Developing Collective Musical Personae:
A Toronto-Based Study of the Performance Practices of Stable Jazz Groups

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts
Graduate Department of Music
in the University of Toronto

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Abstract

Using the analytical lenses and methodologies of jazz studies, ethnomusicology, and cultural studies, this dissertation considers a recent trend among many younger Toronto jazz musicians. While the national reputation of Toronto’s jazz scene has long been defined by a “swing-to-bop” mainstream sound, since the late 1990s the scene’s economic foundations—e.g., well-paying venues and a thriving studio recording industry—that supported this mainstream have mostly collapsed. Without these economic incentives, many younger Toronto musicians have moved away from the bop-oriented mainstream’s usual focus on individual improvising prowess on repertoire with narrow stylistic parameters.

Instead, many younger Toronto musicians have been performing much more highly distinctive original compositions. I argue that this idiosyncratic repertoire, and especially the approaches to improvisation employed when performing it, could only develop through long-term commitment to ensembles with fixed membership. Among the groups that participated in my study, stability allowed for the musicians to foster a multi-layered, collective approach to interaction – not only in how they performed with each other, but in how the composers and players interacted with musical traditions themselves, including jazz. On the one hand, I show how this trend to the long-term group has been influenced by a history of stable group activity in jazz that has been, with only a few exceptions, overlooked in jazz scholarship. On the other hand, I point out how the highly developed sense of group identity in rock bands may also have been influential for these young Toronto musicians.

During my fieldwork, all of these groups performed within a small circuit of venues in and around Toronto. These venues—and the musicians, and the audiences who interacted socially and musically within it—formed an overlapping part within the jazz scene – what I call a subscene. Using four groups as primary examples, I explore how these bands formed and then promoted themselves in this subscene. This sets up my in-
depth analysis of how these musicians composed and improvised in ways that were reliant on their consistent interactions over an extended period of time – practices that helped to solidify their collective musical personae.
Acknowledgements

First, I would like to thank my supervisor at the University of Toronto, Dr. Jeff Packman, for his steadfast encouragement in addition to his consistently thorough and considered feedback. I also thank my other committee members Dr. John Brownell and Professor Terry Promane for all of their helpful input and advice at every stage of this document’s development.

I am grateful to all of the musicians in the four primary groups of my study for allowing me to study their creative work. I also individually acknowledge those that volunteered their time for in-depth interviews: Nick Fraser, Tim Shia, Adrean Farrugia, Chris Gale, Brodie West, Rob Clutton, David French, Ethan Ardelli, Harley Card, and Matt Newton.

I would also like to thank other past and present members of the Toronto jazz scene that provided important background in interviews and emails. This included musicians like Dan Fortin, Ben Dietschi, Lina Allemano, Michael Herring, and Patrick Reid. In particular, I want to thank composer/bassist Andrew Downing not only for his in-depth interview but also for providing the initial inspiration for my research idea. Other individuals that provided important context included historian and journalist Mark Miller as well as the Toronto jazz scene’s “superfan,” Bill Smith.

Many others have provided additional support in this project, especially in the writing phase. I am particularly grateful for the sensitive and wise advice of my colleague Deanna Yerichuk. In addition, David Podgorski and Kathy Morrell provided exceptional copyediting.

Finally, I would like to thank all of my friends and family for their understanding throughout. Most of all, I would like to thank my partner Karen Robertson not only for her additional copyediting, but most of all for her patience and care.
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https://soundcloud.com/user-332557417/sets/dissertation


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Chapter 1
Introduction: My Project and Literature Review

1.1 << What Happened to the Toronto Jazz Scene? >>

In 2009, I moved to Toronto, Canada’s largest city, to begin a doctoral program in jazz performance. Having lived as a Canadian expatriate in the United States just before this, and never having lived in Toronto before, I was then unfamiliar with the substantial changes that had taken place in Toronto’s jazz scene in recent years. The late Jim Galloway, saxophonist and former artistic director of (what was then called) the Downtown Jazz Festival, lamented this transition:

As a veteran of the Toronto jazz scene I’ve seen a lot of changes. I wish I could say they’ve been for the better, but the sad fact is that looking back is more enjoyable than looking ahead. What has changed Toronto from being a leading city on the jazz club circuit to the sad state of today? For a start, there is no club circuit any more. Rising costs and declining, aging audiences put paid to that. Touring groups, except for the few that can fill a concert hall, have become a thing of the past. With the demise of the great jazz clubs in this city… I feel a sense of loss. (Galloway 2010)

As I began to explore Toronto’s jazz scene for myself, I soon realized that the city did not have the multitude of high-profile jazz venues it was once known for. My disappointment was compounded by the knowledge that, in the past, such venues not only programmed world-class international jazz artists with some frequency but that they also regularly showcased many of the veteran musicians of the Toronto jazz scene.

Eventually, however, I began to realize that the demise of Toronto’s former circuit of “straight-ahead” acoustic jazz venues did not put an end to the jazz scene. There were still many musicians performing acoustic jazz all over the city, including and especially younger generations. Indeed, among these younger musicians I observed a new trend in the kinds of jazz groups I often saw performing; these groups, in turn, were often
playing in the rare full-time jazz venues that survived, but mostly in alternative spaces that have emerged as jazz hotspots in the last few years.

Andrew Downing—a Toronto bassist and composer highly active both during and after this mainstream jazz “boom”—suggested to me that the admittedly better working conditions and regular employment in so many of these now-closed mainstream jazz clubs had an effect on the kinds of jazz performance practices that prevailed in the city’s scene:

You would play and there would be a union contract and you would get union scale to do 5-6 nights. As a result, it was a way to make a living to play at jazz clubs. So, one consequence of this was to ensure that the music was easily ‘sellable’ to people. And by no means am I saying that musicians would sell out, but that the ‘general public’ as you well know likes a kind of moderation in music, a stylistic moderation. If things were really ‘far, far out’ or ‘really, really cheesy,’ that wouldn't fly in these clubs. So the music had this kind of 'down the middle' approach to it…So, when you go and play at a club, the owner might ask you - because the owner was paying you to play – ‘we'd love it if you played some standards.’ That's not the only reason [that musicians played standards]. It's that the jazz scene allowed for some original music and some standards…In truth, you're there to be an artist but you’re also there to do a job. So, that shaped the way the jazz scene was in the 80s and 90s. (personal interview, August 7, 2013)

Local conditions then, at the least, helped to perpetuate a prevailing Toronto “down-the-middle” approach which has been associated with repertoire and practices closely tied to what Mark Miller described to me as a prevailing “mainstream, swing-to-bop” stylistic sensibility (personal interview, September 14, 2013).

Toronto’s brand of “stylistic moderation,” however, has often been more specific than merely bebop and/or swing; there has also been a sound tied to highly disciplined, tightly-controlled ensemble playing in the context of precisely prescribed arrangements. Tellingly, in promotional text for the long-standing octet co-led by trombonist/composer Terry Promane and high-profile veteran bassist Dave Young, they describe their band as indicative of a traditional “Toronto Sound.” They describe this “Toronto Sound” as typically including “…well-crafted and uniquely voiced arrangements…along with impeccable timing, flawless execution and world-class solos” (Bowers 2013). This
description is notable both for what it emphasizes and what it leaves out. While “flawlessly executing” carefully planned arrangements with “impeccable timing” do not necessarily suggest an approach antithetical to jazz, they are arguably also not the primary characteristics in most of small group jazz performance traditions, particularly since the advent of bebop and even more-so the avant-garde.\(^1\) Given the prominence of big bands and a studio scene until the 1990s in Toronto, strict arrangements and “disciplined” ensemble performance was, arguably, a local emphasis.

Indeed, for Canadian jazz fans, Toronto had developed a reputation for breeding a particular brand of conservatism to small group jazz performance – a reputation that had calcified by the 1980s and 1990s. Growing up in rural Saskatchewan at that time, far from urban jazz scenes, I remember getting the sense from CBC recordings I heard on the radio, as well as the rare touring group from Toronto that performed in the province, that this was their sound. While in reality this was not the only model for jazz programming in the city (as I will explore in Chapter 3), it was the jazz that tended to be commercially supported and publicly funded and, therefore, was the Canadian jazz that Canadians typically heard (when they heard it at all). It is telling that perhaps the best-known Toronto instrumental jazz ensemble during this time was a big band – Rob McConnell’s Boss Brass. For decades, many of the best-known small group performers playing in the city and broadcast on the CBC were alumni of that band. These were, again, musicians that placed a high value on a strict standard of instrumental musicianship, a near-uniform polish to playing parts (a polish that often applied to improvisation as well), and—for the most part—staying within particular stylistic parameters.\(^2\)

In 2009, as I began attending the venues that local jazz musicians were recommending to me, I began observing performance approaches that seemed notably different from the established “mainstream” Toronto jazz sound I remembered. These

\(^1\) In Chapter 2, I describe some of the history of jazz small group dynamics.
\(^2\) Again, these are broader outlines. I describe Toronto’s mainstream jazz history with more nuance in Chapter 3, including the influence of the Boss Brass.
\(^3\) While I will go into greater detail about this later, I do want to make clear that while these bands were distinctive, I am also not describing an overtly “avant-garde” phenomenon. All of the bands I was hearing
\(^2\) Again, these are broader outlines. I describe Toronto’s mainstream jazz history with more nuance in Chapter 3, including the influence of the Boss Brass.
approaches were most prevalent among the city’s younger jazz instrumentalists – many of whom had begun their careers after most of these mainstream-oriented venues had closed. While the prevailing paradigm in Toronto’s mainstream scene had been ad hoc ensembles (though culled from a finite stable of players) playing familiar jazz tunes or groups (in rare cases with long-standing personnel) playing polished arrangements that utilized familiar post-bop conventions, the new paradigm was organized differently and sounded different as a result.

In fact, in several respects, what I was hearing and seeing at various downtown jazz venues reminded me, in organization more so than sound, of so-called “indie rock” bands. This was apparent even in just looking at promotional materials for venues and musicians. While some of the groups held to the typical jazz convention of naming the band after their leader (for example, I studied the Harley Card Quintet), many others had names akin to rock bands (e.g. Drumheller, Peripheral Vision, Myriad3, Bloomsday, etc.). Of course, what I heard did not necessarily sound like any subgenre of indie rock (though for some groups, in fact, current rock was a clear influence); instead, it was the actual model of being in a band that was important. That is, these were groups that stayed together for a long period of time with a lineup of musicians who were, at least in the beginning, committed to being in a given project. It is true that there is a history of long-term jazz groups as well (see Chapter 2) but for jazz groups playing in a mainstream post-bop mold (especially in Toronto – see Chapter 3), the repertoire and personnel has often been a conduit for idiomatic improvisation. Given the emphasis on a group’s specific approach, these younger stable jazz groups were arguably like rock bands in how each was attempting to carve out a collective artistic identity or, as I prefer to call it, persona. In other words, in a sense, these jazz groups were bands. Musically, this has been achieved not so much by playing in a rock-oriented mode so much as by the idea that they played their own original repertoire. This repertoire, in turn, realized this collective identity.

And yet, these were still jazz groups. It was clear from watching and hearing these groups that they were fluidly interacting and improvising. Through their repertoire and improvisational practice, these groups would evoke musical signifiers that denoted jazz
traditions to their audiences. Individuals would at times (though to varying degrees in different groups) improvise solos utilizing performance techniques from jazz traditions. But the plural of this term—traditions—is key. Rather than a group of professional freelance jazz musicians executing and improvising on repertoire using familiar conventions according to the dictates of a specific jazz tradition (whether the repertoire happens to be “standards” or originals in that vein), these bands were often mediating and interacting with multiple jazz traditions in ways specific to their line up of musicians. The larger aesthetic of jazz tradition(s) involves interacting with many musical traditions, including and especially its own and those from popular music. To do so, each ensemble had its own distinct repertoire that relied heavily on original music that was often written for the specific musicians in the group and how they performed together. In general, what I realized upon experiencing this exciting music was that this was a distinct phenomenon and worthy of its own study.

Therefore, the goal of my dissertation was to examine the interactive practices of these emerging contemporary jazz instrumentalists who have been active in Toronto’s jazz scene. My focus has been not only, however, on how they interactively perform with other musicians, but also with jazz and other musical traditions via regularly performing stable, long-term bands. While musicians in virtually any small-group jazz situation require skills in improvised interaction, those working in fixed ensembles are able to heighten these abilities – often taking particular advantage of the familiarity they have developed with their band-mates.

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3 While I will go into greater detail about this later, I do want to make clear that while these bands were distinctive, I am also not describing an overtly “avant-garde” phenomenon. All of the bands I was hearing did interact with jazz traditions, albeit on their own terms, rather than experiment using jazz instruments while overtly avoiding signposts most commonly associated with jazz practices or repertoire. As the Grove Dictionary suggests, “avant-garde,” in common use, is meant “to describe any artists who have made radical departures from tradition” which is not the phenomenon I am describing (Samson 2015).

4 For the rest of dissertation, I will be using the term “tradition(s)” rather than “tradition” to point to how jazz performance may have initially had a more “linear” tradition that was passed on from one generation to the next, but that its history and practices in the tradition have branched out such that jazz can no longer be subsumed under a singular “tradition.”

5 In Chapter 8, I make this case about how jazz performance tradition(s) are partially defined by how they interact with popular music.
The concern with multi-layered interaction that I mentioned has become a touchstone for many scholars studying jazz performance in recent years; many of whom have mentioned how musicians interact with each other, with their audiences, and with the legacies of jazz musicians who have come before (Berliner 1994, 1997; Borgo 2004; Bowen 1993; DeVeaux 1999; Horn 2000; Monson 1991, 1994, 1999; Murphy 1990; C Smith 1998; Tomlinson 1991; Walser 1993). Yet, while these studies typically emphasize how such interaction informs jazz performance in a broad sense, they pay minimal attention to the possible effects of long-term collaborations between musicians who might develop particular, group-based, understandings of multi-layered interaction. As I suggested above, the conditions of the Toronto scene during my study were rooted in precisely these circumstances. Thus, the focus of my study has been to develop an understanding of how contemporary musicians on the Toronto scene interact with jazz tradition(s) in the context of their long-term projects. I considered not only performance techniques and other creative choices—including repertoire selection, choice of stylistic or genre practices, and improvisational strategies—but also how the broader contexts in which these bands worked, including their scene’s audiences and venues, can affect these choices.

