



What is Black British Jazz?



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The 'Black British jazz' project (BBJ) explores the emergence of a distinct tradition within British music. BBJ melds reggae, hiphop, African music and US jazz into a rich, and constantly developing set of sounds. In documenting this musical hybrid, the project touches on important issues for the study of music – the transmission of cultural values, the social context of musical forms, and frameworks of ownership that impact on musical communities. The project approaches BBJ through three strands:



Routes

Routes examines the development of BBJ through a combination of oral-historical and archival work.

To date we have:

- Interviewed musicians individually and in a focus group.
- Conducted archival work at the British Library Sound Archive, Jazz Heritage Wales, National Jazz Archive, National Archives and the Center for Black Music Research in Chicago (BBJ partner).

Highlights:

- We are conducting historical research into BBJ across Britain (notably Liverpool and Cardiff). This suggests a rich tradition of music making outside London.
- We have approached BBJ history as a lens for examining the canonical, African-American tradition in jazz, raising important issues of heritage, memory and cultural ownership in relation to musical form, value and race.

- Involvement of 8 associate researchers and consultants (areas include audience research, music psychology and music journalism).
- 16 outputs completed to date (including articles, invited lectures and conference papers in the UK and USA); many more are planned.
- Website with active blog <http://www.open.ac.uk/researchprojects/blackbritishjazz/>
- Documentary film in production; radio programme under consideration.
- International conference 'Jazz and Race, Past and Present' at The Open University in Milton Keynes in November 2010.



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