DAWs, allowing each member of a collaboration to use a DAW of their choice.
collaboration . . . I was curious because the music that we recorded over those few
days, I felt, was so fully formed that I was really curious to see what Alfred was
going to do. I was actually… I was kind of at a loss to imagine what he was going
to do. I was really excited by what happened over time. The way that I can put it
is, he kind of remixed the music. He deconstructed it. He took… He really added
his stamp of what he does in the studio to these songs. (Rentner, et al. 2016)

Rastegar’s use of “remix” here is slightly different from convention, referring to production
techniques like sampling, splicing, and effects processing that are applied to tracked material
regardless of whether that material has been released independently. In an extreme example of
splicing (and one that recalls Teo Macero’s infamous work on Bitches Brew), the drummer
Makaya McCraven produced In the Moment (International Anthem, 2015) by cutting up and
mixing down two days’ worth of material that he recorded at live performances in Chicago.²⁹

Musicians may also remix recordings that have already been released. Such tracks would
generally be identified explicitly as “remixes” and indicate the original on which it is based. This
kind of remixing is truer to the origins of the term, wherein a track is literally re-mixed by the
same or a different producer, implying an existing original mix of the stems. Remy Le Boeuf
explained the concept behind their album Remixed (Nineteen-Eight 2013) to me:

Remy Le Boeuf: When we made In Praise of Shadows, we knew we wanted to
[make] stems and have people remix them. When you put the CD into your
computer, it shows up as a folder in addition to the CD.

²⁹ For Bitches Brew, Macero used tape splicing and looping as well as effects processing to edit
together three days’ worth of tracked material. The album was critically acclaimed and
commercially successful, but it also irritated many jazz purists, not only due to the studio
manipulations but also to the incorporation of rock and funk styles.
Dean Reynolds: Is that right?

RLB: Yeah, an enhanced CD . . . It was a fun, creative thing for us. We had a great
time collaborating with different people: collaborating with Justin Deming from
Yellow Then Blue was so cool—it’s so cool what he did with the music; Tim
Lefebvre did some really cool stuff; Louis Cole and Genevieve—the KNOWER
folks—they gave us some stuff and Pascal made a mash-up. That was an
interesting project in terms of collaborating [because] everyone was so different
. . . It was like an exploration that we have a record of. We can’t really take full
credit for it. It’s just stuff other people did with our stems. Pascal did stuff with
Kissy Girls, he did stuff with his own thing, and I did one track where I remixed
something and did a bunch of production—I basically made a new song out of the
stems . . . I don’t think it sold super well, but it was an exciting project. (2015)

The album is also conceptually linked to its predecessor by the album cover. The artwork
featured on In Praise of Shadows (a stylized photograph of the brothers looking down into the
camera) is cut into smaller rectangles and rearranged; some are also tinted with different colors.
(As I discuss in Chapter 4, many musicians use artwork to develop the concept of their albums.)
Robert Glasper Experiment’s Black Radio Recovered: The Remix EP (Blue Note, 2012) is more
limited in scope than Remixed, but similarly features remixes of tracks from the band’s previous
album, Black Radio (Blue Note, 2012). Some musicians have remixed their colleagues’ tracks
and released them as singles; Jesse Fischer, for instance, has remixed tracks by trumpet player
Takuya Kuroda (“Afro Blues”) and vocalist Gregory Porter (“Liquid Spirit”).30

30 See “Jesse Fischer.” SoundCloud. https://soundcloud.com/jessefischer (accessed September 1,
2017).
One interesting approach to remixing was taken by the producers of the compilation *Supreme Sonacy, Vol. 1*. Each track is followed by a remix produced by Raydar Ellis, which serves as an interlude, unifying the album much like a deejay builds a set in a dance club. For one track, Ellis only had access to the final mix, and producer Meghan Stabile arranged for him to get access to a sample library—a database of royalty-free samples that he could then use to mix with the original recording. They discussed this process, highlighting several techniques of production:

Raydar Ellis: When I was tasked to remix the tracks . . . I got a folder just full of all the files of everybody’s takes, and I just had to piece everything together.

Meghan Stabile: Wait, but how did we get the takes?

RE: Which ones?

MS: Do you remember?

RE: What?

MS: When we did Rubber Tracks?

RE: Oh, no. I’m getting to that part. So, this one though [Terry Slingbaum’s “Water Games – Ravel Re-imagined”], Terry only had the final track, he didn’t have the separated parts or anything. So, I was sitting there making the beat, and I played it for Meghan and she was like, “Yo, it’s cool, but it’s missing something.” I was like, “That’s all I got, is this stereo track, I don’t have any other parts.” She was like, “Hold on.” She emails me, like, hours later, like, “Yeah, so, uh, these are the people at Converse they have this studio called Rubber Tracks where musicians go and they record and they do it for free. And they make… You could do as much as you want in a certain amount of time. And they have all these extra
files of all just people jamming and playing stuff, and they’re gonna debut it soon, but they’re gonna give us first access, and so Raydar, go ahead. And so, you just opened up this beautiful world of samples and stuff.

MS: Like 11,000, um, samples. Royalty-free samples for producers to play around with. It’s pretty interesting. But we were… How we got those particular tracks? Indaba Music and Converse were partnering and they asked us to come in and produce a few live recording sessions, so we brought in [trumpet player] Wallace Roney, [drummer] Otis Brown. We did like a couple live sessions, so you ended up sampling, like, live studio recordings… Which they ended up chopping up, so you got Wallace Roney in there, [pianist] Marc Cary, I think you got Al Carty, the bass player Al Carty, um, and a few others. So, that track is really special. Very special. (Stabile, et al. 2016)

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“Okay. Here’s what really fucked everything up,” Remy Le Boeuf told me:

Kurt Rosenwinkel put out Heartcore—that’s what fucked everything up. All these musicians are just like, “Oh my God. That’s the most amazing thing. What an incredible album!” Kurt did something huge by making that album. Q-Tip produced it. It was really creative, I mean, he almost created his own genre with that. He made production such a cool part of that album—he made it so much more by producing it. You’re a jazz musician, you have the authenticity of creating something in the moment, but there’s a whole other layer of what it is to be an artist. There’s a whole other layer of creativity in production, and Kurt
experimented with that, even if he wasn’t the one who was doing the production.

Maybe it was Q-Tip, you know? “Q-Tip changed jazz!” when he did that. (2015)

*Heartcore* (Verve, 2003), co-produced by Q-Tip (of A Tribe Called Quest), features Rosenwinkel overdubbing himself—on guitar, keyboards, and drums—as well as many programmed effects. It was not the first album to use these techniques in such an overt manner, but the album resonated in a special way among young jazz musicians in New York, especially because of the reputations of the band members. Rosenwinkel, along with his bandmates Mark Turner, Ben Street, and Jeff Ballard, had already established themselves as prominent voices on the New York scene; pianist Ethan Iverson (who had begun to play with the group and appeared on two tracks on *Heartcore*) called them a “crucial band” for younger musicians on the scene. With *Heartcore*, a leading jazz group released an album that was at least as much produced as it was performed and recorded.

Le Boeuf may overstate the role of *Heartcore* in leading musicians to think differently about the role of production in contemporary jazz, although he is not the only musician I have heard single this album out. Apart from the use of software instruments, the techniques of production described in this chapter—punching in, overdubbing, effects processing, splicing, sampling, remixing, and others—are not on their own new to jazz. On the contrary, they date back to the early 1940s at the latest. In most case, however, these uses have been “non-intrusive,” used to repair mistakes or surreptitiously combine takes to create a preferred performance, as with Van Gelder’s tape splicing. Alternatively, when such techniques were obvious, they were largely marginalized as experiments, curiosities, or perhaps just “not jazz.”

The Les Paul recordings are regarded as monumental developments in the history of recording but novelties in the history of jazz, while the Macero–Davis collaborations, even to those who have not excommunicated them entirely from acceptable jazz practice, are generally seen as
“fusions” that applied rock recording techniques and aesthetics to jazz instrumentation and improvisation. The implication in any case is that the ideal jazz recording is that which “captures” unadulterated performances or at least leads the listener to believe that it does.

Today, jazz musicians are figuring such recording techniques into the very integrity of their music as composed and performed. In this sense, they accord with the recording techniques and aesthetics of rock, hip-hop, electronic music, and pop, where musicians see the recording studio and its technologies as opportunities for continued creation rather than potential impediments to capturing performance. “To me, and my thinking,” Sylvester Onyejiaka told me, “the record exists best when it’s in fantasy land”:

Dean Reynolds: When it’s something that can’t be done live?
Sylvester Onyejiaka: Yeah. When it’s like, “We’re just gonna go for it. What does this need? We’ll figure out the live show later. Let’s put a fucking orchestra on it! We’ll never be able to pay an orchestra to play live, but let’s have one on there.”
DR: Do you keep that separate from your jazz?
SO: Well, no. I think jazz can be in fantasy land, too. I’m talking about a record in general. Never be limited by, “Oh well, we should think about how we’re gonna play it live.” Like even in jazz, the recording process should be fantasy land. “Oh there’s six flutes? Okay, cool.”

Onyejiaka’s pithiness is telling. Young musicians are not only embracing techniques of production, but they are doing it openly, shedding the stigma associated with editing and overdubbing in jazz. Even if the production techniques are not overtly transparent, musicians no longer feel obligated to hide their use. In fact, when musicians record live in-studio or use post-production in an unobvious way, they often promote these recordings as having been recorded
“live to two-track” or featuring “no overdubs.” In other words, “live in-studio” is now a marked term, if not designating an exception, at least no longer designating the rule.

The consequences of this attitudinal shift are most confounding with respect to the role of improvisation and interaction in contemporary jazz. Part of the reason that many jazz people have been reluctant to embrace not only recording technologies but recording in general is because they invariably—in one way or another—alienate interactive improvisation from the moment of its first occurrence. A jazz purist might be especially appalled by Remy Le Boeuf’s decision to compose and arrange music around a previously recorded, improvised solo, let alone record a solo on top of previously tracked accompanying material. Even some young musicians consider overdubbing of this kind antithetical to the spirit of a jazz; recorded solos ought to be improvised “in the moment,” as they would during live performance. But these kinds of production techniques are only shortcomings if the aesthetic principles of the musician or the listener demand that the music be performed live, or, at the very least, sound like it could have been. As I argue in Chapters 5 and 6, these aesthetic principles no longer invariably hold.
CHAPTER 4. Putting out records: Record release and new media

In this chapter, I discuss the life of a jazz record after it has been tracked, mixed, and mastered and is ready to be formatted, packaged, and disseminated. As in Chapters 2 and 3, I organize this chapter around roughly sequential stages for the sake of clarity. I begin with practices of distribution, focusing on media whose primary role is to mediate the recordings themselves. I return to the work of record labels, discussing the kinds of relationships that musicians pursue after an album has been recorded. I also discuss what I broadly configure as “album design,” which primarily includes decisions about format (i.e., type of media) and packaging (i.e., the album’s accompanying materials), and I discuss the platforms on which recordings are made available, usually for purchase, but not always. In the second section, I discuss practices of promotion, attending to media whose primary role is to spread awareness of a record, guiding people to places where they can purchase or, increasingly, “access” it. I focus specifically on uses of social media. In closing, I consider musicians’ ambivalent feelings about the role of “new media” in the contemporary music economy, which echo some of the issues around crowdfunding discussed in Chapter 2.

Once again, these stages are not rigidly sequential. In some cases, the sequence from distribution to promotion is rather clear cut: a sound recording is pressed to vinyl, released, and subsequently reviewed in a magazine; a link to an MP3 in iTunes is embedded in a tweet. In other cases, such a distinction can hardly be made. Terrestrial radio is an example of a medium with both distributive and promotional functions, as are new streaming services cum social networks like YouTube and SoundCloud. Many media discussed here can be used in advance of those technologies discussed in previous chapters; album design, for instance, may be treated as much a part of record production as tracking, mixing, etc.
Media of distribution

Record labels

As noted in Chapter 2, the traditional record deal is no longer a jazz recording industry norm. Nevertheless, record labels still play an important role for musicians. In fact, as labels have contracted or eliminated artists and repertoire departments, many have reallocated resources to album design, manufacturing, distribution, and promotion. Majors might manage these tasks in-house, while larger independents often outsource them to specialized contractors, such as distributors and marketing teams. Thus, most artists who record independently still invest at least some time and energy “shopping” their masters in the hopes of getting “picked up” by a label—that is, establishing some type of formal relationship with a record label.

Because of the turmoil across the recording industry, it can hardly be said that there is a typical relationship between an artist and a record label. Each label has preferred ways of structuring contracts based on the resources they can offer; one label may even have different arrangements with each of its artists. One general kind of arrangement that jazz musicians commonly pursue is to license their sound recordings to a label for a short period of time, perhaps three to five years. The musician transfers sound recording rights to the label, and the label pays royalties from sales to the musician. After the contract period has ended, rights to the masters revert to the musician. Because independents cannot offer the same resources as the majors, their terms may be more favorable to the artists. Relatively substantial independent labels typically license records directly from musicians, as Sunnyside did for drummer Johnathan Blake’s first record, The Eleventh Hour. Major labels might license them from independent labels that own the sound recording rights. Trumpeter Theo Croker’s Afro Physicist was recorded...
with DDB Recordings (singer Dee Dee Bridgewater’s independent label), which then licensed it to OKeh, a subsidiary of Sony.

As record sales have plummeted for even aggressively marketed records, however, musicians have fewer strong incentives to give up rights to their sound recordings, even for a short period of time. This is compounded by the fact that they stand to gain more from revenue streams other than sales—such as music streamed online—for which royalties are split between the rights owners and the featured artists; bandleaders who own their own masters effectively double their revenue from streaming music. Further, as I discuss below, digital technologies and new media have empowered musicians to distribute and promote music on their own, and the freedom to control the timeline of release and tailor a promotional strategy to their project is appealing. Instead of licensing their recordings, then, some musicians have opted to join small independent labels or to start their own. Such labels generally have extremely limited in-house resources, requiring the recording artists and additional outside contractors (e.g., graphic designers, publicists) to work on most if not all aspects of album design, manufacturing, distribution, and promotion, but they allow musicians to retain control of their masters.

Why attach oneself to a label at all? For one thing, musicians understand that labels—like records themselves—still confer an aura of prestige around a musician. Again, discerning musicians, critics, and fans know that not every worthy musician has a relationship with a label (and not everyone on a label is a worthy musician), but many venue bookers, radio programmers, and members of the mainstream press still place a lot of value on labels when booking festivals and reviewing records. Less cynically, musicians see relationships with record labels as artistic and even social as opposed to strictly business. Many independent labels refer to themselves in communal or even familial terms; it is not uncommon for a label to call itself a “home” to a
“family” of musicians. Some even organize their roster of artists around a certain ideology about art or society. Perhaps unsurprisingly, one common ideology is a “transparency” in the label-musician relationship, which small labels see as distinguishing them from the majors. Talking to *JazzTimes*, clarinetist Anat Cohen juxtaposed the business practices of her label Anzic to the opaque bureaucracy of larger labels:

“I think musicians often end up being in the dark,” says Cohen over the phone.

“They record a CD, then pass it to the record label and that’s it. They have no clue what happens to the CD after that . . . Maybe it’s distributed, maybe it’s not. You know, people don’t see the numbers. Of course, that’s not true all the time but it is on many occasions.”

What appealed to her about launching a record label, explains Cohen, was the chance to achieve “total transparency.” Every artist on the label, she says, “knows exactly what’s going on. They are part of the process. I think it’s really important that musicians wake up and know the numbers, realistic numbers: how much it costs to make a CD, how much people expect to be paid, when they can get paid.”

(Joyce 2008)

Brothers Zaccai (piano) and Luques (bass) Curtis started their label (or rather, “recording collective”), Truth Revolution Records, to empower artists in the music industry; on their website, they describe the predatory practices of the corporate music industry, and they make clear that they allow musicians to retain control of their masters.¹

¹ Part of their website reads: “Truth Revolution Records is totally transparent with their artists. Their relationship is based on a partnership agreement. In this agreement, the artist, label and fans unite against a system that is in need [of] serious reform.” Elsewhere: “Truth Revolution
Artist-owned labels can also have a creative ethos. Guitarist Kurt Rosenwinkel’s recently launched label Heartcore will be oriented to Rosenwinkel’s own musical concept:

For me, the word Heartcore is a very strong suggestion and a description of what I hold to be dear in music. I see Heartcore as a new brand, if you will. The label will be defined by artists who play what I call Heartcore music, which is music that you find all over the world in different genres and has that same thing in common—whether you call it duende, the blues or soulfulness. It’s about integrity and truth in music. So the idea for the label is to sign artists who I feel embody that concept and that attitude towards music, all being under the umbrella of Heartcore. (Quoted in Milkowski 2016)

Labels can also have a social or political orientation. Pianist Fabian Almazan’s Biophilia Records champions environmental justice, not only by promoting artists and albums whose music engages with themes of the environment and social responsibility but also by working on outreach activities with community groups. The label’s website reads, “Biophilia means ‘an instinctive bond between human beings and other living systems’ . . . What sets Biophilia apart from other traditional music labels is that in addition to creating meaningful and imaginative music, our artists are united by a common interest in having a positive impact on the environment and our communities.”

Records is not about money or becoming a large industry. It can’t be. It is about what we believe. Our first order of business is to base our label around the fact that the artist [sic] keep their music. Partnership, truth, respect, love and integrity.” See “What Is Truth Revolution Records All About?” Truth Revolution Recording Collective. http://truthrevolutionrecords.com/about (accessed September 1, 2017).

Alternatively, one reason not to pursue a relationship with a record label is that it gives the musician maximum latitude with scheduling the release date of their album. Mark Guiliana spoke about how he had originally hoped that *A Form of Truth* would be picked up by a label, but he ultimately decided to release it on his own in digital-only formats. “It was great. It was empowering to just put it out into the world. Even if five people buy it, it’s better than it just sitting on my hard drive” (Varriale and Guiliana 2013). Musicians often found “record companies” that are not much more than a literal label under which they release their own material (although some have eventually expanded to include other musicians).

*Formats and platforms*

The resources of the record label may partially determine the format or formats in which an album is released. In general, however, musicians can choose from more formats than ever before. These include traditional physical formats, of which the CD is still the most popular, but which also include the vinyl record and, in rare cases, the compact cassette tape. They also include digital formats, especially the ubiquitous MP3 (or comparable formats, like AAC) as well as higher quality formats like WAV or FLAC and streaming formats like OGG. Increasingly, high-definition video (e.g., MP4) has become a primary format for album releases. Decisions about format are made in consideration of both artistic and professional goals.

Before discussing jazz album formats, it is important to clarify terms. The categories of “physical” and “digital” are imprecise. They are complicated foremost by the CD, which, unlike the vinyl record and the cassette tape, stores digital sound. Virtually no musicians speaking of “digital music,” however, would intend to refer to the CD. For one, the CD is clearly a physical medium in ways that other digital formats are not; it is an object that stores information but does
not alone have the capacity to retrieve (play back) that information, and it almost invariably comes packaged with non-digital material (e.g., the jewel case, the insert) that are as much components of the medium as the disc itself. By contrast, digital music formats are those that are associated overwhelmingly with computers and mobile devices; sound data are stored in files on a computer CPU and played back by the same device. Although digital formats can still be converted or “ripped” from physical formats, they are now predominantly acquired by downloading and streaming. In this chapter, I adopt the conventions of the overwhelming majority of musicians by referring to the CD as a physical format.

The music industry in general is trending away from physical and towards digital formats.\(^3\) This shift, precipitated by developments in data compression, mobile technologies, and music streaming, has created the widespread perception that the CD is well on its way to obsolescence. Yet many jazz musicians sustain a strong commitment to releasing physical albums. Some do so rather begrudgingly, constrained by the requirements of participating in the jazz economy. Many venues, radio stations, and press outlets, for instance, still rely on CDs; one musician I spoke to quipped, “You talk to people in the press, people who book clubs, people who book festivals, managers… they haven’t quite figured it out yet . . . They want me to mail them a CD. Radio stations, they want CDs. And, it’s like, ‘What is this? 1986? You realize that nobody cares about CDs anymore?’”\(^4\) Musicians also want physical albums to sell at live

\(^3\) Digital sales exceeded 50% of the U.S. market for the first time in 2011 (West 2013). They have continued on an upward trajectory while CD sales have been in freefall; Nielsen Music reported that CD sales in the first half of 2016 fell 11.6 percent from the same period of 2015 (Christman 2016).

\(^4\) I followed up with this musician shortly before this dissertation was completed, and he noted that, in the two years since our initial conversation, many booking, press, and radio requests have since transitioned to digital media.
performances, which, as discussed in Chapter 2, remains a valuable revenue stream, even if not as lucrative as it once was. Further, the purchasing habits of jazz listeners may not be representative of those of all listeners. In 2014, Motéma founder Jana Herzen noted that most of the label’s sales are still physical units (Moran, et al. 2014). Greenleaf founder Dave Douglas said recently that many of his customers still ask for CD versions of download-only recordings (Pryor, et al. 2016). The resiliency of physical formats in jazz may be due in some part to the demographics of the jazz market, which undoubtedly skew older and more international than the mainstream.

Costs of manufacturing and distribution can sway decisions about whether to release music in physical formats. Independent labels tend to minimize their risk when manufacturing physical albums; unless the artist is a proven seller, the label is likely to produce a first run of a few thousand CDs at most, if not a few hundred. Additional runs can be printed if necessary, but it is not uncommon for musicians to buy out the first run of an album themselves and try to sell them on tour (or give them away in hopes of residual benefits). Some large independent labels have distribution deals with the majors; Concord and ECM, for instance, are distributed by Universal. Others work directly with large distributors such as Alliance Entertainment and Entertainment One Distribution. For small labels or musicians unaffiliated with labels, a valuable partner has been Disc Makers, which manufactures physical formats and, through their subsidiary CD Baby, distributes them. This includes distribution both to brick-and-mortar record stores and to online marketplaces like Amazon. Despite the decline of brick-and-mortar record stores in New York, they are still prominent in some international markets. Several musicians have proudly shared photos of their albums on record store displays in places like Germany, the U.K., and Japan.
In addition to these economic considerations, many musicians have a creative preference for physical formats. This may be partially attributable to feelings of nostalgia for youthful listening experiences, which were dominated by physical formats, objects they can open and close, flip over and back, lend to friends, and store on a shelf. Whereas earlier generations of jazz musicians associate the very concepts of “a record” and “an album” with vinyl, many musicians coming of age in the 1980s and 1990s associate them with the CD. More practically, physical formats usually make album metadata more easily accessible; liner notes, production credits, acknowledgments, and transcriptions of lyrics are all usually contained within the compact packaging of a CD. This packaging also presents a medium for visual art and graphic design, which may be a component of an album’s overarching concept or a technique to aesthetically unify albums on the same label. Beyond tactile and visual preferences, many musicians also favor the sound quality of the CD over the most popular digital alternatives, as I discuss below.

Some musicians opt to release albums on vinyl, typically as a limited-edition pressing. In an often remarked-upon trend, vinyl has been the only medium—physical or digital—to regularly grow in sales over the last decade, although it still captures far less of the market than do CDs.\(^5\) Causes for this trend are multifactorial. Some have suggested a mainstreaming of “audiophile” aesthetics, whereby vinyl is thought to sound superior to CDs (let alone MP3s). Others have suggested that young people who came of age in the era of the MP3 desire the tactile pleasures of physical formats but are not predisposed to the CD like their predecessors. In any case, jazz musicians and labels such as Blue Note, Mack Avenue, and Motéma have produced vinyl albums to appeal to this small but growing market. Others, by contrast, see vinyl as too

\(^5\) I am making an important distinction between revenue from music sales—purchase for ownership of either physical and digital formats—and revenues from digital music streaming.
slow and expensive to produce. Fabian Almazan, keeping true to his label’s mission, regards it as environmentally unsound (Agovino 2016b).

As with CDs, vinyl presents certain creative opportunities to musicians. Cover art is especially appealing. During a recent public conversation about the state of the jazz economy in New York, critic Gary Giddins admired the cover art of pianist Geri Allen’s *Flying Toward the Sound* (Motéma, 2010), which was created by multimedia artist Carrie Mae Weems. Giddins echoed a common sentiment when he suggested that vinyl presents greater opportunities for album design than the CD: “Most graphic designers don’t want to deal with three inches instead of 12” (Moran, et al. 2014). Vinyl also has a unique sound, often described as “warmth,” which musicians may feel suits the compositions or the album concept. Interestingly, some young musicians scoff at the common attitude among audiophiles that vinyl invariably “sounds better” than CDs. They know that converting master sound recordings to vinyl entails its own set of signal modifications that are just as if not more intrusive than those introduced by conversion to digital. Saxophonist Irwin Hall told me that his preferences for media are strongly determined by how and when the music was recorded:

Dean Reynolds: I love vinyl too, but there’s always, “You gotta hear it on vinyl!!”

You know? I’d like to hear it on lossless digital audio.

Irwin Hall: [laughs] This is 2014, baby! When I listen to 70s music, I’ll put it on vinyl.

DR: Yeah, exactly.

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6 See Dylan Matthews’ “Vinyl’s Great, but It’s Not Better than CDs” (2014) for a clarifying explanation of the differences between vinyl and digital audio mastering.
IH: When I listen to that new Little Dragon jump-off though… Get that lossless.

(2014)  

Musicians and producers, then, also favor vinyl for some projects intended to invoke a historic aesthetic, such as Blue Note albums from the 1960s or CTI albums of the ‘70s. Pianist Jesse Fischer and Sylvester Onyejiaka released a limited-edition vinyl of their EP Vein Melter (Tru Thoughts, 2015), their reimagining of Herbie Hancock’s 1973 Head Hunters. But vinyl can also entail certain limitations, especially with respect to album length, as Dave Douglas noted:

Now, there’s a resurgence of LPs, vinyl. So, for most of my career, when I would conceive of a project, a recording project, I would think in terms of 60–70 minutes of music. And now I’m forced to think in terms of 40–43 minutes of music because I would like it to be on vinyl. You know? And so, you don’t want to write a bunch of tunes and then have to leave them off because it’s vinyl.

(Douglas and Bates 2015)

These days, practically all musicians make their albums available digitally. Any potential disincentives to formatting music for digital distribution—such as the threat of piracy—are negated by its many benefits, including low-cost “manufacturing” (duplication), speed to market, and global reach.  

As discussed below, digital formats are also easily incorporated into many social media platforms, so valuable opportunities for promotion and artist-fan interaction are facilitated by releasing digital music. In fact, despite the various commitments that many musicians still make to physical formats, there is a pervasive sense that digital albums are

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7 Little Dragon is an electronic/soul/synthpop group from Sweden.  
8 Any physical medium can be illicitly digitized and disseminated, so the threat of piracy is never eliminated.
becoming the standard within jazz. As drummer Colin Stranahan put it to me, jazz musicians are starting to “think digitally” (2015). Indeed, some small labels (e.g., Ropeadope) have already shifted to a mostly-digital model.

The dominant format of the digital era has been the MP3. The MP3 was invented in the early 1990s, but didn’t become a mainstream music format until the end of the '90s, after the launch of peer-to-peer file sharing services like mp3.com and Napster; today there are many online retailers for MP3s, including CD Baby and Amazon. Although the MP3 still has the broadest platform compatibility, its dominance is challenged by AAC, the format used by the largest digital music retailer, Apple’s iTunes. They are both formats produced by “lossy” data compression, an encoding process that eliminates a large amount of unnecessary data from a digital master recording and simplifies the remainder, greatly reducing the file size. The logic behind lossy compression is that listeners will accept some loss of sound quality in exchange for the conveniences of uploading and downloading audio files from the Internet, storing large collections of recorded music on a computer, and transporting such collections on handheld music players. One cause of jazz musicians’ nostalgia for CDs, however, has been their unwillingness to accept this tradeoff for their own music. Sylvester Onyejiaka was adamant that lossy formats like the MP3 provide noticeably inferior sound quality:

Dean Reynolds: I don’t have the same negative attitude towards CDs that a lot of people have these days. I still like to buy most of my music on CD.

Sylvester Onyejiaka: What’s wrong with a CD?

9 Jazz musicians and producers played a pioneering role in the development of online music stores. Larry Rosen and Dave Grusin—founders of GRP Records—also founded Music Boulevard, an online music store selling downloadable music. In 1999, Music Boulevard merged with CD Now, which was acquired by Amazon in 2002.
DR: I don’t know, a lot of people, man, they’re like, “Why do I need a CD if I can just get the MP3s?”

SO: Fuck you! God…

DR: Yeah, I like having the CD. My apartment . . . we’ve just got rows and rows and rows . . . The product is still valuable to me. I don’t know. Maybe that’s old fashioned by now.

SO: Nah, man. In the end, it comes down to: an MP3 is just not as good sound quality as a WAV file on a CD. (2014)

Another musician suggested that the differences are felt rather than heard: “It’s something that just hits you, even if you don’t intellectually [know it], your body, your spirit knows that there’s something different about this. It’s vibrating me in a different way.” Jesse Fischer, by contrast, insisted that most listeners can’t tell the difference between a high-resolution MP3 and its CD counterpart:

Jesse Fischer: Honestly, dude, you’re not gonna know the difference between 256 k[bps] MP3s… I can’t. Even listening in a really nice studio environment.

Dean Reynolds: Yeah?

JF: I don’t know.

DR: I’m not sure I can either. Some people… I don’t know if it’s like a placebo thing where I think I can, but…

JF: Well, you should do a test so you can save yourself ten times the hard drive space. And you know, variable rate bit reduction is even higher quality for smaller files . . . Some people really like FLAC, but…

DR: You don’t notice the difference?
In any case, personal convictions about the integrity of lossy compression generally do not prevent musicians from making their music available through iTunes, Amazon, and the like. Because the industry is trending towards digital, all musicians understand that growing their audiences will likely require releasing digital music. Some platforms have enticed musicians by providing ways to maximize the sound quality of lossy formats to the greatest extent possible; for instance, Apple has a “Mastered for iTunes” toolkit that allows engineers to tailor formatted recordings to the technical specifications of their software.