To pursue my study, I chose four jazz groups comprised of relatively young instrumentalists and regularly observed them performing in three of the best-known Toronto jazz venues that regularly feature these types of stable jazz-oriented bands.6 I go into some detail near the end of this chapter regarding methodology, but, in short, my approach involved both interviews with members of the groups as well as analysis of their live performances that I attended and several of their studio recordings. Integrating these ethnomusicological methods of field observation and interview with analysis of jazz performance practice builds on the work of two of the most widely cited books in jazz scholarship by Paul Berliner (1994) and Ingrid Monson (1999), not to mention a host of related articles (Murphy 1990; Tomlinson 1991; Walser 1993; Bowen 1993; DeVeaux 1999; C Smith 1998; Horn 2000; Borgo 2004).

6 The musicians in this subscene that I describe as “relatively young” are typically aged twenty-five to forty-five. It is a distinct contrast to the mainstream part of the scene—at the rare venues that still strictly program “mainstream” jazz, many of the musicians are usually over fifty.
While this trend toward ethnomusicology has been an important influence on my study, musicologist Gabriel Solis has also provided an important precedent to my work in his study of the living legacy of Thelonious Monk – *Monk's Music: Thelonious Monk and Jazz History in the Making* (2008). Though Solis is less interested in formally analyzing performance, his use of theoretical frameworks from a variety of scholarly disciplines while also grounding his ethnomusicological study at events and venues in the present day jazz *scene* has parallels to my approach:

An ethnographic engagement with the jazz “scene”—with its musicians, audiences, promoters, and others—is the most important primary source for the concepts and analyses in this work. Thus, my research consisted of attendance at live performances, formal interviews, and less formal conversations with musicians and others in the scene… I have used this material in a dialogue with theories and models from a number of scholarly disciplines…I describe this as a dialogue because my understanding of those theories and models has functioned as a lens through which to understand the primary material, while at the same time I have allowed the primary material to guide my developing understanding and at times suggest a critique of the theoretical materials. (Solis 2008: 4-5)

Like Solis, I attended concerts and I interviewed various participants in the jazz world including fans, journalists, bookers, and musicians (though with more of the latter, given my performance focus). However, like other performance analysts, I also studied transcribed audio recordings – though some of the ones I used were my own field recordings of the concerts. Also, unlike Solis, my study integrates the more localized concept of “scene” – it is about of younger stable bands in the *Toronto* jazz scene. And yet, I also account for how this phenomenon interacts with historical precedents and present-day global trends in jazz practice. My goal has been to describe why this phenomenon is occurring in Toronto and how it is manifesting itself in performance as a result of interacting with all of these layers of musical tradition(s) and performance contexts.

My ethnographic fieldwork in Toronto’s jazz scene, interviews with various participants, and analysis of studio and field recordings by several key stable bands, have informed the following broad conclusions:
- I confirmed a trend within the Toronto jazz scene of younger musicians forming groups intended to last a long time with the same personnel. This became more apparent after looking at some data from the venues booking the musicians as well as surveying musicians.

- I found that the history of Toronto’s jazz scene prior to 2005 involved several mainstream venues serving an audience of middle to upper class patrons – a “boom” of sorts that is now largely over. Its musicians were often culled from the then thriving studio scene. In its wake, younger jazz musicians—and especially those performing in long-term groups—have shifted to playing at mainstay jazz venue The Rex as well as at “alternative venues.” Especially important from 2005 up until publication has been The Tranzac and new venue The Emmet Ray. While there have been differences among these three venues, in general—relative to the now-closed mainstream venues—they feature more open-minded booking practices, lower cover than typical mainstream venues, and greater informal environments. This, in turn, leads to particular kinds of audiences. I argue that these contextual factors were helpful in allowing this new long-term group paradigm to thrive.

- I conclude that the aesthetics of this trend are both rock and jazz-related. On the one hand, it appears that the aesthetic of playing in long-term groups may have been related, at least in part, to the rock ethos of “band identity.” I refer to this notion as a “collective musical persona.” On the other hand, I also demonstrate how these groups have undoubtedly been inspired by long-term groups from jazz tradition(s), even though this part of jazz tradition has not been most typical nor did it usually manifest itself in the same ways as these Toronto groups.

- In promoting themselves to potential audiences, these groups typically promoted themselves as “jazz” but also often focused on their “band identity” as well as other markers that are, in part, borrowed from rock culture.

- I found that these groups were creating these collective musical personae through playing original compositions that were specific to their approaches. In some cases, the repertoire tended to reflect a leader’s compositional voice while at other times groups reflected several voices within the group.
- These groups, through their members’ long-term commitment, were able to develop ways of interpreting and improvising within these original compositions. Indeed, in some groups, it was only through the commitment of its members that some of these compositions were able to “work.”

- In general, when analyzed, the performance practices reveal ways of interacting with the materials and sonic signposts of jazz and popular music that reflect a larger jazz ethos of meta-interaction which has its roots in African-American culture. It is what Scott DeVeaux calls “defamiliarizing the familiar.”

First, however, I want to ground this study in the context of related scholarship in jazz studies.

1.2 << Survey of Jazz Performance Scholarship >>

1.2.1 << The Beginnings of Jazz Performance Scholarship >>

From the beginnings of jazz scholarship in the mid-20th century until recent decades, Western classical music theory and musicology have provided the most commonly utilized frameworks and tools for analyzing jazz performance. While traditional music theory and musicology provided straightforward and familiar terminology and concepts that helped to “legitimize” some of the earliest jazz scholarship, it also brought its own baggage. In general, classical music analysis has been rooted in a kind of “formalism” – an approach that assumed the possibility of an objective analysis of the formal properties of “the artistic work” as an object unto itself and in comparison to other similar works. Though scholars have problematized this formalism in recent decades, much of classical music scholarship still assumes the composer as sole “authour,” the composition as a “work,” and its notated score as the
object of study or “text.” As a result, musicologists have typically (though not exclusively) avoided factoring in the role of performers as potential co-creators of the music. Further, the music—generally understood as information about sounds as conveyed in the score—has been privileged over matters of the historical and cultural context in which composers created it.

The influence of this tradition can be seen on Gunther Schuller, arguably the earliest influential, serious jazz performance scholar. In 1958, he published an analysis of Sonny Rollins’ improvisation on the studio recording of “Blue Seven” on Saxophone Colossus which became one of the first widely-read academic articles on jazz analysis. The article established the paradigm for decades of articles, books and dissertations about jazz performance that followed. Schuller considers Rollins’s improvisation from the lens of motivic development, arguing that Rollins achieves an unprecedented “thematic and structural unity” which makes his solos superior to that of other instrumentalists who improvised solos that were not as “organized” or “suffered from a general lack of over-all

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7 Lydia Goehr (1994) has become one of the leading scholars in dismantling the aesthetic orthodoxy around analytical methodology which has favored studying the musical “work” as object—determined by the notated score—that has pervaded musicology and the classical musical world since at least the early 19th century through the early 20th century. She argues that this way of studying Western art music in musicology and aesthetics has been largely the inheritance of Anglo-American analytic philosophy; she challenges this orthodoxy with what she calls a Continental-informed “historical approach” based on investigating music as a practice or concept rather than a “thing.” In so doing, Goehr makes “five claims” about what she calls “work-concepts” (to distinguish from “work-as-object”): that they should be considered “open” to change; that they are based on or “correlated to the ideals of a practice”; that the dictates of its genre “regulates” how the notion of the concept is conceived; that these conceptions will lead to so-called “projections” or interpretations of any specific artifact or performance; and that they tend to emerge or crystallize in a given time through the interactions of various peoples and their theories, beliefs, laws, and activities, making a work-concept historically contingent.

8 A prominent critic of this orthodoxy has been musicologist Nicholas Cook. He has argued for a greater attention not simply to “music as texts” but “music as performance.” In so doing, he has even suggested that all performers—including those in Western art music (especially in performing chamber music)—share an improvisational element in the real-time decision-making — “…the performance of the precomposed never can exist without some element of improvisation” (Cook 2004: 20). He further argues that “…the improvisatory dimension of [Western] “art” music performance are substantial” despite primarily involving interpretive aspects of tempo, phrasing, articulation, and attack/release. As a result, he suggests that the difference of the improvisatory dimensions between typical jazz and Western art music performing conventions is merely the “order of magnitude” (a phrase he borrows from Jeff Pressing). As I will try to demonstrate, however, I think this difference is more than a mere difference of quantity in creative choice — that the improvisational choices in jazz tradition(s) are related to rhetorical strategies inherent in African-American culture and history.

9 Even when attempts at historical and cultural context or performance practices are a part of these studies, rarely are the interviews or writings of those involved in the present-day musical world considered as primary sources for analysis.
cohesiveness and direction” (Schuller 1958: 6-7). While Schuller’s discoveries of thematic and motivic development are meritorious, the loaded value judgments he makes about how this relates to Rollins’s peers clearly reflect a particular aesthetic bias inherited from Western musicology. Furthermore, he stresses motivic analysis in part because it is among the aspects of Rollins’ playing that is most readily notated – pitch sets, patterns, and the like.

In the wake of this article as well as Schuller’s future tomes on jazz performance traditions (1968, 1989), many later studies inherited the paradigm of using classical music’s tools, terminology, and notation to analyze transcribed examples of the recordings of canonical jazz performers. In fact, while this emphasis on performers seems like a departure from classical music’s focus on composer, this is largely because these jazz scholars have made improvisers, rather than composers, the primary individual “authors” of “texts” – i.e. solos. In addition, their analysis has gravitated to studying the preoccupations of classical music – form, meter, melodic construction and development, harmonic progression, voice-leading, and (to a far lesser extent) metered rhythm. In other words, most in-depth studies have sought out formal patterns or connections in improvisations played within archetypal cyclical jazz forms (e.g. blues, songbook standards, short tunes by jazz musicians) of individual canonical jazz performers – typical topics have included motivic development, melodic formulae, how voice-leading or harmony inter-relates with such melodic choices, and/or the development of large-scale narrative within an improvised solo (Blancq 1977; Kernfeld 1981, 1995; Larson 1987, 2009; Martin 1996; Owens 1974, 1995; Schuller 1958, 1968, 1989; Tirro 1974). In keeping with musicological tradition, it was very rare for any of this scholarship to attempt to integrate the perspective of the performers they were studying or their colleagues to come to a better understanding of their performance techniques.

1.2.2 << The Trend Toward Ethnomusicology in Jazz Studies >>

10 In a few cases, this has meant, in accordance with musicological tradition, analyzing the (usually) transcribed score of a canonical jazz composer, most often one who writes for mid-to-large size ensembles like Jelly Roll Morton or Duke Ellington (see Schuller 1989). The amount of discourse related to composition in jazz relative to solo improvisation is, nonetheless, miniscule.
More recently, some jazz performance scholars have moved toward incorporating the performer’s perspective and the socio-cultural context—often due to the direct influence of ethnomusicology. Conventions in this field have led scholars to incorporating data about the cultural traditions that inform performance practice (Monson 1991, 1999; Berliner 1994; Berger 1999). To that end, these scholars usually incorporate field research—including interviews with musicians (and often other participants in jazz events) as well as field recordings and notes related to studio performances and/or live performances.

Ethnomusicologist Charles Keil has been especially influential. He argued that to study many musical traditions (including and especially those of the African diaspora), it is problematic to prioritize form and syntax in the way that classical music scholars (e.g. Leonard Meyer) have done for Western art music: “we must be willing to employ two sets of criteria in evaluating music, depending upon whether the processual or syntactic aspect is dominant” (Keil 1966: 346). Syntactic aspects, for Keil, included traditional preoccupations of musicology and theory—the small and large-scale “development” of melodic and harmonic material through longer forms. Contrastingly, Keil described how jazz performance in particular was more reliant on the process of creating a “vital drive” or “groove”—a process which he argued had a great deal to do with the relationship between bassists and drummers. Later, Keil would expand on this framework with his concept of “participatory discrepancies” which he divided into “processual” (mostly focused on rhythm in relation to metre) and “textural” (i.e. timbre, sound, tone, etc.) (Keil

Bruce Johnson, in an essay in the Cambridge Companion to Jazz (2002), points out that today’s institutions (including academic fields such as mainline musicology) are what he calls “ocularcentric” (100). That is, the visual ways of knowing are favored over aural and oral in “maintaining a regime of knowledge-as-control” and that Western art music therefore fixates on the notated text as “opus” and a fixed “product.” More critically, he suggests that jazz inherently challenges this notion but is still ultimately marginalized in academic discourse because “jazz is distinguished from art-music models in the priority of the ear, in collective improvisational performance. Jazz is an earsite in an epistemology dominated by eyesight” (104). Elsewhere, Johnson calls this an “authorized musical aesthetics” (105).
This notion of looking at jazz through its own traditions, and focusing on the matter of process, was to be very influential on later scholars.

Without necessarily invalidating or abandoning traditional musicology entirely, many contemporary jazz scholars after Keil have also shifted away from musicology’s long-standing formalist focus on the individual author (i.e., the composer of classical music; a single improviser in jazz). Instead, many scholars have begun to focus more on the interaction among musicians and, often, among all participants in the jazz performance. Again, this is a multi-layered conception of interaction they are analyzing.

On the one hand, there are the scholars’ actual tools and techniques for analysis. Many of them still use the tried and test tools and techniques from Western traditions when appropriate (including music notation), especially in relation to topics like melodic development, form, as well as harmonic progression and voice-leading. In addition, though, they also highlight aspects that are not a focus of most traditional classical music musicology including, but not limited to, instrumental timbre—as pertaining to the individual musician and/or how such individual timbres combine into ensemble texture—as well as rhythm – often considering subtopics such as how performers articulate “time” or how members of the ensemble (especially rhythm sections) interact in the moment.

On the other hand, these scholars contextualize jazz players’ interactions as part of a real-time, improvisational practice rather than analyzed as if considering a written—and therefore by comparison, static—classical music score. In the broadest sense, such scholars are often also considering how this real-time interaction on-stage takes place within a broader context that includes their audiences, their communities, and the larger culture (Ake 2002; Berliner 1994; Berger 1999; Brothers 1994; Fraser 1993; Gabbard 1991; Monson 1991, 1994, 1997 & 1999; Murphy 1990; Smith 1988; Walser 1993). Given that these methods influenced my own scholarship more directly, I need to address these ideas in detail.

Keil defines these terms early in this 1987 article: “For ‘participatory discrepancies’ one could substitute ‘inflection,’ ‘articulation,’ ‘creative tensions,’ ‘relaxed dynamisms,’ ‘semiconscious or unconscious slightly out of synestheses.’ For ‘process’ one could substitute ‘beat,’ ‘drive,’ ‘groove,’ ‘swing,’ ‘push,’ etc., and for ‘texture’ one could substitute ‘timbre,’ ‘sound,’ ‘tone qualities,’ ‘as arranged by,’ and so forth” (Keil 1987: 275).
1.2.3 Studying the Jazz Performer Through Psychology and Cognitive Science

There has also been a whole range of literature that has examined jazz performance through the lenses of psychology and cognitive science. A host of psychologists—including E.F. Clarke (1998), Jeff Pressing (1988), as well as Barry J. Kenny and Martin Gellrich (2002)—have all created analytical frameworks to study the mental processes involved in improvisation; all of these scholars address jazz specifically. Pressing’s article is often in direct dialogue with that of Kenny and Gellrich. Pressing stresses the importance of how the cognitive processes that allow for improvisation necessarily occur within a linear timeframe (Pressing 1998). Picking up on this point, Kenny and Gellrich note that, as a result, “…temporal constraints necessitate a series of efficient mechanisms designed to facilitate improvising in real time” (117).

As a result, all of these scholars point out that performers need to develop internalized, acculturated knowledge to perform efficiently. As Kenny and Gellrich put it, however, “the most important internal constraint is the knowledge base” (2002: 117-118). Pressing outlines the improviser’s potential knowledge base which are not simply concepts but also physical routines: “…musical materials and excerpts, repertoire, sub skills, perceptual strategies, problem-solving routines, hierarchical memory structures and schemas, [and] generalized motor programmes” (1998: 53). Kenny and Gellrich expanded on this point in relation to jazz, describing that “…improvising music typically involves the internalization of source materials” which “in jazz [includes] the transcribed solos of distinguished musicians” (2002: 118).

Both Pressing’s and Kenny and Gellrich’s articles use the term “referents” to describe underlying structural concepts that serve as a foundation for improvisation. Pressing defines a “referent” as “…a set of cognitive, perceptual, or emotional structures (constraints) that guide and aide in the production of musical materials” (1998: 52). With regard to jazz improvisation, Pressing tends to equate referents to repertoire (especially standards). Kenny and Gellrich, however, stress how a referent can be more broadly
defined in their more refined definition: “...the external, culturally supplied forms that assist with the transmission of improvised ideas” (2002: 118). In either case, the notion is that using a referent—in conjunction with the competence and understanding in relation to its use—allows for efficient cognitive processing in the process of improvising and allows for greater “perception, control, and interplayer interaction” (1998: 52). Kenny and Gellrich provide a more specific model for how they see referents typically being used in a jazz context:

The musical referents of jazz are its cyclical...structures (i.e. jazz standards), its chords...and its characteristic rhythmic patterns. Two of the referent’s most important functions are its ability to limit improvisational choices according to appropriate guidelines and its role in building perceptual paradigms for listener appreciation. (2002: 118)

This reference to rhythmic “patterns” rather just musical form and its related harmonic structure as a basis for a perceptual cognitive paradigm serves as a possible precedent for future scholarship connecting Keil’s notion of “groove” (rhythmic pattern) to the notion of referents. ¹³

Kenny and Gellrich’s model also builds on this notion with related concepts – “flow state” (which they refer to as “surrender[ing] to the moment itself”), risk-taking (creating a “self-induced state of uncertainty where repetition and predictable responses become virtually impossible”) and “kinesthesia” (“the sense of where parts of the body are with respect to one another”), making reference to jazz throughout. Their article builds to a model of improvisation in which eight different mental processes are at work but in which “improvisers typically shift from one process to another but cannot combine two or more simultaneously” (2002: 124). These processes include short, medium, and long-term anticipations of musical events about to occur or recalls of that have already occurred, as well as the state of “flow status” (i.e. “staying in the present”), and “feedback processes” in which ideas are “gathered from that which can be previously recalled” (ibid.). They argue that “deliberate practice” has been the primary function of much pedagogical jazz literature, but that those parts of mental processes involving

¹³ This also serves as an important precedent for the contemporary scholarship of J.A. Prögler (1995) and Vijay Iyer (1998), both of whom were informed by cognitive science (as well as Keil) in their approaches.
invoking “transcendence” (i.e. “flow states” and “risk taking”) have not and “like deliberate practice, can be encouraged and cultivated at the outset of an improver’s development; it need not be delay until the final stages of an artist’s development, as deliberate-practice research implies” (2002: 125). Referencing the work of Paul Berliner, they also point out how “skill acquisition and developmental processes [in jazz]…however, move well beyond the individual learning of knowledge bases to include a wider, collaborative learning environment” (2002: 126). As Keith Sawyer points out in his observations of jazz performance in an article that studied the psychology of this interaction:

> Each [musician] has to listen and respond to the others, resulting in a collaborative, and intersubjectively generated performance…no one acts as the director or leader, determining where the performance will go; instead, the performance emerges out of actions of everyone working together. (1999: 194)

However, while this prioritization of group interaction and collaboration is central to my own study, I do not utilize the lens of cognitive science.

1.2.4 << Studying the Relationship of Jazz Performance to the West African Diaspora >>

In their efforts to contextualize jazz and its particular emphasis on interaction, ethnomusicologists (including Keil) will often describe the music’s connections to the musical and cultural practices of Western Africa.14 African-American music scholar and composer Olly Wilson (1999) points out that Afro-diasporic music—from West African drumming to jazz and beyond—has an inherent interactivity that foregrounds particular musical contrasts that are alien to much of European classical music traditions. Wilson is among many scholars to emphasize that in West African music, the Western notion of meter—including the concept of “strong and weak beats”—is not a central tenet. Instead,

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14 Two of the most important African-American music scholars—Samuel Floyd Jr. (1996) and Olly Wilson (1999)—have written seminal books on the subject that are frequently quoted in jazz scholarship.
the norm is a lattice of interacting, “syncopated” rhythms (though actually “against” meter so this is actually a misnomer) that make up the fundamental timeline. Similarly, according to Wilson, contrasting timbral choices and ensemble textural heterogeneity are valued in Afro-diasporic musics while in Western art music homogenous blend is the prevailing norm (Wilson 1999: 159-160). Timbral/textural heterogeneity and distinct approaches to rhythm and metre are just two aspects of Western African musical aesthetics and values that strongly inform the particular approaches to interaction that are prevalent in jazz. Wilson also points out how the musical prioritization of timbral heterogeneity may be tied to how West African languages often closely tie meaning to differences in timbre (especially by comparison to Western European languages). He suggests that the musicians and their instruments are not far removed from verbal language – consider the notion of “talking drums” or the direct connections that scholars have made of drumming patterns to oral poetry (Wilson 1999: 161).

The importance of how language relates to meaning extends to African-American culture. Ingrid Monson suggests that the very experience of being black in America is “interactive, participatory...[and] multiply authored” (Monson 1999: 87) and that this is reflected throughout African American music, literature, and vernacular speech. This includes verbal games such as “doing the dozens” that have this playful interactivity. Many of its practitioners and chroniclers have focused on jazz “as a language” or the notion of “telling stories,” a common Lester Young metaphor for soloing (Porter 2005: 34). To that end, linguistics, and especially semiotics, has often been adopted by jazz scholarship when accounting for the importance of language.

1.2.5  << Semiotics and African-American Aesthetics (Including Jazz) >>

Many music researchers have made use of *semiotic theory* – the study of how signs create meaning. While semiotics has been adapted to many contexts including visual art, the most common application has been linguistics. In adapting semiotic linguistics to music, scholars will often analyze the “syntactical” elements (meter, rhythm
harmony, melody, form, etc.) as well as previous ways of playing (ways of playing together in time, timbral manipulation, etc.) as possible signifiers – these signifiers, in turn, may hold contextually-driven meanings for performing musicians and their listeners. Such context for live jazz performance could include factors such as the conditions at the venue, the demographics and knowledge of the audience members attending, in addition to the backgrounds—individually and collectively—of the actual performers themselves. Furthermore, though, the context for any jazz performance also includes the larger culture in which it takes place, which includes the sounds and discourses of jazz tradition(s) and popular and folkloric music practices.

The history of the discipline of semiotics have had apparent applications to jazz. Ferdinand de Saussure, the originator of semiotics, always problematized the emphasis on individual authorial “originality” (Saussure 1983). Given the emphasis on group interaction and authorship in jazz performance generally (and particularly in the phenomenon I am studying), this suggests the theory could potentially be applicable. Later post-structuralists such as Roland Barthes further delegitimized the idea of the lone authour, arguing that in any text “it is language which speaks, not the author; to write is to reach the point where only language acts, ‘performs,’ and not ‘me’” (Barthes 1977, 143). This passage reads a lot like how many jazz musicians, and especially improvisers, talk about how they give themselves up to “the moment” or even “music itself” when in an ideal state for improvising. Sonny Rollins once actually described effective playing as allowing oneself to let go of authorship: “I’m not supposed to be playing, the music is supposed to be playing me…The music is supposed to be coming through me; that’s when it’s really happening” (National Public Radio 2014). Barthes goes further, however, in arguing that the writer of a given text is an orchestrator of the “already-written” rather than the sole originator (Barthes 1977: 21). Thus, he describes a “text” as

…a multidimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations...The writer can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original. His only power is to mix writings, to counter the ones with the others, in such a way as never to rest on any one of them. (1977: 146)
For Barthes, writing is a matter of playing with the meaning of previous signifiers from previous “quotations.”

Barthes was the mentor for Julia Kristeva, whose concept of *intertextuality* (1966) is a touchstone for many recent jazz scholars (Tomlinson 1991; Monson 1991, 1994, 1997, 1999; Berliner 1994; Heble 2000; Horn 2000; Borgo 2004). Intertextuality describes how meaning is constructed through the relationships between a literary text (as well as that text’s audience) and its relationship to other texts (both past and contemporary). In articulating this concept, Kristeva pivots classic semiotics away from the denotative (one-to-one symbolic) meaning of words to a more expansive view of language (what she referred to as “the semiotic”) in which the sounds of words contribute to a multiplicity of potential meanings – meanings which are always dependent on context. Intertextual analysis of a literary text occurs along two poles at once: first, along a horizontal axis that connects the author and reader of a text; and, second, along a vertical axis, which connects a given text to other texts. Further, she describes how what she calls *codes*—frameworks and conventions for making meaning shared among a given audience—allow this interplay of signs and texts to make sense. Obviously, language is the most fundamental of semiotic systems, and therefore a specific language constitutes one of the most common kinds of codes. While Kristeva is applying intertextuality to written language and literature specifically, this conceptual framework—along with this understanding of a given social group’s “codes” for making meaning—has been applied to instrumental music. This is despite the fact that the meanings of instrumental music are

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15 While other scholars I mention below develop the idea of texts interacting well beyond the concept of “quotation,” direct melodic quotation is a tactic with a long history in jazz improvisation. Krin Gabbard’s essay on the subject “The Quoter and his Culture” (1991) is widely viewed as a scholarly landmark in contemporary jazz studies.

16 “Classic” semiotics here primarily refers to the pioneering work of Ferdinand de Saussure who, in large part, founded the field (though he called it semiology). His posthumous work *Cours de linguistique générale* (Course in General Linguistics) of 1916 was epochal for defining the linguistic sign as being composed of a signifier (the “shape” of a word or its phonic component) and a signified (the concept or object that appears in the mind upon reading or hearing the signifier). This is the root of the so-called denotive approach to analyzing text for meaning. I am aware that I am glossing over a huge amount of semiotic history in this section, and focusing on the elements that I feel most apply to my project.

17 This notion of semiotic “codes” originates with Saussure, but is greatly elaborated by Roman Jakobson who discusses codes at length (1971) before being adopted by Barthes and Kristeva.
inherently more “abstract” for the receiver than are the meanings in language or even art which have denotative meanings and/or visual symbols.\(^\text{18}\)

Ethnomusicologist Ingrid Monson built on Kristeva’s concept with the concept of *intermusicality*, which she formulated as a way of emphasizing musical interactivity: “...the word intermusical is best reserved for aurally perceptible musical relationships that are heard in the context of particular musical traditions” (Monson 1994: 308). Using this as her foundation, Monson examines how and why jazz musicians interact with each other and their audience—which she refers to as a “community of interpreters”—through the mutually shared materials of popular and jazz repertoire. Monson points out that jazz involves interpreting the sonic signifiers culled from jazz and popular tradition(s). Thus, she comes to the conclusion that jazz is inherently a “socially interactive dialogue” which has “historicity embedded in music events as a process” (Monson 1994: 305). She describes this process in detail:

...A chain of associations may be set off that engage the listener and unite her or him with a community of other individuals who share a similar musical point of view. Quotations are only the most obvious examples of the thick web of intertextual and intermusical associations to which knowledgeable performers and listeners react. Theoretically almost any musical detail or composite thereof could convey a reference, so long as a community of interpreters can recognize the continuity. (Monson 1994: 303, 305)

To summarize: jazz performers utilize a wide range of interactive musical strategies which are specifically meant to engage their “community of interpreters.” Monson, throughout her work, argues that this mode of interacting is foundational to African-American expressive cultural tradition(s).

An important direct influence on Kristeva and Barthes—not to mention Monson and many other scholars of African American culture—is the pioneering work of Mikhail Bakhtin—a philosopher/semiotician who wrote much of his most groundbreaking work

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\(^{18}\) While many musicologists have developed theories of musical semiotics (Nattiez 1976, 1990; Monelle 1992, 2000, 2006; Cumming 2000; Tagg 2013; et al), I am not providing an exhaustive overview of the subject here. Instead, I will draw on particular concepts from those musicologists most fruitful for my topic. To that end, in Chapter 8, I will consider specific concepts from Kofi Agawu, David Lidov, and Robert Hatten in greater detail in forming my analytical methodology.
about literary theory and discourse during the 1930s and 40s.\(^{19}\) Bakhtin’s central linguistic concept is *dialogism* – the notion that all human expression inherently creates dialogue. Cultural studies scholar Martin Irvine neatly summarizes Bakhtin’s hypothesis: “…every level of expression from live conversational dialog to complex cultural expression in other genres and art works is an ongoing chain or network of statements and responses, repetitions and quotations, in which new statements presuppose earlier statements and anticipate future responses” (Irvine 2004).