A kind of happy medium between digital music and the CD has been the “lossless” digital format, which includes WAV (the format encoded on CDs), FLAC, and others. Lossless compression encodes data in such a way that all the original data can be reconstructed, which, for sound recordings, means that, on playback, the compressed file will sound identical to the master. The tradeoff is that the master can only be compressed by about half, resulting in a file substantially larger than the MP3. While a digital music library of such files was impractical ten or 15 years ago, the storage capacity of even small mobile devices (let alone a computer) has grown to such extremes that a moderately sized library of lossless files is possible. Thus, some online music stores specialize in lossless digital music. HDtracks, founded in 2008, sells FLAC versions of albums (along with other lossless formats and sometimes high-resolution MP3s). Another platform, Bandcamp, is an independent music marketplace that, unlike iTunes, Amazon, and HDtracks, is based on user-generated content. Musicians and labels create their own web

\[10\] Kbps (kilobits per second) is a bitrate, a measure of the rate at which data is sampled during compression to create the simpler data set. Variable bitrate (VBR) is a type of encoding that changes the bitrate relative to the complexity of the data at a given moment.
pages that serve as virtual storefronts, where they can sell music in physical formats, digital formats (both lossy and lossless), or both. A one-time purchase of a digital album (or track) entitles the listener to download the album in an unlimited number of the available digital formats. In other words, listeners can download both AACs and FLACs; they might choose to import AAC files into iTunes, which sync to their mobile device, and store FLACs on a large external hard drive at home, which they can play through a pair of high-quality speakers.

Again, with the odd exception of vinyl, sales of music across all formats are declining precipitously. On the rise, by contrast, is digital music streaming. Whereas digital music is stored on the user’s computer or mobile device and then played back, streaming music plays back as it is being transmitted. Streaming platforms generally limit when and how users can listen to music; the shift to streaming has typically been described as a shift to an “access”-based music economy as opposed to an “ownership”-based economy.

The huge diversity of streaming services defies easy categorization, but one important point of distinction is who manages the music available on the platform. For many popular services, recordings are licensed to the platform by record labels or distributors, and royalties are paid to copyright holders. On one end of this category are services like Internet radio stations, some of which are “webcasted” streams of terrestrial radio, while others are Internet-only.\textsuperscript{11} Access to these streams is usually free, but the same limitations on use apply—namely, listeners cannot pause, rewind, or skip ahead, let alone select different music. On the other end are subscription services that allow listeners to stream music “on-demand,” selecting at will from a

\textsuperscript{11} One of many controversial provisions of the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) exempts terrestrial radio stations from paying publishing royalties in addition to performance royalties; satellite and Internet radio stations, by contrast, must pay both publishing and performance royalties.
vast catalog of both major label and independent music. Services like Apple Music and Tidal charge a monthly or yearly subscription fee, which gives users access to a full range of features (e.g., the ability to create custom playlists) and allows them to download digital files to their computer or mobile devices for offline listening. Some of the most popular services lie somewhere in between these extremes and are typically called ad-supported or “freemium” services, wherein free access is exchanged for accepting some limitations on use, lesser audio quality, and, most notably, compulsory advertisements. With Pandora, for instance, playlists are curated by an algorithm designed to adapt to each listener’s preferences, but listeners must listen to an advertisement every few songs, and they can’t select music at will or skip past an unlimited number of songs. With Spotify, listeners can select music on-demand and curate their own playlists, but again, they are subjected to advertisements.

The other major category of streaming services comprises those that acquire content directly from users. A favorite among jazz musicians has been SoundCloud, which allows them to upload music directly to the platform for streaming. (They also have the option to permit downloading). At first, SoundCloud catered to independent musicians, providing a simple platform for them to make streaming music available without relying on a record label or a distributor to get it onto Apple Music or Spotify. “I’m big on SoundCloud,” Sylvester Onyejiaka told me. “It’s just sound. There’s a limited description you can write underneath the track, but the first thing you see when you get there is the track. You click play or you don’t click.

12 Files downloaded from a subscription service are usually encoded with DRM (digital rights management) protections; they cannot be duplicated—although a user can typically “authorize” more than one device to store them—and they cannot be stored after the subscription has lapsed.

13 SoundCloud (along with YouTube) largely replaced MySpace as the favored platform for user-generated music streaming among musicians. MySpace had essentially become obsolete (and the butt of many jokes) by the time this research began.
play” (2014). Because there is no mechanism for selling music, however, SoundCloud is mostly useful for sharing album “singles” or other one-off recordings (i.e., recordings not intended for an album) for free, often as an enticement to purchase the full album elsewhere. As bassist Aidan Carroll described:

> People will put out free music. They’ll put up their music on SoundCloud streaming, so you can always go listen to it. And I think it’s an interesting thing, you know, because you can put out all this stuff and then, when you do put out something you only want to sell, hopefully those people that are only listening to you on SoundCloud will then buy your music. And I think that probably works. (2015)

Musicians have also valued SoundCloud’s more “social” features, such as the ability for listeners to comment on specific moments of the recording, and the ease with which music uploaded to SoundCloud can be “embedded” in other platforms like websites and Facebook posts. The integration of music streaming and social media is discussed in more detail below.¹⁴

YouTube has arguably been the platform most transformative of the recording industry, for better or for worse. What began as an independent platform for user-generated video has evolved into a streaming music juggernaut owned by one of the largest technology companies in the world. It is the most widely-used platform for streaming digital music, a reality of which jazz musicians are keenly aware. In our conversation, Jesse Fischer was blunt:

¹⁴ Recently, some musicians have become disenchanted by SoundCloud. The company has made repeated efforts to follow the likes of Apple Music and Spotify and license music from major record labels and distributors. It has also explored mechanisms for independent labels and musicians to “monetize” their content through advertising, which, as discussed in the case of YouTube below, have not yet generally worked to the benefit of musicians.
Jesse Fischer: Yeah, I think most people—or anyone that I talk to that’s not a musician—the only way they listen to music is YouTube.

Dean Reynolds: The only way?

JF: The only way. Yeah. I don’t know anyone that... A few here and there like Pandora. That’s mostly people that are in their 40s or 50s. Most people I know who are not musicians or not in the music industry? YouTube. (2014)

Even musicians use YouTube this way: “I go on YouTube if I want to hear about a band,” Irwin Hall told me. “Bandcamp, SoundCloud, they’re cool, but usually the first place I go is YouTube” (2014). For its reach alone, then, YouTube has been especially valuable to jazz musicians in seeking out a wider audience.

As with SoundCloud, musicians often use YouTube to release album singles and to conveniently integrate them into social media. As a video platform, however, YouTube has compelled musicians to reconsider the potential of video as a recording format *sui generis*. While audio can be posted just with a static image or two (e.g., a promotional photo of the musician, the album cover art), musicians have been much more inventive in creating compelling video recordings. One popular technique has been to hire professional videographers to film the tracking session. Jesse Fischer hired Nikki Birch and Tariq Khan of HighBreed Music—owners of the Breeding Ground studio—to film the *Day Dreamer* tracking session. Fischer worked with them to edit together their footage as video singles: “Nomads” was released in advance of the

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15 There is evidence that audio-only streaming services (e.g. Apple Music, Spotify, etc.) have gained significant ground on YouTube. This may be partially due to the industry pressure on YouTube to control posting of infringing content, but it is also due to the continued growth of other services.
album, and “Suite for the Blue Planet” was posted a few days after the official album release. Guitarist Gilad Hekselman (“Homes”), trombone player Ryan Keberle with his group Catharsis (“I Thought I Knew”), pianist Shaun Martin (“The Yellow Jacket”), and the group Kneebody (“Uprising”) have also released such video singles.\textsuperscript{16}

Generally, musicians create such videos for a few album singles, at most. If they have footage of the full tracking session, however, they might consider releasing the entire album in video format. The group to have most fully developed this practice for jazz recordings is Snarky Puppy, who, in collaboration with filmmaker Andy LaViolette (Mr. Magic Carpet Ride Productions), have filmed the live in-studio tracking sessions for six of their last seven albums. They have typically made each album available as individual tracks on YouTube and, further, collected on a DVD and sold in combination with the audio-only CD. Ben Wendel recently completed one of the most unique experiments with video as a primary format in jazz. \textit{The Seasons} is a 12-part series of videos—released one per month over the course of 2015—featuring duets that Wendel composed. Wendel conceived the project not only as a collaboration with twelve other musicians but with filmmaker Alex Chaloff as well:

\begin{quote}
I think what . . . the medium of video offers is an opportunity to create really specific distinct worlds for each piece. If this was just an audio recording, each track would sound distinct and different because the instrumentation would be different, whether I’m playing sax or bassoon or just the nature of the music, but when you add this video element, suddenly we’re in 12 completely different
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{16} Another kind of video single is the “lyric video”—an animated video with stylized text that syncs to the audio. They are more appealing than static images but easier and cheaper to produce than other kinds of videos. Lyric videos have not been especially popular in jazz, with some exceptions (e.g., “Calls,” by Robert Glasper Experiment featuring Jill Scott).
places, you’re able to see perhaps a little bit about how musicians interact . . .

What I was hoping for is it would give you a little bit of a sense of what our community is like and how musicians are together. (2015)

What distinguishes *The Seasons* from most other uses of video as a format is that the recordings were *not* also released in a more traditional album format, or even as audio-only digital files. Further, when Wendel plays these compositions live, he usually performs arrangements for a larger ensemble (e.g., a quintet). In short, *The Seasons* is a jazz video album; it “creates” its worlds on its own terms, rather than “capturing” existing worlds.

Lastly, Christian Scott aTunde Adjuah’s *Stretch Music* (*Stretch Music/Ropeadope, 2015*) combines an experimental album format with the aesthetics of remixing. The *Stretch Music* smartphone app, released in partnership with the tech company Tutti, affords listeners the ability to listen to the album as Scott made it, but also to fade, mute, or isolate individual tracks, pan left and right, change the tempo, create loops, and access the sheet music for each composition. Recalling Jamey Aebersold “Play-A-Long” books and CDs, students can use the app to practice; they can mute the soloist and improvise with the rhythm section, or they can use the tempo control and looping capabilities to help with transcription exercises. But the app can also be used to customize the listening experience through rudimentary remixing. Scott quipped at the Harlem concert, “Let’s say you like my song, but you really fucking hate the bass line. You can just listen to the song without the bass line.”

*Supplemental materials*

Regardless of format, most recordings are accompanied by a variety of supplementary materials. Jazz has a rich history of creative album supplements like album artwork and liner
notes. Graphic designers (e.g., David Stone Martin, Reid Miles), photographers (e.g., Chuck Stewart, Francis Wolff), and liner notes writers (e.g., Dan Morgenstern) are frequently celebrated alongside musicians as contributors to “the jazz tradition.” In fact, when people mourn the increasing obsolescence of physical formats, it is sometimes these materials that they miss most. To the extent that jazz musicians still release physical records, they continue to be creative with aspects of album design and other materials. Many are also striving to revitalize for the digital era some of the supplements that have been endangered by the decline of physical albums, such as production credits. Further still, musicians are using the unique resources of the Internet to develop new kinds of materials to supplement jazz albums, such as websites and music videos.

Traditional supplemental materials—packaging, artwork, liner notes, etc.—remain important creative resources for musicians when releasing physical albums. Many see these materials as integral to the overall album concept. Drummer Eric Harland infused Vipassana with his album concept, from the precise sequence of pieces “down to the art design on the cover” (Weiner and Harland 2014). About his album The Imagined Savior Is Far Easier to Paint, trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire said, “From your first interaction with it – the photos, the title – I want it to feel like you’re on a journey” (Peterson and Akinmusire 2014). Album design can also establish unity across two or more of a musician’s albums, as does the artwork and lettering for Vijay Iyer’s series of recordings for Act Music + Vision.
Musicians have varying degrees of control over their album artwork, depending on their relationship with a label. Many labels have standard cover art templates to establish unity across the catalog. Criss Cross albums are identifiable by the large and colorful lettering used for album title, lead artist, and personnel, which usually overlays a photograph of the musician(s). ECM albums are known for their understated photographs, abstract artwork, and plain lettering; Manfred Eicher is famous for hand-picking the cover art for each album. This is a consideration for musicians when shopping their recordings, as strong feelings about album design can conflict with requirements of the label. The Belgian reedist Joachim Badenhorst’s frustrations with a lack of control over his album design led him to start his own label, KLEIN, and he released his first album with a hand-drawn cover and a 24-page “zine” of sketches and notes (Margasak 2014).

Musicians with creative independence often work with photographers or graphic designers, and, as noted in Chapter 2, collaborating with friends or family in this respect can be a good way to cut production costs. Artwork remains an important component of even digital-only albums; digital files typically contain images of the front cover in the metadata, which is displayed in the user’s library of digital music or the streaming application.
Liner notes, including acknowledgements and production credits, are another aspect of album design that musicians carefully consider when releasing physical albums. Musicians may write notes themselves, describing the process of creating the album or engaging with artistic, social, or political topics related to the album concept. Others recruit fellow musicians, poets, journalists, or scholars to write notes for them. Here again, liner notes can forward the concept of the album by providing context for the compositions or the recording process or by developing the concept through poetry or musings. However, liner notes have been one of the more prominent casualties of the digital age. Even some physical packaging formats like the more cheaply produced (and environmentally-friendly) Digipak do not accommodate the traditional booklet insert and thus restrict the amount of liner notes musicians can include. Amazon and iTunes sometimes make liner notes available for download, but these files are not easily integrated into playback software and are thus not as conveniently at hand as they are when playing physical albums.

A particularly troublesome loss to musicians has been production credits—the personnel featured on the album, including band members, producers, engineers, composers, lyricists, and graphic artists, as well as publishing information and attributions of any material licensed for use via covers, sampling, etc. Chatting with me after a gig, a musician suggested that younger generations of musicians generally have little to no knowledge of who they are listening to on a given recording other than the featured artist; he told me he has had more than one musician ask him who the bassist is on records that he himself played on. In addition to these cultural effects, musicians also worry about the effect of the loss of album credits on their livelihoods, as recognition from credits can be beneficial to the careers of non-featured artists. Some musicians are involved in campaigns to compel online music stores and streaming services to make full
production credits accessible to users; those who work frequently as sidemen, songwriters, producers, and engineers have a particularly vested interest in their success.\footnote{Such campaigns have included the Recording Academy’s “Give Fans the Credit” (https://www.grammy.com/credits) and the Music Producer’s Guild “Credit Where Credit Is Due” (https://www.mpg.org.uk/category/mpg-blog/campaigns/credits/).}

To the extent that the digitization of music has undermined traditional aspects of album design, it has also created new opportunities for musicians to create visual, written, or interactive supplemental material. Websites can host much of the material that would otherwise be presented in liner notes. Another reason that jazz musicians favor Bandcamp is that the service provides a template for integrating album supplements into a single web page. Musicians can make digital copies of cover art and inserts available for download (as a PDF file, for instance) and post notes and credits as plain text. Some musicians also create a dedicated section of their personal websites to function as a platform for album supplements, to which they post notes, credits, promotional images, videos, or other media, and perhaps stream excerpts from the recording and link to online sellers; for new releases, musicians might temporarily designate this page as their site’s “landing page”—that is, the first page that a user sees when they follow the website’s URL. The web page designed for Ben Wendel’s The Seasons project includes a description of the project alongside a promotional portrait of Wendel. This is followed by an array of twelve images, which, over the course of the year, were successively revealed to be photographs of each pair of musicians. Each of these is linked to a page dedicated to the month’s recording, which features the video recording plus additional notes written by Wendel.
Websites also can also be convenient platforms for other kinds of supplemental material. Several musicians have published sheet music of compositions featured on an album, packaging them with purchase of the recording or selling them separately as printed and bound books or downloadable PDFs. Greenleaf Music is clear that they hope sheet music will enhance the listeners experience of the recordings: “Accessing the sheet music provides another way to experience the music and allows fans to dig deeper into the artist’s process.”

One rare but unique kind of supplemental material is a digital file folder of stems. As discussed in Chapter 3, Le Boeuf Brothers invited other musicians and listeners to remix the recordings on In Praise of

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Shadows. They released a limited run of “enhanced” CDs, which contained both the sound recordings—playable like any other CD—and the folder of stems, accessible via computer.

Perhaps the most significant change to the distribution of jazz recordings in the digital era has been in the use of video. Concert films or other video recordings of live performance have a strong tradition within jazz, and above I described a trend of using video of tracking sessions as format for release. A related trend has been the creation of MTV-style music videos. As with websites, these videos—typically posted to YouTube or other video-hosting platforms like Vimeo (and subsequently embedded in websites or other social media platforms)—can have a promotional function. But musicians also think of videos like they think of album art; videos present an opportunity to develop an album or composition concept through another medium, typically in collaboration with visual or performing artists. Several musicians I spoke to identified trumpet player Maurice Brown’s “Time Tick Tock” as an early instance of a jazz music video and a model for their own. In keeping with pop music conventions, singers are especially poised to create music videos, as are instrumentalists featuring singers or rappers. But there are also cases of music videos for fully instrumental pieces, which may feature musicians in and out of performance, actors, dancers, or animation.

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19 Examples of singers’ videos include Gregory Porter (“Be Good [Lion’s Song],” “Hey Laura”), Esperanza Spalding (“Black Gold,” “Good Lava”), Sarah Elizabeth Charles (“White and Blue,” “Bells”), and Cécile McLorin Salvant (“Wives and Lovers,” “Look at Me”). Aidan Carroll and Jesse Fischer released music videos for “Sundays” featuring Chris Turner and “Refuge” featuring Sarah Elizabeth Charles, respectively, and saxophonist Jaleel Shaw and trumpet player Marquis Hill made videos for “Flight (Energy)” featuring Black Sheep Dres and “Love My Life” featuring Legend Mane, respectively.

20 Marc Cary’s Focus Trio (“Todi Blues”), trumpet player Takuya Kuroda (“Rising Son”), Jaimeo Brown Transcendence (“Be So Glad”), Logan Richardson (“Slow”), Kneebody (“The Balloonist”), and Ryan Keberle and Catharsis (“The Times They Are a-Changin’”) have all created elegant live-action or animated videos for instrumental pieces.
Media of promotion

For many musicians, the most important incentive to establishing a relationship with a record label is to unburden themselves from at least some of the work of promoting an album. Even small independent labels—because they don’t invest heavily in recording and manufacturing—dedicate significant resources to promotion. But the landscape of promotional outlets has shifted significantly in the digital era. Some traditional outlets, such as terrestrial radio and magazines, are still important, while others, such as newspaper reviews, are declining in influence. New, Internet-based outlets are gaining prominence, and the rise of social media has empowered musicians and small labels to reach audiences directly. Whatever the outlet, musicians have been resourceful and innovative in spreading awareness of their music to new and existing audiences.

Traditional media outlets

Although the state of jazz criticism has been tumultuous for several decades, many in New York view the last twenty years or so as an especially precipitous decline. This decline has been marked by events like Whitney Balliett’s retirement from The New Yorker in 1998, a succession of changes at The Village Voice—the end of Gary Giddins’ “Weather Bird” column in 2003, the restructuring of the paper under new ownership in 2005, the firing of Nat Hentoff in 2008—and the recent departures of Ben Ratliff and Nate Chinen from The New York Times, with signals from the paper that they would not be replaced. Some New York papers remain active in jazz—The Wall Street Journal still runs columns by Larry Blumenfeld and other contributors, for instance—but the widespread perception is that daily coverage of arts and music in New York
has been trending away from jazz. Monthly print magazines like *DownBeat*, *JazzTimes*, and *Hot House* are still active, and an album review or feature can boost a young musician’s visibility and lead to an uptick in album sales, but these only reach a specialized jazz audience. In the digital age, regular coverage of jazz with the potential to reach a broader audience has cropped up in new forms and new forums.

Online magazines and blogs are important spaces for record promotion. Meghan Stabile’s *Revive Music* website has become especially prominent. Besides promoting live performances, *Revive* also publishes exclusive previews of albums and promotional interviews with musicians, usually embedding sound or video and providing links to online stores. Another online magazine, *Nextbop.com*, plays a similar role; although based in Texas, writer Anthony Dean-Harris covers new album releases by New York musicians, sometimes in conjunction with his radio show. Some enterprising writers, such as Natalie Weiner, formerly at *Billboard*, have pushed for greater coverage of jazz at mainstream music magazines. On blogs, jazz writers (freelancing journalists and critics, but also aficionados and musicians) review albums, conduct interviews, or write about other jazz topics. Popular blogs include Marc Myer’s *JazzWax*, Dave Sumner’s *Bird is the Worm*, Ethan Iverson’s *Do the Math*, the Jazz Gallery’s *Jazz Speaks*, and NPR’s now defunct *A Blog Supreme*. Each of these blogs engages with contemporary recordings to a different extent; Sumner’s is devoted specifically to reviewing new recordings, whereas Myers only occasionally discusses them, focusing instead on rare or “classic” albums.

See Max Cea’s “Welcome to the Jazzless Age: Change in New York Times Coverage Spells Trouble for a Scene” for a good overview of the state of jazz criticism in New York (2017). Weiner left *Billboard* to cover sports and culture for *Bleacher Report* in March 2017, a setback for consistent jazz coverage at non-jazz-specific publications. Some non-music magazines (e.g., style magazines) have run features of young New York musicians. See Will Friedwald’s “These Millennials Are Shaking Up the Jazz World” in *Vanity Fair* (2015).
The other pillar of the traditional jazz media has been terrestrial radio. Although commercial radio had largely moved *en masse* away from jazz before the digital era, public radio still serves the jazz listeners in the New York area rather well. WBGO out of Newark, NJ is not only still prominent, but is showing signs of revitalization. It recently relaunched its website, which features a live stream of its terrestrial broadcast, and it recruited Chinen to spearhead a revamped editorial division. It has also partnered with National Public Radio and Jazz at Lincoln Center to run the popular *Jazz Night in America* program. While being backed by a label can provide the resources and clout needed to get a recording featured on the radio, most young musicians don’t count on having regular radio exposure, much less getting an interview or a profile. Podcasts have helped fill this gap to a limited extent. There are some shows—such as WBGO’s *The Checkout*, hosted by Simon Rentner—that are edited versions of radio broadcasts, but others are exclusively podcasted, such as Dave Douglas’s *A Noise from the Deep*. Musicians occasionally appear on non-jazz-specific podcasts, as when Otis Brown III was featured on Jesse Thorn’s *Bullseye* to promote *The Thought of You* or when José James was featured on NPR’s *Latino USA* to promote *Yesterday I Had the Blues: The Music of Billie Holiday* (Blue Note, 2015). In the main, jazz has been curiously slow to embrace podcasts as a medium, although that could change soon; Ratliff recently mused offhandedly that a “weirdly influential podcast” could take the place of the *Times* coverage (quoted in Cea 2017).

Many musicians are uncertain about the importance of these traditional press outlets and their digital adaptations to promoting their recordings. Some musicians I spoke to expressed frustration that, even when newspapers covered jazz more robustly, they were competing for coverage with either crossover artists or jazz “stars” and with album reissues or recently
discovered sessions by master musicians.\(^{23}\) Others have been irritated by some album reviewers’ lack of discernment, or at least by the criteria by which they sometimes seem to evaluate records, which some musicians perceive as biased towards slick marketing material or even expository writings by the musicians themselves.\(^{24}\) On balance, however, many musicians regard coverage in traditional outlets as beneficial. To that end, even if they are on a label with an in-house staff, they may hire additional publicists to facilitate getting their albums into the hands of critics and radio programmers.\(^{25}\) Indeed, some musicians who seem to have “broken” onto the scene by virtue of their prodigious talent actually had a large management and promotion team working in the background.\(^{26}\) Those who have not benefitted from coverage themselves often still worry that the potential decline of traditional press coverage will negatively affect the vitality of jazz in New York; although many musicians are competitive and seek individual recognition, they also have something of a “rising tide lifts all ships” mentality about the promotion of jazz in general.

**Social media**

Without being able to count on traditional media outlets to promote their recordings, however, musicians have turned social media into indispensable resources. Using platforms like

\(^{23}\) Musicians may not always find allies in their labels, which may have the rights to extensive back catalogs. At a concert in 2015, Christian Scott aTunde Adjuah discussed his decision to leave Concord because he felt they were underinvesting in marketing his music.

\(^{24}\) In the July 2016 issue of *DownBeat*, trumpeter Jeremy Pelt wrote a letter to the editor expressing his disappointment with a recent profile of him, which he though dwelt upon his work as a sideman (as opposed to highlighting his work as a leader) and made patronizing comparisons to Miles Davis and Freddie Hubbard.

\(^{25}\) Fully Altered Media, Two for the Show Media, and Red Cat Publicity are some of the more active publicists in New York.

\(^{26}\) See Heckman (2008) on Esperanza Spalding. This is not to imply that Spalding and other successful musicians aren’t prodigiously talented; on the contrary, their talent is what attracts managers and promoters in the first place.
Squarespace, YouTube, MailChimp, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Bandcamp, and SoundCloud, they publicize albums, announce live performances, and communicate directly with fans and other musicians. Due to the inherently interactive nature of social media, most musicians believe that, to be effective, their use of social media must transcend the basic transactional relationship of seller and (potential) buyer. Beyond merely promoting music, they cultivate social profiles, post personal and professional “status updates,” share photos, audio, and video, and, ultimately, attract “followers” and “likes,” which broaden their audiences for further social media activity, and, ideally, for their recorded (and live) music.

One of the most basic forms of social media that virtually all musicians use is the website.²⁷ Popular site building applications such as Squarespace and Wix have made it possible for just about anyone to create an elegant web page with no computer programming experience whatsoever. Most musician or band pages have the same set of features: a biography, a gallery of promotional and live performance photos, a discography of recording credits, a media page featuring audio and video clips, links to the musician’s online store or other merchants, and contact information. Some musicians have personal blogs, and others have pages dedicated to certain projects, such as a recent commission, theoretical writings, or (as discussed above) an album. The website also has links to other social media profiles; in this sense, it acts as a hub for the musician’s entire web presence.

²⁷ Some might object to my classifying websites as “social media.” Indeed, musicians do not typically interact extensively with fans on their websites; they update the content and fans access it. Even so, websites are often formatted as blogs, which can be open to fan comments (to which musicians can subsequently respond), and almost always incorporate other social media content (Twitter profiles, photo streams, etc.) Besides, if platforms like Facebook and Twitter are inarguably social media platforms in ways that websites are not, then we risk overestimating the extent to which those spaces are truly interactive. In other words, some musicians are as likely to respond to a comment on their website’s blog as they are to a comment on an Instagram post.
Over the last couple of years, the emailed newsletter has become a common supplement to the personal website. Newsletters typically serve to update subscribers on notable events in the musician’s career, such as receiving a commission, making progress on a recording project, or scheduling a tour. They also include more static information, such as promotional photos for albums with links to iTunes or Amazon, links to the musician’s website and other social media profiles, and quotes from album or performance reviews. Services like MailChimp streamline the process of designing and distributing newsletters, providing a variety of templates. Musicians can manually subscribe people to their newsletter (perhaps off a list of email addresses they’ve collected at live performances), but they also embed sign-up forms in the home page of their websites (see Figure 4). Trombonist Ryan Keberle incentivized subscription to his newsletter by offering a free MP3 download of an unreleased recording upon sign-up.

Above, I described some of the ways that musicians are using video both as a format for release and as a visual supplement to the audio recording. Musicians also use video for promotion; in fact, promotional considerations may determine for which track the musician chooses to make a video. Aidan Carroll created a music video for “Sundays” and release it as a single in part because he expected it to be the tune most likely to attract new listeners to his record: “It’s the only tune on the record with vocals, and I wanted people to hear that first” (2015). Videos often display information about when the album will be released and where it can be purchased (typically at the beginning or the end); on YouTube’s site, that information and relevant links will be visible in a text description under the video player. Adapting terms from the film industry, Motéma Records and some other labels call such videos “teasers” or “trailers.”

Another use of video for promotion is as a component of an electronic press kit (EPK). Press kits are assembled by the artist or their manager and include materials like biographies,
photos, tour dates, and published interviews. For album promotion, many musicians streamline the EPK into one short video. At a minimum, these contain audio from some of the album tracks, promotional photographs, and information about the musician and the album, including the record label, the release date, and in what formats and where it will be available for purchase or streaming. More extensive EPK videos might feature footage of the musicians both in performance and socializing (in the studio, on tour, around New York, etc.) as well as interviews with the bandleader, producer, or other musicians describing the concept of the album, the compositions, the process of recording, and the personnel involved. In almost all cases, EPK videos will be professionally produced, with bold fonts, bright colors, and slick transitions between clips and images. Whereas press kits are traditionally sent to booking agents, radio programmers, or media outlets, many album EPKs are posted to YouTube and embedded in the musician’s web page, where they can be viewed by the public.

The most popular social media platforms have been even more transformative to strategies of album promotion: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and a few others. There are important distinctions between these platforms in terms of both type and amount of “content” one can share. Facebook is arguably the most robust in terms of tools; musicians can post videos, photos, and text updates of any length, create event pages for live performances, construct elaborate profiles, and communicate with visitors using both public comments or private messages. Some musicians use their personal profiles for these tasks, perhaps loosening privacy

protections to make their account accessible to the public, or, alternatively, keeping privacy protections tight but accepting just about anyone as a “friend.” This type of account comes with certain restrictions, however, including how many friends one can have. Many musicians therefore use “musician/band pages,” which have different features from personal profiles, including biographical fields like “Genre” and “Record Label” and built-in links to the musician’s store; most importantly, they allow an unlimited number of “followers” (as opposed to friends).