To that end, while Bakhtin argues that all statements or “utterances” are inherently dialogical, he makes a further distinction between how statements can suggest dialogical elements that are internal and others that are external. Internal dialogue refers to how the author can create “multiple meanings” through manipulation of the semantic relationship between the words in a given text (Bakhtin 1986: 141-142); how a given text interacts with other texts (i.e. intertextuality); and how a text interacts with social or cultural discourses, both present and past. This form of dialogue also tends to be the purview of the individual speaker or author who is creating such dialogue in a more abstract sense. Many scholars of African American culture (Ingrid Monson among them) point out that the African American aesthetic of interaction and dialogue in language has, in part, had its roots in both the individual storyteller or author’s way of interacting with other versions of a given “text” – what African American literary scholar Henry Louis Gates refers to as *Signifyin(g)* (this concept is discussed in detail later).\(^{20}\)

Monson argues, however, that many of the African American literary scholars that have cited Bakhtin overemphasize the role of the individual author. While Monson acknowledges the importance of the individual author in written African American literature, she also stresses that “…what is lost sometimes in the extension of this metaphor to texts with a single author is a sense of how signifyng as an aesthetic

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\(^{19}\) Four of his most widely influential essays were later anthologized as *The Dialogic Imagination* which was translated into English in a 1981 edition. The essay that is most pertinent to “intermusicality” is “Discourse in the Novel” (originally written about 1934-35) in which he discusses literary genre as well as internal and external forms of dialogue in language.

\(^{20}\) It has been pointed out that this aesthetic of subversion and adaptation—on a practical level—does not occur in a historical vacuum, but rather emerges from the African American historical reality of oppression. There is extensive discussion of this in Floyd (1996, 2002), Gates (1988), and Wilson (1999) among others.
developed from interactive, participatory, turn-taking games and genres that are multiply authored” (Monson 1996: 87). The games and other literary genres she refers to are, for the most part, oral. As such, these genres involve both sound and face-to-face interaction – both of which can be readily adapted to music and jazz in particular. Beyond this, dialogism and intertextuality (or, in Monson’s framing, intermusicality) in the African American sense will typically involve both interacting with cultural traditions to create layers of multiple “meanings” (in the Bakhtin sense) and also that this aesthetic of making meaning(s) has been cultivated through face-to-face, participatory interaction. Jazz, in this sense, is ideally suited as a forum for African American expression given that it is overwhelmingly preoccupied with both internal and external dialogue – that is, creating multiplicity of meaning through face-to-face interaction.

Many of the scholars who have made semiotics as a touchstone in studying jazz performance (including Monson) have referred to “Signifyin(g),” the foundational concept for the literary theory of Henry Louis Gates Jr. Gates himself actually cites Bakhtin’s definition of the literary genre of “parody” as a direct influence. Specifically, Gates has cited how, in parody, Bakhtin refers to a “double-voiced” word or statement (a Bakhtinian “utterance”) is meant to create a specifically ironic dialogue. Parodic double-voicedness is achieved by the authour inserting an additional semantic meaning into discourse which already has one apparent meaning – i.e. an utterance in which both meanings are present (Bakhtin 1984: 189). Meanwhile, Gates refers to the Signifyin(g) authour or speaker as engaging in a kind of “repetition with a signal difference” (Gates 1988: xxiv). As in Bakhtin’s double-voiced utterance, the authour or speaker (or, for Monson and other jazz scholars, the improvising musician) holds together an original meaning and another potentially (often contradictory) meaning.

With Signifyin(g), however, Gates pivots from Bakhtin’s narrower focus on irony in overt parody to a more specifically African American aesthetic of “double-voicedness.” Gates transitions from Bakhtin’s concept of “double-voicedness” to W.E. Du Bois’s “double consciousness.” Du Bois famously used this phrase in an essay that was meant to theorize how the historical reality for African Americans has meant that
their collective identity has been divided between their “Negro” and American selves. Gates hypothesizes that African American storytellers and authours have often reflected this sense of divided identity in their own “double-voiced” art, albeit in culturally specific ways.

For Gates, Signifyin(g) encapsulates an overarching trope found throughout African American language and literature that subsumes all of the other typical literary tropes such as irony, metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and others (the so-called literary “master tropes”). All of this is in the service of a kind of cultural indirection. In other words, troping amounts to a kind of playful “trickery” that arises from the cultural proclivities and historical realities of African Americans – a strategy often played out in traditional African American storytelling by the iconic trickster character called the “signifying monkey.” Rather than the intertextual process of analyzing a given text’s relationship to other texts, Signifyin(g) involves using the existing materials and devices to signal (at least) one other distinct meaning – i.e. “repetition with a signal difference” (Gates 1988: xxiv). This notion of making a statement that points to other texts, while re-contextualizing these other texts to create additional layers of meaning, has proven to be a useful analogy for describing jazz aesthetics as well. I will return to this concept in greater detail when I describe my analytical framework in Chapter 7.

1.2.6  << Signifyin(g) and Audiences >>

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21 Du Bois originally used the term “double consciousness” in the context of an essay titled the “Strivings of the Negro People” in 1897 which later became a chapter in his 1903 book The Souls of Black Folk. In the essay, Du Bois intends to reveal the black experience in America as inherently psychologically and socially divided: “It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness, an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife- this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost” (Du Bois 1993: 2-3).

22 This notion of an authour creating “multiple meanings,” again, reflects back to Bakhtin’s concept of “internal dialogue.”
How, then, do audiences factor into Signifyin(g) and how is musical meaning affected by the locale it is situated? Can Signifyin(g) mean anything without an audience to Signify to (or, possibly even, with)? Monson makes clear that African-American derived musical tradition(s) require a “community of interpreters” which includes not only “knowledgeable performers” but also, to some extent, knowledgeable listeners (Monson 1994: 305). Jazz requires an audience that has a competence with the ways of working—the codes and conventions—that the musicians are interacting in and with.

It is my contention that jazz musicians in many scenes (especially outside of the New York City “élite”) cannot typically expect “highly competent” knowledgeable jazz audiences at the venues they regularly play in. Rather, musicians and long-term groups, as part of establishing their presences on a jazz scene, will try to cultivate regular audiences with this kind of “competence”—that is, audiences that can engage with the parameters of a group or artist’s “sound world.” This sound world includes conventions and references that the musician invokes, subverts, or defamiliarizes—i.e. Signifyin(g). Rather than musicians merely expressing this as individual improvisers in a narrower application of the jazz idiom, however, I am arguing that in the recent context—internationally, but in particular in Toronto—there has been an embrace among many younger musicians of the “band concept”—which stresses having a long-term group that develops a collective musical identity. And, furthermore, it is this stability that is critical in being able to forge, at first, a kind of competence for a “group-oriented” way of performing and then, in turn, for a given group to forge a competence among the audience members they come into contact with and that they hope to turn into “fans.”

Furthermore, I am arguing that this ensemble model has become so prevalent among younger players that a scene within a scene—what I refer to as a subscene—emerged that has focused on such projects. These projects have allowed for more distinctive performance practices which, in turn, allowed for distinctive group identities.

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23 I delve into greater detail about how this cultivation of audiences in my discussion of Becker’s “art world” below. Later parts of the dissertation include my analysis of how jazz musicians in my study interact with audiences at local venues (Chapter 7), and the rationale for my performance analyses (Chapter 8).

24 I will formulate “subscene” in full later in the chapter.
to emerge, each grounded in its own “sound world.” This stands in contrast to the typical “mainstream” jazz context in which musicians highly competent in the bebop idiom gather to perform. More often, these bop groups are at least partially ad hoc, but even those long-term groups tend to play compositions which rely on and provide a way to feature the mastery of these skillsets. Based on my interviews, many musicians admired this way of performing and the majority of them was comfortable with, and frequently performed in, these contexts. However, it was also clear that for many artists in this subscene that their long-term projects allowed for different kinds of creative opportunities that mainstream contexts did not.

It should be noted that while there are reasons for a more recent emphasis on long-term stable groups with distinctive identities recently in Toronto and elsewhere, this phenomenon has a history all its own within jazz tradition(s) which I delve into greater detail in Chapter 2. Nonetheless, what I aim to describe and analyze is a local phenomenon – a specific cluster of related younger long-term stable jazz groups and their performance practices which are affected by the venues and audiences. This is what I call the Toronto stable group jazz subscene (what I refer by shorthand throughout as “TSGJ subscene”).
1.3 Studying Jazz Performance in the Context of a Music Scene

1.3.1 Life as a Working (Jazz) Musician in a Local Scene

Jazz, like any other living musical tradition, is not only performed by its most celebrated international “élite.” While élite musicians often serve as models, musicians in local scenes also aspire to find their own approaches to jazz performance, but also must manage to do so while adapting and surviving in the cities in which they live.

In an interview for the website www.inthesetimes.com about the realities of being a “working jazz musician,” Chicago-based drummer Makaya McCraven discusses these very issues at length. While McCraven is cast in the article as a busy, in-demand drummer in the city, he has also not been an international touring artist nor is he a local artist that can survive playing only original jazz music. He speaks to the different ways musicians approach their careers:

There are a lot of different ways of going about making a career in music. You can be in a band, which is risky because a lot of bands aren’t making much money – you’re working for money brought in at the door. You’re waiting for the big break. Then there’s the working musician method, where you refuse to play for under a certain amount but you approach it as labor: you’re going to play a gig at a hotel and you’ll be in the corner, for example. When the gig’s over, you’re done. That’s very different from the idea of being in a band. (Gantz 2014)

McCraven, later in the interview, takes pains to separate the two kinds of jazz-related work that often utilize a stable band – the “corporate” or private event (e.g. a wedding) which is sometimes contracted by an agency; and jazz music for listening that is performed at jazz venues for jazz audiences. The former kind of professional engagement, while typically more lucrative, often involves playing music for clients that are not hiring musicians to play music for its own sake, but rather to accompany other activities ranging from dancing to providing “atmosphere.” McCraven states: “Those [corporate band] gigs aren’t for being creative – they’re for being wallpaper. That’s why I
really prefer not to do those kind of gigs [sic]. I only do them to fill my schedule, to keep me busy, and bring in more money” (Gantz 2014).

McCraven speaks to the need for musicians to acquire a diverse skill set in order to find different kinds of work that will allow them to professionally survive, develop an identity, and (hopefully) maximize the potential to play the opportunities to play the kinds of music that are most creatively fulfilling:

You have got to work hard. It pays to have a creative outlook and entrepreneurial approach because nobody knows what’s going to happen with the music industry…I really think it’s about being an original artist: create a body of work and be hired for being you, rather than just being a musician for hire. You have to constantly create, collaborate with people and diversify the work. By doing that, I’ve been able to stay busy and avoid things I’d rather not do. Some musicians would rather have a day job and only do exactly what they want to do. But I look at it as a livelihood. (Gantz 2014)

In the interview, he also speaks to the kinds of music-industry related work that different musicians engage in, beyond performing at live events. As he quite rightly puts it, musical activities in any city could include recording session work, engineering, producing, and teaching, either privately or in affiliation with some kind of school. All of these may be more or less likely depending on the diversity of one’s skill set. McCraven’s framing of the diversity of skills needed to survive in a local market is a useful starting point for understanding the concept of a “music scene” and why it forms a conceptual foundation for my study.

1.3.2 << Academic Constructs that Preceded “Scene” >>

While the term “scene” has been in everyday use as a way to delineate and demarcate groupings of people involved in specific cultural activities for decades, it has only recently become formally defined and utilized in academic discourse. Scholars in
communications, media studies, and sociology have been most influential in delineating the concept.

The cultural studies precursor to “scene” which was often used in relation to music was “subculture.” While this term has become a familiar cliché without explicitly negative connotations, the term actually originated with so-called “deviancy theory.” Among the most influential cultural books in this field was Howard Becker’s *Outsiders* (1963). In one chapter, he even uses the “outside culture” of “dance musicians” (by which he means a kind of “jazz musician”) as an example. As a musician himself, Becker describes how he observed other musicians as consciously attempting to differentiate themselves from “squares” (i.e. mainstreamed members of society) through “deviant” displays of “hipness”:

Every item of dress, speech, and behavior which differs from that of the musician is taken as new evidence of the inherent insensitivity and ignorance of the square. Since musicians have an esoteric culture these evidences are many and serve only to fortify their conviction that musicians and squares are two different kinds of people. (Becker 1963: 90)

Study of (so-called) deviant style and demeanor is also central to most scholarship associated with the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Culture (BCCC) in the 1970s, and became part of popularly understood after the publication of Dick Hebdidge’s *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (1979). In the wake of the BCCC’s influential work, cultural studies scholars and sociologists have described subcultures as tightly bound cultural groups; as Kenneth Ray Culton puts it, subcultures are “…homogeneous, somewhat static, bounded cultural spaces where participants shared norms, values, style, and argot” (Culton 2011: 560). Culton and other recent scholars (Bennett and Peterson 2004), however, have pointed out that the term can be problematic for describing many socio-cultural groupings that are more fluid. Furthermore, in general, this framing of cultural groups as static and homogenous does not seem as applicable today, given the

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25 The roots of deviancy theory and subcultural theory, however, go back even further to criminological study in the 1920s, much of it related to gang culture. They theorized that these groupings emerged due to lack of socialization with mainstream societal norms and their subsequent adoption of alternative behavioral and cultural norms (Thrasher 1927; Cohen 1955; et al).
mobility of people, practices, and discourses in a post-internet/digital age (Chaney 1996).  

Transitioning from subcultural discourse, many scholars have shifted to “scene” with its more flexible connotations. As Richard A. Peterson and Andy Bennett have put it, “…subculture…presumes that all of a participant’s actions are governed by subcultural standards, while the scene perspective does not make this presumption” (Peterson and Bennett 2004: 3). Subcultural theory emerged out of earlier work in criminology, and thus focuses on criminal behaviour and so-called “deviancy.” I have not observed that the musicians in my study tended to live according to consciously “deviant lifestyles” with highly specific modes of dress and slang meant to subvert them from a “dominant culture.”

Meanwhile, Howard Becker developed the concept of an “art world” to theorize the ways in which expressive culture is created and consumed (1982). Becker defines an art world as “…the network of people whose cooperative acts, organize through shared knowledge of conventions, produces art that this world is known for” (1982: x). Furthermore, he describes how the existence of a “shared knowledge” for a “community of interpreters” within a given artistic practice allows for its effective production and consumption. To clarify, he points that artists in any art world may create and manipulate

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26 Furthermore, David Hesmondhalgh convincingly argues that “…subcultural analysis was in fact never able to offer much insight into music…the CCCS work on youth subcultures was never really about music, it was about youth collectivities that used music, among other means, to construct their identities” (Hesmondhalgh 2005: 31).

27 Hebdidge is hardly unique among subcultural scholars in his preoccupation with fashion and lifestyle over specific musical practices in his study of punk music: “The meaning of subculture is…always in dispute and style is the area in which the opposing definitions clash with most dramatic force. Much of the available space in this book will therefore be taken up with a description of the process whereby objects are made to mean and mean again as ‘style’ in subculture” (Hebdidge 1979: 3).

28 It is true that most of these Toronto subscene musicians do dress more informally than, perhaps, jazz musicians from other earlier scenes, but this is largely a function of the venues they are playing in and there is a great deal of variety within this broad informality. Also, while it is true that there are a handful of genre-specific terms in use among current-day jazz musicians, there is far less of this kind of slang than from prior generations, which may be in part because jazz slang from earlier eras has so permeated the popular vernacular. With musicians no longer typically using “jive” or “hipster” talk of earlier eras, the only slang still used are utilitarian performance terminology. And, many of these terms are just everyday words that have been adopted to signify a performance convention (e.g. “head,” “chorus,” “walking”). In this way, the Toronto jazz scene does not resemble many other popular music scenes which frequently flaunt their dense slang codes and rigid dress codes (e.g. southern hip-hop, new mainstream country, goth industrial, etc.).
consumers’ expectations, but that the affective success of the art is largely dependent on
the artists’ and audience’s “share[d] knowledge of and experience with the conventions
invoked” (Becker 1980: 30). Becker lists a variety of conventions that could be shared in
order for artistic production to be possible and intelligible. Putting some of this in the
context of the art world of jazz, the conventions that (once they are familiarized) make a
musician or listener “knowledgeable” might include not only some of the musical
references and physical materials used to make the music but also other more abstract
aspects – including the forms and dimensions of the performances (i.e. “works”), and
even how artists and audiences perceive their roles (29).

Put in the context of my own project, Toronto jazz audiences in the local subscene
may become accustomed to the ways in which a given group’s specific practices re-
contextualize those familiar conventions from within and outside jazz’s tradition(s). Once
acclimatized, this allows both the musicians and audiences to foreground the spontaneous
interactive conversation that is so often central to the jazz event. Becker, echoing this
notion, refers to how the individual work/event created by the artist can be a means of
teaching the audience about its art world anew:

Each work in itself, by virtue of its differences (however small or insignificant)
from all other works, thus teaches its audiences something new: a new symbol, a
new form, a new mode of presentation. More important, the entire body of work
by a single artist or group gradually, as innovations develop (perhaps through an
artist’s entire career), teaches the new material to so many people that we can
speak of the training of an audience (Becker 1982: 66).

Becker’s notion of interaction in an art world engages the listeners as active – they
respond based on their own experiences and frames of reference, and can “learn” to
experience the artist’s work differently.

However, in a certain sense Becker’s term is more “limited” than that of “scene.”
As I demonstrate later in this chapter, while scene can flexibly connote genre or location,
“art world” is more narrowly focused on genre or practice, de-emphasizing the influence
of location. Instead, there is a much greater focus on the activities, especially as it the
sociological sense:
All artistic work, like all human activity, involves the joint activity of a number, often a large number, of people. Through their cooperation, the art work we eventually see or hear comes to be and continues to be. The work always shows signs of that cooperation. The forms of cooperation may be ephemeral, but often become more or less routine, producing patterns of collective activity we can call an art world. (Becker 1982: 1)

In addition, Becker also emphasizes how these activities in an artistic world are shaped by a shared “rationale” which he suggests “…typically take[s] the form of a kind of aesthetic argument, a philosophical justification which identifies what is being made as art, as good art, and explains how art does something that needs to be done for people and society” (Becker 1982: 4). While there are certainly those who might be tempted to use the term “jazz world” instead of scene (McAndrew, Widdop and Stevenson 2015), my hesitation to adopt this or a similar construct stems, in part, from my experience that participants in jazz do not necessarily agree on any overriding aesthetic or philosophy in relation to a particular performance or even with regard to what “jazz” is.29 Indeed, while debates about defining jazz in recent decades may have been particularly fervent, musicians, fans, and writers have always contested what is and what is not “jazz” (and its various equivalent terms).30 Furthermore, as my project makes clear, I think that local concerns can have a profound impact on artistic practice, an aspect which “art world” is less concerned with.

As I suggested above, however, I think Becker’s emphasis on the conventions that make it possible for “art” to be produced and consumed is important to my framing of “scene” as a concept. For Becker, “artistic conventions cover all the decisions that must be made with respect to works produced, even though a particular convention may be

30 Mark Tucker’s 2010 entry on “jazz” in the Grove Dictionary of Music conveys how the term can mean many things in different contexts to different people: “The term conveys different though related meanings: 1) a musical tradition rooted in performing conventions that were introduced and developed early in the 20th century by African Americans; 2) a set of attitudes and assumptions brought to music-making, chief among them the notion of performance as a fluid creative process involving improvisation; and 3) a style characterized by syncopation, melodic and harmonic elements derived from the blues, cyclical formal structures and a supple rhythmic approach to phrasing known as swing” (Tucker 2010).
30 Despite debates that often relate to sonic features, most scholars and musicians will agree to a notion of jazz as founded on an African-American strategy, embedded in coded performance practices, of playing with its own relationship to both its own tradition(s) and that of culture around it, generally (see Chapter 2 for history and Chapter 8 for more detailed theoretical underpinnings for analysis).
revised for a given work” (1980: 29). While Becker allows that, in part, conventions merely allow for “efficient coordination of activity,” he also suggests that successful artistic expression is predicated on reference to such conventions. Of course, jazz musicians have always subverted such musical conventions through their compositions and performance practices, but it is my argument that doing so demands a difficult balance – and that using a stable group allows for ways to successfully subvert with tradition(s) while maintaining a kind of coherence.

1.3.3 <<“Scene” as Academic Construct and as a Term in Common Use >>

“Scene” has become a familiar term not only in cultural studies of course, but for consumers, organizers, or practitioners of culture. In virtually all cases, the term is used to delineate some kind of alignment of specific cultural activities with the various participants—including artists, fans, venue owners and bookers, support personnel, journalists, and many others—that take part in these activities as well as the larger context these activities take place in. Given that various participants’ investment in, and perspective related to, will vary, they will delineate a cultural scene’s boundaries differently. The two factors that are most critical for this delineation of a scene are genre/style or location – though usually one factor is emphasized over the other.

A given genre, style, or school of cultural practice a scene can be demarcated in a very narrow or broad sense – for example, the “avant-garde dance scene” or the “dance scene”; the “stand-up comedy scene” or the entire “comedy scene.” Whether narrow or broad, when used this way, “scene” generally refers to a group of people associated by a kind of cultural activity. However, when applied to music, Sara Cohen points out that “…the term is perhaps most often applied to groups of people and organizations, situations, and events involved with the production and consumption of particular music genres and styles” (Cohen 1999: 239) as in the “heavy metal scene” or the “rock music scene.” While this use of “scene” in music is widespread across virtually all music genres
now, the usage actually dates back to the 1940s and 1950s with the emergence of (so-called) modern jazz (Bennett and Peterson 2004: 3, Cohen 1999: 239). In other words, jazz was the first genre to be described as a scene on to itself – the “jazz scene.” While “scene” has been adopted by the participants in many cultural groups (particularly with reference to pop culture - i.e., the “rock scene”), the term remains an especially common term among jazz musicians, fans, and journalists.

The other common delimitating factor when using the term “scene,” however, is geography – that is, using “scene” to establish a cultural group’s locale. Again, this may be framed quite specifically or broadly – as in a given neighbourhood (“Brooklyn scene”), city (“New York scene”), region (“Northeast scene”), nation (“American scene”), or, even, continent (“North American scene”). While scenes are often circumscribed in the broadest terms (by nation or continent), framing a scene within a scene or neighbourhood is closer to the word’s original meanings.

With reference to these two general ways of demarcating (genre or artistic practice and locale), I argue that there are two common ways to use the term “scene” in a musical context:

1) **Delimiting a music scene by genre** (or style, school, etc.) but avoiding *reference to geography* (e.g. “the punk scene,” “the avant-garde jazz scene”).

When “scene” is used this way, the speaker or writer will usually be signaling some kind of stylistic practices or aesthetics by using a genre modifier(s) before the word “scene.” This usage will often deemphasize the local aspects to focus on how social, musical, and cultural activities of scene participants interact on a global scale (or “translocal” to use Andy Bennett’s term). This is not to suggest this usage always negates local concerns entirely – but rather that broader changes

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31 The Oxford English Dictionary makes reference to “...a particular sphere or aspect of human activity; an area of interest, action, etc.” (Oxford English Dictionary). The same entry indicates that while the term “social scene” was in use as early as the 18th century, using “scene” to delineate a specific domain of cultural activity like a “music scene” appears to be a post-mid-20th century phenomenon.

32 “Scenes” have traditionally served a specific function in narratives, and especially the theatre – they are sites of potential face-to-face interaction. This makes “European scene” perhaps less precise than “Paris scene.”
and interactions in genre practice are the typical focus.\textsuperscript{33} Communications scholar Will Straw’s widely-cited definition of a “scene” frames it as a trans-local musical “terrain” that is not bound by geography: “…that cultural space in which a range of musical practices coexist, interacting with each other within a variety of processes of differentiation, and according to widely varying trajectories of change and cross-fertilization” (Straw 1991: 373).\textsuperscript{34}

2) \textit{Delimitating a music scene not only by its genre but *also* within a specific locale} (e.g. “the Cleveland punk scene,” “the Vancouver avant-garde jazz scene”). Using the term in this way tends to reflect an emphasis on how local participants interact with each other and how the area’s context affects the specifics of their social and musical activities. American studies scholar Barry Shank formulated a more local-focused definition of scene to support his study of the Austin rock scene in the 1980s and early 1990s. In his definition, he suggests that the creation of individual \textit{identity} through participation in cultural activities that take place in a given locale is at the very heart of what is meant by “scene”: “I believe that this performance of new, sometimes temporary but nevertheless significant, identities is the defining characteristic of scenes in general as well as their most important cultural function” (Shank 1994: x). More abstractly, he refers to a scene as an “overproductive signifying community” (122); by this, he appears to suggest that a scene involves a community of musicians, fans, and other participants involved in meaning-making through an “excess” of cultural activity taking place there. In other words, there is more going on in a given local music scene than can possibly be consumed and processed by the public – a fact which has to be true of the Toronto jazz scene or, for that matter, any local cosmopolitan music scene.

\textsuperscript{33} Here is but one example of this usage with reference to describing socio-political changes in the punk music scene: “…the brief convergence of punks and skinheads during the 1980s resulted in some factions of the \textit{punk scene} adopting more reactionary political ideologies. However, she insists, these factions were far outnumbered by radically egalitarian punks, who swiftly “expelled” them from the punk scene back to the skinhead movement from whence they came” (Philipov 2012: 26, my emphasis)

\textsuperscript{34} Straw uses the word “community” to denote a “local scene,” but it is my opinion that this deviates too far from common usage to be useful.
In describing a scene, then, if one or the other of these formulations is emphasized, this will emphasize different things about these musical worlds.

Whether attempting to delineate a scene in the “translocal” sense (like Straw) or local sense (like Shank), any musical scene’s boundaries will, by their very nature, be consistently blurry. For one, any genre/style artistic practice (i.e. a translocal music scene) is always a site of discourse, contention, and change, and therefore any musical “scene” will change as a genre’s practices and aesthetics change. Meanwhile, when narrowing it to a specific local music scene, there are contextual, big-picture factors that will inevitably change over time in a given locale—such as the local economy or the demographics of its population—which will in turn have various affects; relatedly, various key actors and organizations on the local music scene and sites of musical activity—including venues—will change. Therefore, I use the term “scene” not only because it is in common use among my peers, but because it inherently denotes the very flexibility and instability that is at the heart of musical practice in any style/genre within any local context. \(^\text{35}\) In my formulation, both the translocal and local aspects are always interacting. I am studying such performance practices within the musical, cultural, and social context of a given locale of Toronto, and yet these practices are emerging as a result of interactions with jazz tradition(s) and current-day activities happening globally within the trans-local jazz scene.

\(^\text{35}\) Academic David Hesmondhagh, meanwhile, complains that “...the term [“scene”] has been used for too long in too many different and imprecise ways” (Hesmondhagh 2007: 42). As a result, he claims the term is too ambiguous for use in academic contexts: “…its use has been very ambiguous, or perhaps more accurately, downright confusing. This confusion has been compounded by its further use in popular music studies: sometimes to denote the musical practices in any genre within a particular town or city…sometimes to denote a cultural space that transcends locality” (Hesmondhagh 2007: 42). As I will attempt to demonstrate, it is not difficult to delimit “scene” as a construct if one breaks down the term clearly and uses it with clarity in an academic context. Furthermore, his own solution involves combining the term “genre” with the semiotic construct of “articulation” which strikes me as far removed from the practices of typical musical performers and audiences in any field. In addition, his conceptual model does not deal with the influence of locality specifically, which is critical for my study. In any case, as a jazz performer, I prefer to revel in the possible conceptual ambiguity of “scene” while still making it clear how I will be using it.
In this study I examined the trends that I observed among the musicians that performed at live venues in the downtown Toronto area. In that sense, my study is of phenomena specific to a local scene – the Toronto jazz scene. To be more specific, however, my study focuses on performance activity in specific venues in which I observed the trend of younger stable, long-term bands – bands with a sense of musical identity distinct from the long-standing mainstream practices in Toronto, while still maintaining clear connections to traditions of jazz practice. The musicians in these projects and other participants attending these live performances were not typically exclusive to playing these venues nor did they typically only play in these kind of long-term bands. Some musicians participated in other parts of the Toronto jazz scene (in its broadest sense) including mainstream and avant-garde venues and practices and/or performed in classical or pop music scenes. The same was often true of audiences as well.

Again, I have elected to refer to this phenomenon, this scene-within-a-scene, as a subscene. In so doing, I use the prefix “sub-” in accordance with this formal definition: “…designating a division or subdivision of the second element into a component part, section, or branch…with reference to a body, group, or assembly of people…[or] denoting a place…” (OED Online). My intention with this term is to indicate how a given “scene” can be subdivided into another component by reference to place (venues) and people (musicians, audiences, venue personnel and management, etc.) without this component being separate from the larger scene it originates from. While this might conjure up notions of “subgenre,” using “scene” as the root points out (in the two-pronged sense of “scene” that I mean) that this is a phenomenon that may relate to broader movements within the jazz “genre,” but also has important local considerations. In other words, I am not only pointing to genre and place but also a way of performing within this genre—the propensity to developing a strong sense of band identity—that I
hypothesize to be an interaction between some of the local scene participants and translocal as well as a part of traditions in the genre itself (as I describe in Chapter 3).

1.4 << The Rock Band’s “Collective Persona” and the Stable Band Phenomenon >>

As I will describe in Chapter 2, while jazz is sometimes associated with its most informal performance tactics (i.e. the jam session) there have been traditions of stable, long-term jazz groups since the genre’s beginnings. Indeed, I try to demonstrate how many long-term groups have been among the most important inspirations for jazz performers through to the present – including those musicians in my study. Outside of jazz’s own traditions, however, the way in which contemporary jazz musicians in many local scenes (including Toronto) have used long-term groups appears to also often be inspired by the paradigm of the rock band.