Facebook provides musicians with several other tools that help them promote albums. Musicians can pay to create advertisements, which Facebook pushes into the feeds of other users, greatly expanding the number of people a promotional post can reach and, hopefully, enticing more to buy the album or at least follow the artist. In addition to advertising, musicians also get “analytics” from their band pages, a breakdown of the relevant metadata that Facebook collects from its users. Musicians can see how many “views” and “click-throughs” their posts get, where in the world they are coming from, and how long the average visitor spends on their band page. This kind of information can be valuable when planning release strategies for albums (such as whether to work with an international distributor), not to mention when planning tours.

Twitter and Instagram are more limited than Facebook in terms of professional features, and so although many musicians use them to promote albums, they tend to feature more social interaction with listeners and with one another. (One musician told me he mostly uses Twitter to “talk shit about Madden”—a football video game series—with other musicians.) One of the most important currencies of Twitter is the “mention,” when one user tweets something at another or incorporates their username (“handle”) in a tweet. Mentioning a fellow musician, for instance, can initiate a dialogue, which is then visible to the other musician’s followers. High levels of
interaction tend to expand a musician’s social media “reach” (the sum total of her presence on Twitter) and, ultimately, their “engagement” (the level at which people are interacting with her content) and “influence” (the level at which those people are encouraging others to interact with it). Within the jazz community, such activity tends to be largely friendly, supportive, and positive, but there are sometimes acrimonious exchanges; Twitter has been the forum for high-profile jazz controversies of recent years, especially between musicians and critics.\(^{29}\)

Instagram has the fewest features explicitly for professional musicians, although its basic formula of an image with a caption is well-suited to promoting new records, and, like Twitter, high levels of activity (including following other users and liking their posts) increase visibility across the platform. Still, Instagram is very popular among musicians, primarily for social purposes, such as to post pictures from the road or even life events (or non-events) unrelated to their careers. Instagram also accommodates video, and so some musicians post short clips from studio sessions or live performances that they filmed on their phone. It most recently added a feature called “Stories,” which allows users to string together a sequence of photos or videos with superimposed text; these stories then expire after a day.\(^{30}\) Musicians use this feature to post narrative sequences of clips from live performances or the recording studio. A story from a touring musician might consist of a sequence of photos from the departure airport, the arrival airport, public transportation, the hotel, the city streets, the sound check, backstage before the concert, the concert itself, and then the post-concert “hang.”

\(^{29}\) High profile jazz “Twitter feuds” have involved Nicholas Payton’s response to Ben Ratliff’s profile of young pianists in the *New York Times*, John Halle’s “Jazz after Politics” piece in *Jacobin*, a piece of satire purportedly written by Sonny Rollins in the *New Yorker*, and, most recently, Robert Glasper’s remarks to Ethan Iverson about women and jazz.

\(^{30}\) Instagram modeled Stories off a feature of another social media app, Snapchat.
Finally, Periscope (owned by Twitter) and Facebook Live have recently become popular social media tools for musicians. They allow musicians to broadcast live video taken with their smartphones over the Internet (livestream); viewers can like and comment on the videos in real time. It is most common for musicians to livestream live performances; I once observed a musician tweet that he was about to take a solo and that people should tune into his Periscope livestream to check it out. (I did; he had his phone set up on the edge of the piano, pointed at the keyboard.) Musicians might also use Facebook Live and Periscope to livestream from the recording studio. Days before this dissertation was completed, bassist Esperanza Spalding announced the details of her next album project, Exposure. She and a group of musicians will be going into the recording studio with nothing prepared, and, over the course of three days, they will “create, compose, write, record, produce, and finish an album in front of a live audience.” The entire process (including breaks to eat and sleep) will be broadcast on Facebook Live, and Spalding will read real-time comments from fans, “allowing them to participate in the creative process.”


New media, the recording industry, and jazz

What has the proliferation of new media of distribution and promotion meant for jazz musicians? Many both inside and outside the music industry see it as the basis for a more robust and equitable music economy. Not only do new media provide adequate alternatives to essential aspects of the traditional recording industry, but they often obviate the need for cultural “gatekeepers” at record labels, newspapers, and other institutions, so that more musicians can
deliver more music to larger audiences more quickly and at a lower cost. A 2015 report in The New York Times Magazine celebrated digital media for the diversification of “revenue streams” available to creatives, concluding that artists are “thriving” in the new economy (Johnson 2015). 32 A Vanity Fair profile of young jazz musicians called the effects of new media on the music industry “overwhelmingly positive,” especially for artistry and innovation in jazz: “Contemporary jazzmen and -women are free to create in whatever style they want, whether an existing format . . . or a mode entirely of their own invention” (Friedwald 2015).

Indeed, many young jazz musicians have welcomed these changes. Although most retain a fondness for traditional formats and still value conventional media coverage, they have embraced new media of distribution and promotion to disseminate their music and connect with both existing and new audiences. There is a pervasive feeling that new media literacy is now necessary, or, as a JazzTimes article put it as early as 2008, “virtually obligatory” for successful participation in the new jazz economy (Heckman 2008). I asked Colin Stranahan if new media are essential for advancing one’s career, and he was unequivocal:

Absolutely. Absolutely. And I’ll argue with people about this all the time. I think that it’s very important. I do. Yeah, say what you want. Some people hate Facebook, some people don’t. I have found, in my own personal experience and from watching other people, that posting a lot of things is very important if you’re a public figure or if you’re a musician that people know, [people] who are curious as to what you’re doing . . . I’ll still promote [a recording] on Facebook or Instagram, and it gets great responses, and I think that element of it is just very, 

32 The article profiled young creatives from across the arts, including jazz saxophonist Bob Reynolds.
very important. It should not be forgotten . . . You know, I’ll meet someone on there and stay in touch with them, or we’ll end up working together, or I’ll get recommended by somebody for something else . . . Even venues contact me and are like, “Oh, we’d love to have this group, or recording, or . . .” . . . It’s good for lessons. Yeah, all different kinds of things. The social media side has been very helpful to do self-promotion, you know. A lot of people would argue [against] that, but I personally have had a lot of really cool things come from it. If you’re a musician that has stuff out there and has a little bit of a buzz . . . It’s important to stay connected and to try to give something back. (2015)

Aidan Carroll echoed this sentiment:

You know, I think, in this day and age, they’re definitely necessary. I really do. At the same time, I’m also amazed and I admire people that don’t use them at all.

You know, like, incredible musicians that somehow survive. But someone who’s trying to do their own thing, you know, and really put that out there, you gotta do that stuff. I mean, I’ve thought that all of it helps. (2015)

Even some veteran musicians like saxophonist Joshua Redman share this perspective:

Jazz musicians have to find a way to build their audiences, and they have to find a way to make that work in the new paradigm for information sharing and how music reaches people and new avenues for exposure. A lot of it is about social media. I guess that musicians have to find a way to make that work for them.

(Stryker and Redman 2014)

The compulsory nature of new media engagement was the premise of a panel called “Making Social Media Work (& Pay)” at the 2015 Jazz Connect Conference, an annual industry
conference in New York. The panel featured management and promotion professionals lecturing musicians on how best to cultivate a social media presence to benefit their careers. They offered advice on using websites (“Build it for what people are looking for, not what you want them to know”), newsletters (the “prevalent trend in social media”), Facebook band pages (“a must,” but “post only three to four times per week”), Twitter (tweet at least six times a day—two original tweets, two advertisements, and two retweets—but you cannot over-tweet), and Instagram (“‘Visual content’ is the buzzword of 2015”), as well as general recommendations (“Operate in as many communication channels as you feel comfortable with”). The only professional musician on the panel, guitarist Nir Felder, spoke more broadly about the benefits of social media to the artist-fan relationship; fans want social media to show them “the real you” and to give them a chance to be your friend.

Whether by such a systematic approach or more organically, jazz musicians are indeed finding many ways for new media to work for them. In a recent interview, drummer Mark Guiliana attested to the convenience of Bandcamp:

Now, with technology and being able to make a video and post it that night and share some art and make a record and sell it on Bandcamp—all these things—I feel like, [even] if I’m not on that eight-month tour, I can still… My creative output can still be very high, even if from home. You know, always working on new things and sharing them. (Varriale and Guiliana 2013)

Saxophonist Ben Wendel told me that he believes his audience has grown due to the availability of his music on services like YouTube and Spotify: “I definitely see a correlation between, you know, videos on YouTube and music on all these streaming services connecting to fans and people coming out because they literally discovered your music through any of the million ways
that you can access music now” (2015). One musician is confident that his investment in Facebook advertisements has increased his record sales: “I can’t tell you how much money I’ve spent on Facebook ads. It’s like the only way people will really see what you post, unless you’re huge. That’s sort of a drag, but it can help!” (2015). Snarky Puppy has attributed much of their success to their YouTube videos and other new media endeavors. About the band’s success internationally, League wrote:

To me, it’s a sign that there is an underground scene larger than the mainstream. And not just larger, but more powerful, faster-moving, and with the ability for a normal person . . . to make an unknown band into a household name in their country, simply on account of the music being interesting. No photo shoots, publicists, A&R people, or record labels necessary. Just music, listeners, and an Internet connection. As a music lover, you should feel empowered. (Johnson and League 2014)

One broader phenomenon associated with social media has been the “branding” of individuals as content creators. Particularly savvy musicians have used social media platforms in conjunction with album and live performance design to construct and promote their own brand. Aidan Carroll attested to this in our conversation:

One thing I really paid attention to for this record was branding: image, and how to portray that across social media. Because one thing that I was noticing over the last year or so is how successful people used social media—musicians who have an image, they have a look, they have a logo, they have a specific font for their name, for their record, their website looks all in accordance . . . Everything that they do on social media will be connected and consistent. And that’s one thing
musicians need to learn about. I’m sure that a lot of jazz musicians are still clueless about that. It’s more of a pop culture sensibility, but it’s super important. So, I did all those things. I had a logo, an AC Music logo . . . I tried to make the record look a certain way, have a design and “look” to it, with the photos, too. And you try to represent that on your Instagram, your Twitter, your Facebook. It’s gotta be… You want people to think of you in a certain way. I really do. At the same time, it’s still important to be honest and casual every once in a while. You want to be loose. You don’t want to be just a promoting machine. But, I really do support that kind of concept and think it’s important to know about branding and how to market yourself, because, yeah, it matters. (2015)

Cross-platform branding through digital media also works effectively for record labels. The brand identity of Greenleaf Music is strongly connected to its web presence. As early as 2006, founder Dave Douglas experimented with selling MP3 downloads of live recordings the morning after the sets. Today, the company offers subscription service for exclusive recordings and hosts its own streaming platform. As noted above, Douglas also hosts a Greenleaf podcast that profiles musicians and recordings from the label, and the label operates social media accounts on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

Despite the promise of new media, many musicians have reservations about their lasting roles in the music economy. For media of distribution, musicians are especially concerned about how to get fair royalty rates from the most popular digital music platforms, like Spotify, Apple Music, and YouTube. When I put to Ben Wendel the question of the relative advantages and disadvantages of streaming music, he thought very carefully:
My feeling is that the movement towards streaming music is a great thing. That more and more of the billions of people on earth having access to art and to music through their digital devices in a very easy, streamlined way is good. The only thing is: We unfortunately are in a transitionary time where the mechanisms for compensating artists are really not in place yet. Nobody really knows what it should or shouldn’t be. And all of the companies that are at the forefront of this technology . . . they don’t really have any need to tell artists how much money they’re making off of ad revenue, etc., which makes a lot of sense if you’re trying to make profits; it’s not in your interest to reveal to the people that provide you content what you’re making off of them, because then the negotiations start, etc. etc. So, I think—I hope and I think—that in the long run (but unfortunately this might be a very long run), these technologies will start to settle, and just maybe, perhaps through music unions, through the government, etc. etc., some of these technologies might get regulated . . . At which point, I do think that perhaps it will be a viable model where people will make money.

A potential roadblock to equity for independent musicians, however, is that the major labels and distributors are setting the standards for their agreements with digital music platforms, and some independent musicians feel that these institutions have been selling them down the river; the majors were too slow to adapt to the post-Napster digital era, and they cut bum deals to catch up. The current royalty rates may benefit the top tier of artists, but they generate literally tens of dollars at best for most other artists. Although some in the jazz scene are optimistic that the streaming model will eventually evolve to benefit independent musicians, others remain deeply
skeptical. Referring to another panel at the Jazz Connect conference, one musician I spoke to was blunt:

I think there was a whole panel dedicated to people being angry about Spotify.
And I was like, “First of all, if you’re expecting to pay your rent off of Spotify, you are lost.” Unless you’re Eminem or, like, Bon Jovi, maybe. You know? But, Joe Schmo Jazz Musician that’s gonna go picket Spotify because she wants to make an extra fifty dollars? It’s not a battle worth fighting.

This musician and others have instead concentrated their efforts on cultivating platforms like Bandcamp that benefit the artist more directly.33

YouTube became the epicenter of battles over fairness in the recording industry as it transitioned away from a solely user-generated content service to an ad-supported streaming service akin to Spotify and Apple Music. This is not only because of its massive size, which makes setting fair royalty rates particularly consequential, but also because it is openly engaged in what many musicians believe is or ought to be illegal activity. Most of this activity pertains to YouTube’s role (or lack thereof) in protecting the rights of content creators. Under the “safe

33 Bandcamp has positioned itself as an artist-friendly alternative to services like iTunes and Spotify. In a message to users in spring 2016, Bandcamp CEO Ethan Diamond boasted that both physical and digital music sales had increased on Bandcamp despite the downward trend industry-wide. The message concluded: “Subscription-based music streaming . . . has yet to prove itself to be a viable model, even after hundreds of millions of investment dollars raised and spent. For our part, we are committed to offering an alternative that we know works. As long as there are fans who care about the welfare of their favorite artists and want to help them keep making music, we will continue to provide that direct connection. And as long as there are fans who want to own, not rent, their music, that is a service we will continue to provide, and that is a model whose benefits we will continue to champion” (Diamond 2016). Importantly, Diamond has often stressed that Bandcamp does not reject the technology of streaming—on the contrary, users can stream albums that they purchase using the Bandcamp app—but rather the “access” model of music streaming currently powering subscription-based services.
harbor” provision of the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA), YouTube has been protected from liability for any content uploaded in violation of copyrights. Because they have had no legal incentive to police the content on their site, the onus of monitoring for infringing material has in most cases fallen squarely to the copyright holders. This is an extraordinarily burdensome task for independent musicians, as they must generate and submit “take down notices” for each infringement. In an ostensible effort to help musicians with this labor, YouTube developed a program known as Content ID, which automatically scans uploaded content for infringing material and notifies the copyright holder of any matches; the creator then chooses either to block the content or to “monetize” it, allowing it to remain posted but attaching advertisements that generate money for the rights holder, YouTube, and, controversially, the uploader. Although this model may be appealing in theory, some musicians have said that they were rejected by the Content ID program because they did not agree to its exploitative terms, including permitting YouTube to monetize their entire catalog, refusing them access to its internal data about viewers, and others. Paradoxically, musicians resent these conditions because they want to retain both the ability to maximally capitalize on their music and the ability to give it away for free.\textsuperscript{34}

Jazz musicians have been very active in the legal and public relations fight against YouTube and other streaming music platforms. Bassist Ben Allison has served as the President of

\textsuperscript{34} These issues were brought to widespread public attention in the wake of independent musician and composer Zoë Keating’s blog post about her experience with YouTube’s “monetization” scheme (2015). YouTube published its own blog post, “Setting the Record Straight,” in which it defended Content ID (Muller 2016), which prompted a critical response from artist manager Irving Azoff, which itself drew a response from entrepreneur and “vlogger” Hank Green (Azoff 2016, Green 2016). Jonathan Taplin summarized much of the debate in a New York Times op-ed (2016).
the Board of the New York chapter of the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences and has been an outspoken advocate for artists’ rights. Much of his work has been dedicated to rectifying the inadequacies of the DMCA, especially the “take down notice” requirement (Allison 2016). Guitarist Marc Ribot has worked with another advocacy organization, Content Creators Coalition (c3), to compel the government to protect creators’ rights in the digital era. This includes fights against the content acquisition policies of YouTube described above (what Ribot has called “commercial, ad-based piracy”) and fights for fair royalty rates from streaming services like Spotify and Apple Music (and, in the meantime, terrestrial airplay) (Douglas and Ribot 2015).

Arguably the fiercest advocate for artists’ rights—not only within jazz, but in general—has been composer and bandleader Maria Schneider. Schneider wrote a scathing open letter to YouTube in May 2016, accusing it of grossly violating the conditions of the safe harbor carve-out, which prevent companies from “substantially influencing” users to violate copyrights. She argued that YouTube could hardly give users a stronger incentive to upload copyrighted content than the chance to make money from it. Further, Schneider argued that YouTube “intimidates” content creators into agreeing to its exploitative monetization terms, both through sly public relations stunts (like showing users a “frownie face” when they attempt to watch content that a creator has blocked) and through threats of legal action (while making no such threats against the copyright violators). She has called the company “sick” and likened their business model to “criminal racketeering” (Schneider 2016).

As for social media, musicians are similarly ambivalent. “I don’t know. I mean… It’s great and terrible at the same time,” Remy Le Boeuf told me (2015). One cause for skepticism is the feeling that social media fame—the visibility of a musician’s brand—is a poor measure of a
musician’s reputation. Le Boeuf continued: “You get these people whose identities exist on the Internet. Or, somebody who’s amazing but doesn’t post a lot of videos gets no recognition” (2015). Some musicians see crafting social media profiles as a way of fabricating an identity rather than revealing an artist’s “real” self. When I asked one musician about platforms like Twitter and Instagram, he thought for a second and then responded:

I guess they’re necessary and fun, but… It’s kind of the same thing with Facebook. It’s like, people [are] “faking the funk.” Your life on Twitter and Instagram is… It’s just kinda bullshit . . . On Instagram, you can put up some fancy-ass picture and some fancy link and show like a bunch of people and it’s like, “Oh my God! It *sounds* like shit, but it *looks* like it’s supposed to be a big deal, so I’m gonna be part of it.”

Other musicians scoff at their colleagues who blend their professional and personal activities too much. Although he himself is an advocate for social media use, Colin Stranahan summarized this argument against it, quoting an imaginary colleague: “‘Nobody cares if you set up that cymbal and tried playing on it today. Nobody cares if you got a package in the mail with your new albums. I don’t want to waste my time writing to people I don’t know’” (2015).

Another cause for skepticism is related to musicians’ concerns about crowdsourcing discussed in Chapter 2. Even as they value the control of their own music that social media afford, they have concerns about normalizing a model that places the onus on musicians to be their own promoters. Saxophonist Kamasi Washington stated that, with social media, “there are gives and takes. The give is that you have to basically be your own promoter. You are responsible for a certain amount of your PR, whereas you know in the past the artist had nothing to do with it” (quoted in Sullivan 2016). The challenge of this to musicians is further compounded by the
fact that social media networks often rely on existing networks and relationships (pre-existing fan bases, relationship with a record label, etc.). As Vijay Iyer recently told Max Cea: “It’s hard to just start from scratch . . . and say, ‘Look I’m active on social media, give me a gig.’ And you can’t really start from scratch when you haven’t had those kinds of footholds” (quoted in Cea 2017). This goes for media of distribution as much as social media. Many attribute Snarky Puppy’s mainstream success to their innovative use of YouTube, as I did in the Introduction. But many musicians insist that this level of success would not have been possible without the group’s tireless touring in the early stages of their career, which established a small but diffuse and devoted fan base that could more quickly and broadly amplify their new media content as it became available. Still, there are interesting exceptions. One of Snarky Puppy’s collaborators, British multi-instrumentalist Jacob Collier, is arguably jazz’s first “YouTube star,” having gained prominence via videos he records from his own bedroom studio, which he has since parlayed into international performances, two Grammy Awards, and offers of record deals from Universal and Sony.35

35 Reportedly, Collier turned down multi-album deals and signed a “demo” deal, which allows him to produce recordings at the record company’s expense but retain rights to the sound recordings if they decide not to release them (“Jacob Collier – the vocalist/multi-instrumentalist YouTube sensation”). It’s telling that such deals used to be favorable to the record company, mitigating the risk of signing a young artist. Today, they might be favorable to the artist, ensuring that the company can’t block them from releasing their own music.
CHAPTER 5. Jazz style: Songs, beats, and solos

In Chapter 1, I argued that musicians’ formative encounters with jazz recordings primed them to embrace recording technologies and recorded media as essential artistic and professional resources, and in Chapters 2–4, I demonstrated how musicians put those preferences into practice, making innovative records and using new media and social networks to share their music. I also suggested in Chapter 1 that many of the styles of jazz that musicians encountered on record are those that have been marginalized in conventional jazz histories, in part because they were commercially-oriented, embracing popular music conventions like tuneful melodies, groove-based rhythms, and high production values and deemphasizing qualities like swing and extensive soloing. In short, musicians’ listening habits—hearing a Grover Washington, Jr. record on a black radio station or a Jimmy Smith sample on a hip-hop track—naturalized the relationship between jazz, recording technologies, and popular music aesthetics.

In this chapter, I investigate this relationship in contemporary jazz record production. I do not claim to be comprehensive in my account of contemporary jazz style, which is extraordinarily diverse. Many jazz musicians still compose on the model of the standards, writing main melodies (the “head”) and harmonic progressions (the “changes”) that serve as the basis for a series of improvised solos. Others compose what critic Greg Tate has described as “chamber-ish” compositions (Hughes 2016). These tend to be sophisticated, multi-sectional or even through-composed pieces, which may require many pages of precise notation representing thorny melodies or complicated metric shifts; it is not uncommon for bandleaders to incorporate string sections or electronic instruments or to compose specific bass lines, drum patterns, or chord voicings. Still other musicians might compose pieces intended for “free” improvisation, some of which essentially amount to a basic set of instructions. Most musicians are adept at
composing in multiple musical styles. Their choices are not only artistic but sometimes professional; musicians might cater to the (real or imagined) stylistic preferences of a certain foundation committee or a record label.¹

I discuss a rather narrow range of stylistic trends in this chapter, not only because they are relatively prominent among the musicians in this cohort, but also because they are in significant part predicated upon uses of recording technologies and recorded media, although they have also been adapted to live performance, often in quite innovative ways. I categorize these trends under the aesthetic frameworks of *songs* and *beats*, which I use to index sets of stylistic features related to lyrics, melody, rhythm, and timbre, but which may overlap considerably. These two concepts are primarily associated with non-jazz genres, including pop, hip-hop, and electronic music, and—in present usage at least—also sometimes carry strong associations with recording technologies or recorded media. I use them deliberately with such associations in mind, because although musicians do attribute their stylistic tendencies to their formative listening experiences, they also appeal to their contemporaries in these genres as models (or “influences”). After discussing these stylistic trends, I examine their implications for soloing as a feature of jazz performance, which I suggest is becoming less significant to musicians when they make records.

**Songs**

A song may be broadly defined as a standalone piece of music for voice. The term proliferated over the course of 19th- and 20th-century American music in such forms as the

¹ Even within the cohort of musicians I followed for this project, there is great diversity of styles. The Le Boeuf Brothers’ “A Dream” suite is a strong example of a chamber-like composition; Mark Guiliana described “Please Hang Up” and “Spirit Animal” from *Beat Music* as “general guidelines of a sonic realm” (Johnson 2013).
“popular songs” of Tin Pan Alley composers and lyricists, the commercial “pop songs” of post-1950s rock, and the “protest songs” of the 1960s folk revival. The relationship between songs and jazz is deep; the repertoire of standards derives in large part from Tin Pan Alley songs, show tunes, and other popular songs. In bebop-oriented performance conventions, however, these compositions have not generally been performed as songs per se. For one thing, they have typically been performed without the original lyrics. Further, their melodies serve mostly as opening and closing themes, bookending solos improvised over the song form. Thus, original jazz compositions intended for these same performance conventions have not typically been referred to as songs. This distinction is captured in bassist Aidan Carroll’s self-identification as a songwriter as opposed to a jazz musician who “writes tunes”:

People connect to songs. That’s what jazz comes from: popular songs. You know, songs with lyrics that mean something. And that song [“Sundays”] did mean something. It’s written for my lady a few years ago . . . There’s a lot behind it, and I just thought that people would connect with it . . . I thought it would be a cool way to let people know about the record and to show another side of myself, that I’m also a songwriter of some sort, not just a jazz musician who writes tunes and plays them and records them. (2015)

Jazz singers have always composed and performed songs as songs (although they, too, might subordinate the melody and lyrics to improvised solos), but today, many jazz instrumentalists are also composing songs for their records. Sometimes they collaborate with lyricists (usually the featured singer), but many are also writing their own lyrics. Carroll wrote the lyrics to “Sundays,” performed by Chris Turner on Original Vision, and pianist Jesse Fischer
wrote “Mourning Dove,” performed by singer Sarah Elizabeth Charles on Day Dreamer.

Guitarist Kurt Rosenwinkel penned lyrics for many of the songs on his latest album, Caipi:

> Writing songs with lyrics was very much a part of my upbringing. I used to do that a lot. With Caipi, the music asked for that, so you gotta step up to the plate to do what the music asks you to do. Every once in a while there’s a song that comes through that is a lyric song, and this album shaped up to be that way. It’s definitely something different from my other albums, but it was just a matter of doing what the music needed. (quoted in Milkowski 2016)

Rosenwinkel’s fanciful suggestion that some pieces of music “need” lyrics suggests that songwriting affords non-singing musicians compelling ways to “say something” with their music other than composing or improvising instrumental music. As such, songwriting can be another technique of reinforcing the concept of an album. Drummer Eric Harland explained the lyrics he wrote for “Normal,” also sung by Chris Turner, for his album Vipassana:

> Yeah, I wrote the lyrics. Is it a dream, or our reality? Is this something I can wait another day for? Do I really want to be just...this? Or do I want to be more than this? Do I want to reach for these other desires that are in my heart, and is that OK? You see that that is OK, to continue to reach and to push to the unlimited potential that you have within you. So it becomes an anthem, of course. (Weiner and Harland 2014)

Musicians may also ask singers to write songs for them. Trumpet player Ambrose Akinmusire invited singer-songwriter and guitarist Becca Stevens to write a song for The Imagined Savior Is Far Easier to Paint. The song, “Our Basement (Ed),” was loosely based on a character created by Akinmusire (Rath and Akinmusire 2014).
Jazz musicians are also using the concept of song in a broader sense, to refer to instrumental music that shares key stylistic characteristics with songs proper. Such music generally features melodies that are *singable*, even if they are not ever properly sung. Bassist and composer Michael League was explicit about this approach to composing:

I’ll generally start on keyboard or guitar and come up with a progression and a groove. From there, I try to sing a melody over the top of it. I find that singing melodies ends up creating much better melodies than when I write them on an instrument. I find that if I can write it by singing it, then it will be easy for people to sing. It will make it simpler and more direct and hopefully catch your ear.

(Johnson and League 2014)

The notion of singability is implicit in other ways that musicians characterize their approach to composing. Saxophonist Donny McCaslin reflected on his approach to composing and recording the music for *Fast Future*, for which his goal was

not making [compositions] overly complex with the written stuff, but trying to have the key elements: the melodic strength going for it, the harmonic development clarity, the bass line thing, and then trying to leave it open for these guys to interpret . . . The more experience I’ve gotten through the years, the more I can see that [goal] when I’m in the process, and be like, ‘Yeah, this 5/8 bar… Really?’ You know? And so, and I think that’s something I learned a lot when I was in your quintet, Dave [Douglas], was just the clarity of the songs. It felt like, you know, you were able to just present things, and the key elements were always there. (Douglas, et al. 2015)
Here, McCaslin’s appeals to “melodic strength,” “clarity,” and “key elements” are somewhat opaque but in context indicate his consideration of the ease with which someone might internalize the melodies of his music. This is further implied by McCaslin’s imaginative reference to a 5/8 bar, which he dismisses as needlessly complicated.²

An aesthetic of songs often entails a related attitude about the role of improvised soloing in jazz. In contrast to traditional jazz performance conventions, musicians who compose and perform songs as songs generally regard the composed music as at least as important as improvised solos, should they be featured at all. This attitude is implicit in drummer Eric Doob’s assessment of his longtime collaborator guitarist Matt Stevens’ compositions: “His music is not so much about just having an introductory melody, on which we’re just off to the races soloing all over it” (quoted in Murph 2015). Excessive extemporization may be thought to undermine the song. Pianist Aaron Parks stressed his focus on playing songs rather than on demonstrating virtuosic improvising abilities:

The idea is to get people who love playing songs. The improvisation element is an important part, but I want to be playing the songs in a way where it feels natural and flowing and organic where things can happen. But with this project, the point is the song . . . The idea is the songs. The whole thing is just songs, man. It’s a

² I do not say very much in this chapter about stylistic approaches to harmony. Such approaches can never be entirely disaggregated from approaches to melody, however, and so within the framework of songs, I would provisionally argue that there is a related tendency towards relatively simple harmonic progressions. I do not mean that these musicians do not use sophisticated chord voicings; in fact, the ability to coax a memorable melody out of an unusual harmonic progression is especially impressive. What I do observe is that excessive variation in harmony within a single composition is increasingly avoided by many jazz musicians, because these run the risk of undermining “the clarity of a song.” For a good overview of contemporary approaches to jazz harmony, see Stover (2014).
band for songs. It’s kind of simple, but that’s pretty much what it is for me right now . . . If you come expecting a lot of shredding, you’ll be at the wrong place [laughs]. (Fishman and Parks 2015)

Due to both the preference for memorable melodies and the relative lack of protracted solos, jazz songs tend to be relatively short pieces of music (as jazz compositions go), perhaps around four to six minutes, though some can be even shorter. Most songs on guitarist Julian Lage’s latest album Arclight (Mack Avenue, 2016) are between two and four minutes long; their brevity was inspired by Lage’s singer-songwriter girlfriend (Beuttler 2016). Similarly, Ben Wendel told me that, when performing live, he is comfortable “stretching out” for 15 minutes on one tune, but when he recording, he challenges himself “to distill down the essence of the songs and try to convey them in the shortest amount of time possible” (2015).

Musicians who write and record songs draw from a variety of models. Interestingly, the standards themselves serve as models, with the important distinction that, when recording, musicians hew closer to their original performance conventions rather than those of bebop-oriented jazz. Compositions from soul jazz, instrumental R&B, gospel music, and other genres that constituted formative listening experiences are often built upon the stylistic characteristics and performance conventions of songs: tuneful melodies, uncomplicated harmonic progressions, and the relative lack of extensive soloing, primarily. These preferences have also been instilled by music squarely within the widely-accepted jazz canon; as Marcus Strickland attested to DownBeat: “The lasting impression of Wayne Shorter and Joe Henderson and John Coltrane on me is that their songs were actual songs, you could sing the [melodies] . . . That’s very important in my writing” (quoted in Micallef 2016:46).
It is also important to consider jazz musicians’ interests in the music of their contemporaries in non-jazz genres. I noted in Chapter 2 that many jazz musicians work as touring band or session musicians for pop, rock, and soul artists, contexts in which they often develop an affinity and aptitude for song-based aesthetics. As bassist Larry Grenadier noted, creative pop musicians tend to have a highly developed sensitivity to the elegance of songs: “Certain pop musicians have a better feeling for sensing the structure of a whole tune, seeing a whole tune and how to balance out a whole tune... whereas jazz musicians are always trying to being [sic] super-creative, play something different all the time” (Hum, et al. 2014). Artists like Radiohead, Bjork, and D’Angelo are widely admired by jazz musicians, as are lesser known artists like the electropop and soul bands Little Dragon and Hiatus Kaiyote, singer-songwriters Andrew Bird and Emily King, and indie rock group Tame Impala.

It is also not especially uncommon for jazz musicians to have favorable attitudes towards the most mainstream of contemporary pop. While they admire performers, they often have a stronger respect for pop producers. Contemporary pop song production has been dominated by what John Seabrook calls the “track-and-hook” technique, in which an underlying production (“track”) is paired with a catchy chorus melody (“hook”) (Seabrook 2015). Even if they don’t particularly enjoy the music, some musicians at least admire the consistency with which pop producers create music that appeals to mainstream audiences. One musician I spoke to aspired to move to Los Angeles (which has largely superseded New York as the epicenter of the pop music industry) and become a pop songwriter himself. Full-throated endorsement of commercial

3 Lyrics are then composed by a “top-liner,” and the song is recorded by a star singer. The assembly-line like creation of pop songs has plenty of precedents in pop music history, not the least of which is Tin Pan Alley. Its modern incarnation is generally associated with the Swedish producer Denniz PoP, and, above all, his protégé Max Martin.
popular music is hardly widespread among jazz musicians, but it must be said that a blanket animosity towards mainstream pop that has been characteristic of some past and current jazz scenes should not be taken for granted.

The resonances between jazz and commercial popular music signal some professional considerations that musicians make when writing and recording music. Musicians strive to make their music more “relevant” to American popular culture, and they see composing songs as an avenue to more widespread appeal. (Consider Carroll’s insistence that “people connect to songs”; he also told me that he aspires to make music that is “current”). When musicians use “song” to denote a composition, it not only indexes certain aspects of style, but also employs a colloquial usage of the term to refer to any piece of popular music, including music from R&B, soul, rock, and pop, but notably, not jazz or classical. Thus, jazz musicians might still use “song” to refer to a piece of music that is relatively complex in terms of melody, form, or other traits, as long they imagine it might have commercial appeal or otherwise want to distinguish it from common conceptions of jazz performances as inaccessible and irrelevant.

**Beats**

Another set of stylistic features in contemporary jazz may be categorized under the framework of *beats*, which, interestingly enough, is a work concept in those popular music genres, especially hip-hop and electronic dance music (henceforth, “beats-based” genres), that are *not* typically oriented around the concept of songs.⁴ Whereas songs’ associations with

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⁴ Joseph Schloss defines “beats” in hip-hop as “musical collages composed of brief segments of recorded sound” (2014:2), a definition which emphasizes hip-hop’s origins as a sample-based music. His definition remains technically accurate if it is emphasized that “segments of recorded sound” now commonly include original music generated by software instruments.
recording technologies obtain primarily through the mass mediation of popular music, beats are usually directly associated with contemporary techniques of DAW-based music production; as already discussed in Chapter 3, some musicians are approaching jazz recording by quite literally “making beats.” But the aesthetics of beats-based music like hip-hop and electronic dance music are also being adapted to compositional approaches that do necessarily not rely on the technologies of the studio.

One technique has been the use of “loops.” To be sure, looping predates beats-based music; tape looping, for instance, was an essential technique of Pierre Schaeffer’s *musique concrète*, among other experimental music, including, once again, recordings by Tristano, Davis, and Macero. Still, contemporary jazz musicians’ concepts of looping are strongly linked to hip-hop and electronic music production. In those music cultures, the practices of looping were heavily shaped by, first, hip-hop turntablists’ looping of drum breaks, and, shortly afterwards, producers’ use of programmable drum machines and digital samplers; today, DAWs facilitate just about any kind of looping. In jazz, loops appear as short, repeating passages, generally consisting of a relatively simple chord progression, a prominent bass line, and a steady drum pattern. As Ben Ratliff characterized the music of the group ERIMAJ, led by drummer Jamire Williams, “A lot of the set settled into seesaws between two chords: a logical place where the old-style rhythm-section vamp meets the sampled loop” (2010). In an interview with Jacob Bickenstaff, Robert Glasper connects his use of loops in his music to hip-hop production aesthetics (as well as to broader African and Asian aesthetics):

Jacob Bickenstaff: Both in your trio and the Experiment, I hear a central element of repetition, similar to a sample or loop. Is there a feeling you get from that—is it something hypnotic?
Robert Glasper: That's exactly what it is. I think there's beauty in repetition. And that's part of my culture and African culture as well: repeated things, mantra. It's spiritual, it's meditation, it's Buddhism, it's praying, it's all these things. It's the repetitive thing that brings space. That's one of the things I love secretly about hip-hop. Jazz doesn't have that element. It changes every bar, nothing is ever the same. Most jazz musicians get off on making it different every time. But that approach is not as spiritual. Coltrane would stay on one chord, and you'd keep hearing that one sound, over and over. He would play all kinds of stuff over it, but you just hear this one chord. (N.d.)

Musicians have found models for looping in a variety of hip-hop music, not the least of which have been the beats of the “golden age” hip-hop producers discussed in Chapter 1 (i.e., Prince Paul, Q-Tip, DJ Premier, and Pete Rock). The late hip-hop producer and rapper James Yancey, a.k.a. Jay Dee, J Dilla, or simply Dilla, casts an especially long shadow. His beats for his group Slum Village and other alternative rappers are widely regarded as groundbreaking, pioneering a production style that would so impact subsequent producers that it became common for people to speak of “post-Dilla” hip-hop. Glasper, above nearly all jazz musicians, has been explicit about his emulation of Dilla:

At home, I have my Rhodes and drum set set up . . . We’ll play a Dilla beat for literally an hour, because it feels so good, and that’s all that matters to me. I think that’s harder [than playing chord changes]. It takes discipline. He’s the producer that makes you change the way you play. . . . When you just play the beat for what it is, the repetition definitely gets you into a spiritual space . . . My band loves to just make beats. (quoted in Russonello 2013)
Dilla’s loops are most famous for their rhythmic concept. Rather than placing kick and snare drum strokes or bass notes at precise (“quantized”) locations along a rhythmic grid, Dilla often placed attacks slightly askew of the underlying pulse. Further, instead of programming a loop and setting it to repeat automatically over the course of the beat, he often played loops in real-time, a production style closer to the performance conventions of live drummers but still using the technologies of classic hip-hop. Saxophonist Marcus Strickland described his own fascination with Dilla’s rhythmic approach: “Before Dilla a lot of beats or rhythms were quantized; everything was exactly on-the-beat, tempo-wise. He made a beat sound like it was rushing forward and simultaneously dragging . . . That delayed sound on the hi-hat and bass drum is a concept Dilla created that is still influencing drummers” (quoted in Micallef 2016:46).

A related characteristic of Dilla’s production style was his sampling technique. Before Dilla, many hip-hop beats sampled drum breaks, vamps, or other patterns at the level of the measure; in other words, the loop was coterminal with the sample on which it was based. By contrast, Dilla often sampled sounds as brief as a single snare drum hit or piano chord, assigned each sound to a button on a sampler, and then built the beat from them. Glasper described watching Dilla work on their mutual collaborator Bilal’s debut album:

I got to watch him work, and realized what a genius this guy was. I mean, his jazz vocabulary was killing mine. That was my first time really understanding jazz vocabulary, how vast it was. I just watched him make a beat. He made one bassline from four different records. He just chopped it all up and made it into one line. And then he said, “I need a chord.” So he pulls out Keith Jarrett’s Köln Concert and found the chord and put it on there. He knew exactly the chord he was looking for, and it all came together. (Quoted in Fleming 2008)
Drummer Damion Reid, a member of Glasper’s trio, echoed:

Every track [Dilla] did, he had different drum sounds . . . Most producers around that time — like DJ Premier and Diamond D and guys like that — they kind of had a sound. When you heard a beat, you knew it was them because of the drums. [In Dilla’s music], I would hear that every sample, every drum, every nuance, every atmospheric sound was strategically placed. Jay Dee embodied, to me, the culmination of all those things. (Quoted in Russonello 2013)

Dilla may be unusually influential to jazz musicians in part because he worked with many of them. He was an associate of the Soulquarians, the music collective that pioneered “neo-soul” music, which worked regularly with jazz musicians, including trumpet players Roy Hargrove and Nicholas Payton, bassists Larry Grenadier and Christian McBride, guitarist Charlie Hunter, and drummers Chris Dave and Karriem Riggins. Even so, not all jazz musicians who draw from hip-hop limit their interest to Dilla. Another greatly admired producer, Madlib, was Dilla’s label-mate at Stones Throw Records and occasional collaborator. Madlib also has explicit connections to jazz; besides being the nephew of trumpet player Jon Faddis, Madlib’s project Yesterday’s New Quintet is jazz-oriented, and he was invited by Blue Note to remix their archives in 2003. Several musicians have been inspired by the production styles of New York’s Digging in the Crates (D.I.T.C.) Crew—namely, producers Lord Finesse and Diamond D—while others have

\[5\] Payton has criticized what he perceives as young musicians’ exaggeration and fetishization of Dilla’s style of rhythmic displacement at the expense of what he regards as the producer’s abiding sense of a strong beat, the “boom-bap” of classic hip-hop (Reyes and Payton 2014a).

\[6\] Yesterday’s New Quintet is a jazz “group” consisting of Joe McDuphrey, Malik Flavors, Ahmad Miller, Monk Hughes, and Otis Jackson, Jr, the first four of which are other Madlib pseudonyms (the last is his real name). The Blue Note remix project resulted in the album Shades of Blue (Blue Note, 2003).
cited west coast hip-hop (emblematized by Dr. Dre’s “G Funk” sound) and the southern hip-hop style trap as providing stylistic models. Still, Dilla’s signature style—loops with a playful sense of time and timbral richness—is broadly characteristic of the beats-based concept of much of contemporary jazz.

It should be noted here that there are important predecessors to contemporary blends of hip-hop beat-making and jazz, the most significant of which are projects by contemporaries (and sometime collaborators) of the early-1990s “jazz rap” producers and rappers. Guru's Jazzmatazz series, begun in 1993, combined live jazz and R&B instrumentation with hip-hop production and rapping, and Branford Marsalis’s band Buckshot Lefonque recorded two albums in the mid-1990s, the first of which was with DJ Premier. As Robin D. G. Kelley has described, “illbient” producers like DJ Spooky and electronics-minded jazz musicians like Russell Gunn belong to a similar lineage of attempts to fuse hip-hop and jazz (Kelley 2004). Some observers have grouped this music with that of so-called “acid jazz” artists like Us3 and Groove Collective. Interestingly, musicians with whom I spoke did not often cite these predecessors as significant models for their own attempts to adapt principles of hip-hop to jazz. My impression has been that they generally regard the stylistic blends that characterize these projects—adding a turntablist or a rapper to a jazz band, for instance—as experimental and, in some cases, somewhat superficial. Musicians around the age of 40 or younger often describe themselves as belonging to the “hip-hop generation,” by which they seem to imply that hip-hop is a native language to them, that their blends of hip-hop and jazz are not exercises in genre-blending but simply manifestations of their identities.

The aesthetics of beats in jazz is also indebted to contemporary electronic dance music (or electronica). This genre concept is broadly defined, but in typical usage it refers primarily to
a lineage of synthesizer- and drum machine-generated music growing out of house and techno in the United States and continuing through the various genres of “bass music” from the United Kingdom, such as garage, jungle, and dubstep.\(^7\) As in hip-hop, style in electronic dance music is wildly diverse, but it may be characterized in general by an emphasis on electronic timbres, many of which are produced by effects processing, and on bass and drums; programmed loops are the foundation of many electronica genres, although others, such as drum ’n’ bass, are characterized by rapid, almost disorienting variations in the drum pattern.\(^8\)

Pianist and producer Mark de Clive-Lowe attributes his approach to looping to his work with a house music producer:

> The first session I did in London was a keyboard player for a producer, Phil Asher – a house producer. It was a remix he was doing and I played three chords and he was like, “That’s it!” I was like, “Oh yeah that’s cool, but what’s next?” But he was like, “No! That’s it!” And the track’s a classic. It’s an absolute classic track. . . . How did I learn that from a house producer in London after years messing with jazz? (Reyes and de Clive-Lowe 2014a)

Pianist Brad Mehldau also cited electronic dance music when referring to the playing style of drummer Mark Guiliana, his partner in their electro-acoustic project Mehliana: “Mark is

\(^7\) Confusingly, “EDM,” an abbreviation of “electronic dance music,” does not typically refer to this entire lineage but rather to a kind of mainstream, festival-oriented style created by such figures as David Guetta, Avicii, and Skrillex. I thank the students of my Fall 2016 course at the New School, Bass Music, for patiently explaining to me the fine distinctions between different genres of electronic dance music.

\(^8\) UK bass and US hip-hop have shared parentage. The “Amen” drum break (from The Winstons’ “Amen, Brother”) has a prominent place in both genres, albeit in different ways; while the sampled break is typically slowed down in hip-hop (e.g., N.W.A.’s “Straight Out of Compton”), it is sped up in U.K. hardcore and jungle (e.g., Subnation, “Scottie Remix”).
expanding what’s possible on the drum set . . . He’s taking influences from electronically generated and looped music, and putting it back in an acoustic, real-time setting with the advantage that he can then react spontaneously to other musicians” (quoted in Micallef 2014:50).

As they do with pop and hip-hop artists, jazz musicians cite both electronic dance music veterans and peers as models of production styles and aesthetics. Especially prominent are English producers Aphex Twin (Richard D. James) and Squarepusher (Tom Jenkinson, who is also an electric bassist). As Guiliana himself noted: “When I heard these guys, it reminded me of the first time I heard Tony Williams and Elvin Jones . . . Quite simply, I was blown away. It was a rhythmic and sonic world that I had never heard before. Immersing myself in these recordings had a strong impact on both my drumming and my approach to composition” (quote in Micallef 2014:48). Bassist Tim Lefebvre echoed him:

Hip-hop and dancehall reggae were famous for using Roland 808-generated sounds for bass. Drum ’n’ bass took those familiar sounds and tweaked them waaaay out there. It was totally underground and refreshing. We all wondered how it was possible for Squarepusher [aka Tom Jenkinson] to pull off what he was doing, with all the insane drum breaks. Drum ’n’ bass [artists] motivated us to buy samplers, mixers and outboard effects units to produce our own tracks. (Ibid)

Admired contemporaries include Los Angeles based producers like Flying Lotus, Daedelus, and Louis Cole, who performs in the duo KNOWER with vocalist Genevieve Artadi. Again, collaborations with electronica artists have presented jazz musicians with opportunities to assimilate their styles and aesthetics: alto saxophonist Terrace Martin has worked with Flying Lotus; the members of Kneebody joined with the producer Daedelus to form the band Kneedelus; and, bassist Tim Lefebvre, saxophonist David Binney, and Snarky Puppy have all
worked with KNOWER (Cole himself studied jazz drums at the University of Southern California). Just as with pop, jazz musicians are not by nature averse to the most mainstream electronica artists; Donny McCaslin has cited the music of producer Skrillex and singer Ellie Goulding as inspiring his approach to some of the tracks on Fast Future (Douglas, et al. 2015).

Partially owing to the characteristics of loops, an aesthetic of beats entails an emphasis on “groove.” Groove is a term with many valences in music, including jazz. As Kernfeld has summarized, its origins seem to be in swing-era jazz, and it continues to be used to refer to the quality of rhythmic propulsion or drive, especially that which compels movement or dance; in contemporary usage, however, it tends to refer to the rhythms of black popular and dance music from the ‘60s onward, including soul, funk, disco, and hip-hop (Kernfeld). These are genres that tend to feature a kind of backbeat- and bass-heavy “funkiness.” Ironically, then, “groove” or “groove-based” music is now typically contrasted with the concept of swing, especially when the latter is used to refer specifically to the accompaniment patterns of bebop-derived jazz.  

Jason Moran articulated this distinction when commenting on Glasper’s music, which can easily be applied to other contemporary jazz musicians:

Glasper in particular — his group is killing. They’re not playing acoustic jazz, OK? Glasper is a great acoustic jazz musician, but that particular group isn’t playing swing music; they’re playing groove music and music heavily influenced by hip-hop and electronica. But they’re doing it in a way that is completely in keeping with the jazz spirit and jazz attitude, which is very improvisational and creative. (Stryker and Redman 2014)

See Stewart (2000) for a discussion of the shift from swing to funk in American popular music around the 1960s.
Groove’s more contemporary valences are also apparent in the implicit link Glasper makes between groove and loops (short, repeated phrases):

Now, I love playing a groove. Derrick Hodge, Chris Dave, and me: we’d [*sic*] used to sit and play a groove for hours. At rehearsals, soundchecks, or at my house. For hours we’d play a groove, and be fine with it. I don’t have to solo. I genuinely find joy in just playing as [*sic*] groove . . . Sometimes I say I’m providing a house and you can provide the furniture. It’s a soundtrack, there’s space, and the audience put their own thoughts to it. Sometimes jazz musicians, we fill up all the fucking space, so people can’t lose themselves in it. (Iverson and Glasper 2017)

In other words, groove can and does signify a rhythmic relationship shared between musicians independent of melodic, harmonic, or rhythmic variation, but it is often used intentionally to distinguish a kind of loop-like repetition that is strongly associated with beats-based music. The distinction between swing and groove and the latter’s association with loops is captured in saxophonist Kamasi Washington’s account of the different approaches to rhythm he learned while touring with rapper Snoop Dogg, as related by Adam Shatz:

At the point when Washington got the call, he had been spending most of his time trying to master harmonically demanding songs like Coltrane’s “Giant Steps.”

Now his job was to play apparently simple riffs to “line up with the groove.”

Playing those riffs, however, was tougher than it looked: Hip-hop was a miniaturist art of deceptive simplicity. “When you play jazz in school, you talk about articulation, but it’s a very light conversation,” he said. “The question was about what you were playing, not how you were playing it. But when I was
playing with Snoop, what I was playing was pretty obvious — anyone with ears could figure it out. The question was how to play it, with the right articulation and timing and tone.” . . . Snoop was particularly demanding when it came to the placement of notes in relation to the beat, and Washington struggled at first to hear the beat the way Snoop did. After a while, though, he began to discern what he calls “the little subtleties,” the way, for example, “the drummer D-Loc would lock into the bass line.” He continued: “It wasn’t like the compositional elements in Stravinsky. It wasn’t about counterpoint or thick harmonies. It was more about the relationships and the timing, the one little cool thing you could play in that little space. It might just be one little thing in a four-minute song, but it was the perfect thing you could play in it. I started to hear music in a different way, and it changed the way I played jazz.” (2016)

A few musicians who groove aspire to make music that is suitable for dancing. In such cases, a contrast with swing is again highlighted. Pianist and producer Mark de Clive-Lowe described his approach to a monthly residency in Los Angeles:

The night would start super straight-ahead and, over two sets, it would evolve. I would start live remixing and it would turn into a dance party. We’d get the dancers coming out early and singers flipping out on some Monk. The jazzers would stay late and see it turn into a house party and they would be bugging out. I just wanted to show my story every night. (Reyes and de Clive-Lowe 2014b)

The perceived novelty (in recent history) of dancing to jazz has impressed outside observers responding to the success of musicians like Glasper and Washington, who tend to play nightclubs and large outdoor festivals conducive to dancing at least as often as they do jazz clubs or other
seated venues. Profiling Jason Moran and Meshell Ndegeocello’s *All Rise* dance parties based on the music of Fats Waller, critic Giovanni Russonello noted, “Part funk workout, part cabaret, part improvisational experiment, *All Rise* represents a creative answer to today’s constant chorus of jazz doomsayers: Go to these shows and you’ll find diverse, relatively young, often unsuspecting audiences listening to a new musical hybrid and dancing with abandon” (2014).

It should be noted that discussions of dance are often strongly gendered, as became apparent when Ethan Iverson posted a transcript of a conversation with Glasper to his blog and set off a small firestorm. Amid their conversation about groove, Glasper proposed,

I’ve seen what that does to the audience, playing that groove. I love making the audience feel that way. Getting back to women: women love that. They don’t love a whole lot of soloing. When you hit that one groove and stay there, it’s like musical clitoris. You’re there, you stay on that groove, and the women’s eyes close and they start to sway, going into a trance. (Iverson and Glasper 2017)

Critical responses came hard and fast, not only to Glasper but also to Iverson for his apparent failure to push back. Many people justifiably interpreted Glasper to mean that women lack the ability to understand complex solos, a pernicious, sexist trope that has marginalized women as both audience members and performers in the jazz scene for decades. Glasper and Iverson defended themselves contentiously, which at first turned out to be more incendiary than the initial comments.¹⁰

¹⁰ For a summary of the controversy, see Michelle Mercer’s piece for NPR (2017).
Given the history of sexism in jazz, Glasper’s comments were offensive. Allowing that, they could still be reasonably interpreted as a broader critique of jazz, something that he attempted to clarify in his final comments on the matter, which he posted to Facebook:

Personally, what I wanted to speak about was the idea that jazz has lost its connection with something fundamental. The groove, the dance, the soul that it was originally built off of. And yes, this is connected to sex – for men and women. I don’t think it’s a bad thing to mention sex. It’s a real, natural human thing - and I’m paying attention to it. There’s been too much shaming of women as sexual beings. And I truly feel that my music is inclusive. Women are my teachers, co-conspirators and collaborators. I learned music from a woman: my mom was a musician – she is the reason I do what I do.

The reality is, I do over a hundred interviews a year - somewhere in there I’m gonna say something that may come out wrong. I apologize that this came out wrong and caused offense – or upset [anyone]. I was speaking from my experience. The whole point is that I would love to see more women in jazz. In general I love to see people that aren’t initially connected to jazz coming to it. My experience, with my music, is that this shift has meant audiences with more women and more young people, and I connected that to a return to a groove which just feels good – for everyone.\(^\text{11}\)

These additional comments suggest that Glasper believes his groove-based music is appealing to women and men alike. In other words, Glasper would likely maintain that no one loves “a whole

lot of soloing,” at least not anyone who isn’t a more traditionally inclined jazz musician, whom Glasper sees as misguided. This view is consistent with comments he has made elsewhere (some of which are quoted above) and with broader trends in jazz.

It bears stressing again that groove in jazz is not solely indebted to an affinity for beats-based music; jazz musicians undoubtedly developed preferences for groove by listening to and playing soul, gospel, and other genres. Still, I argue that it is significant that musicians’ comments about grooving are often couched in the stylistic principles and production techniques of contemporary beats-based music. For example, musicians sometimes describe grooves in contemporary jazz as “sounding like a sample,” a claim about style and aesthetics that is distinct from describing grooves as, for instance, “funky.”

A final characteristic of the beats-based aesthetic in modern jazz pertains to “sound.” In Chapter 3, I discussed musicians’ general preoccupation with developing the “right sound” of a recording during tracking and post-production processes. Here, I more narrowly consider sound in terms of the timbres of production-based music. These sounds, such as those produced by drum machines, sample packs, and softsynths, as well as those produced by applying effects to previously recorded sounds, are increasingly native to jazz. When predominant or highlighted on a track, they may lend the recording a distinctively “produced” sound. Drummer and producer Karriem Riggins’s Alone Together (Stones Throw, 2012) is instructive, produced exclusively by the lead artist (as implied by the clever title), relying on samples, synthesizers and drum machines, and some recordings of live drumming with and without effects processing. Other projects include drummer and producer Chris Dave’s mixtape with the Drumhedz, Jesse Fischer and Sly5thAve’s Vein Melter, James Francies and Eric Harland’s untitled project with producer Love Science Music, and Kneedelus, the collaborative project between Kneebody and producer
Daedelus. Mark Guiliana has also incorporated such sounds into various projects; the name of one of his groups, Beat Music, which incorporates laptop-based production from electronics artist Steve Wall and Guiliana himself, encapsulates this aesthetic. Producer Flying Lotus (Steven Ellison) is among the most prominent musicians blending jazz and beats-based music. (He is also rather unique because, unlike these other musicians, he is not known professionally for playing another instrument.) As Chris Barton reported for *Los Angeles Times*, Flying Lotus represents “the most intriguing flash point in the country for the intersection of beat music and this new varietal of jazz” (2012). His album *You’re Dead!* (Warp, 2014) made many best-of-the-year lists compiled by jazz critics, touching off a debate within the jazz community about whether he ought to be considered a jazz musician.

An interesting effect of the naturalization of the sounds of production in jazz has been that musicians are developing ways of approximating them on non-computer instruments, using on-stage effects processors but also acoustic and electric instruments. At a workshop, bassist John Davis, who is also the co-owner and chief engineer of the Bunker recording studio, described how he uses combinations of effects pedals—such as octave pedals, envelope filters (“wah-wah pedals”), distortion pedals (“fuzzboxes”), and low frequency oscillators—to approximate the sounds of certain bass synthesizers on his electric bass. Such adaptations are perhaps most unique when musicians emulate the sounds produced by certain types of sampling. Sampling (especially Dilla-like sampling) can often dramatically alter the envelope (attack, sustain, and decay) of an otherwise familiar sound—a snare drum hit or piano chord, for instance. Musicians have created techniques to approximate these effects through articulation and phrasing. Nate Wood of Kneebody has developed such techniques on drums, as Ben Wendel, Daedelus (Alfred Darlington), and radio host Simon Rentner discussed:
Ben Wendel: You made Nate learn a very lopsided kind of feel, that you even had a reference of it, possibly. Like, you had a sample.

Alfred Darlington: Oh, absolutely.

BW: Yeah, yeah. And that was really interesting to watch…

Simon Rentner: Wow, so Alfred playing Nate Wood, the drummer, a sample.

BW: Yeah, that had a really specific feel that you could almost only get from a sample, in a sense, because it was kind of lopsided. And then Nate learned it and then played it back.

AD: Well, not only did he play it back, but he adapted the tonality of his instruments to fit that. (Rentner, et al. 2016)

This exchange is indicative of Wendel’s claim elsewhere that the Kneedelus collaboration amounted to a “weird new cyborg,” fusing man and machine (Panken 2016). Mark Guiliana practiced emulating the sound of the drum rhythms of jungle and drum ’n’ bass music, which as noted above, derive from sampling and remixing the classic “Amen Break.” Because the samples are sometimes at the level of a single beat or even fraction thereof, remixing rearranges the stressed and unstressed attacks of the original soul-era drumming pattern, such that the resulting rhythm can sound very “unnatural” to the listener. Thus, as Guiliana observed during a workshop, emulating these rhythms on drums requires not just learning the rhythms, but also learning to resist the inclination to phrase them “naturally,” instead phrasing them as a sampler would.

I am wary of making too strong a distinction between contemporary conceptions of “sound” deriving from beats-based music and those of earlier jazz genres—such as jazz-rock fusion and jazz-funk—that also incorporated electronic instruments like analog synthesizers, and,
indeed, the overall preference for diverse timbres that has characterized black American music of all kinds, not the least of which was ‘70s-era jazz.\footnote{Steven Pond discusses how bass drum timbres of Hancock’s fusion recordings differed markedly from those of their predecessors (e.g., Miles Davis’s \textit{Filles de Kilimanjaro}, Columbia, 1968), a difference that accounts for important genre distinctions between them (2005:146–51).} Indeed, as should be clear by now, the attitudes of young jazz musicians towards the legitimacy of these sounds were primed by their early encounters with such music. Even so, I think that an important distinction should be made between electronic timbres that are not broadly associated with “production” in an exclusive or significant way and those—such as the timbres of the 808 drum machine—that are. Such sounds are typically associated with instruments that are “programmable” as opposed to electronic instruments writ large, and may be further identified as “computer-generated.” They are sounds, in general, that would likely prompt the layperson to think, “This music was made by a producer.” The increasing commonality of such responses in jazz is indicative of what I am calling an emergent aesthetic of beats.

\textbf{Interlude: Another model of melody and groove}

I have emphasized throughout this dissertation the extent to which jazz styles other than bebop and its progeny have been important to the development of both attitudes towards recording and to stylistic preferences among young jazz musicians. Most of these styles date from the 1970s to the present, but there has also been an undercurrent of interest in styles of jazz that \textit{predate} bebop. Interestingly, musicians often look to this music for models of the same approaches to composition and performance that characterize contemporary song- and beats-
based music—that is, preferences for songs (or at least singable melodies), relatively short forms, and compelling, danceable grooves.