The rock band archetype solidified with the broader changes in popular music that occurred in the mid-1960s. Generally, popular culture writers gloss this as a shift from the ethos and aesthetics of late 1950s and early 1960s “rock and roll” (which, at the time, was often blurred with ‘pop’ and/or rhythm and blues) to “rock.” The philosophy around “rock” that developed for musicians—as well as, eventually, fans and critic/journalists—was largely focused around complicated and sometimes contradictory

36 Many rock scholars will pinpoint 1965 specifically. That year, The Rolling Stones and The Who released massively popular, defiant anthems that were about youth revolt and social hypocrisy (“My Generation” and “Satisfaction” respectively). The Beatles released their first more stylistically diverse album in Rubber Soul, while Bob Dylan “went electric” in playing the then-controversial set at the Newport Folk Festival that year with The Paul Butterfield Blues Band backing him. (Notably, the prototypical collective band, “The Band” would just afterward become Dylan’s backing band.) Journalist Jim Farber describes how this musical shift was reflected in the nomenclature: “fifty years ago [in 1965], the music previously known as ‘rock and roll’ morphed into the emphatically named ‘rock’” (Farber 2015).

37 Of course, as always, genre terminology is always fluid and disputed. With regard to “‘pop’ and ‘rock ‘n’ roll,’” Roy Shuker points out that “rock’ [is] often used as shorthand for the latter, if not both” (Shuker 2001: 8). Nonetheless, it is commonplace to stake differing claims musically and aesthetically on all three of these terms. Philip Auslander, for example, indicates that he “employ[ed] the word ‘rock’ to denote a kind of popular music that originated in the mid-1960s, as distinct from its 1950s predecessor, rock and roll” (Auslander 1999: 66). As Auslander usage suggests, “rock and roll” is a term with a lineage going back to the 1950s, while historically the shortened version—“rock”—becomes more commonplace as part of the cultural and musical shift that happens in tandem with the British Invasion and the influence of the American folk revival (for more context, see Friedlander 1996).
notions of “authenticity.” Central to claims of rock authenticity was not “selling out” creative ambitions to mass market demands:

Rock was something more than pop, more than rock ‘n’ roll. Rock musicians combined an emphasis on skill and technique with the romantic concept of art as individual expression, original and sincere. They claimed to be non-commercial – the organizing logic of their music wasn’t to make money or to meet a market demand. (Frith 1983: 36)

Of course, popular music-making of any kind necessitates participation in the mass market, and this meant the musical products had to be mediated through the music industry itself;\(^{38}\) ironically, the industry eventually began to market these products by highlighting the artist’s claims of “non-commercial” and/or artistic authenticity.\(^ {39}\)

Nonetheless, Simon Frith also points out that rock music, as popular culture, could only claim success when it achieved some definition of popularity (however that may be defined): “The ideological power of popular music comes from its popularity…Mass music is recorded music and—whatever their particular artistic claims, their authenticity and interest as music-records which don’t sell, which don’t become popular, don’t enter mass consciousness” (1981: 61).

Underlying this shift from rock and roll to rock were two formulations of authenticity that were tied to music scenes of two different nations – the American folk music revival and the British rock scene (Moore 2002). On the one hand, the American folk music scene tended to greatly value lyrics, and in particular those that emphasized “truth telling.” Common themes included social/political protest, personal narratives, or portraits of real or imagined people. Sonically, there was a strict adherence to acoustic instruments and vocal timbres that usually eschewed trained qualities (Bob Dylan being perhaps at an extreme). Accordingly, this scene was embodied by the lone singer-songwriter accompanying him or herself with an acoustic guitar (e.g., Joan Baez, Tom Paxton, Phil Ochs, or Bob Dylan). In other words, the performer as “truthful” and

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\(^{38}\) This is particularly true before the advent of the Internet.

\(^{39}\) As Frith points out, “The myth of authenticity is, indeed, one of rock's own ideological effects, an aspect of its sales process: rock stars can be marketed as artists, and their particular sounds marketed as a means of identity” (1987: 137).
“authentic” author of his/her own songs was central, then, to the folk aesthetic.\textsuperscript{40} Dylan, by eventually bridging his persona as “authentic truth teller” with the rock aesthetic of a unified, electrified band, became especially important in shaping the emerging rock paradigm of the late 1960s. While acoustic folk traditions continued in the wake of Dylan’s electric period, his contributions to rock music, along with those of several of his folk-scene peers, were also indelible.

Meanwhile, many British rock bands of the so-called “British Invasion” were also extremely important in solidifying the emergent rock aesthetics. According to several scholars including Howard Horne and Simon Frith (1983), many influential British rock musicians had their aesthetic sensibilities molded in their adolescence in state-sponsored art schools.\textsuperscript{41} Horne and Frith described the “mode of expression” at these art schools as having “…borrowed heavily from Romantic philosophy with its emphasis on autonomy and creativity and from avant-garde manifestos of the early 20th century” (1983: 286). While not all British rockers had this background (nor, surely, were all influenced in the same way), Peter Wicke points out that being subjected to this prevailing aesthetic orthodoxy likely had an influence on building the acute artistic self-awareness that prevailed in this scene:

The art school experience above all provided rock musicians with the basis of their consciousness of themselves as musicians in artistic and ideological terms. The result was that, in contrast to the traditional pop song, the contradictory relationship of art and commerce, of artistic claims and popular culture, was reflected in rock music and became the driving force for its development. (Wicke 1990: 96)

\textsuperscript{40} This stands in contrast to the continuing pop/R&B genres of the 1960s (and some of the earlier rock ‘n’ roll music of the 1950s) in which star singers and vocal groups were, most often, not performing their own material and usually worked with a record label’s house musicians. Indeed, many of the popular music record labels had their house songwriters writing for their popular singers at the time (e.g. Lieber/Stoller at Atlantic Records or Holland/Dozier/Holland at Motown Records).

\textsuperscript{41} The list of British Invasion bands with key members that spent time at these art schools includes The Who (Pete Townshend), The Beatles (John Lennon), The Rolling Stones (Keith Richards, Mick Jones, and Charlie Watts), Cream (Eric Clapton), The Kinks (Ray Davies), The Yard-Birds (Clapton and Jeff Beck), and The Animals (Eric Burdon).
In their rhetoric and lyrics, many of these British rockers emphasized a Romantic sense of freedom and a self-conscious “artistic” attitude.\(^{42}\) Sonically, this often manifested itself through experiments (albeit within an idiom) of form and style uncommon in prior rock ‘n’ roll or pop music.\(^{43}\)

And yet, if artistic independence grounded in individual “personality” was one plane of the aesthetic ideology of British art schools, Wicke describes the “pop…or mass communication” as “the second important plane” (1990: 98). The idealistic belief was that through developing an independent, honest, and “authentic” artistic personality or vision, the artist would cultivate his audience:

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\text{[It] postulated an ideal of communication, seeing in such an ideal the most immediate link between people. And again, the key to the realisation [sic] of the ideal of communication was to be seen in the individuality and personality of the artist. The more honest and sensitive, the more ‘authentic’ the artist’s behaviour towards himself, the more immediate the communication with his audience. (Wicke 1990: 98)}
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So in seeking independence, these 1960s British musicians were trying to present some kind of authentic presentation to their audience that went beyond “music itself” but that also projected a persona that blended their music with visual elements:

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\text{Since the mid-1960s at least, every fine art student has been a potential rock musician. The history of British rock … has been the history of the realisation of that potential: artists not just in music and song, but in terms of their multi-media organisation of image/performance/style. (Horne and Frith 1983: 286)}
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While there are certainly parallels to the folk tradition in how these musicians wanted to account for an “authentic persona,” British rockers’ attempts to build a “multimedia” style or persona are somewhat antithetical to the folk ideal of a truth-telling troubadour.

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\text{In the wake of this shift in the mid-1960s, Philip Auslander argues that a pervasive “visual culture” began to emerge in rock that includes a number of potential}
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\(^{42}\) Peter Townsend, for example, described The Who this way: “‘we play pop art with standard group equipment’” (Wicke 1990: 96).

\(^{43}\) This would culminate in sonic experiments in the late 1960s, often inspired by psychedelic drug culture. The *Oxford Encyclopedia of Popular Music* neatly summarizes many of these specifics (Larkin 2006).
“visual artifacts” to supplement the music (e.g., advertisements in various media, media photos, posters, recording art/booklets, and fan merchandise; today, that usually includes various online presentations). These artifacts began to be very important for establishing authenticity: “Such images help to define, but also must conform to, the visual standards of rock authenticity prevalent at a given historical moment” (Auslander 1999: 75).

While the particulars of the claims of rock authenticity differed according to the era or subgenre, they also differed greatly depending on the specific musicians involved.

In fact, in keeping with the greater self-awareness and intent to create identity that became a part of 1960s rock culture (especially among the British Invasion art school alumni) is Phillip Auslander’s concept of the musical persona. He describes the musical persona as “the version of self that a musician performs qua musician” (2006: 104). Further, Auslander defines performance as a way to project identity: “Musical performance may be defined…as a person’s representation of self within a discursive domain of music...What musicians perform first and foremost is not music, but their own identities as musicians, their musical personae” (102).

Musical personae are developed, in part, by the music performed and its sonic allusions to (and departures from) genre and subgenre conventions. However, personae are also developed through the various expressive non-sonic tools that a performer uses (whether knowingly or not). Auslander refers to this toolbox as “the front,” adopting a term from sociologist Erving Goffman (1959). A performer’s front, in turn, can be divided into the “setting” (physical venue of performance) and “personal front” (the ways in which a performer acts to represent him/herself). Honing a “persona” may often have been more overtly self-conscious among British rockers, but even those solo American folk artists were often acutely aware of having established personae, even if they were in the service of (so-called) truth-telling and acoustic, intimate musical aesthetics.

44 Here, Auslander is taking issue with Theodore Gracyk’s argument that such visual aspects are merely the “imagery of rock promotion” (1996: 78) – they are meant to “misrepresent” rock musicians as being live performers when, according to Gracyk, rock musicians are primarily tied to recordings and the studio. Auslander points out, however, that live performances help to authenticate rock musicians in having a history and a following but also because it fundamentally authenticates or “proves” that the musicians that play the music represent who they are in person (Auslander 1999: 76-78). The live performance is, in a sense, the most important “visual artifact.”
However, with the emerging dominance of British rock bands in the 1960s (the so-called “British invasion”), this emphasis on the individual performer and his/her identity shifted to a focus on developing a collective persona or identity through the band. In other words, these bands shifted the idea of building a persona around an independent, “authentic” artist to emphasizing a collective persona under a band name. Reflecting this, bands did not typically feature a leader’s name (e.g. “The Beatles” rather than the “John Lennon Four”). In other words, unlike the typical “mainstream” jazz paradigm (see Chapters 2 and 5) the band name does not refer to a single individual, but rather, is a symbol that, regardless of any other associative meaning, signifies this collective approach to music-making, artistic vision, and personality. This fundamental concept has persisted in rock music, even though there are also singer-songwriters who have had “backing bands” for long periods of time. However, even in these cases, it is often true that the musicians in these bands have significantly contributed to shaping an overall “sound.”

In any case, rock fans, in evaluating any band’s identity, will discuss the specific lineup of a given band and how they relate to each other. While fans will debate how members of the band perform together and possibly collaborate on songwriting, this is usually done in the context of describing the personalities and/or visual persona (or “look”) of the band. The perception of a band’s collective personality and “look” are often the result of how the band physically and verbally interacts on-stage and when appearing across various media.

These issues come to the fore when an established rock band changes its line-up; after this point, devoted fans often debate whether specific iterations of the band are more “authentic.” Sometimes, the authenticity is evaluated on the basis of it being the “original line-up” and therefore “truest” to a perceived identity; on the other hand, some fans may

45 As mentioned, Dylan is pivotal in merging folk and rock sensibilities, but it goes further than simply adding electric instrumentation to his persona. Rather, he begins to merge the concept of a “band persona” or sound to his songwriting persona. At first, this manifests itself with his Newport Folk Festival performance which was accompanied by John Mayall’s Bluesbreakers (Mayall himself a product of the art schools of the time). Eventually, Dylan would add a backing group that would eventually epitomize the band concept perfectly – The Band (albeit, a group that was not British, but rather mostly Canadian).

46 This is often reflected in that band having a collective name of their own (e.g. Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band or Jimi Hendrix and the Experience).
perceive that a later line-up represents a higher creative “peak” based on other criteria including perceived musicianship or creative contributions of later members.\textsuperscript{47} Again, some fans may even find the personalities and visual brand of some members are important in gauging whether later musicians are worthy of membership.\textsuperscript{48} In any case, devoted rock fans invest a great deal in the specific musicians of a particular fixed entity.

While the visual artifacts of a public persona are key, however, the “most authentic” mode of rock performance eventually became those bands that performed original music: “As the main vehicle for creative expression in popular music, songs occupy a prominent role in the shared space of band work” (Behr 2010: 141). As Ruth Finnegan found in her local study of amateur musicians, “…the standard expectation was…for [rock] bands to play mainly material composed and worked out by themselves”; to her, this appeared to reflect “the value locally placed on ‘originality’” in rock circles (Finnegan 1988: 132).

For the musicians in my study, all of whom were raised in the 1980s and 1990s in a popular culture with many popular rock bands (even as, admittedly, hip-hop and electronica was on the rise), this ensemble dynamic favoring the collective persona was both familiar and attractive. This paradigm was widespread even though the popular music listening habits of individual musicians in my study varied widely. In addition, though there have been stable jazz groups in jazz traditions for decades that also provide key inspiration (a history which I explore in Chapter 2), there are specific ways in how rock bands typically function that have been a distinct influence. For example, bands in this young stable group subscene presented and promoted themselves to potential

\textsuperscript{47} For example, one of the most commonly cited fan base controversies for any rock band is for The Rolling Stones line-up, especially as it pertains to the “lead” guitarist chair – some fans advocate for the early work with Brian Jones (who gets credit for being the original, on their earliest hits, and for having an elusive “blues credibility”), Mick Taylor (who is on their most famous albums during the period that most critics and many fans think of as the band’s high point), and (admittedly less commonly) Ronnie Wood, given his longevity with the band. Each is viewed as contributing significantly to a slightly different take on the band’s identity, which nonetheless maintained a stable core.