These tendencies have been expressed especially strongly by musicians who are from or otherwise link their aesthetic sensibilities to New Orleans. Trumpet player Christian Scott aTunde Adjuah, responding to the criticism that his music “isn’t jazz,” appealed not to contemporary genres of music but to jazz’s predecessors:

I’m a guy here who plays trumpet, born in New Orleans’ Ninth Ward, learned to play music from the guys who were literally the sons of the architects of this music. And there were people who were telling me that what I was doing wasn’t jazz music because it didn’t go tang-tang-ta-tang-ta-tang-ta-tang [the swing pattern]. Which to me was fucking absurd, because most of the things they were saying had to be done, that were requisites of playing jazz music, was [sic] stuff that started 20, 30 years after the shit had been created in New Orleans. Like you listen to Louis Armstrong’s first recordings, you don’t hear a swing pattern, because swing hadn’t been created. So how can that be a requisite for jazz?

(Quoted in Macia 2013)

Scott refers to his own brand of jazz as “Stretch Music,” which in its recent incarnation incorporates drum machines, effects processing, and hip-hop rhythms. But he has also linked this music to the traditions of the Mardi Gras Indians of New Orleans, calling his uncle Donald Harrison Jr.’s album Indian Blues (Candid, 1992), “the first Stretch Music album.” (Donald Jr. is the Big Chief of the Congo Square Nation, a role he inherited from his father—Scott’s grandfather—Donald Sr.)
Nicholas Payton (who, tellingly, calls himself “The Savior of Archaic Pop”) derives his desire to make dance-oriented music from his heritage:

My connection to dance is from New Orleans, playing in brass bands, playing in the street, and playing for parties. I attribute all my rhythm sensibilities and how music moves people socially, physically, and communally to growing up in New Orleans and growing up in the Tremé neighborhood. We would get together, start playing tunes, walk down the street, and we would have a parade. Everybody from the 2 year-old to the 90 year-old knows what body movement goes with what rhythm. They understand the culture and the history. It’s the only city in the world – which I know of – that’s like that. It’s lost some of that because of gentrification, but there’s still an intangible character in New Orleans that exists and cannot be denied. (Reyes and Payton 2014b)

Another New Orleans-bred musician who has promoted jazz as a dance-oriented music is piano player Jon Batiste. His band Stay Human’s live performances became known for their lively crowds, and they caught the attention of late night host Stephen Colbert, who ultimately invited the band to serve as the house band for the Late Show. It is notable that each of these New Orleanian musicians has developed a term for their music other than “jazz.” Payton famously (or notoriously, depending on whom you ask) calls his music “Black American Music (BAM),” while Batiste calls his “Social Music.” This latter term was briefly but famously used by Miles

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13 For Payton, the urge to connect his music to pre-swing and certainly pre-bebop black music is also politically motivated, aimed at undermining the institutionalization (and whitening) of “jazz.”
Davis in a televised interview with Bryant Gumbel in 1982 to link his music to contemporary popular music, both of which to him represented “all the social melodies out in the air.”

New Orleans jazz is not the only time and place where musicians have looked for creative resources and touchstones. Musicians have revisited popular tunes from the 1920s and ‘30s (or earlier) that never became standards. Discussing his choices of “pre-bebop songs” to record for Arclight, Julian Lage acknowledged the similarities they have with contemporary pop music:

I think there's something that that era, specifically the teens and the '20s and the kind of early '30s, you know, before things got kind of codified and slick and refined. There was this thing where you kind of couldn't tell if it was country, if it was ragtime, if it was - you know, if these were the seeds of bebop, if they were show tunes. It's very hard to pin down, much like how I feel with a lot of popular music today. (Quoted in Beuttler 2016)

For her Grammy-nominated WomanChild (Mack Avenue, 2013), singer Cécile McLorin Salvant recorded non-standard popular songs, including a minstrel song: Bert Williams’ “Nobody” (1905), Sam Coslow’s “You Bring Out the Savage in Me” (1935), and Fats Waller’s “Jitterbug

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14 In his inimitable style, music critic Greg Tate made a more imaginative connection between New Orleans music and trends in contemporary jazz, focusing on uses of technology: “Creatively tho I feel the real step back has been jazz musicians after the 70s backing off using the studio as an instrument--a process that truly began with Bitches Brew. Thats [sic] why Kamasi and those West Coast Get Down cats collective embrace of an electroacoustic profile for their music is so refreshing on the current American mainstream jazz scene. Ditto what Christian Scott is up to in his bands now, Terence Blanchard and his E- Collective [sic] Trombone Shorty too. About right some Nawlins cats are on the Neo-Eectronic [sic] Jazz frontier since New Orleans brass been bending Western technology into sonic brinksmanship since Buddy Bolden.” See Greg Tate, “For 70s Muzic Headz Mostly but not Exclusively.” Facebook. October 8, 2015. https://www.facebook.com/Congoblondie/posts/10154282186401038.
Waltz” (1942), among others. For their Waller project, Moran was clear that he and Ndegeocello focused intently on the power of his lyrics: “A lot of our early conversations were about lyrics. They weren’t even about songs, just the lyrics. I was thinking about that a lot. What he said. How he says it” (quoted in Matzner 2014).

Highlighting this trend serves to reiterate once again that there is no stylistic unity within contemporary jazz, not even within New York, and not even within the subset of New York musicians that I have profiled in this dissertation. Music modeled off pre-bebop songs like McLorin Salvant’s can hardly be said to share obvious similarities with the production-based aesthetics of groups like BEAT Music or Kneedelus; the former is even likely to sound overtly “retro” or “old school” and may be unappealing to fans of the latter. But as I have hoped to show by highlighting songs and beats as broad aesthetic frameworks, there is an important stylistic orientation that this music shares. This is an orientation towards such characteristics as lyrics, singable melodies, relatively simple forms, cyclic structures, and danceable grooves, and these are often implicitly or explicitly counterposed to the stylistic orthodoxy of bebop-derived jazz.

**Solos**

As already noted, the aesthetic frameworks I am proposing here do not overtly privilege one of the signature stylistic hallmarks of jazz: the improvised solo. Recall Aaron Parks’ and Robert Glasper’s comments regarding song and groove, respectively: “We’ll be playing songs. If you come expecting a lot of shredding, you’ll be at the wrong place”; “For hours we’d play a groove, and be fine with it. I don’t have to solo. I genuinely find joy in just playing a groove.” Other perspectives presented above and throughout this dissertation suggest that extensive, adventurous soloing is no longer a defining stylistic feature of recorded jazz and can sometimes
even undermine the effectiveness of a catchy melody or a compelling groove. To that end, solos may be fewer (both within a track and across an album), shorter, and, more importantly, subordinate to the lyrics, melody, or groove; again, this inverts the typical relationship between melody and soloing in bebop-derived jazz, where improvised solos (“blowing”) are typically featured.

As bandleaders, musicians often aim to highlight creative abilities other than their aptitude as soloists. As Aidan Carroll noted, describing responses to his record, “People come out of the woodwork and are like, ‘Great record! But I really wish you really threw down on the bass on one track,’ or something like that . . . I guess I could have, but I wanted it to be more about the music and the song, the tune, the sound of it, and the layers” (2015). To be sure, bass has always had comparatively fewer solos than piano, guitar, or lead instruments in jazz, but instrumentalists of all kinds share this attitude. Trumpet player Marquis Hill discussed the relative lack of solos on Modern Flows EP Vol. 1 (self-release, 2014):

It’s about the solos being organic and helping the record to flow . . . If each track is nine minutes long with a lot of solos, listeners don’t want to hear that. I wanted to make a record, 45 to 50 minutes long, that when you’re done listening you feel really refreshed. I didn’t think I needed to highlight myself more. I write for the strengths of my band. I highlight different things for different songs. That creates the flow of the record. (Quoted in Micallef 2015)

Robert Glasper’s attitude towards soloing can already be surmised from the many quotations above, but he has also been explicit: “I’d rather repeat something for 30 minutes than solo for 30 minutes” (quoted in Russonello 2013). Jesse Fischer was especially pithy about his desire to be known as a composer rather than as a soloist: “If I had enough money to pay someone to play
piano in my own band, I would do it. I would hire Kris Bowers or Aaron Parks. What I love is composing, and getting to hear people play my music.”

There are also more strictly professional reasons why many musicians are opting to reduce or cut solos from their music, consistent with the attitudes towards composing songs discussed above: solos can make an album or track too long or otherwise off-putting to a mainstream audience. As Aaron Parks averred: “I hate long records . . . I think around 50 minutes to an hour is the limit to what somebody can sit down and really listen to, unless they have superhuman strength. I wanted to make a very concise, to-the-point statement” (quoted in Brady 2008). At the 2015 Jazz Connect Conference, bassist Mimi Jones noted that she advises young musicians to consider song length when recording; an 11-minute track may be great, but “they’ll never play [it] on the radio.” The continuing relevance of airplay is often invoked when discussing song length. After listening back to the third take of a composition during the Day Dreamer sessions, Fischer was concerned about the length of a take that ran over seven minutes. “If we have to make the radio edit, we’ll make the radio edit,” he ultimately concluded.

As noted in the Introduction, jazz musicians have always tailored their solos to the requirements of recorded media, and it has usually been assumed that musicians feel mercifully liberated from them during live performance. While musicians today still do “stretch” while performing live, many are making a decreased emphasis on soloing central to their performance

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15 “Jesse Fischer Live Studio Session in Brooklyn @ BRIC / B-Side.” BRIC TV. Published December 13, 2016. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6y6dUdnlS9w.
16 Fischer was probably using “radio edit” as a figure of speech, referring not to an explicit desire to have this particular track (“Nomads”) played on the radio but instead to a general preference for the succinctness of album tracks in general.
preferences, regardless of context. Mark Guiliana has said that when he is performing with his own bands live, soloing is “the last thing” he’s thinking about:

I never play a drum solo on my own gig . . . I don’t want to hear myself play a drum solo. If someone asks me to do it [as a sideman], great. And I will give that my all. I will absolutely dive in . . . And maybe if I wasn’t a sideman at all, maybe I would have an itch to play some solos in my own music. But, that’s the last thing I’m thinking about because I’m able to express myself in that way in many other situations. (Varriale and Guiliana 2013)

On social media, one musician expressed an attitude towards solos and, in fact, improvisation in general: “This might sound anti-jazz, but I am so sick of solos! I'm sick of playing solos, listening to solos, transcribing solos, shedding on solos. There's got to be more to life than just bebop lines. Am I just burnt out? Anyone else ever go through this?” After a series of both sympathetic and dissenting responses, the musician added, “I guess I just feel like if I can't play something better or more meaningful than the song melody, I should just play that!” and then, “For most of my life I always felt something from improvised music, but right now I don't really feel anything in the same way as what I feel from the song melody.” Finally, he admitted, “When I play from the heart I play the MELODY or the GROOVE. That's what really connects with the people. I don't know how to get that same emotional connection from blowing.”

There are other explanations for the reduced emphasis on soloing that are not necessarily linked to song- and beats-based aesthetics. As noted in Chapter 2, many contemporary jazz musicians are composing sophisticated pieces of music that by design do not leave much room for soloing, at least in their recorded versions; this may be especially the case for composers of the so-called “chamber-ish” pieces. Commenting on an early version of this chapter, Peter
Manuel proposed that musicians and listeners may be satisfying their desires to hear solos by going to YouTube and watching videos of live performances from the distant and recent past, which are seemingly limitless.

In any case, these stylistic preferences and the proliferation of recorded jazz prompt questions about the place of improvisation in jazz. Most musicians maintain that improvisation—especially interactive improvisation—remains the defining characteristic of jazz. Indeed, this is one of the reasons that the problem of recordings in jazz has been so vexing, since recordings—as technology that ostensibly “fixes” musical performances—are by nature non-improvisational; they are not “of the moment” in the way that live improvisation is. In the next chapter, I grapple with this issue by investigating the question of what kind of thing a recording is.
CHAPTER 6. Recordings as mediatized performances

In the Introduction, I showed how jazz studies scholars have addressed the nature of sound recording through historiography, analyses of the “effects” of recording technologies on jazz performance practice, and ethnographies of objects circulating among communities of listeners. Much of this writing has been animated by the apparent paradox between the centrality of records to jazz over the course of its history and their supposed incapacity to adequately “capture” what jazz musicians do when they perform. This incapacity is attributed in one sense to the conditions of the studio, which many regard as both physically and psychologically restrictive; as I have argued in Chapter 3, these conditions may now just as likely present opportunities to jazz musicians as they do limitations. It is attributed in another sense to the fact that recording, by definition, alienates music from the time and place of its original performance, making it both reproducible and repeatable. This, it is thought, is antithetical to the spirit of improvised music, which becomes meaningful largely (or, for some, only) through the social and musical interactions of live performance (shared space) and the ephemerality—the “never-to-be-repeated”-ness—of the music (shared time).

In this chapter, I present theoretical perspectives on the nature of sound recording that suggest a new way of thinking about the nature of recording in jazz. I begin by introducing the concept of recordings as “works”—more specifically, “works of phonography”—wherein recordings are said to represent performances rather than reproduce them. Many scholars have argued convincingly for this work concept in rock and other studio-based genres of music, but they have often done so by contrasting it with the work concept in jazz (or lack thereof), a distinction which I suggest is no longer widely applicable. Still, the apparent contradiction between recording and improvisation per se is not directly solved by the notion of jazz
recordings as works of phonography, and so I explore further the question of the repeatability of recordings. Insights from the philosophy of art and aesthetics and cognitive science have recently investigated how people experience the same recordings differently upon relistening, and I suggest that this differentiation of experience not only holds in cases of recordings of improvised music, but could in fact be stronger in such cases. I argue that the concept of mediated performance more adequately accounts for these experiences than do concepts like “works of phonography,” because it highlights the dynamic relationship between the performers and their audiences mediated by recordings, instead of the intrinsic relationship between a recording and that which it represents. Finally, I consider the concept of liveness, which many music scholars interested in mediatized performance have employed to account for the ways that people experience recorded music. Despite its apparent relevance to jazz, liveness risks devaluing experiences that people have with recorded music that do not ultimately depend to the extent to which they are perceived as “live”; on the contrary, one might say that people value the experience of “recordedness.”

Reproductions and representations, documents and works

Contemporary theoretical discourses about the nature of sound recording have often been oriented around the capacity of recording to do one of two types of things: “reproduce,” “capture,” or “document” the performance of an existing work, or “construct” or “create” a work that “represents” a performance. Much of this discourse was touched off by Evan Eisenberg’s concept of “phonography,” which he defined as “the art of recording”: “The word ‘record’ is misleading. Only live recordings record an event; studio recordings, which are the great majority, record nothing. Pieced together from bits of actual events, they construct an ideal event”
This distinction has been made in some form by many scholars in Eisenberg’s wake. Theodore Gracyk argued that recordings are either “reproductions” or “representations” of a performance; the difference between them “hinges on the degree of aural and sequential fidelity between the recording’s output and the sequence of sounds that were recorded”—that is, the extent to which they were “doctored” (1997:142). Michael Dellaira proposed a similar scheme; recordings are either “documents” or “pseudo-documents,” the latter of which have been “tampered with in some way or another” (1995:196).¹

Adapting Eisenberg’s compelling idea, philosopher Lee Brown introduced the concept of “works of phonography,” developing it over the course of several articles. Like others, Brown considered a distinction between such works and “documents of performance,” but he questioned whether this difference is fundamental, that the notion that a recording can be a fully “transparent” document (the “transparency perspective”) is even tenable; what kind or degree of transformation during the processes of recording, he asked, is sufficient to constitute recordings as works of phonography as opposed to documents of performance? Some threshold might exist, but there is certainly not yet a consensus on where it is. Or, perhaps all recordings are works of phonography by definition, becoming so through the inevitable introduction of even the tiniest modifications by recording processes (Brown 1997:255).

This latter idea is implicit in many other considerations of the nature of recordings. Simon Trezise has suggested, for instance, that recordings cannot possibly “show” us a

¹ Dellaira differentiated further between types of pseudo-documents: “perfect performances,” “impossible performances,” and “abstractions” (1995). Steve Wurtzler had made a similar distinction between recordings that “construct” an event and those that dismantle “any sense of an original event” and instead create “a copy for which no original exists” (1992:93).
performance (the implicit assumption of the transparency perspective), but merely “tell” us about one (2009:207). Likewise, Stephen Cottrell has construed recording technologies as either “low impact” or “high impact,” essentially rendering document/reproduction and work/representation not as distinct categories but instead as ideal types at the poles of an aesthetic continuum (2010). Interestingly, as Joshua Glasgow has argued, this framework actually legitimizes the transparency perspective (part of what he calls “Hi-Fi aesthetics”)—the view that recording technologies can indeed be “no impact,” if you will—because that perspective only makes “the descriptive claim that it is possible to achieve transparency” in recording, even if it is never achieved (2007:164, emphasis in original). This ultimately makes the question of recording’s nature not merely one of “technological possibilities,” as David Patmore and Eric Clarke have put it, but of “musical aesthetics” (2007:271).

Indeed, aesthetic orientations at both ends of this continuum can be seen throughout this dissertation. Hi-Fi aesthetics have been prevalent in jazz (e.g., the “self-effacing producer”) and remain important to many musicians, at least for certain projects. When Colin Stranahan discussed his preference for live to two-track recording, for instance, he couched it in a desire to “capture” the in-studio performance. By contrast, an aesthetics privileging “high-impact” uses of recording technologies are also common, as when Sylvester Onyejiaka and Aidan Carroll described how production techniques enabled them to create impossible performances, and even when Ben Wendel spoke about creating “worlds” for The Seasons. Tellingly, Wendel’s suggestion of musical “worlds” resonates with Alban Zak’s characterization of rock recording in his classic book:

> Rock and roll records do not simply capture and make portable an image of a performance. Presenting a transparent representation of some natural acoustic
reality was never the point. *Records were meant to be distinctive worlds of musical sound* with the power to make their way into the consciousness of a mass audience, and the record-making process was a matter of building those worlds. (2001:14, emphasis added).

One thing I have aimed to show with this dissertation is that aesthetics favoring “high impact” recording technologies are increasingly common in jazz, aligning it with rock and other studio-based genres like hip-hop, electronica, and pop.

**Repeatability and improvisation**

Georgina Born has argued that the development of ontologies of recording as representations breaks with (Benjamin-induced) “anxieties over loss immanent in notions of reproduction,” by favoring “an utterly distinctive musical object – a second primary object, if you will, and one that, in its difference, augments rather than either echoing or replacing music’s live performance” (2011b:294). As discussed in the Introduction, these anxieties persist in jazz, due to apparent contradiction between recording and improvisation. Construing jazz recordings as works of phonography does not directly solve this problem. One might accept the idea of jazz recordings as artworks unto themselves and still maintain that they cannot represent improvised music in an authentic way.\(^2\) Recording *by its very nature*, it may be argued, impoverishes

\(^2\) I am setting aside practical considerations in the relationship between recording and improvisation, such as the conditions of the recording studio, which some find both physically and psychologically limiting. Musicians do acknowledge the differences between the conditions of the studio and those of live performance, which they might regard as more conducive to improvisation; as Irwin Hall said, recording is “a different animal.” Still, as I suggested in Chapter 3, many musicians have become so accustomed to working in the studio that there may be effectively no barriers to quality improvisation. On the contrary, the technologies of the studio
improvised music, because it makes infinitely repeatable a performance that, in its ideal form, is ephemeral, utterly unique to one place and one time. As jazz scholar Thomas Greenland states categorically, “Because of their improvised, spontaneous nature, jazz performances are of-the-moment and therefore impossible to reproduce; even a high fidelity recording cannot capture the experience, the ‘truth,’ of being there at the time the music is being composed” (2007:404, emphasis added). Brown has described this problem as one of “reidentification”:

A request that a pianist, who has just played Beethoven’s opus 111, play that piece again is an intelligible one. By contrast, a request that tenor sax man, Sonny Rollins, improvise that solo again is not. With improvised music, an informed listener understands that the music one is listening to is being created before one’s very ears—as it is being played. This fact gives improvised music a peculiarly momentous quality, one might say. One has to be there at the right time to hear a specific improvisation; yet, one cannot plan to hear that improvisation. This feature of improvisational performance is not an adventitious feature of it, but part of its raison d’etre. (1997:256, emphasis in original)

For Brown, replaying a recording reveals to us in no uncertain terms that we are not in fact “there at the right time”: “It takes only one punch of the ‘repeat’ button to bring home the fact that the music is not being created spontaneously—as I listen” (ibid). Such a realization would, as Brown has argued elsewhere, preclude “informed responses” to improvised music, the “special sense of that music’s birth, as I listen,” a “feeling of indeterminacy,” and “the excitement the experience engenders” (1996:365). Such responses are found throughout the

may even create conditions for improvisation more favorable than in certain live performances (such as by allowing musicians to create their own headphone mix).
literature on live jazz performance, such as in Travis Jackson’s ethnography, and they are also captured in sentiments expressed by musicians like pianist Vijay Iyer: “The main source of drama in improvised music is the sheer fact of the shared sense of time: the sense that the improviser is working, creating, generating musical material, in the same time in which we are co-performing as listeners” (2008:277).

Aron Edidin has offered one response to Brown’s reidentification problem, arguing that repeatability alone does not impoverish the experience of improvised music, as long as one maintains “the sense of listening to a unique, unscripted event” (1999:30). Using a sports analogy, Edidin explains,

It may be helpful in this regard to consider also that the experience of watching delayed broadcasts of, say, figure-skating competition . . . or, to vary the sport, the improvisation of an American football halfback dodging defenders. These examples of improvisation in non-artistic domains also reinforce my sense that a very vivid ‘real time’ appreciation of the spontaneous inventiveness of an improviser can be a central feature of the phenomenology of even repeated hearings (or viewings) of an improvisation. (Ibid)

That there are entire television channels dedicated to replaying recordings of sporting events so that people may marvel at athletes’ improvisational skills is a testament to value of such experiences, and it seems like the most plausible response to the question of why recordings have been held in such high esteem throughout jazz history despite their purported inadequacies.

Recent insights into the nature of repeatability in music, however, suggest that relistening to recordings may also elicit favorable responses that are in fact dependent upon repeatability. In other words, whereas Edidin argues that replaying a recording does not necessarily preclude
informed responses, there is a case to be made that certain responses are in fact enhanced by relistening—that is, a different, perhaps more profound response to a piece of recorded music is elicited because the listener has already heard it. This idea is implicit in Ben Wendel’s answer to my question of why he makes records: “The more music you release where people have a chance to actually sit with it, listen to it repeatedly… It allows them to get a sense of who you are. So, I actually think it’s a really important part of the process in establishing one’s voice” (2015).

Repetition is endemic to jazz. Gabriel Solis has recently compiled a concise overview of the types of repetition that have structured jazz “at essentially every meaningful level,” from the cyclic repetition of beats in a musical meter to the noncyclic repetition of a composition (e.g., a standard) in the performance repertoire of a musician (2014:9). Solis is primarily concerned with the ways that repetition bears on the relationship between improvisation and composition in jazz and, by extension, on the notion of the musical work, a topic that he has addressed extensively elsewhere (2004, 2008). He considers a recording’s repeatability—its capacity to be played and listened to over and over again—largely to the extent that the iterability of jazz recordings across time and space is foundational to the ways that recordings “become meaningful” within jazz communities through “real and imagined re-embodiments” (Solis 2004:339). These re-embodiments are techniques of overcoming the “disembodying” effects of recording music, and they too account for the enduring appeal of recordings to jazz communities despite their supposedly intrinsic shortcomings.

Implicit in Solis’s argument is that “imagined re-embodiments” not only differ from one listener to another, but also from one person’s listening to another. Scholars in the field of sound studies have been especially considerate of this issue, arguing that separate experiences of listening to recorded music are shaped significantly by their conditions, including formats (e.g.,
vinyl, CD, MP3), playback devices (e.g., the phonograph, the iPod), speakers (e.g., headphones, public address speakers), and spaces (e.g., the city, the living room). But the more fundamental question of relistening is if experiences—those “imagined re-embodiments”—are differentiated from one another by repetition specifically. In other words, if other conditions of listening could be held constant, would the tenth listening to a recording differ from the second because the recording has been listened to nine times as opposed to only one? William Echard has argued that what most appeals to people about recordings is “the possibility of return”: “This should be understood not in the sense of a reinstatement of something identical so much as a return to some familiar dynamic . . . When returning to a familiar piece of music, you recognize the space and yet nothing is identical to previous instances” (2008:33). Echard argues that one only recognizes a subsequent listening as a relistening (a “return”) if each is indeed perceived as a unique event—following Deleuze, “There is no repetition without difference” (ibid).

This proposition has been defended empirically by Elizabeth Margulis in her recent book *On Repeat: How Music Plays the Mind*. Like Solis, Margulis tackles repetition in a variety of musical registers, including repetition within a piece of music at the level of melody, rhythm, and form as well as repetition of entire pieces of music (i.e., relistening to a piece of music, both performed and recorded). A great deal could be said about the first kind of repetition with respect to contemporary jazz (i.e., the repetition inherent to hooks and loops, for instance), but I focus on Margulis’s investigation of the repeatability of recordings, which, again, seems to present the greatest challenge to the relationship between recording and improvisation.

Margulis is primarily interested in examining the causes of “the Wundt curve,” which depicts the change in level of enjoyment of a recording over subsequent relistenings. The curve is an inverted-U shape; enjoyment rises with initial relistenings but eventually peaks and begins
to descend, ultimately leveling off at a state of mild displeasure (at which point one stops
listening and begins to lose familiarity with the recording, enabling one to experience the
trajectory again after enough time has passed). Psychologists and evolutionary biologists have
offered explanations for this phenomenon, but the one that Margulis advocates is that the
increasing pleasure of relistening arises from the listener’s ability to hear the piece differently
each time it plays: “Repeated listenings engage listeners with the stimulus at different levels,
connecting them with new aspects of the same sound . . . Understood in this light, it’s not a piece
of music’s familiarity, per se, that is rewarding, but rather the kind of involvement that
familiarity affords” (2013:98).³

The mechanisms by which people attend to different aspects of a recording upon
relistening are multiple. In the simplest terms, the processing power of the brain is too modest to
fully apprehend complex recordings in one listening. Thus, relistenings allow people to focus
their attention on different aspects, a process that can be both conscious (i.e., overt “analysis” of
the music during relistenings) or subconscious, what Margulis calls “implicit learning”
(ibid:106). In any case, the complexity of recording—the number of “levels”—can partially
determine how many times a listener can replay a recording before he or she has exhausted all
levels of engagement; recordings lacking “timbral richness” and “large-scale structure” may not

³ Psychologists have proposed that people attribute the satisfaction that they get from familiarity
itself—which confers “the sense of acumen and power”—with some inherent positive quality of
the stimulus (in this case, music); as they become aware of this “processing fluency,” however,
they cease to make this attribution. Evolutionary biologists, alternatively, have suggested that
humans are predisposed to familiarity due to the pleasure that results from knowing that they
have lived long enough to experience something more than once; however, they are also
predisposed to novelty, deriving from the need to explore and adapt to unexpected changes in
environment. The curve, then, is a composite of “the positive learned safety effect on the one
hand, an aversion to boredom on the other” (Margulis 2013:97).
reward very many relistenings (ibid:97). Thomas Turino has recently described this mechanism in terms of Peircian semiotics:

After listening to the same recording many times, one day I will notice a percussion part or some other feature that had previously been in the background of my focal awareness, but in that instance is noticed as fundamental to the groove or the texture of the song. How could I have not noticed that before? Since so many potential signs are sounding in music simultaneously, we cannot attend to them all in the foreground of focal awareness. As we listen to a recording repeatedly, the signs that had been in the foreground previously require less attention—we have heard them before. These features become part of the general icon of the piece (the piece as a legisign) and, as such, may move to the background, opening mental space to attend to new signs in the foreground. As this process continues with repeated listening, the general icon becomes fuller. I have the habit of listening to a new favorite song or piece obsessively after first discovering it, but as my general icon for the piece becomes more and more complete I begin to tire of it. What happens is that the general icon of past listening (legisign) is substituted for actually listening to the recording in the present (sinsign); listening is replaced with merely hearing. The recording is then shelved until sufficient time has elapsed so I can begin the process again, if not completely naively at least with the pleasure of being reminded of my previous discoveries. (2014:194–95)

These insights resonate with the approaches that jazz musicians take to making records. They think strategically about how their recordings might reward relistenings in this way. Vijay
Iyer is clear that he himself has experienced the pleasure of discovery through relistening and that it has shaped his approach to recordings:

There are records I’ll listen to one time and zero in on what’s happening, and then I’ll listen again to something I didn’t notice the first time. The art of making records is something like this: you want to provide a multiplicity of experience in a single object, which is to say you want layers so that people can revisit and have something revealed to them that wasn’t apparent the first time. (Sriram and Iyer 2016).

Iyer elaborated elsewhere: “You might sculpt it a little differently, you might be a little less direct about things. You might have more subtlety and layers so people can revisit the same recording and find something else in it the next time, you know?” (Kondabolu and Iyer 2017). The metaphor of sonic “layers” in recorded music was echoed by Aidan Carroll, as quoted above, with respect to the relative presence of soloing: “I wanted [my album] to be more about the music and the song, the tune, the sound of it, and the layers.”

Some powerful techniques for adding “subtlety and layers” to recorded jazz are the techniques of production described in Chapter 3. When producing the track “For Now” on *Original Vision*, Carroll overdubbed a synth accompaniment to his bass solo and then mixed it at a very low volume, expecting that it might only be audible “if you listen with headphones” (2015). Implicit here is the expectation that listeners might not hear the synth melodies in their initial encounter with the recording. In other cases, the Dilla-like treatment of rhythm—small variations in timing arising from playing rather than programming—can engender rhythmic subtlety that rewards relistening. Finally, the precision in mixing that DAWs afford facilitates adding levels or layers to a recording, enabling an almost obsessive fastidiousness with
production. As pianist James Francies told me about the approach of drummer and producer Chris Dave. “Chris is another guy who will spend hours on one section,” he said. “Like, ‘Nah, turn this snare up. Put this filter over it. I want to bring the pitch of the snare up like a half [step].’ Crazy, crazy stuff.” (2015). These observations accord with Simon Zagorski-Thomas’s suggestion that “the ability to listen to the same performance many times allows the attention to focus on the minutiæ of timbre, pitch and phrasing,” and that these are central to a “performance- and timbre-led aesthetic” of recorded music (2014:53).