\textsuperscript{48} Sometimes a part of the fan base can be so invested in specific notions of the visual image of a band that when a band member changes, it can reveal latent racism. In the case of arena rock band Journey, the band brought in Filipino vocalist Arnel Pineda in 2007 as a replacement (original and famed rock vocalist Steve Perry departed in 1998). While the band was clearly very impressed with his abilities, Pineda later admitted than in the early going he was worried about the hate mail he received from rabid fans: “…my wife was so freaked out with all these racist comments that she told me to bring a bulletproof vest” (Appleford 2013).
audiences in ways that, at times, were indicative of how rock bands presented themselves (a phenomenon I describe in detail in Chapter 6). Furthermore, these younger groups were organically moving away from the prevailing competitive (rather than collaborative) ensemble performance model that prevailed in Toronto’s scene from the 1960s through to the mid-2000s (I outline this history in Chapter 3). In their shift to collective identity influenced by the rock band model (though not exclusively), this was in part due to this mainstream scene breaking down (which I detail in Chapter 4). Instead, these younger Toronto groups were likely influenced themselves by key internationally famous contemporary jazz groups who also appeared to be influenced by the rock model (which I outline in later parts of Chapter 2). As I conceptualize in Chapter 8, these Toronto musicians decided to develop groups to perform with to develop an artistic identity and way of performing that was only possible due to this collaborative, long-term approach. Like rock bands, they were focused on performing original music that reflected their emergent collective personae, while utilizing core tactics related to jazz tradition(s).

1.5 << Methodology >>

This dissertation is based, in large part, on fieldwork with four different Toronto-based jazz projects that all regularly performed in a stable formation. All of them primarily featured instrumentalists under age forty-five at the time of study. I observed them in performance from 2010 through 2013 at three of Toronto’s best-known venues. At the live events, I took field notes, noting aspects I would analyze in greater depth later as well as noting how venue and audience behavior appeared to affect performance at the time. While I did make my own conclusions based on what I heard and observed, I also interviewed members of the groups about these very issues – sometimes in the immediate aftermath of performances at venues and other times in longer, sit-down interviews. I spent the most time, though, with the bandleaders who often had the most critical role in shaping the band’s identity. Our discussions also addressed how the musicians working

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49 I describe why I selected these three venues and their centrality to the subscene in Chapter 4. For the historical context that led to these three venues becoming important, see Chapter 3.
with long-term projects promoted themselves. To do so, I combed through their own descriptions on their websites and/or social media platforms as well as their responses in media interviews. I also interviewed a handful of other participants on the scene (including a prominent historian/journalist, a passionate regular fan on the scene, a venue booker) as well, but given my focus on performance, I used these to supplement data and provide context rather than as primary sources.

I also spoke with several young jazz musicians who are not members of the four core ensembles to ask them about when, where, and with what type of ensembles (e.g., stable, fluid, or some combination of both) they performed in Toronto and about whether they performed in these groups – the results helped support my arguments about the contemporary scene (Chapter 4). These discussions help contextualize the practices of the core ensembles and give a sense of any wider young, fixed ensemble based jazz (sub)scene.

Finally, after the primary data compilation phase, I analyzed both studio and live recordings of the groups, using different analytical tools for each group. I elected to use different analytical tools for each of these groups, given that I wanted to demonstrate how each group enacts jazz tradition(s) by interacting on its own terms with conventions of jazz tradition(s) to create its own group identity. This involved careful, intensive listening to these recordings to which I often applied a variety of transcription methods – sometimes incorporating Western notation and sometimes with other tools.

1.6 **Contribution to Scholarly Conversation**

As I have described, while there have been other contemporary studies of jazz performance that have studied interaction in small group jazz performance practice in American centers, there have been comparatively few studies about these issues in Canada. While studying at the University of Toronto, it seemed natural to me to study

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50 My analytical rationale in Chapter 8 describes my methodology in greater detail.
how these kinds of issues relate to phenomena unique to the country’s largest city with one of its most vibrant, longest-standing jazz scenes. Indeed, given this study’s focus on cross-cultural fertilization and interaction, Toronto—a city with a population that is half foreign-born—is perhaps well-suited as a base of study.

Furthermore, very little jazz scholarship has focused on why, how, and to what effect musicians create long-term projects. This is problematic because, there have been two long-standing traditions around instrumental small group jazz – short-term (usually one-off or possibly a short tour) and long-term (with mostly the same personnel for at least a year but quite likely more). The short-term model has been most common for the contemporary studies of small group ensemble dynamics that have incorporated field research in a given community (Berger 1999; MacLeod 1993; Faulkner and Becker 2009); most of the time, these scholars studied the jam session, its studio corollary the one-off recording session, and/or the “pick-up group.” Instrumentalists participating in these events may be already somewhat familiar with each other’s repertoire and tendencies to greater or lesser degrees, if they are on the scene. Given the limitations of time, though, the musicians are in this situation more likely to default to the shared conventions of jazz tradition(s) – stylistic practices and core repertoire that is either “standard” or original, but uses familiar conventions. To be sure, some of the most celebrated jazz recordings have occurred under such conditions – and this is often among masters who share a great deal of the same common ground within jazz tradition(s).

Indeed, as I have already pointed out (and will provide greater detail for in Chapter 2) it was this very approach to ensemble practice that dominated Toronto’s jazz scene for decades.

However, the other approach to small group performance—the long-term ensemble—has rarely been the focus in its own right in such contemporary studies of interactive ensemble performance practice. Berliner, Monson, and several others have conducted research with members of long-term jazz groups, and these conditions may have been implicit that the interactive practices they discuss – in fact it is possible that the musicians’ longevity working with a stable ensemble heightened their competence at interaction, making many of the scholars’ conclusions possible. Yet this point has rarely
been considered, let alone explicitly stated; and the implications of long-term co-performance have not been investigated for its own sake. Lastly, most studies of jazz performance practices have been about internationally recognized, canonical, or elite jazz performers without consideration of local factors, rather than investigating practitioners in a specific city other than New York City. This in effect homogenizes much of what we know about jazz performance, neglecting its many local interpretations.

1.7 << Overview >>

The dissertation moves from broader concerns about stable jazz groups and the Toronto jazz scene in general, to a focus on how various factors have shaped the ways that groups in this TSGJ subscene function, to a more detailed analysis of specific groups’ performance practices.

In Chapter 2, I provide a history of how many of the most influential jazz musicians throughout its tradition(s) have used long-term projects to challenge conventions and find new ways of interacting with jazz tradition(s), often doing so in ways that have shifted musicians’ relationship to the culture and audiences around them. In Chapter 3, I provide an introduction to Toronto itself and the history of its jazz scene up to the last decade. I describe how jazz was introduced to the city, and the various strands of the jazz scene, which have typically been quite segregated. Most critically, I describe how, eventually, the robust Toronto studio recording scene that demanded particular skillsets among some of Toronto’s best known jazz musicians deteriorated; this occurred in tandem with a faltering mainstream jazz club scene that supported jazz musicians that often worked in these studios. Then, in Chapter 4, I describe the shifts that have taken place in Toronto’s jazz scene since 2005. While I touch on other phenomena as well, I point out that the stable group subscene has emerged to take up a greater degree of the overall scene’s space.
I introduce the groups I opted to study in-depth for this study in Chapter 5. In so doing, I describe their “origin stories” and point out the importance of social ties in initiating and maintaining long-term stable groups. In Chapter 6, I investigate how jazz musicians describe their long-term projects in their promotional materials (especially on the Internet) and in press interviews. I highlight patterns that emerge in their language that highlight how each band serves to promote its band persona. In Chapter 7, I examine how local factors such as the nature of a venue’s physical space or audience behaviour can affect performance. Chapter 8 provides a rationale for my analysis of the performance practices of three of the four primary groups. I ground this in theoretical concepts from several disciplines, including semiotics, ethnomusicology, music theory, cultural studies, and more.

Finally, in Chapter 9, 10, and 11—using data gleaned from transcription of the audio, the interviews, musicians’ scores, and field notes—I attempt to demonstrate how each of the other three groups has interacted with jazz tradition(s) and practices in their own way by creating and utilizing my own analytical constructs. In each case, I seek to show how the group’s way of performing was made possible by a commitment to a stable personnel.

But first – how has the stable group been critical to jazz tradition(s)?
Chapter 2

The Stable Group in Jazz Tradition(s)

“Art Blakey…always said, ‘Get a band where you have somebody who can write. I don’t write anything, but I have composers. The main thing: get a band’” (Iverson 2016) – Wayne Shorter remembering the advice bandleader/drummer Blakey gave him while with the Jazz Messengers about his future career in jazz.

2.1 << Group Identity and Performance in Jazz Tradition(s) >>

Many popular music performers develop identity not only through how they sound, but also through careful cultivation of a distinctive visual aesthetic and personality. Yet in jazz performance, especially since bebop, there are few musicians, and even fewer groups, who have consciously developed a public persona with a complex visual iconography and public personality – the very qualities that are so often analyzed by fans, critics, and academics of modern popular music. Indeed, at its extreme there have been examples of popular music artists who very consciously constructed elaborate identities (indeed, sometimes multiple identities) such as David Bowie, the members of Kiss, or numerous rappers (e.g. Eminem has the alternate persona of Slim Shady). While there have been performers who have cultivated a public persona, comparably elaborate efforts are usually at the margins (e.g. Sun Ra). For most jazz performers, visual, linguistic, and theatrical efforts to create identity have taken a back seat to musical performance techniques.

Instrumental jazz group performance in the last twenty to thirty years has deemphasized development of a look and/or personality, often to the point of being particularly casual at most smaller venues. It is true, however, that some stylistic or

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51 Arguably, the most prominent exception of an individual jazz musician cultivating a public persona has been Miles Davis – and yet, his cultivated persona has tellingly been a kind of anti-persona: “The effectiveness of Davis’ persona depended on a clash of interests and perspectives, on a series of small but effective offenses… Never for a second did he allow anyone to believe that he was there [at a jazz venue] to entertain” (Szwed 2004: 202).
regional scenes will favor a more formal or casual manner of dress and/or presentation than another. Also, for a while in the 1980s and early 1990s, many of the more prominent “young lion” mainstream jazz groups assumed a formal manner of dress.

Today, however, little in the way a jazz group typically presents itself signals genre-specific techniques to a jazz listener in the same way visual presentation can help an audience identify sub-styles of rock music. Consider that, in a typical case, it would be hard to mistake a heavy metal band for an indie folk-rock group upon seeing their promo pictures – even if they had the same instruments. Meanwhile, in the jazz world, a casually dressed ensemble may play very bebop-oriented music while a band in formal dress may play free music. At the very least, the correlation between mode of dress and performance technique or genre is definitely weaker in contemporary jazz than in most popular youth-oriented (sub)genres (e.g. hip hop, heavy metal, punk, etc.).

And yet there is always a visual element to performance that expresses to audiences some part of the character of jazz musicians – both the individual players as well as the group as a whole. As I elaborate on in Chapter 7, the ways a given musician or group interacts with and presents visually and linguistically as well as sonically to audiences is very important. As Phillip Auslander puts it: “Jazz musicians often have very distinctive personalities as instrumentalists and bandleaders, expressed not only in the way they play but in their appearance, the way they move, the way they address the audience, and the way they deal with their fellow musicians” (2004: 8). Certainly, there are some examples of long-standing groups with a very defined collective visual aesthetic, though—as I show in my historical overview below—such groups are most often associated with either the avant-garde or with fusion. In general, these examples are outliers in jazz.

While this may be the general tendency, stable jazz groups in particular tend to do cultivate distinctive collective personae; some of this relates to how it visually presents

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52 However, in contemporary jazz, visual identity is often partially established online through websites and social media. In a way, this helps to establish a way of promoting this persona, as I will expand on in Chapter 6.
themselves but most of it relates to its collective “sound” – what I would call its musical persona. By contrast, ad hoc jazz groups (e.g. jam sessions or one-off performances) will usually be described in terms of the performances of the individual improvisers’ contributions or, more rarely, the momentary interactions among individual musicians. In other words, for ad hoc groups, individual rather than collective personae are emphasized. Accordingly, it is the paradigm of the individual persona that has been emphasized in jazz criticism and narratives about jazz history.

However, there have always been cases of groups with stable lineups that have developed performance identities that allow for that group to be thought of as a unit at least as much as the individual improvisers within it. Even in cases in which the leader’s name is in the name of the ensemble, the specific iteration of that leader’s group—when together for a long period—can become known for a distinctive way of performing, which is part of what Auslander calls a “performance persona” (Auslander 2004: 7). It should be stated that Auslander, however, even in discussing instrumentalists, is primarily preoccupied with the public perception of how these artists perform rather than any detailed analysis of the sounds themselves.

Building on Auslander’s ideas, I suggest that while individual personae are still part of the picture for stable jazz groups, the collective of a given set of musicians and how they perform together, are central to a jazz group’s collective musical persona. Further, I submit that jazz instrumentalists in such groups are often quite aware of how

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53 It is true that, in a jazz group, the leader’s creative vision in a group can contribute a great deal as to how it operates. Stable jazz groups are not always pure collectives in this sense. Nonetheless, my sense of a stable group is one that uses its stability of personnel specifically to develop its identity and forge a particular collective way of interacting with musical traditions.

54 Granted, Auslander does explore how musical roles are mapped out in certain rock groups. One example he uses for instrumentalists is rock band Led Zeppelin – specifically focusing on how guitarist Jimmy Page and bassist James Paul Jones were perceived as inter-relating: “…Jimmy Page played the role of the inspirational musical genius while bassist and keyboard player John Paul Jones portrayed the persona of the band’s solid, learned musical technician. The interplay between the two musicians was based partly around this narrative, a narrative that did not derive from a text such as a song and involved the musicians’ performance persona…” (Auslander 2004: 7). Again, however, Auslander does not provide any detail as to how these musicians play and interact – he is more interested in how this is received. This is emphasis is typical of performance studies scholars.
their performance techniques interact in a larger sense with jazz and other tradition(s).\textsuperscript{55} (As a result, this will be a major focus of my analysis of performances in Chapters 9 through 11.) In general, this notion of a band fostering a musical performing identity or persona is borne out not only in examples of current prominent groups but also many famous examples from jazz history.