In the previous chapter, I proposed the aesthetics of songs and beats, and I argued that these are at least partially oriented towards a preference for relatively simple musical structures, such as melodic hooks and harmonic-rhythmic loops. Although even superficially “simple” musical structures can entail certain kinds of complexity, relistenings can also be rewarding in other ways. Perhaps the most obvious is that melody- and groove-based music might be especially prone to embodiment (including “imagined” embodiment), either by singing along, dancing, or otherwise moving to the music (e.g., Glasper’s “head nod”). Margulis identifies these embodiments as manifestations of entrainment or what Charles Keil has called “kinaesthetic listening,” and they may be especially compelling for music with a high degree of internal repetition (2013:112).

Margulis makes a broader point about entrainment, however, which is that it can be induced through relistening regardless of the degree of internal repetition. Through relistenings, recorded music “grips and regrips motor circuitry, solidifying a kind of motor routine that makes the music increasingly feel like a familiar way of moving, rather than merely a familiar series of sounds” (ibid:111, emphasis in original). Thus, even if the music is not embodied through physical movements (e.g., dance, a head nod), it can be embodied through the “sensorimotor
coupling” of the music and the body that arises out of the latter’s ability to predict the former. As Margulis explains,

On first hearing, the sounds [of a recording] might seem to have been put together haphazardly, but each time we go down the musical path etched out by the piece, its track gets deeper and deeper, such that we fall down it more and more easily, until it carries with it some sense of inevitable rather than accidental reality. This is an inevitability we feel rather than believe. And since we know that musical pieces are not natural objects but rather artifacts of a human urge to communicate, express and create, feeling that a piece is inevitable and right amounts to an appealing sense of someone else’s (the composer or performer) artistic act precisely matching our own sensibilities. It can be intoxicating to feel that piece created by another person is fundamentally right; we don’t generally stop to ponder that excessive literal repetition might have led to or at minimum enhanced this sense of perfection. (2013:113, emphasis in original)

This phenomenon is particularly relevant to jazz, as discourse about classic jazz recordings has at times been suffused with claims of the “perfection” of certain recorded performances. Indeed, as discussed in the Introduction, the tendency to treat an improvised performance—in reality, one among many possible alternatives—as a perfect work is precisely the kind of thing that many jazz studies scholars have strenuously resisted. But the experience of a recording’s fundamental rightness should not be dismissed so quickly, because, as Margulis notes, it does not require that listeners believe that a recording is objectively perfect, let alone defend this through formal analysis. It only requires that the listener, as they listen, feels that it is perfect. Such a feeling is quite compelling, and it is dependent upon the repeatability provided by recording.
These insights, I argue, encourage us to reconsider the ostensible incompatibility between recording and improvised music. First, improvisation in jazz often produces a high degree of complexity, which rewards repeated listening. This is not only the case with improvised solos, but perhaps even more significantly, the constant improvised interactions between accompanying musicians. Second, improvised music may make the pleasure arising from entrainment even more “intoxicating” for listeners than does non-improvised music; if the listener knows that the recorded music was improvised, the fact that it seems to precisely match our expectations is even more remarkable, and therefore even more thrilling. I have listened to bassist Charles Fambrough’s version of Milton Nascimento’s “Don Quixote” from *The Proper Angle* (CTI, 1991) hundreds of times. Joe Ford’s soprano saxophone solo is one of my favorite melodies in all of music. Although I know that it was improvised—that it was merely one among many possible alternatives—I feel that it was inevitable, that it couldn’t possibly have happened any other way. I would not argue that the solo is intrinsically perfect. (Even if I believed it is, doing so would reproduce the kind of fetishizing of jazz recordings as magisterial works of genius.) My feeling that this recording is “fundamentally right”—my sense that Ford somehow played—improvised—exactly what I wanted to hear—has been engendered merely by the repeatability of the recording.

**Mediatized performance and liveness**

Attending to the repeatability of recorded music in these ways encourages us to consider the nature of recordings not just ontologically—in terms of the inherent properties of recordings—but instead phenomenologically—in terms of people’s experiences with them. It compels us to shift our frame of reference from the relationship between the recording and the
thing that it represents (a relationship that is privileged in the idea of recordings as works) to the relationship between the listener and the recording, or, perhaps better, the relationship between the listener and the performer as mediated by the recording. In this last section, I argue that the concept of *mediatized performance* productively accounts for this latter relationship.

The concept of mediatized performance was introduced by theater studies scholar Philip Auslander in his book *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*. Auslander, too, was skeptical of the view that recorded media are inherently inferior to live performance, that “the live event is ‘real’ and that mediatized events are secondary and somehow artificial reproductions of the real” (1999:3). He sees this position as irreconcilable with the “mediatization” of culture in general, the emergence of the mass media as the dominant “code” of (Western) culture, without which the very notion of “live” performance is meaningless to begin with (ibid:5). Rejecting a hierarchical relationship between them, Auslander instead regards live performance and “mediatized performance”—“performance that is circulated on television, as audio or video recordings, and in other forms based in technologies of reproduction”—as “parallel forms that participate in the same cultural economy” (ibid).

Auslander developed the concept of mediatized performance in subsequent articles, including one in which he critiques another persistent (and familiar, from the previous section) binary, between what he calls “documentary” performance documentation—that of a

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4 Famously, Auslander contested pioneering performance studies scholar Peggy Phelan’s claim of a categorical distinction between performance and recording: “Performance’s only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance” (1993:146). This claim, it may be noted, prefigures those of Brown and jazz scholars who propose that improvised music and recording are irreconcilable.
performance that occurred in front of an audience—and “theatrical” performance documentation—that of an event that was staged only for the purposes of being documented.⁵ He suggests that, despite their differences, these two types of documentation have an important trait in common: they are both staged in some respect for an audience consisting of observers of the documentation: “The performance is always at one level raw material for documentation, the final product through which it will be circulated and with which it will inevitably become identified” (Auslander 2006:3–4). By foregrounding the relationship between the artist and the document’s audience, Auslander reconfigures the terms of Richard Bauman’s classic definition of performance: “A mode of communicative display, in which the performer signals to an audience, in effect, ‘hey, look at me! I’m on! watch how skillfully and effectively I express myself.’ That is to say, performance rests on an assumption of responsibility to an audience for a display of communicative virtuosity” (quoted in Auslander 2006:5). For Auslander, performance documentation of any kind is always constituted on at least one level as a performance, because it is always created for an audience, even if that audience is absent.

Although he does not develop the idea fully for music, Auslander suggests the argument still holds. While Brown, he argues, construes non-documentary (“theatrical,” in Auslander’s terms) sound recordings as a new kind of entity—works of phonography—for Auslander, they are “a species of musical performance, albeit a species that exists only in the space of recording” (ibid:8). He drives the point home:

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⁵ His example of a documentary documentation is Chris Burden’s famous Shoot piece, for which the artist is shot with a gun by a friend in front of a live audience. His example of a theatrical documentation is Yves Klein’s Leap into the Void, a photograph which appears to show the artist jumping off a building with no safety net below; the photo was printed from two negatives, one of which depicted Klein jumping into a net.
Perhaps the authenticity of the performance document resides in its relationship to its beholder rather than to an ostensibly originary event: perhaps its authority is phenomenological rather than ontological . . . Pleasures are available from the documentation and therefore do not depend on whether an audience witnessed the original event. The more radical possibility is that they may not even depend on whether the event actually happened. It may well be that our sense of the presence, power, and authenticity of these pieces derives not from treating the document as an indexical access point to a past event but from perceiving the document itself as a performance that directly reflects an artist’s aesthetic project or sensibility and for which we are the present audience. (Ibid:9, emphasis in original)

By this logic, jazz recordings that hew closely to the conditions of traditionally live performance and those that exploit a wide range of studio production techniques are all performances on at least one level. The musician assumes a responsibility to the recording’s audience, and it is in that relationship where “presence, power, and authenticity” lie.

Musicologist Paul Sanden has done the most to develop the notion of mediatized performance in music, especially with respect to recordings (2013). But Sanden is primary concerned with a correlating phenomenon of mediatization, liveness, which he defines as “a perceived trace of that which could be live in the face of the threat of further or complete electronic mediation or modification” (ibid:6, emphasis in original). He argues that liveness emerges “not just from this perception of performance but from the dialectical tensions inherent between this perception and the perceived encroachment of electronic technologies into the terrain of fully human performance” (ibid:6–7). He develops a typology of livenesses, which
includes “temporal” (same time) and “spatial” (same place) liveness (together, these are typically thought of as the defining features of traditional liveness, at least in the context of music). Others include “liveness of fidelity,” when music “is perceived as faithful to its initial utterance”; “liveness of spontaneity,” produced by music that “demonstrates the spontaneity and unpredictability of human performance”; “corporeal liveness,” wherein listeners perceive a “connection to an acoustic sounding body”; “interactive liveness,” produced by interactions between performing partners and/or between performers and listeners/viewers”; and finally “virtual liveness,” a quality of music for which “the conditions for its liveness (be they corporeal, interactive, etc.) do not actually exist” (Sanden 2013:33–43, emphasis in original).

Various scholars have used ethnographic studies to reveal how liveness operates in different music genres or cultures. Thomas Porcello, Louise Meintjes, and Christopher Scales have described how musicians, producers, and engineers in indie rock, Zulu music, and Aboriginal American powwow, respectively, produce liveness through studio technologies, techniques, and social interactions (Porcello 2002, Meintjes 2003, Scales 2012). Alternatively, Mark Butler, Anne Danielsen, and Inger Helseth have studied events that are ostensibly “live” but that significantly incorporate pre-recorded music, arguing that their liveness is produced and negotiated through the interactions of musicians, DJs, recordings, and listeners (Butler 2014, Danielsen and Helseth 2016). Mueller’s study of the Ellington Newport recordings shows how two different concepts of liveness can result in markedly different sonic artifacts (2014). I have shown in this dissertation that liveness remains an important aesthetic orientation for many musicians today. It might be especially relevant to recordings that were made with “low impact” recording techniques, such as live to two-track recordings that include a studio audience. It might also be relevant to recordings that were made with high impact techniques but that do not do so
in an obvious way; Sylvester Onyejiaka may have overdubbed all six flutes himself, but the listener might hear them as six different musicians tracking together. In fact, the ease with which musicians can now transpose many studio technologies to traditionally live performance means that even the most overtly “produced” jazz could nevertheless be perceived as having the quality of liveness.

The problem with liveness, in my view, is that it reinscribes the traditionally live as the privileged domain of musical experience. It is premised on the assumption, as Jonathan Sterne has characterized it, that “face-to-face communication and bodily presence are the yardsticks by which to measure all communicative activity,” which defines sound reproduction “negatively, as negating or modifying an undamaged interpersonal or face-to-face copresence” (Sterne 2003:20). Indeed, Sanden himself is unambiguous about the hierarchy of experience that gives liveness its potency, characterizing mediation as a “threat”: “Values of traditional performance + Threat of technological encroachment on these values = Liveness concept” (2013:6–7). This formulation is especially consequential in the context of jazz, where “live” has always connoted exactly this communicative mode: face-to-face interactions of musicians and listeners. In other words, if the concept of liveness is meant to explain how people experience jazz recordings, it does so by assuming their inherent deficits. I argue just the opposite, however; people value recordings precisely because they are not live, because the performances that they mediatize and the experiences they create are not conceivable without recording. In other words, people value recordings for what might be called, albeit awkwardly, their recordedness.

One recording that draws on many of the recording techniques discussed in this dissertation that might suffice to illustrate the point is “Red Sand” by British keyboardist Bill
Laurance, a track of his album *Swift* (GroundUp, 2015). Laurance is a keyboardist in Snarky Puppy, and, like the band, he collaborated with Mr. Magic Carpet Ride Productions to video record the tracking sessions and release the album as a film. Unlike Snarky Puppy, however, Laurance did not record his album “live in-studio,” but rather made extensive use of overdubs. Indeed, in “Red Sand,” except for the string section, all the other instruments are played by members of the core trio: Laurance plays several keyboards and the vibraphone, Michael League plays guitar and all basses, including the Moog bass, and Robert “Sput” Searight plays the drum set and a variety of percussion instruments. Although strategic camera angles sometimes obscure the faces of the musicians, it is nevertheless made clear by the video that the performance is “unreal.” One might argue that this use of video promotes “corporeal liveness”—or rather, “virtual corporeal liveness,” because it facilitates “re-embodying” (in Solis’s terms) the music to sounding bodies, even though the conditions for that re-embodiment do not actually exist—the ensemble the video proposes is impossible. I would argue alternatively that it is precisely the impossibility of the ensemble that makes the performance compelling; my perception of recordedness is what heightens my experience of the recording.

Liveness and recordedness are both meant to explain why people have such strong responses to recorded music. Perhaps a concept better than both is “presence.” Some scholars have used presence as synonymous with liveness in precisely the way I have warned against; Darren Mueller, for instance, defines it as “a feeling of immediacy that comes from face-to-face interaction where the audience has, as Paul Allain and Jen Harvie write, ‘a sense of the importance of being in that moment at the event’” (2014:19). A different concept of presence is

employed by media studies scholar Steve Dixon, for whom it denotes the capacity of an artwork or a performance to command our attention, regardless of whether it is live or mediatized:

“Presence in relation to audience engagement and attention is dependent on the compulsion of the audiovisual activity, not on liveness or corporeal three-dimensionality” (2007:132). Both recordings perceived as those “which could be live” and recordings perceived as mediatized can inspire the feeling of presence in a listener. By the same token, as Dixon notes, “mere corporeal liveness is no guarantee of presence” (ibid:133). This fact ought to be readily accepted by anyone who has attended a bad performance and spent the entire time wishing they were elsewhere, maybe even craving some significant “technological encroachment.”

* * *

It is worth closing by revisiting Georgina Born’s summary of perspectives on the ontology of recordings as reproductions and as representations. She proposes a new class of recordings—remediations—a term that she attributes to Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, who define it as “the representation of one medium in another.”

Sampling is a classic example of remediation, but the scope of remediation has vastly expanded in the digital age, as recordings are more easily manipulated and as they circulate rapidly and with a global reach. Remediation

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7 Born does not discuss it, but Bolter and Grusin’s concept remediation is also a kind of third category, an extension of two dominant relationships between media and their observers: “immediacy” and “hypermediacy.” In the case of immediacy, observers have some knowledge of a “contact-point” between the medium and what it represents; Bolter and Grusin use the example of the realism experienced by people during their first viewing of the Lumière Brothers’ _L’arrivée d’un train en gare de La Ciotat:_ “The audience members knew at one level that the film of a train was not really a train, and yet they marveled at the discrepancy between what they knew and what their eyes told them . . . The marveling could not have happened unless the logic of immediacy had had a hold on the viewers” (2000:31). By contrast, hypermediacy “makes us aware of the medium of media”; in other words, observers are not fooled into thinking that they are observing something “real” rather than a media representation, nor is there an attempt to convince them otherwise.
suggests “an open sequence whereby the closing down of a musical object or process and its circulation are followed by its repeated re-opening and re-creation” (Born 2011b:301). This repeated opening and closing undermines the concept of recordings as “fixed” or “complete” works of phonography (or mediatized performances, for that matter): “The very nature of the musical work is transformed, such that it makes sense to speak of the provisional work” (ibid:302). Crucially, the possibilities of remediation extend beyond musicians to listeners, who are at liberty to become “active participants” in its practices. In this sense, the creative processes that constitute a remediation are “relayed” from musician to listener to another listener and so on. Born summarizes: “Distributed across space, time and persons, digitized music eschews any finished state; it becomes an object of relayed creativity – that is, of recurrent de-composition, composition and re-composition by a series of creative agents” (ibid:303).

Interestingly, Born sees remediation in digital music as prefigured by jazz and other genres of black music, where, as discussed in the Introduction, works are also provisional, made and remade through cycles of performance and recording. However, contemporary jazz also offers examples of the more literal de- and re-constructing of music that she observes in digital music cultures. Remixing projects like Glasper’s and Le Boeuf Brothers’ are strong examples. Among the more intriguing is Christian Scott aTunde Adjuah’s Stretch Music app. As he described the concept in relation to his notion of the work:

A lot of people said, “Why would you want people to edit, manipulate and play with your music and your artistic vision?” My thing is if they want to hear my artistic vision, they can buy the record, but it’s no skin off my back for a young trumpet player to be able to get my record and take me out of it to learn to play
the record as me . . . That doesn’t hurt my artistic vision; it just allows them entry in a way they’ve never been eligible for. (Scott aTunde Adjuah 2015)

In the most explicit way, Scott relays creativity, giving listeners the power to deconstruct his music. Whether or not more jazz musicians begin to conceive of their music in this way remains to be seen.
CHAPTER 7. Jazz recordings and social media activism

In the previous chapter, I used the framework of mediatized performance to theorize recordings at the level of the individual encounter; to that end, I focused largely on the dynamic experiences of listening to recorded music. In this chapter, I extend this framework to the digital, online spaces within which people share music, articulate identities, and establish social relationships. In these spaces, sound recordings circulate as mediatized performances supplemented by other media (e.g., liner notes, videos, websites) and discourses (e.g., interviews, album reviews), which may continue to accrue as they move through various digital networks (e.g., streaming services, online magazines, social media).

There are various, overlapping social networks through which recordings move, not the least of which is the community of taste consisting of those who identify as “jazz fans.” In this chapter, however, I focus on the participation of jazz musicians in racial justice movements, collectively known as Black Lives Matter. I begin by introducing these movements, highlighting the essential role that new and social media have played in their emergence. Then, focusing on a selection of recent jazz recordings, I show how musicians use recording technologies, supplemental materials, and digital networks to make strong political statements about violence against people and communities of color. I also briefly consider the extent to which racial justice activism overlaps with other sociopolitical concerns in jazz. I conclude by arguing that, like the social movements in which they participate, the potential for jazz to be effective protest music is not located exclusively in either live or mediatized performances, but instead the aggregative interaction of both.
Racial justice movements and social media

Writing in *The Nation* in the summer of 2015, Mychal Denzel Smith linked the development of current movements for racial justice to the ascendency of social media. A pivotal moment was hip-hop artist Kanye West’s indictment of President George W. Bush on national television in 2005, broadcast live during a telethon to raise money for Hurricane Katrina relief; YouTube, in its infancy at the time, was key to the spread of West’s statement, which resounded through black communities across the United States and among millennials especially. In 2007, Facebook became a platform for organizing in support of the Jena Six—African-American teenagers who were charged with attempted murder and tried as adults after a schoolyard brawl—as activists and ordinary citizens used it to create support groups and plan solidarity marches. While the initial years of Barack Obama’s presidency tempered the emergence of a national movement, the killing of Trayvon Martin by George Zimmerman in 2012 and the many subsequent incidents of racial violence, often by police, spurred the emergence of what has come to be known as Black Lives Matter (Smith 2015a).

Twitter has been indispensable to the ascendency of this movement; indeed, its name is often stylized as #BlackLivesMatter, a reference to the origin of the phrase as a Twitter hashtag.

After a Florida jury acquitted Zimmerman in 2013, Twitter quickly became a space for African Americans to express their outrage at the acquittal and to plan their own protests.

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1 Black Lives Matter is used colloquially to denote the decentralized, transnational movement for racial justice that coalesced in the wake of Martin’s death. It also denotes a specific organization founded by Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi (http://blacklivesmatter.com). In this chapter, I use it strictly in the former sense.

2 Twitter has also played a pivotal role in other recent social and political movements, including the Iranian Green Movement, which stemmed from the 2009 reelection of president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad following a vote that was widely thought to have been fraudulent, and the international Occupy movement, which originated as Occupy Wall Street in 2011 and has since expanded (Mottahedeh 2015, Juris 2012).
Americans to share grief and anger and to provide support to one another, including by coordinating local solidarity vigils and marches. In the immediate aftermath of the shooting death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, in 2014, residents took to Twitter to circulate images and reports from the street, where Brown’s body was left lying for over four hours. Outraged not only by another apparent case of police brutality but also by the cavalier treatment of the teenager’s body, people immediately began coordinating protest actions and traveling to the city. The protests themselves were reported extensively in real time on Twitter; people informed one another of police movements and documented misconduct (Smith 2015b).

Since then, Twitter has been an essential space for Black Lives Matter activists and for socially and politically mindful African Americans in general. It has provided a digital platform for a transnational “community,” allowing people to connect and organize across great distances. Activist DeRay Mckesson has suggested that through social media, African Americans are “building a radical new community in struggle that did not exist before,” and blogger Feminista Jones has noted that Twitter has become a “forum for [African Americans] to reach out and build community, an action that has proven itself vital to our collective growth” (Berlatsky and Mckesson 2015, Jones 2013). It has also facilitated protest activity, helping people to plan and coordinate actions—street protests, letter-writing campaigns, etc.—in rapid response to events. As Mckesson has noted, on Twitter, Black Lives Matter thrives as a decentralized movement, allowing “regular people” to plan and carry out actions without the intervention of a sole leader (Berlatsky and Mckesson 2015). Robin D. G. Kelley has called Black Lives Matter a movement that is “organized horizontally rather than vertically” (2017:6).

Social scientists have probed further the relationship between Black Lives Matter and social media. Responding to criticisms that so-called “hashtag activism” is ineffectual relative to
“real,” offline activism, Yarimar Bonilla and Jonathan Rosa have argued that through the real time “dialogicality” of Twitter, participants construct a “shared political temporality,” which simulates the feeling of participating in ground-level actions, even if they are not physically there (2015:4). A high volume of virtual activity can be crucial in drawing attention to events that might otherwise be distorted or simply ignored by traditional media outlets.3 Bonilla and Rosa also argue that Twitter allows people to quickly and thoroughly counter distorted and potentially destructive media representations of events and the people involved. It has been especially useful for combatting biased representations of African-American victims of police violence, such as when Twitter users pilloried The New York Times’ characterization of Brown as “no angel” (Bonilla and Rosa 2015:9). Nora Gross has further shown how Twitter users used the hashtag #IfTheyGunnedMeDown to share pairs of “socially acceptable” and “socially problematic” photographs of themselves, protesting the mainstream media’s tendency to choose “menacing” pictures of black men when reporting violence against them (2016).

Broadly, Bonilla and Rosa frame social media as constituting “mediatized publics,” “sites for activism around issues of racial inequality, state violence, and media representations” and “for collectively constructing counternarratives and reimagining group identities” (2015:5, 6). Although they do not attribute their use of mediatization to the Auslander lineage as I have, it is based upon the same principle: the inextricability of digital, online mediation from the integrity of certain forms (in this case, social forms, as opposed to artistic forms). In other words, in movements like Black Lives Matter, social media do not merely mediate existing community organizing and political activism, they provide the necessary conditions for organizing and

3 As Mckesson noted, “[The state of] Missouri would have convinced you that we [the protesters] did not exist if it were not for social media” (Berlatsky and Mckesson 2015).
activism in the first place. I argue that making and sharing records, as mediatized performances, become effective modes for jazz musicians to participate in mediatized publics. That is not to say that effective protest cannot be registered through live performance, but simply that mediatization affords musicians unique opportunities to participate in social movements.

**Jazz recordings and racial justice**

The 2017 Winter Jazzfest in New York was organized around the theme of social justice. According to festival producer Brice Rosenbloom, the theme had not been planned far in advance, but as the lineup started to take shape, it struck him how many musicians were preparing projects that substantially engaged with social justice issues. The festival also inaugurated a series of “talks,” which included a panel on the role of music in social justice movements in general and one on its role in environmental justice in particular, both of which featured musicians and activists in dialogue. During the general panel discussion, moderator and journalist Siddhartha Mitter speculated about the possible origins of this apparent groundswell of social awareness in jazz. After briefly considering the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and Hurricane Katrina, he suggested that the movement today has coalesced around Black Lives Matter. This view was echoed by cultural critic Greg Tate, who observed a broader “renewal of social-justice-focused artistry inside of jazz” (quoted in Kassel 2017).

Musicians, scholars, and others differ on when—if it all—the lull in social and political engagement (the prerequisite of a “renewal”) is supposed to have occurred. For Tate, it coincided with a 25–30 year stretch from the 1980s through the first decade of the new millennium, during which jazz was “relatively apolitical and devoid of statements of activism or protest” (ibid). Others who are far less generous to the 1970s than Tate cite the preceding decade as the last time
when jazz musicians made what could be called protest music. In a piece on contemporary activism in jazz for The New York Times, Nate Chinen refers to a selection of recordings, including Louis Armstrong’s recording of “(What Did I Do to Be So) Black and Blue” (1929) and Billie Holiday’s version of “Strange Fruit” (1939), that prefigured the current era; John Coltrane’s “Alabama,” which was released in 1963, is the most recent of the bunch (2016a). While Chinen does not claim to be comprehensive, his timeline distills a common perception that jazz has been more or less apolitical since the Civil Rights era.4

Alternatively, some insist that the apathy of the 1980s and ‘90s has been overstated, citing groups like the Art Ensemble of Chicago and the Liberation Music Orchestra, who continued to respond to national and international social justice issues in their music. Tate himself has said that his views on the period have been misrepresented and that the rejection of neoclassical jazz aesthetics by the M-Base musicians, for example, constituted a radical politics in and of itself. More common is the view that today’s current political movement in jazz predates Martin’s murder by a decade, dating back, as Mitter posited, to the wars in the Middle East and especially to Katrina. In any case, what is clear is that there persists a strong perception among contemporary jazz musicians and other observers that jazz is engaging with social justice movements with historic intensity.

Trumpet player Christian Scott aTunde Adjuah has been among the most overtly political jazz musicians of the current era. His celebrated 2007 album Anthem (Concord) is an elegiac

4 Music theorist John Halle has also argued for the 1960s as the last significant moment of protest in jazz, but, unlike Chinen, observes no revitalization of political consciousness in contemporary jazz (2014). As Shuja Haider has pointed out, however, Halle offers little evidence that he is even aware of what is happening in contemporary jazz, let alone informed enough to make such a sweeping claim (2014).
reflection on the devastation wrought by Hurricane Katrina on his hometown and the federal and local governments’ inadequate responses. Scott addressed social justice issues in greater depth on his next album, *Yesterday You Said Tomorrow* (Concord, 2010). The titles of the individual tracks invoke a range of issues pertaining to violence against black people and communities. “Jenicide” refers to the Jena Six case described above, while “Angola, LA & The 13th Amendment” is Scott’s reflection on the permissibility of slavery as a punishment for crime under the U.S. Constitution. In the liner notes, Scott explicitly links the album to the politically-oriented jazz of the 1960s:

*[Yesterday You Said Tomorrow]* was designed in subject matter and sound to have the brevity and character of the recordings of the ‘60s . . . a period when music was in direct relationship to society in view and application . . . The driving force behind this document was to illuminate the fact that the same dilemmas that dominated the social and musical landscape in the ‘60s have not been eradicated – only refined. This record looks to change this dynamic by reengaging these newly refined pre-existing problems in our societal structure in the same ways our predecessors did. (2010)

Scott does not merely identify the compositions as vehicles of political commentary, but also the sound of the recording. He recruited the legendary Rudy Van Gelder (aged 84 at the time), whose engineering sound is iconic of that era, to record, mix, and master the album. Further, he adopted the design template of classic Blue Note albums; on the back cover, the album title and the names of the lead artist and band members appear in capital letters across the top, and the tracks are listed below them in two columns. Composition, production, and album design work together
to encourage listeners to hear the recording in the spirit of its Civil Rights-era predecessors, strengthening Scott’s commentary.

Figure 5. Back cover of Yesterday You Said Tomorrow by Christian Scott (Concord, 2011)

The record is further supplemented through a series of videos produced with the online jazz magazine Nextbop.com in 2010. Posted to YouTube, they feature footage of Scott relating the stories behind each track, intercut with clips of the recorded music and photographs from the tracking sessions and live performances. One especially compelling story is that of the provocatively titled “K.K.P.D.” (Ku Klux Police Department). Scott reveals that he composed this tune in the immediate aftermath of a perilous traffic stop on his way home from a gig, during
which he was humiliated and threatened by a group of police officers. He then describes how he interpreted this experience through composition. The “twang” and “edginess” of the guitar (played by Matt Stevens), for example, is meant to represent Pulaski, Tennessee, the birthplace of the Ku Klux Klan, while the drums (played by Jamire Williams), using a combination of rhythmic devices, are meant to represent the people of the African diaspora; the two create, in Scott’s words, a “very intense push and pull.”

Scott has also been an active presence on social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter, where, in addition to publicizing concert dates and the like, he shares and comments on news stories and recirculates clips from his records or footage of live performances. In April 2015, for example, news broke regarding the Danziger Bridge shootings of 2005, a case in which five New Orleans police officers shot and killed two black men in the aftermath of Katrina; the police department subsequently covered it up. A court overturned the convictions in 2014 due to prosecutorial misconduct, and the officers pled guilty to lesser crimes with reduced sentences to forgo a second trial. Scott took to Facebook to share his tune “Danziger” from Christian aTunde Adjuah (Concord, 2012), which he had written in response to the original incident, and fans posted sympathetic comments and re-shared it within their own social networks. Not long after, in October 2015, a video of a white male police officer violently detaining a black female high school student in Columbia, South Carolina was shared widely across social media, prompting outrage and condemnation from activists. Scott again used Facebook to share the video, and in an accompanying comment, he reaffirmed his commitment to playing “K.K.P.D.” At that time, I myself had just heard Scott play the piece twice, first during a YouTube livestream of a concert at

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Berklee College and then again in person at the Harlem Stage Gatehouse. Both times, Scott gave a detailed account of his own traffic stop, which, due to several recent high-profile cases of police shootings during traffic stops, had become much more harrowing.6

Another trumpet player, Terence Blanchard, has also addressed recent cases of racial profiling and police brutality through recording. His album with his group the E-Collective, *Breathless*, was inspired by “I Can’t Breathe,” the words spoken by Eric Garner as he was choked to death by a police officer on Staten Island. Blanchard has called the album his “version of a protest album, without the firebrand lyrics of Phil Ochs, but in mood and purpose” (Reyes and Blanchard 2015). Like Scott, he utilized album design techniques to shore up the political orientation of the project. The cover art, “Black Man Grove: Resilience” by Andrew F. Scott, is a computer-generated image resembling a sculpture of a clenched fist; the fist is colored with an image of a stained-glass window that depicts a white dove with its wings spread. As Scott’s use of the Blue Note design template accords with the sound of the album, so the computer-generated artwork of “Breathless” matches the electronics-heavy music. Both album designs cultivate a political orientation, Scott’s through visual and sonic markers of Civil Rights era jazz, and Blanchard’s through recognizable symbols: the clenched fist (resistance) and dove (peace).

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6 Cases include the shootings of Walter Scott (April 4, 2015) and Samuel DuBose (July 19, 2015).
Figure 6. Front cover of *Breathless* by Terence Blanchard featuring the E-Collective (Blue Note, 2015)
Also like Scott, Blanchard supplemented his album with a series of videos explaining the
caption concept and intent behind the music. He has elaborated on the album concept in various
interviews, as well. In one, Blanchard tells the story of a potentially dangerous encounter that his
son—who composed the song “Shutting Down” for Breathless—had with the police. A woman
had reported a breaking and entering, and her husband, seeing Blanchard’s son in the
neighborhood and imagining him to be the suspect, followed him to his school and called the
police. Seven patrol cars responded and arrested him in his classroom; he was only released
when one of the police officers—an old friend of Blanchard’s—recognized him. Reflecting on
this incident, Blanchard has been direct about the kinds of solutions he envisions: “What got me
was the seven patrol cars. That says a lot about the mentality going on in law enforcement. The
thing I keep saying: It’s not going to stop until those police who are responsible go to jail”
(Blickenstaff and Blanchard n.d.). Blanchard has elaborated on this perspective elsewhere:

People have been asking me whether [Breathless] will create a dialogue, but I
don’t want it to create a dialogue. We’ve talked too much about this. It’s time for
laws and policy to change. It’s time for people to go [to] jail for wrongdoing. It’s
time for people who know what’s right to stand up for what’s right and stand
against what’s wrong. It’s just that simple. (Reyes and Blanchard 2015)

Composer Anthony D. J. Branker is another musician to have interpreted personal
experiences of racial profiling through his recorded music. These again include his own
encounters with police, including one in his early twenties when he was held at gunpoint under
suspicion of breaking and entering and another when he was pulled over because he “fit the

7 “Breathless: Terence Blanchard featuring the E-Collective.” Terence Blanchard. Published
profile” of a car thief (Reich 2013). Branker draws on even more sinister encounters on his album *Uppity* (Origin, 2013). The title track is based on a short text that he wrote to typify the kind of invective that he and other African Americans have experienced:

*You Uppity Motha Fuckin’ Nigger!!*

*Go and Take Your Black Ass the Fuck Out of Here, We Don’t Want Your Kind!!*

*You Don’t Belong, You Don’t Belong, You Don’t Belong!!*

*You Uppity Motha Fuckin’ Nigger!!* (Branker 2013)

Importantly, this text is not directly spoken on the recording; its purpose is to put musicians in a frame of mind for performances. Thus, although the performance is affecting on its own, the text, printed with an explanation in the liner notes, allows the listener to hear the recording in context.

On *Uppity*, Branker also responds to one of the highest profile cases of racial profiling and violence in recent years. “Ballad for Trayvon Martin” is a composition that Branker hoped would be received as a “song of healing and one that speaks to the urgent need for all of us to continue to work together” (ibid). Yet, when *NJ.com* announced the live premiere of the piece at Princeton University (where Branker, an alumnus, had run the jazz program for over 25 years), many online commenters responded with vitriol (Reich 2013). They leveled racist attacks against both Branker and Martin, and even the more temperate comments complained that a jazz concert at an Ivy League university is an inappropriate forum for such a divisive issue. The announcement was also picked up by various far-right blogs, where it was hit even harder with racist abuse and likely prompted the harassing and threatening phone calls and emails that Branker received. The University provided extra security for the concert, but Branker told me he was nevertheless “terrified” to take the stage (2015). One would be hard-pressed to find stronger evidence that the odious sentiments encapsulated in the “Uppity” text are still widespread.
Scott, Blanchard, and Branker come from a long line of jazz musicians who have been racially profiled or unduly harassed, especially by law enforcement. Bud Powell and Miles Davis suffered severe beatings by police, both prompted by behavior that, if of a white person, would no doubt have been unremarkable. Indeed, for knowledgeable listeners, part of what makes contemporary stories of racial injustice particularly urgent is that they are not at all new but in fact routine. But even for listeners without a full grasp of this history, recordings and their attendant media and discourses can impart strong political stances.

In addition to sharing personal narratives through recorded music, another musical-political strategy that jazz musicians have employed is reciting the names of victims of racial violence. Trumpet player Ambrose Akinmusire’s *When the Heart Emerges Glistening* (Blue Note, 2011) features “My Name Is Oscar,” which he recorded in response to the 2009 killing of Oscar Grant by a transit officer in Oakland, Akinmusire’s hometown. Featuring a drum solo by Justin Brown, it incorporates a recording of Akinmusire’s voice—with effects processing—reciting phrases like “My name is Oscar,” “Don’t shoot,” and “We are the same.” By adopting Grant’s perspective on the recording, Akinmusire, himself a young black man from Oakland, conveys his own insecurities in the face of racial violence.

Akinmusire’s second album, *The Imagined Savior Is Far Easier to Paint*, features a similar track called “Rollcall for Those Absent.” This recording features drums, keyboards, and a recording of a young girl reciting the names of black men who were killed by the police, including Patrick Dorismond, Amadou Diallo, Kendrec McDade, Timothy Russell, Orlando Barlow, and Trayvon Martin. The girl is the daughter of drummer Johnathan Blake, who participated in this project.
multiple times over the remainder of the piece, sometimes overlapping other names. Akinmusire has explained his approach in various interviews: “So, I have a kid reading the names and then all of a sudden you hear ‘Trayvon Martin,’ who’s known globally. It’s like a slap in the face, like, ‘Wait a minute? You’re telling me all these people are like Trayvon?’” (Peterson and Akinmusire 2014). “You come in, and you’re just like, ‘What is this?’ And then when you hear Trayvon Martin, in the middle of the piece, you say, ‘Oh, okay.’ And then I have her read the names again, and now we recognize what’s really going on” (Rath and Akinmusire 2014).

“Rollcall” is even more compelling due to the inclusion of Oscar Grant’s name only at the very end of the track, after the others have been recited multiple times. It is repeated twice: first, softly, underneath another repetition of Martin’s name, and then alone, with an echo effect. Two things may be said about the part played by recording technologies in reinforcing the track’s sociopolitical commentary. First, overlapping Grant’s name with Martin’s reinforces the sense that the crisis of police violence against people of color is ongoing, while the echo effect intimates a perception that the crisis has no foreseeable end. Second, because they both incorporate manipulated voice recordings, “Rollcall” is something of a stylistic sequel to “My Name Is Oscar,” reinforcing the thematic lineage between the two tracks; by waiting to introduce Grant’s name on “Rollcall,” Akinmusire delays the most explicit connection until the very end. Akinmusire describes the desired effect: “I really like the part where you have Oscar Grant’s name . . . You have that on top of Trayvon Martin, and it’s sort of saying, ‘This is still happening. It’s the same story, just a different time’” (Rath and Akinmusire 2014).

A year after “Rollcall,” pianist Robert Glasper released Covered (Blue Note, 2015), which he dedicated “to the victims and the families of those who were wrongfully killed by the police…” (2015). The album includes a cover of Kendrick Lamar’s “I’m Dying of Thirst,” which
once again features recordings of the voices of children—Glasper’s son and his friends—reciting names. It is effective for many of the same reasons that “Rollcall” is, but what makes this recording especially compelling is that it immediately follows another track, “Got Over,” which features yet another voice, Harry Belafonte’s, reciting a short, poetic version of his life story. The juxtaposition of the voices of children reading the names of young people whose lives were taken by racial violence to that of an aging Civil Rights icon recounting his own perseverance is striking. That Glasper used his son’s voice is also significant because the pianist has spoken publicly about how—like Blanchard—he fears violence against his son more than against himself (Heins 2015).

A final, somewhat different example of jazz musicians using the technique of name recitation is singer and filmmaker Talia Billig’s “Peace Power Change,” a music video for singer José James’s cover of “A Change Is Gonna Come.” The video features jazz musicians, other artists, and activists holding placards with popular slogans and social media hashtags associated with racial justice movements, including “#BlackLivesMatter” and “#WeCantBreathe.” Near the end of the video, the names of victims of racial violence begin to appear, a visual analogue of the technique used in “Rollcall for Those Absent” and “I’m Dying of Thirst.” In this case, the music video and the sound recording contextualize one another; many listeners will know that “A Change Is Gonna Come” is strongly associated with the Civil Rights movement, composed by

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Sam Cooke in 1963 in response his own experiences of racial profiling and police harassment. Importantly, the video also prominently features women as well as men with their children; placards that read “#BlackWomenMatter” and “I am a father” are examples of the ways that social media can undermine stereotypical representations of victims of police brutality as black men with “troubled” pasts (such as being an absentee father).

Reciting the names of victims of racial violence has been an enduring technique of Black Lives Matter activism. It is a way of memorializing the victims, but it is also an exhortation to keep distinct each individual case of violence rather than allow them to recede into a faceless mass or to become normalized. It is worth considering, however, that reciting the names of victims may also make it easier to forget the names of perpetrators—individual, institutional, or otherwise. Perhaps musicians and other activists might also name and shame them with as much resolve as they name and remember their victims.\textsuperscript{10} There is, of course, notable precedent for this in jazz: Charles Mingus’s satirical upbraiding of Orval E. Faubus, the Governor of Arkansas who deployed the National Guard to stop the integration of the state’s public schools. Although Columbia Records refused to release the recording in 1959, it was released by Candid the next year, when Faubus was still in office.

\textit{“A new golden age of protest music”}

These jazz recordings and others like them coincide with a broader revitalization of political commentary in black popular music. African-American Studies scholar Daphne A.

\textsuperscript{10} I am indebted to ethnomusicologist Travis Jackson, who proposed this alternative strategy in response to an early version of this material at the 2015 Annual Meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology.
Brooks has heralded “a new golden age of protest music,” while English scholar Salamishah Tillet similarly identified a “revival and redefinition of the protest song tradition” (Brooks 2016, Tillet 2015). These commentators and others invoke a core group of leading artists that invariably includes rapper Kendrick Lamar, R&B singer Beyoncé, soul singer D’Angelo, and a handful of others. They also usually relate them to predecessors like Nina Simone and Curtis Mayfield, although scholar and activist Conor Tomás Reed, who dubbed the current moment a “Black Arts Boomerang,” suggested that some artists are also reviving the more radical spirit of the Black Arts Movement (2015). In any case, they reinforce with respect to popular music the same interpretation of black protest that Mitter, Chinen, and others make with respect to jazz: that the degree of sociopolitical activism in music is at its highest levels since the Civil Rights era.

With the possible exception of Glasper, the jazz musician who has been most directly linked with this movement in black popular music has been saxophonist Kamasi Washington, whom Greg Tate has called “the jazz voice of Black Lives Matter” (quoted in Shatz 2016). Interestingly, unlike Glasper, Scott, and (to a lesser extent) Akinmusire, Washington generally eschews contemporary popular styles and aesthetics in his own music, instead adopting the Afrocentric and sometimes Afrofuturist styles and aesthetics of the late 1960s and early 1970s, predominantly associated with such artists as Art Blakey, Archie Shepp, Sun Ra, Alice Coltrane, and Pharoah Sanders. The black-and-white cover art for *The Epic*, Washington’s highly celebrated three-disc debut, depicts the saxophonist wearing his typical garment—a Senegalese *kaftan*-like tunic—and standing beneath a night sky of stars and two celestial orbs. The music features heavy swing, Afro-Caribbean rhythms, and extensive soloing; Washington’s playing by turns recalls John Coltrane’s “sheets of sound” and Albert Ayler’s blistering wails.
The Epic is overtly political in some ways; one track sets excerpts from a Malcolm X speech to a roiling 12/8 groove. But the embrace of Washington as a figurehead of “the new golden age” is more often attributed to the implicit political underpinnings of his throwback aesthetic. As Adam Shatz has written,

Many listeners heard [The Epic] as an allegory of that greatest of American epics, the African-American freedom struggle since slavery. Certainly Washington looked well cast for the part, a bearded, dashiki-clad man with an Afro whose sheer size seemed to convey the magnitude of his ambitions. “The Epic” tapped into an intense nostalgia for an era when, as Washington puts it, “music was a sword of the civil rights movement.” But it has awakened those feelings in listeners who, in most cases, were not alive to know that era. (2016)

I would go a step further and suggest that Washington’s embrace of a broad spectrum of black music has been instrumental in this “awakening.” This embrace is epitomized by his collaborations with rappers, including Snoop Dogg and, more famously, Kendrick Lamar, with whom he worked on the Platinum-selling To Pimp a Butterfly (Aftermath, 2015). As a throwback jazz musician who also plays contemporary hip-hop, Washington embodies the potent convergence of various strains of black music. This may be political inasmuch as it represents a diverse but cohesive body politic—a black “community,” in the words of activists like Mckesson and Jones, or “the Afro-collective community,” in those of Tate (quoted in Hughes 2016). These feelings of identity and community are in fact promulgated in much of jazz, in what Mark Anthony Neal has called, referring to Robert Glasper, “cosmopolitan blackness,” and especially in what Nicholas Payton has called “Black American Music” (Neal 2012, Payton 2014).
In observing “the new golden age of protest music,” Daphne Brooks makes the bolder claim that artists like Washington and Lamar “offer the most robust moment of resistant . . . black popular music that we’ve ever had” (2016). Brooks is speaking partly in terms of musical style but, ostensibly, in terms of political activity as well. Those familiar with the music of Civil Rights—much of which Brooks herself cites—might chafe at this suggestion, but it is likely that by “robust” Brooks means not merely strength but also diversity—that is, the extent to which Black Lives Matter overlaps with other social justice movements. Such movements include those around issues like women’s rights, LGBTQ rights, immigrants’ rights, income inequality, environmental protection, war in the Middle East, and, most recently, anti-fascism. These and still others have found expression through Black Lives Matter (and vice versa), becoming, in the au courant concept of critical race theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw, “intersectional.”

Jazz musicians too have found spaces to participate in movements that often entail but are not reducible to issues of race and ethnicity. In 2013, bassist and singer Esperanza Spalding composed and recorded “We Are America,” which protests the indefinite detention and secret prosecution of prisoners at Guantanamo Bay. She released it on YouTube as a music video, which presents facts about abuses at the military prison and instructions for contacting congressional representatives to demand its closure.11 Another anti-war project is pianist Vijay Iyer’s collaboration with librettist Mike Ladd, *Holding It Down: The Veterans’ Dreams Project* (Pi, 2013). The recording combines Iyer’s music with Ladd’s poetic interpretations of the dreams of veterans of color of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq as they were related to him, along with

11 “We Are America - Esperanza Spalding.” k-wad movin. Published November 19, 2013. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c68gcu30MnA.
two first-person accounts by veterans themselves. These projects draw attention to traumas on both “sides” of the wars in the Middle East.

Other musicians speak out against environmental destruction. Pianist Fabian Almazan started Biophilia with environmentalist Jessica Wu not only as a record label but also as an explicitly activist organization. Besides producing environmentally responsible products, the label and its artists organize outdoor concerts that run entirely off solar energy, participate in educational initiatives in local communities, and work with environmental organizations like Trees NY and RiverKeeper on such projects as urban “greening” and habitat cleanup. Almazan has stressed that they are especially concerned with advocating on behalf of people and communities of color, which tend to be not only the hardest hit during environmental crises but also the least likely to be represented in public conversations about climate change (Matzner, et al. 2017).

The participation of jazz musicians in movements associated with gender and sexuality is more complicated. Women and openly LGBTQ musicians remain seriously marginalized within jazz. As evidenced by the Glasper/Iverson scandal discussed in Chapter 5, jazz is still quite often unwelcoming if not openly hostile to musicians who are not cisgender, heterosexual men; this includes not only the community of professionals but also the institutions (e.g., primary school music programs) and cultural representations (e.g., films about jazz) that introduce young people to jazz at an early age. This is another respect, however, where social media may provide tools for women and LGBTQ people to make space for themselves in jazz. First, social media might allow them to work around industry institutions (e.g., major labels, newspapers, etc.) that continue to exclude them. Second, intersectional social movements might afford them techniques to more overtly demand equitable participation in the jazz scene. Indeed, the technique of
reciting names has become predominantly associated with the #SayHerName initiative spearheaded by the African American Policy Forum (AAPF), which responded to the failures of both the mainstream media and of Black Lives Matter itself to adequately address the prevalence of black women as victims of racial violence. It is doubly significant, then, that “Peace Power Change” was made by and so prominently features women. Still, it remains to be seen whether jazz will be responsive to the increasingly louder demands of its minority voices.

**Live and mediatized protest music**

It is important to resist techno-utopian conclusions about new and social media’s effectiveness at driving sociopolitical change. Set aside the obvious fact that social media—Twitter, in particular—have been platforms for hate and intolerance as much as they have for social justice. Such conclusions also run the risk of making protest fashionable, allowing people to cynically capitalize on what Rawiya Kameir has astutely called “the newfound cool of social justice” (2015). Further, as Astra Taylor has argued, using social media—the infrastructure of which is owned by some of the largest and most exploitative technology companies in the world—cannot help but perpetuate the structural inequalities that it simultaneously contests (2014). As users who “create content” and seek to attract “followers,” musicians with popular aspirations are perhaps more susceptible to these trappings than the average user, especially considering that many of them, as discussed in Chapter 4, are already making concerted efforts to “brand” themselves through social media.

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Further, as Bonilla and Rosa have noted, critics of “hashtag activism” argue that social media protest is a poor substitute for on-the-ground, direct political action, and that online activist networks must arise out of “real life” grassroots movements; indeed, as Mychal Denzel Smith has noted, groups like the Black Youth Project and Color of Change laid the groundwork for Black Lives Matter through more traditional, in-person organizing actions (2014). From a logistical standpoint, these organizations parallel the pre-existing, “real life” social networks that some musicians believe are necessary to cultivate a meaningful online presence. More broadly, critiques of hashtag activism resonate with the persistent belief that the integrity of jazz inhere

in live, face-to-face performance contexts. The logical conclusion of these perspectives on activism and jazz is that the greatest potential for effective social and political protest through music inhere


in live performance.

This is often the position advanced by many musicians and scholars studying the ethics of collective improvisation. Daniel Blake’s interviews with improvising musicians in New York reveal that face-to-face interaction in performance promotes an ethic of tolerance, “the recognition of difference” in the service of finding “aesthetic agreement” (2013:71–72). Fischlin, Heble, and Lipsitz go a step further, suggesting that such interactions are models for the imagination, cooperation, and resolve necessary to effect social change beyond music, including by making claims for human rights (2013). An overarching ethos of musical gatherings like New York’s Vision Festival, its Improvising Agency conference, and the Guelph Jazz Festival and Colloquium (convened by the International Institute for Critical Studies in Improvisation) has been that creative improvised music, by requiring especially attentive and intense negotiations between participants and, usually, radical defiance of mainstream stylistic conventions, is an especially effective model for resistance to dominant social or political structures.
Without question, live, interactive, improvised performances have been and will continue to be potent spaces for not only music making but also for social and political activism. However, just as I hope to have undermined the privileging of “liveness” in the previous chapter, I hope to have shown in this chapter that it is a mistake to view mediatized performance (and popular aesthetics, for that matter) as inherently less conducive to effective protest than live performance. On the contrary, mediatized performances offer musicians unique ways to participate in social movements, especially when those movements themselves are highly mediatized.

Ultimately, musical protest might be most effective when live and mediatized performances work dialogically. This accords with Bonilla and Rosa’s view that real and virtual forms of activism “work in interrelated and aggregative ways” (2015:10). Activists might use Facebook, for instance, to organize a community action at the local police precinct and then Tweet live updates from the event to global followers. As I described above, Christian Scott’s mediatized and live performances of “K.K.P.D.” built upon one another, becoming newly significant as instances of racial violence persisted. Ambrose Akinmusire attested to the ways that “My Name Is Oscar” created opportunities for him to speak out against racial violence while on international tour: “I would be in the Ukraine and somebody would come up to me and say, ‘Who’s Oscar Grant?’ and I would tell them the story. I said as long as I have this platform, I’m going to talk about stuff like this that relates to my fears, what I deal with” (Peterson and Akinmusire 2014).

As a final example, pianist Samora Pinderhughes recently debuted *The Transformations Suite* (self-release, 2016), a project reflecting on past and present movements for civil rights. The suite was premiered as a live performance in 2011, but has since developed into a multimedia
project that includes music, poetry, film, visual art, and a website.\textsuperscript{13} Production of the album was
crowdfunded through a Kickstarter campaign, and its release was promoted on social media.\textsuperscript{14}
Since its original inception, the content of the project has continued to evolve; one of the recent
videos hosted by the website features the second movement of the suite, “History,” and depicts
photographs from Black Lives Matter rallies that postdate the original performance.
Pinderhughes has also reinvented the live version, performing it in collaborations with social
justice organizations like the Campaign for Black Male Achievement and the Institute on the Arts
and Civic Dialogue. In short, the aggregation of multiple live and mediatized performances
propagating through real and virtual spaces constitutes \textit{The Transformations Suite}, and it is by
virtue of both that it makes its compelling political statements.

\textsuperscript{14} See “Please Help Us Record ‘The Transformations Suite’!” Kickstarter.
NEW ALBUM - OUT NOW

we who feel lava in our eyes & hearts
find it hard not to shake or scream

Subscribe for updates

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download press release
## THE TRANSFORMATIONS SUITE

created & composed by Samora Pinderhughes  
poetry by Jeremie Harris

*The Transformations Suite* combines music, theatre, and poetry to examine the radical history of resistance within the communities of the African Diaspora. Continuing in the tradition of artists such as Bob Marley, Duke Ellington, Marvin Gaye, Billie Holiday and Tupac Shakur, the suite paints a musical picture of the current state of social inequality and injustice in the United States and beyond.

*The Transformations Suite* connects contemporary issues, such as the prison industrial complex and the Black Lives Matter movement, with the history of revolutionary movements of color, building a bridge between the past and the future.

*The Transformations Suite* has been performed throughout Brazil and the U.S., at venues including the American Museum of Natural History, the Harlem Arts Festival, Juilliard, NYU, Joe’s Pub, the Jazz Gallery, and Columbia University. Most recently, the project was featured as part of Blackout’s #MLKNow event which was viewed by over 500,000 people and trended #1 on Twitter.

| The sun slapped me last night -  
Rippled me to the edge of earth,  
where angels fly with broken wings  
and love with shattered hearts |
| Tell me why you lied - and was it worth it?  
The culture you called stool,  
stepped on and then stole  
The malignant markings you left on the souls of folk,  
Scratching for breath in the land that calls them pariah  
for trying to breathe |
| We stand on broken glass with bloody feet |

*Figure 7. Screenshots (July 31, 2017) of Samora Pinderhughes’s The Transformations Suite website*  
*SOURCE: https://www.transformationssuite.com*
CONCLUSION

In Chapter 6, I introduced Georgina Born’s concept of “relayed creativity,” an open-ended process whereby the composition of digital music is “distributed” across a network of musicians and listeners. In such cases, if it can be said that there is a “work,” it is provisional at best; better, the musical object is the aggregate of all its Remediations, not only their sonic qualities, but also the variety of discursive, visual, and social qualities that inflect it as it circulates. The musical object is what Born has elsewhere called a “musical assemblage, where this is understood as a characteristic constellation of such heterogeneous mediations” (2011a:377). Primarily interested in social mediation, Born has proposed an analytical framework consisting of “four planes” that crosscut the musical assemblage:

In the first plane, music produces its own diverse social relations – in the intimate socialities of musical performance and practice, in musical ensembles, and in the musical division of labour. In the second, music conjures up and animates imagined communities, aggregating its listeners into virtual collectivities and publics based on musical and other identifications. In the third plane, music is traversed by wider social identity formations, from the most concrete and intimate to the most abstract of collectivities – music’s refraction of the hierarchical and stratified relations of class and age, race and ethnicity, gender and sexuality. In the fourth, music is bound up in the social and institutional forms that provide the grounds for its production, reproduction and transformation, whether elite or religious patronage, market or non-market exchange, the arena of public and subsidized cultural institutions, or late capitalism’s cultural economy. All four planes of social mediation enter into the musical assemblage. All four are
irreducible to one another, while being articulated in contingent and non-linear ways through relations of synergy, affordance, conditioning or causality. The first two planes amount to socialities engendered by musical practice and experience; whereas the last two amount to social and institutional conditions that themselves afford certain kinds of musical practice – although they enter into the nature of musical experience, permeating music’s intimate socialities and imagined communities.” (Ibid)

In closing, I use Born’s planes to organize some concluding thoughts on what contemporary jazz, recording technologies, and new media reveal about music and sociality and some propositions for future research.

**Plane I: Intimate socialities of musical performance and practice**

I have discussed many ways that jazz recording practices and intimate socialities mediate one another. Even before they enter the studio, musicians and fans develop personal relationships through crowdfunding campaigns, investing time, energy, money, and even emotions in one another. In the studio, recordists collaborate not only to track recordings but also to craft their “sound”; afterwards, they continue with intense, sometimes protracted post-production work. When releasing recordings, musicians collaborate with independent record labels, use social media to promote their music and communicate with their audiences, and create music videos, websites, or remixes. Private listening and relistening experiences manifest a unique relationship between the artist and the listener. Finally, recordings are instruments for participation in activist movements; the social and political statements that artists create and broadcast with recording technologies and new media establish affective bonds between people protesting injustices.
These observations counter the notion that recorded music is inherently antisocial at any point along the recording-listening continuum. In this dissertation, I have concentrated on the practices of musicians, but an ethnography of jazz listeners ought to reveal in even more detail how recorded music produces intimate social relationships. Such a study would undoubtedly engage with insights by scholars working on mobile music (Bull 2014, Weheliye 2014) and Internet fan communities (Wall and Dubber 2010, Cormany 2015). An especially fruitful line of inquiry might be how listeners develop expectations for live performance based on recordings and *vice versa*, and how those expectations shape their social interactions in each context. This research would complement the multiple excellent studies of such interactions in live jazz performance.

**Plane II: Virtual collectivities and publics**

As noted in the Introduction, “scene” has been a common concept by which people have identified themselves as members of jazz communities, especially those oriented around networks of venues and around shared aesthetic principles. By highlighting the mediatized nature of contemporary jazz as well as its stylistic diversity, this dissertation suggests different approaches to conceptualizing virtual or “imagined” collectivities in jazz. One increasingly relevant approach concerns the genre name itself: “jazz.” Debates about what “is” or “is not” jazz are endemic to jazz history, and scholars continue to grapple with the term’s meanings as a musical genre or style, not to mention as an attitude, lifestyle, or brand. One prominent perspective is represented by the recent collection *Jazz/Not Jazz: The Music and Its Boundaries*, in which the editors argue that jazz “possesses no essential characteristics” and advocate for thinking of jazz as “an open-ended, multifaceted, ever-changing idea or set of discourses rather
than a prescribed and proscribed set of specific musical devices, names, places, or styles” (Ake, et al. 2012:14).

The notion of jazz as a variable set of discourses rather than a stable collection of features requires an analysis of the ways that any particular piece or body of music comes to be identified with the genre. I propose that it is helpful to use David Brackett’s concept of genre (which he attributes in part to Jacques Derrida) as something that texts participate in rather than belong to, a distinction that emphasizes the temporal, experiential, functional, and fleeting quality of genres while nonetheless retaining the importance of the genre concept for communicating about texts. Put another way, genres are not static groupings of empirically verifiable musical characteristics, but rather associations of texts whose criteria of similarity may vary according to the uses to which the genre labels are put. (2016:3–4)

Brackett emphasizes that musical texts may be similar not only in terms of style, but also in terms of social constructs like ethnicity, class, and gender; as such, knowledge of musical contexts (e.g., artists’ identities, industry practices, critical discourses) are essential to mapping the associations that constitute a genre (ibid).

Moving forward, then, the relevant research question regarding virtual jazz collectivities or imagined jazz communities might not be whether music is or is not jazz, but rather to what extent it participates in jazz by meeting some criteria of similarity. Such an approach might help account for the often diverse and sometimes even contradictory ways that musicians, despite recognizing one another as participants in the same music world and even collaborating regularly with each other, identify music as “jazz.” Regardless of whether they have a wide or narrow set of criteria for jazz—or, indeed, whether they would prefer to do away with the term “jazz”
completely—they accept and even embrace the fact that their music is listened to by jazz fans, broadcast on jazz radio stations, compiled on jazz charts, reviewed in jazz magazines, played in jazz clubs, and programmed at jazz festivals. In short, their music participates in jazz, regardless of whether it precisely satisfies some stylistic criteria; this is one sense in which music “conjures up” an imagined jazz community.

**Plane III: Wider social identity formations**

Age has figured prominently into my discussion of contemporary jazz and recording. Computer and social media literacy among especially young musicians has undoubtedly more fully prepared them both to take advantage of the resources of modern technologies and media and to adapt to rapid changes within the music industry. Young musicians are often quite sanguine about the prospects for streaming—even “freemium” streaming, in some cases—to become an industry model that’s equitable to musicians. By contrast, many older musicians express justifiable concerns that the ways they used to earn their livings from recordings—by selling them on the road, for instance—are no longer lucrative, and they express justifiable anger that powerful institutions in the new music economy often show little interest in protecting their rights to control their existing work. Still, plenty of older jazz musicians are fluent in advanced technologies and media, for reasons not the least of which is that they were early pioneers in digital music; think only of Herbie Hancock’s electronic jazz-funk innovations or of GRP Records’ pioneering use of all-digital recording. But even older musicians who have been more faithful to “traditional” jazz aesthetics and industry standards have adapted quickly and creatively to the new landscape; as has often been noted, skills in adaptive improvisation honed over decades have served musicians’ entrepreneurship as much as their musicianship.
Future research should investigate in more detail how dynamics of class, race, and gender impact jazz recording practices. It is often observed that jazz is becoming increasingly white and increasingly middle class, a change which is usually attributed in part to the institutionalization of jazz training in exclusive collegiate programs. The mediatization of jazz described in this dissertation may have countervailing effects. The reintegration of the aesthetics of black popular music may simultaneously broaden and shift its base of support. Social media may propel this change; African Americans use Twitter, for example, at much higher rates than white Americans and have used it to construct and cultivate vibrant online networks for communication, media exchange, and activism (Duggan and Brenner 2013, Sharma 2013). The renewed commitment to creative recorded music alone may serve to invite poor and working class communities to participate in jazz; Vijay Iyer challenged attendees at the 2015 Improvising Agency conference to appreciate how making and listening to live, improvised music can sometimes be a luxury, requiring time, energy, space, and other resources that not everyone has or can afford to spend. Of course, lack of access to resources may prevent underprivileged people from developing as musicians in the first place; despite the increasing availability of consumer-oriented recording technologies, they are still be prohibitively expensive for some.

Gender arguably remains the most critical issue for scholars of both jazz and contemporary music production to address. As noted in the previous chapter, women remain seriously underrepresented in jazz, due to enduring institutional structures, social norms, and gendered stereotypes that discourage or outright bar them from participation. Once again, mediatization may have both positive and negative effects. The decentralization of the music industry and the empowerment of musicians to control their own businesses may allow women to enter the playing field on more equal terms with men than they have in the past, when artist
development was concentrated in the hands of a few powerful, sexist institutions. At the same time, mediatization may erect new barriers to women, who very often face stereotypes about their technological literacy. Women may be implicitly or explicitly discouraged from experimenting with studio technologies and techniques of production, and, in jazz, this may be compounded by the fact that many women are already pressured to “prove” their mastery of more traditional aspects of jazz, such as the virtuosic, improvised solo, to gain acceptance.

*Plane IV: Social and institutional forms*

Jazz musicians are at the forefront of changes in the arts economy, not only among the first to adapt to new economic conditions and technological developments, but also among the most aggressive in pushing developments to their advantage. They have utilized crowdfunding, grant writing, and other strategies to finance recordings in response to the contraction of the traditional recording industry. They have also advocated vociferously for government support for the arts, including by guaranteeing protections of creators’ rights from the predatory practices of new players in the music industry, especially technology companies. Many are active in New York-centric economic issues, advocating for healthcare and pensions for musicians, as well as for zoning policies that prioritize affordable housing for artists and community performance venues. Still, musicians often struggle to balance their creative desires with their professional obligations. Some express a will to see the traditional recording industry recover in at least some respects, including in its dedication to artist development. Moving forward, creative people striving to develop successful careers in a capitalist music economy may find themselves at odds with some of the progressive, anti-capitalist political movements with which they sympathize.
Ultimately, jazz and recording have much to tell us about the creative ways that musicians and their audiences are navigating and effecting musical, technical, and social changes. They show us how people make music that dexterously traverses physical and virtual networks, inspiring listeners, building and sustaining communities, and participating in social movements. Through their music, jazz musicians not only strongly rebuke proclamations of jazz’s “death” or “irrelevancy” expressed in various eulogies for jazz that have practically constituted a genre of writing over the last few years.¹ They provide models for how to address both the opportunities and challenges posed by the cultural economy in the digital age.

¹ In 2012, Benjamin Schwarz, reviewing Ted Gioia’s The Jazz Standards for The Atlantic, declared jazz “a relic,” and Gioia himself lamented in The Daily Beast in 2014 that the general public is more likely to hear jazz in a Starbucks than on the radio or in a nightclub (Schwarz 2012, Gioia 2014). Most pointedly, Justin Wm. Moyer wrote an editorial in The Washington Post in which he pronounced jazz “boring,” “overrated,” and “washed up” (2014).
APPENDIX A. Selected musicians and recording projects

*Ages, if indicated, are approximate, based on publicly available information
**Roles are based on musicians’ self-identifications as they appear on personal websites, social media accounts, etc.

Akinmusire, Ambrose, mid-30s
Roles Trumpeter
Projects *The Imagined Savior is Far Easier to Paint (Blue Note, 2014)
When the Heart Emerges Glistening (Blue Note, 2011)

Almazan, Fabian, early 30s
Roles Pianist, Composer, Film scorer
Projects *Alcanza (Biophilia, 2017)
Rhizome (Blue Note/ArtistShare, 2014)

Blake, Johnathan, early 40s
Roles Drummer
Projects Dr. Lonnie Smith, *Evolution (Blue Note, 2016), drums
Gone, but not Forgotten (Criss Cross, 2014)
Tom Harrell, *Light On (HighNote, 2007), drums

Blanchard, Terence, mid-50s
Roles Trumpeter, Bandleader, Composer, Arranger, Film scorer
Projects *Breathless (Blue Note, 2015)
*Magnetic (Blue Note, 2013)

Branker, Anthony D. J., late 50s
Roles Educator, Conductor, Composer, Bandleader, Scholar
Projects *Beauty Within (Origin, 2016)
The Forward (Towards Equality) Suite (Origin, 2014)
Uppity (Origin, 2013)
Brown, Otis, III
Roles  Drummer, Composer, Recording Artist
Projects  *The Thought of You* (Blue Note/Revive, 2014)

Carroll, Aidan, early 30s
Roles  Bassist, Composer, Songwriter, Producer
Projects  Remixes of recordings by Gabriel Garzón-Montano, A Tribe Called Quest, and others available at https://soundcloud.com/aidancarrollmusic
*Original Vision* (Truth Revolution, 2015)
“Sundays” music video, dir. by Dondre Green (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=anL_SYKsShY)
Sullivan Fortner, *Aria* (Impulse!, 2015), bass

Charles, Sarah Elizabeth
Roles  Vocalist, Composer
“Haitian Sunrise” music video, dir. by Sarah Elizabeth Charles, Marcela Peñalva, promoting Rise2Shine charitable organization (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qyC_W4_uKJ4)
“White and Blue” music video, dir. by Sarah Elizabeth Charles (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1lszYLmzCfU)
Jesse Fischer, *Day Dreamer* (Ropeadope, 2015), vocals

de Clive-Lowe, Mark, early 40s
Roles  Musician, Composer, Producer
Projects  *CHURCH* (Mashibeats/Ropeadope, 2014)
“Sketch for Miguel” music video, dir. by Eric Coleman (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qxXkSPd6gsk)

Douglas, Dave, mid-50s
Roles  Trumpeter, Composer, Educator
Founder and owner of Greenleaf Music (https://www.greenleafmusic.com)
Projects  *High Risk* (Greenleaf, 2015)
*Spirit Moves* (Greenleaf/Koch, 2009); sound recording and film (CD/DVD)
*Live at the Jazz Standard* (Greenleaf/Koch, 2006); compilation of recordings of 12 live sets, each originally released within 24 hours for digital download
Ellis, John, early 40s
Roles Saxophonist, Composer
Projects Charm (MRI/Parade Light, 2015)
w/ Andy Bragen, MOBRO (Parade Light, 2014); composition commissioned by The Jazz Gallery, supported by the Jerome Foundation and the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs

Fischer, Jesse, early 30s
Roles Producer, Composer, Engineer, Pianist
Founder and owner of Electrik Indigo Sound recording studio (http://electrikindigo.com)
Projects Remixes of recordings by Emily King, Gregory Porter, and others available at https://soundcloud.com/jessefischer
Day Dreamer (Ropeadope, 2015)
“Refuge” music video (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jV0mJmcJMUC)
“Nomads” music video (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DkG4QkSpQG0)
w/ Sly5thA Ve, Vein Melter (Tru Thoughts, 2015)

Francies, James, early 20s
Roles Pianist, Composer
Projects Stem Sounds (forthcoming) (http://www.stemsoundsmusic.com)
Various Artists, Nina Revisited: A Tribute to Nina Simone (Columbia, 2015), keyboards, arranger
Jeff “Tain” Watts, Blue, Vol. 1 (Dark Key, 2015), piano

Glasper, Robert, late 30s
Roles Keyboardist, Record Producer
Projects Everything’s Beautiful (Sony Legacy, 2016); “reimagined interpretations” of Miles Davis recordings
Covered: The Robert Glasper Trio Recorded Live at Capitol Studies (Blue Note, 2015)
Black Radio 2 (Blue Note, 2013)
Black Radio (Blue Note, 2012)

Guiliana, Mark, early 30s
Roles Drummer, Composer
Projects w/ Brad Mehldau, Mehliana: Taming the Dragon (Nonesuch, 2014)
“Hungry Ghost (Live)” music video, dir. by Alex Chaloff (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tn6gjoMUEY4)
My Life Starts Now (Beat Music, 2014)
Beat Music: The Los Angeles Improvisations (Beat Music, 2014)
A Form of Truth (self-released, 2013)

Hall, Irwin, early 30s
Roles Saxophonist, Flautist, Clarinetist
Projects Theo Croker, Escape Velocity (Masterworks/OKeh, 2016), saxophone
Melody Gardot, Currency of Man (Verve, 2015), saxophone
Jesse Fischer, Day Dreamer (Ropeadope, 2015), saxophone, flute
Theo Croker, Afro Physicist (Masterworks/OKeh, 2014), saxophone, alto flute

Harland, Eric, early 40s
Roles Composer, Drummer
Projects Stem Sounds (forthcoming) (http://www.stemsoundsmusic.com)
Charles Lloyd, Passin’ Thru (Blue Note, 2017), drums
José James, Yesterday I Had the Blues (Blue Note, 2015), drums
Vipassana (GSI, 2014)
w/ James Farm, City Folk (Nonesuch, 2014)

Iyer, Vijay, mid-40s
Roles Composer, Pianist
Projects w/ Wadada Leo Smith, A Cosmic Rhythm with Each Stroke (ECM, 2016)
Break Stuff (ECM, 2015)
Radhe Radhe: Rites of Holi (Universal, 2014), composer; film by Prashant Bhargava
w/ Mike Ladd, Holding It Down: The Veterans’ Dreams Project (Pi, 2013)
Historicity (Act Music + Vision, 2009)

James, José, 39
Roles Vocalist
Projects Love in a Time of Madness (Blue Note, 2017)
“Always There” music video (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BgPViFFCB4)
“To Be with You” music video (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jqs-9DUolg)
Yesterday I Had the Blues: The Music of Billie Holiday (Blue Note, 2015)
“Peace Power Change,” dir. by Talia Billig (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kuX1kM5UdBA)
No Beginning, No End (Blue Note, 2013)

Keberle, Ryan, late 30s
Roles Trombonist, Composer, Arranger, Educator
Projects Find the Common, Shine a Light (Greenleaf, 2017)
“The Times They Are a-Changin’” music video (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=azRyCgCGRuk)
“Become the Water” music video (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LRdjLHj5Sek)
Azul Infinito (Greenleaf, 2016)

Le Boeuf, Pascal, early 30s
Roles Pianist, Composer, Electronic Artist
Projects w/ Le Boeuf Brothers and JACK Quartet, imaginist (New Focus/Panoramic, 2016)
“Alkaline” music video (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bT8gr76tnvE)
Justin Brown, “W.A.I.T.T.” music video, composer (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UXz2B0e7pCc)
w/ Le Boeuf Brothers, Remixed (Nineteen-Eight, 2013)
w/ Le Boeuf Brothers, In Praise of Shadows (Nineteen-Eight, 2011)

Le Boeuf, Remy, early 30s
Roles Saxophonist, Composer
Projects w/ Le Boeuf Brothers and JACK Quartet, imaginist (New Focus/Panoramic, 2016)
“Alkaline” music video (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bT8gr76tnvE)
w/ Le Boeuf Brothers, Remixed (Nineteen-Eight, 2013)
w/ Le Boeuf Brothers, In Praise of Shadows (Nineteen-Eight, 2011)

League, Michael, early 30s
Roles Bassist, Guitarist, Composer, Arranger, Producer, Label owner
Projects w/ Snarky Puppy, Family Dinner, Vol. 2 (GroundUp, 2016), arranger; sound recording and film (CD/DVD)
w/ Snarky Puppy and Metropole Orkest, Sylva (Impulse!, 2015), composer; sound recording and film (CD/DVD)
w/ Forq, FORQ (GroundUp/Ropeadope, 2014)
w/ Snarky Puppy, We Like It Here (Ropeadope, 2014); sound recording and film (CD/DVD)
w/ Snarky Puppy, Family Dinner, Vol. 1 (Ropeadope, 2013), arranger; sound recording and film (CD/DVD)
Lindner, Jason, mid-40s
Roles  Pianist, Keyboardist, Synthesist, Sound designer, Composer, Arranger, Producer
Projects  Donny McCaslin, *Beyond Now* (Motéma, 2016), keyboards
David Bowie, *Blackstar* (ISO, 2016), keyboards
Mark Guiliana, *A Form of Truth* (2013), keyboards

McCaslin, Donny, early 50s
Roles  Saxophonist, Composer
Projects  *Beyond Now* (Motéma, 2016)
David Bowie, *Blackstar* (ISO, 2016), saxophone
*Fast Future* (Greenleaf, 2015)
*Casting for Gravity* (Greenleaf, 2012)

Oh, Linda May Han, early 30s
Roles  Bassist
Projects  *Walk Against Wind* (Biophilia, 2017)
Fabian Almazan, *Alcanza* (Biophilia, 2017), bass
Le Boeuf Brothers and JACK Quartet, *imaginist* (New Focus/Panoramic, 2016), bass
Anthony Branker and Imagine, *Beauty Within* (Origin, 2016), bass
*Sun Pictures* (Greenleaf, 2013)
Le Boeuf Brothers, *In Praise of Shadows* (Nineteen-Eight, 2011), bass

Onyejiaka, Sylvester a.k.a. Sly5thAve, early 30s
Roles  Multi-instrumentalist, Composer, Arranger, Producer
Projects  *Composite* (Tru Thoughts, 2017)
w/ Jesse Fischer, *Vein Melter* (Tru Thoughts, 2015)
*Akuma* (Truth Revolution, 2014)
Remixes, CCCO singles, and other tracks available at https://soundcloud.com/sly5thave
Parks, Aaron, early 30s
Roles       Pianist
Projects    Find the Way (ECM, 2017)
               w/ James Farm, City Folk (Nonesuch, 2014)
               Nir Felder, Golden Age (OKeh, 2014), piano
               Arborescence (ECM, 2013)
               Invisible Cinema (Blue Note, 2008)

Pinderhughes, Elena, early 20s
Roles       Vocalist, Flutist
Projects    Christian Scott aTunde Adjuah, Diaspora (Ropeadope, 2017), flute
               Christian Scott aTunde Adjuah, Ruler Rebel (Ropeadope, 2017), flute
               “Roses” music video trailer (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9SGNPkEDhY0)
               Christian Scott aTunde Adjuah, Stretch Music (Ropeadope, 2015), flute
               Various Artists, Nina Revisited: A Tribute to Nina Simone (Columbia, 2015), flute

Pinderhughes, Samora, mid-20s
Roles       Composer, Pianist
Projects    The Transformations Suite (2016); multimedia project, streaming audio, video, artwork, and merchandise available at https://www.transformationssuite.com

Scott, Kendrick, late 30s
Roles       Drummer, Bandleader, Composer
Projects    w/ Kendrick Scott Oracle, We Are the Drum (Blue Note, 2015)
               Walter Smith III, Still Casual (self-release, 2014), drums
               w/ Kendrick Scott Oracle, Conviction (Concord, 2013)
               Terence Blanchard, Magnetic (Blue Note, 2013), drums

Scott aTunde Adjuah, Christian, mid-30s
Roles       Trumpeter, Composer, Producer, Music executive
Projects    Diaspora (Stretch Music/Ropeadope, 2017)
               Ruler Rebel (Stretch Music/Ropeadope, 2017)
Stretch Music: The App, powered by Tutti Player; interactive music player; users can customize the audio mix, loop sections of music, control tempo, and access sheet music (http://www.christianscott.tv/stretch-music-the-app/)

*Stretch Music* (Stretch Music/Ropeadope, 2015)


*Christian aTunde Adjuah* (Concord, 2012)

*Yesterday You Said Tomorrow* (Concord, 2010)

### Smith, Nate, early 40s
Roles
- Drummer, Composer, Producer, Educator

Projects
- *Kinfolk: Postcards from Everywhere* (Ropeadope, 2017)
- José James, *Love In a Time of Madness* (Blue Note, 2017), drums
- Chris Potter Underground Orchestra, *Imaginary Cities* (ECM, 2015), drums
- Takuya Kuroda, *Rising Son* (Blue Note, 2014), drums
- Nir Felder, *Golden Age* (OKeh, 2014), drums

### Staab, Chuck, early 30s
Roles
- Drummer, Musical director

Projects
- Melody Gardot, *Currency of Man* (Decca/Verve, 2015), drums, composer

### Stevens, Becca, early 30s
Roles
- Singer, Songwriter, Guitarist

Projects
- *Regina* (GroundUp, 2017)
- w/ Becca Stevens Band, *Perfect Animal* (Universal Music Classics, 2015)

### Stevens, Matthew, mid-30s
Roles
- Guitarist, Composer

Projects
- *Preverbal* (Crystal Math, 2017)
- Christian Scott aTunde Adjuah, *Stretch Music* (Stretch Music/Ropeadope, 2016), guitar
- Esperanza Spalding, *Emily’s D+Evolution* (Concord, 2016), guitar
- Ben Williams, *Coming of Age* (Concord, 2016), guitar
- *Woodwork* (Whirlwind, 2015)
- w/ The Next Collective, *Cover Art* (Concord, 2013)
**Stranahan, Colin, early 30s**  
**Roles**  
Drummer  
**Projects**  
w/ Glenn Zaleski and Rick Rosato, *Limitless* (Capri, 2013)  
w/ Glenn Zaleski and Rick Rosato, *Anticipation* (Capri, 2011)

**Strickland, Marcus, late 30s**  
**Roles**  
Saxophonist  
**Projects**  
*Nihil Novi* (Blue Note/Revive, 2016)  
“Alive” music video (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Yo62iyWAsQ)  

**Sun, Kevin, mid-20s**  
**Roles**  
Saxophonist, Improviser, Composer, Blogger  
**Projects**  
w/ Earprint, *Earprint* (Endectomorph, 2016)  

**Washington, Kamasi, mid-30s**  
**Roles**  
Saxophonist, Composer, Producer, Bandleader  
**Projects**  
“Truth” music video (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rtW1S5EbHgU)  
Thundercat, *Drunk* (Brainfeeder, 2017), saxophone  
*The Epic* (Brainfeeder, 2015)  
Kendrick Lamar, *To Pimp a Butterfly* (Aftermath, 2015), saxophone  
Flying Lotus, *You’re Dead!* (Warp, 2014), saxophone

**Wendel, Ben, early 40s**  
**Roles**  
Saxophonist, Composer, Producer  
**Projects**  
w/ Kneebody, *Anti-Hero* (Motéma, 2017)  
w/ Kneebody, “Uprising” music video (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eqTbnVL0CWE)  
Le Boeuf Brothers and JACK Quartet, *imaginist* (New Focus/Panoramic, 2016), saxophone  
*What We Bring* (Motéma, 2016)  
w/ Kneebody and Daedelus, *Kneedelus* (Brainfeeder, 2015)  
*The Seasons* (2016); multimedia project, video and notes available at https://www.benwendel.com/theseasons/
## APPENDIX B. Selected live events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Featured artist / Event</th>
<th>Ensemble</th>
<th>Venue</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 13, 2013</td>
<td>Gretchen Parlato (v)</td>
<td>Taylor Eigsti (p); Alan Hampton (b/g); Mark Guiliana (d)</td>
<td>Rockwood Music Hall, Stage 2</td>
<td>Album release</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 8, 2014</td>
<td>Robert Glasper (p) and Jason Moran (p)</td>
<td>Ravi Coltrane (ts); Alan Hampton (b); Eric Harland (d)</td>
<td>The Town Hall</td>
<td>Blue Note Records; 75th Anniversary / Winter Jazzfest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 9, 2014</td>
<td>Revive Big Band / Wallace Roney Orchestra</td>
<td>Wallace Roney (t)</td>
<td>Le Poisson Rouge</td>
<td>Winter Jazzfest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 10, 2014</td>
<td>Winter Jazzfest marathon 1</td>
<td>Various artists</td>
<td>Various venues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 11, 2014</td>
<td>Winter Jazzfest marathon 2</td>
<td>Various artists</td>
<td>Various venues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 27, 2014</td>
<td>Theo Croker (t) ft. Dee Dee Bridgewater (v)</td>
<td>Irwin Hall (as/f); Seth Johnson (g); Sullivan Fortner (p); Eric Wheeler (b); Kassa Overall, Jerome Jennings (d)</td>
<td>The Jazz Standard</td>
<td>Album release</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun. 5, 2014</td>
<td>Mark Guiliana’s (d) Beat Music</td>
<td>Jason Lindner (k); Steve Wall (e); Tim Lefebvre (b)</td>
<td>Rockwood Music Hall, Stage 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jul. 9, 2014</td>
<td>Nir Felder</td>
<td>Shai Maestro (p); Matt Penman (b); Nate Smith (d)</td>
<td>The Jazz Standard</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jul. 10, 2014</td>
<td>Jesse Fischer</td>
<td>Sarah Elizabeth Charles (v); Godwin Louis (as); Billy Buss (t); Chris Smith (b)</td>
<td>Ginny’s Supper Club</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep. 8, 2014</td>
<td>Mark Guiliana’s (d) Beat Music</td>
<td>Jason Lindner, Big Yuki (k); Steve Wall (e); Chris Morrissey (b); John Ellis (ts); Keyon Harrold (t); Kris Bowers, Robert Glasper (p); Derrick Hodge, Alan Hampton (b);</td>
<td>The Blue Note</td>
<td>Album release / Label launch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 6, 2014</td>
<td>Otis Brown III (d)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event Details</td>
<td>Venue</td>
<td>Notes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct. 29, 2014</td>
<td>Gretchen Parlato, Melonie Daniels-Walker, Bilal (v)</td>
<td>The Blue Note</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Godwin Louis (as/ss); Billy Buss (t); David Cutler (b); Jonathan Pinson (d); Sylvester Onyejiaka (ts); Sarah Elizabeth Charles (v)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 12, 2014</td>
<td>“Our Point of View” Marcus Strickland (ts); Ambrose Akinmusire (t); Lionel Loueke (g); Robert Glasper (p); Derrick Hodge (b); Kendrick Scott (d)</td>
<td>Le Poisson Rouge</td>
<td>Blue Note Records 75th Anniversary</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 8, 2015</td>
<td>Kendrick Scott (d) Oracle / Derrick Hodge (b) / José James (v) / Robert Glasper (p) Trio</td>
<td>Le Poisson Rouge</td>
<td>Winter Jazzfest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 9, 2015</td>
<td>Winter Jazzfest marathon 1 Various artists</td>
<td>Various venues</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 10, 2015</td>
<td>Winter Jazzfest marathon 2 Various artists</td>
<td>Various venues</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan. 30, 2015</td>
<td>Jazz and Colors at the Met Various artists</td>
<td>Metropolitan Museum of Art</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mar. 30, 2015</td>
<td>Sarah Elizabeth Charles (v) Jesse Elder (p); ? (b); John Davis (d); Christian Scott (t)</td>
<td>Le Poisson Rouge</td>
<td>Album release</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr. 15, 2015</td>
<td>Aidan Carroll (b) John Ellis (ts); David Bryant (p); Justin Brown (d); Godwin Louis (as); Christ Turner (v)</td>
<td>Rockwood Music Hall, Stage 2</td>
<td>Album release</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr. 24, 2015</td>
<td>Taylor Eigsti’s (p) Free Agency Gretchen Parlato, Becca Stevens, Alan Hampton (v); James Francies (k); Joshua Crumbly (b); Mark Colenburg (d)</td>
<td>Subculture</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Artist(s)</td>
<td>Performers</td>
<td>Venue</td>
<td>Location</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 27, 2015</td>
<td>Linda Oh (b) / Donny McCaslin (ts) / Ryan Keberle (tb)</td>
<td>Ben Wendel (ts); Ben Monder (g); Justin Brown (d) / Henry Hey (k); Matt Clohesy (b); Nate Wood (d) / Mike Rodrigues (t); Camila Meza (v); Jorge Roeder (b); Jimmy Macbride (d)</td>
<td>Subculture</td>
<td>Greenleaf Music 10th Anniversary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun. 4, 2015</td>
<td>Mark Guiliana (d) Jazz Quartet</td>
<td>Jason Rigby (ts); Shai Maestro (p); Chris Morrissey (b)</td>
<td>Rockwood Music Hall, Stages 1, 2, and 3</td>
<td>Album release</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun. 23, 2015</td>
<td>Justin Brown’s (d) NYEUSI</td>
<td>Mark Shim (wc); Jason Lindner, James Francies (p/k); Burniss Earl Travis II (b)</td>
<td>The Jazz Gallery</td>
<td>Pre-recording</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun. 24, 2015</td>
<td>John Ellis (ts)</td>
<td>Kevin Hays (p); Matt Penman (b); Kendrick Scott (d)</td>
<td>Rockwood Music Hall, Stage 3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Jul. 1, 2015</td>
<td>FORQ</td>
<td>Michael League (b); Chris McQueen (g); Henry Hey (k); Jason Thomas (d)</td>
<td>Rockwood Music Hall, Stage 2</td>
<td>Album release</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jul. 10, 2015</td>
<td>Colin Stranahan’s (d) Pacemaker</td>
<td>Ben Wendel (ts); Pete Rende (k); Matt Penman (b)</td>
<td>The Jazz Gallery</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jul. 11, 2015</td>
<td>Godwin Louis</td>
<td>Jason Palmer (t); Pauline Jean (v); Sam Dickey (g); Jonathan Michel (b); Obed Calvaire, Markus Schwartz (d)</td>
<td>The Jazz Gallery</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jul. 17, 2015</td>
<td>Shai Maestro</td>
<td>Ben Wendel (ts); Charles Altura (g); Jorge Roeder (b); Nate Wood (d)</td>
<td>The Jazz Gallery</td>
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<td>Jul. 18, 2015</td>
<td>Marcus Strickland’s (ts) Twi-Life</td>
<td>Shedrick Mitchell (o); James Francies (k); Kyle Miles (b); Daru Jones (d); Christie Dashiel (v)</td>
<td>Smoke</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Jul. 23, 2015</td>
<td>Raymond Angry (p)</td>
<td>Burniss Earl Travis II (b); Marcus Gilmore (d)</td>
<td>The Jazz Gallery</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jul. 24, 2015</td>
<td>James Francies’ (p) Kinetic</td>
<td>Charles Altura (g); Harish Raghavan (b); Jeremy Dutton (d)</td>
<td>The Jazz Gallery</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event Description</td>
<td>Artists</td>
<td>Location</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aug. 4, 2015</td>
<td>Le Boeuf Brothers</td>
<td>Remy Le Boeuf (as); Donny McCaslin (ts); Pascal Le Boeuf (p); Linda Oh (b); Peter Kronreif (d)</td>
<td>The Jazz Gallery</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Aug. 22, 2015</td>
<td>Aaron Parks’ (p) Little Big</td>
<td>Greg Tuohy (g); Adam Chilenski (b); Darren Beckett (d)</td>
<td>The Jazz Gallery</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sep. 24, 2015</td>
<td>Jesse Fischer (p)</td>
<td>Yacine Boularès (ss/ts); Jonathan Powell (t); David Cutler (b); Cory Cox (d); Sarah Elizabeth Charles (v); Zack Brock (vn)</td>
<td>Rockwood Music Hall, Album release Stage 2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct. 3, 2015</td>
<td>Christian Scott aTunde</td>
<td>Braxton Cook (as); Elena Pinderhughes (f); Lawrence Fields (p/k); Dominic Minix (g); Warren Wolf (vb); Kris Funn (b); Joe Dyson, Corey Fonville (d)</td>
<td>Harlem Stage Gatehouse</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct. 15, 2015</td>
<td>BRIC JazzFest marathon 1</td>
<td>Various artists</td>
<td>BRIC Arts Inaugural festival</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct. 16, 2015</td>
<td>Kamasi Washington (ts) / Mark Guiliana’s (d) Beat Music / Lakecia Benjamin (as) &amp; Soul Squad</td>
<td>Various artists</td>
<td>Le Poisson Rouge Winter Jazzfest preview</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan. 15, 2016</td>
<td>Winter Jazzfest marathon 1</td>
<td>Various artists</td>
<td>Various venues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 16, 2016</td>
<td>Winter Jazzfest marathon 2</td>
<td>Various artists</td>
<td>Various venues</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan. 22, 2016</td>
<td>Ben Wendel (ts)</td>
<td>Taylor Eigsti, Aaron Parks (p/k); Matt Brewer (b); Eric Harland (d)</td>
<td>The Jazz Gallery Live premiere of The Seasons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key**

- **e** electronics
- **f** flute
- **as** alto saxophone
- **g** guitar
- **b** bass
- **d** drums
- **o** organ
- **p** piano
- **ss** soprano saxophone
- **tb** trombone
- **ts** tenor saxophone
- **v** voice
- **vb** vibraphone
- **vn** violin
- **w** wind controller
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312


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