2.2 \textit{A History of the Stable Group in Jazz}

2.2.1 \textit{Early Jazz to The Beginnings of Bebop}

Stable jazz groups with distinct artistic and/or public personae are not a strictly contemporary, or even “modern jazz” phenomenon. There have been famous stable bands in recorded jazz history going back to some of the earliest recorded groups – including the Original Dixieland Jazz Band and King Oliver’s Creole Jazz Band. In particular, it was King Oliver’s band’s long stint as the house band at Lincoln Gardens in Chicago from 1922 to 1924 that allowed Oliver and Louis Armstrong to develop their particular way of playing together – a way of interacting that was not at that time, despite Armstrong’s presence, dominated by solo improvisation.\textsuperscript{56} Rather, the improvisation among smaller jazz groups of this period was usually limited to, on the one hand, interpretation and ornamentation of a given melody utilizing rhythmic and melodic improvisatory strategies culled from ragtime and the blues, as well as, on the other, the collective group improvisation utilizing polyphony (especially in the front-line). As a result, ensembles were more broadly recognized by the New Orleans jazz audiences of

\textsuperscript{55} There is a lot more about this kind of broader interaction with musical tradition(s) in my analytical rationale of jazz performance in Chapter 8.

\textsuperscript{56} “On stage, [Oliver and Armstrong] had initiated a program of duet breaks, where it seemed to audience members that the two read each others' minds...The problem was one of time and space. Oliver had come out of the New Orleans ‘band’ tradition and had always seen himself as a ‘band man’: polyphony was more important than any one player. Indeed, early jazz was defined by its collective improvisation, not by solos” (Gerler 2011).
the day than individual musicians, though there were exceptions.\textsuperscript{57} As Scott DeVeaux and Gary Giddins put it in their widely-used jazz history college textbook:

> By the time their sound was first captured on recordings, New Orleans bands had already attained their own distinctive style. There was no obvious star or standout soloist. Instead, the three instruments in the front line…improvised simultaneously in a dense, polyphonic texture. This way of playing, known today as collective improvisation, is perhaps the most distinctive feature of New Orleans jazz…Breaks (where a single horn improvises unaccompanied) and stop-time (where the band leaves space for a soloist by playing a series of brief, sharp chords) are common. Still, soloing as we currently think of it is rare: it tended to occur primarily when one horn continued while the other rested their “chops.” (DeVeaux and Giddins 2009: 87-88)

These strategies became so engrained in the aural culture of early jazz musicians (particularly those from New Orleans) that groups could be formed from virtually any of those who were raised in it. To the extent there were “stars,” in the earliest days they were very attached to the ensembles they played in.

Nonetheless, the most prominent published narratives of jazz’s history and, indeed, much of the conversation among jazz practitioners and fans, have tended to lionize the individual soloist. This is particularly true when historical narratives reach the mid-1920s, when Louis Armstrong’s career began to emerge from the shadow of Oliver. Indeed, Armstrong is commonly viewed as the musician most responsible for definitively shifting the focus from group performance to the improvised solo, particularly in the small group context – this, just as jazz was beginning to be recorded in earnest.\textsuperscript{58} With his

\textsuperscript{57} It is true that there is Buddy Bolden, the celebrated, though unrecorded figure of the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century. Also, Jelly Roll Morton, King Oliver, and other performers were broadly known to New Orleans audiences before being distributed nation-wide on commercial recordings. It is Armstrong, however, that inexorably links the “superstar improviser” more than the ensemble with jazz – this is especially true among the practitioners and most devoted jazz fans and writers.

\textsuperscript{58} In the early decades, improvising new melodies over the cyclical structure of popular song forms was already emerging as the focus in jazz performance, but it was Armstrong who raised the bar both technically and artistically to make the solo so compelling. There is wide consensus that his solos had far greater form, coherence, and technical fluency, and were more advanced than his peers. Frederick Garber sums up the consensus position: “Most jazz historians affirm that Louis Armstrong made jazz a soloist’s art, that the move from King Oliver’s Jazz Band of 1923 to Armstrong’s Hot Fives and Sevens later in the decade was a shift from the New Orleans ensemble mode to a modified format that showcased soloists, mainly Armstrong himself. Jazz had always been an individualist’s art, but the nature of the context shifted as the soloist got even more upfront and alone” (Garber 1995: 70).
rise to superstardom, the prevailing tradition of groups formed and named by a given leader rather than by a collective name was solidified. While he would eventually front bands that would have an identity of sorts, his “Hot Five and Seven bands” (1925-28) were essentially ad-hoc in-studio bands for each session.\(^5\) In the 1940s and in later decades, Armstrong returned to a more traditional New Orleans style with a group that was consistently called the “Louis Armstrong All Stars.” This group too, as its name would suggest, was more of a collection of high-profile players who could play in this style rather than a jazz band carving out a new way of playing jazz together.\(^6\) Furthermore, it was a group that never maintained a stable line-up for long. While all of the groups he led were inherently interactive, few would argue that it was the ensemble work rather than Armstrong himself that made these sessions or his touring group musically distinctive or successful with audiences.\(^6\)

With the big band emerging as the dominant commercial entity for jazz in the Swing Era (approximately the 1930s through the early 1940s), two separate, though related, sets of ensemble practices emerged – one for small groups and one for big bands. While small groups typically tended to follow the conventions of the pickup group or jam session, big bands tended to have a core, stable personnel allowing a musical and often commercially viable identity to emerge, typically built around the public face of its leader. Bandleaders like Duke Ellington, Count Basie, and Benny Goodman became the brands of their ensemble, representing different approaches to the swing sound and practices for jazz and popular audiences. Due to the performance practice realities of

\(^5\) The various iterations of the Hot Fives and Sevens were formed from a finite pool of elite New Orleans-schooled players.

\(^6\) The All Stars’ identity—even with such jazz stars like Jack Teagarden, Earl Hines, and Barney Bigard in the band at various times—was always about its famous and respected leader – as trumpeter/vocalist and overall entertainer. Furthermore, while always a highly credible group, the All Stars were not arguably forging any new ground artistically nor was Armstrong, as part of the group or as solo act, quite as dominant in popular culture as he had been in the 1930s and early 40s. Terry Teachout summarizes how by the 1950s, Terry Teachout Armstrong’s group was successful but no longer cutting edge: “in 1956…the [Louis Armstrong] All Stars remained among the highest-grossing nightclub acts in jazz, in large part because their leader’s vocals were as distinctive as his trumpet playing…but the writing was now on the wall: with the arrival of rock-and-roll, Armstrong’s once-revolutionary music had become old-fashioned at last” (Teachout 2009: 4-5).

\(^6\) One way of thinking about this issue – Armstrong, in any of his own groups as leader (even a band called the “All Stars”), was like a superstar athlete or franchise player who a given franchise in a team sport is built around rather than one star among many in an actual All Star Team.
playing large ensemble arrangements, these big bands demanded a greater stability in their ranks to perform their respective “books” of original music in the idiomatic style of their group.  

By contrast, small groups during the Swing Era, with rare exceptions, rarely had stable line-ups. Small group performance conventions of the time rarely demanded long-term projects, but rather only an engrained familiarity and fluency with swing performance parameters for each instrument, a knowledge of the repertoire and forms typically used, and a melodic and rhythmic improvisational vocabulary culled from both past and period jazz tradition(s). While certain musicians developed long-term performing relationships based on their personal and/or musical compatibility and/or the fact that they played in big bands together (e.g. Lester Young and Billie Holiday), few small groups maintained a fully stable line-up of personnel for either touring and recording, or developed their own original repertoire specific to the group.

The earliest beboppers also had considerable fluidity in their groups’ line-ups; Scott DeVeaux persuasively argues that this occurred because bebop was primarily conceived in after-hours jam sessions of the early 1940s:

…the jam session…[in] its offhand displays of virtuosity, its apparent disregard for everything outside of its own charmed circle—all seem to sum up that which is attractive and liberating in the jazz aesthetic. This peculiar constellation of qualities lies at the heart of the ‘modulation into a new key of musical sensibility’ that bop has come to represent. For in adopting the characteristic attitudes and procedures of the jam session and making them the central focus of public presentation, bebop radically revised the prevailing definition of jazz. (DeVeaux 1997: 202)

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62 This was particularly true for Ellington’s band which sometimes had challenging through-composed pieces that were often only partially sketched, or for Basie’s band of the era which rarely used written parts for their riff-oriented pieces, relying on the aural memory of its regular members.

63 Benny Goodman’s ever-expanding small group of this period could be, perhaps, the one high-profile exception. It is also true that a stable lineup of specific rhythm sections were often common backbones for many jazz recordings – the rhythm section of Basie’s band, for example, was the foundation of many recordings of the era.
These informal procedures predominated in early bebop. After all, DeVeaux recognizes that at a jam session “…there is no ‘band’: musicians come and go as they please, even during the middle of the number. They may not even know one another, although they usually have at least a passing acquaintance and may use the bandstand…to socialize” (1997: 203). Given this connection to jam sessions, it is unsurprising that a more casual, fluid approach to band line-ups has been the norm in “classic” bebop.

While DeVeaux agrees with conventional historical narratives that suggest the jam session was a site of experimentation for beboppers, he also suggests that the jam was more than a place for musicians to seek refuge from commercial obligations – it was an essential site of professional activity in which musicians networked with their colleagues:

For black musicians at the height of the Swing Era, public performance and after-hours improvising were not separate and antagonistic spheres, reflecting an unbridgeable gulf between the need to put bread on the table and artistic self-respect, but interrelated parts of a larger whole. The jam session was an integral part of the ‘art world’ that constituted their professional life. It was both recreational and vocational (DeVeaux 1997: 207, emphasis in original).

Further, DeVeaux points out that the jam session was a site where musicians would exchange information (in both musical and verbal conversation) not only about music but also the professional world in which they worked – musicians, in other words, would “work out new ideas and techniques,” “exchange information,” and “network with their colleagues” (207). Jam sessions helped developed musicians’ improvisational and interactive competences in ways that were not only artistically important, but also professionally necessary. These professional and artistic goals merged at such unpaid jam sessions, including those Harlem sessions that indeed were the most critical incubators for bop’s new performance practices.

Meanwhile, since the mid-1930s, many musicians had been utilizing stable chamber groups in smaller midtown New York venues – much of this took place on a
stretch of 52nd Street which became known as “Swing Street.” And as the touring dance bands of the early-to-mid 1940s were becoming less lucrative while remaining gruelling and difficult work settings, more and more black musicians—including many of the most prominent young beboppers—began to also look to midtown and downtown New York venues for work. Playing bebop regularly in professional situations allowed the new practices to be codified as they were presented to a somewhat broader audience.

In this codification, Dizzy Gillespie’s contributions were undoubtedly critical. In particular, he and Oscar Pettiford were co-leaders of a quintet that was the first regular group to demonstrate bebop practices to a broader audience. Their quintet was in residence at the Onyx Club from October 1943 until March 1944. Gillespie provided much of the original repertoire. This relative stability of personnel and repertoire helped in establishing arrangements and solidifying these new improvisational practices. In the wake of this group’s engagement, other ad hoc bebop groups began to be programmed at various venues. Many of them were finding enthusiastic and consistent, if small, crowds who would come out to hear their new music. Given that most of these groups were not long-term units (apart from some house rhythm sections), jam session practices and repertoire continued to be pervasive. This meant either songbook standards or bop heads – the latter usually based on the forms of the songbook standards or the twelve bar blues.

It was at the conclusion of the American Federation of Musicians’ strike and recording ban in 1944 that bebop practices began to be disseminated among more jazz

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64 Some historians mark the beginnings of “Jazz Street” as 1933 after the end of Prohibition. It is possible to mark the beginnings of a more “jam session-oriented” approach to the clubs in this part of New York as when enthusiast Milt Gabler moved his already well-known jam session to the Famous Door club on 52nd Street in 1936 (DeVeaux 1997: 278).

65 This was aided considerably by the introduction of the wartime “cabaret tax” in spring of 1944 which placed a high surcharge on venues that had public performance for profit, but exempted instrumental music. For a time, instrumental small groups like bebop groups made even more sense for these clubs.

66 However, even during this relatively short tenure the group had considerable porousness – the tenor sax chair changed three times and the piano chair changed twice (Vail 2003: 23-24). It is quite possible that this inhibited the group from developing a greater sense of collectivity.

67 Charlie Parker, for much of his career, was simply too erratic professionally to manage a regular group because of his drug habit. Notably, when he did manage to settle on a full group from about 1948 to 1950 (with Miles Davis, Al Haig, Tommy Potter, and Max Roach), it helped solidify modern jazz practices in the jazz scene and establish a band repertoire. This, however, was a short-lived period in Parker’s career and in early bebop overall.
musicians and fans in earnest. This, in turn, facilitated relatively well-attended appearances by musicians such as Gillespie and Charlie Parker across the country. At the same time, though, jazz was beginning to lose audience share through the mid-to-late 1940s. In the 1950s, as a result of this shift in popular tastes away from jazz in addition to some jazz musicians’ new creative inclinations, there were more high-profile attempts at long-term groups. Many of these groups would explore creating an identifiable sound reliant on musicians familiar with its repertoire and/or specific approach to bebop’s practices.

2.2.2 << Approaches to the Stable Jazz Group in the 1950s and 1960s >>

With the rise of bebop, jazz was began to cede audience share to other popular music including solo vocalists (e.g. Frank Sinatra), early rock and roll, and rhythm and blues. Art Blakey and Horace Silver decided to form the collective of the Jazz Messengers with a mission of reaching audiences that bebop was losing to these genres. With R&B in particular taking hold with popular black audiences, their strategy was to highlight the blues and more “singable” themes in their re-contextualization of bebop practices. Therefore, the Jazz Messengers, from its earliest incarnation, maintained a “book” of original compositions and an approach to performance that emphasized: 1) blues-oriented devices (such as pentatonic and “blues scale” melodic ideas and development grounded in repetition in themes); 2) a harder driving groove from the rhythm section (especially from Blakey who, as the drummer, sometimes utilized shuffle grooves and/or a backbeat); 3) fewer melodically and rhythmically angular tunes; and 4) a greater overall dynamic range, but especially at the louder, punchier part of the spectrum (particularly compared to so-called “cool” groups).

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68 This also coincides with, at first, the rise of popular singers, who were increasingly less reliant on their attachment with a specific band as in the Swing Era. Frank Sinatra, emblematic of the trend, left Tommy Dorsey’s band to become a superstar solo artist. Later, jazz would lose an even greater share of the audience as rock-and-roll and rhythm-and-blues took hold with younger audiences.
Having a stable group signed on to this way of playing also facilitated using more polished arrangements with this distinct approach. Co-founder/producer for the Mosaic record label, Michael Cuscana, in preparing reissues of their 1950s recordings, had spoken a great deal with Blakey and Silver as well as the producers for their label at the time, Blue Note Records; he argues that Blakey and Silver were acutely aware of how having a regular group would allow for this new approach while also offering the potential to change the dynamic with audiences:

Both Art [Blakey] and Horace [Silver] started talking about making it a cooperative group [after their first recording session], since they seemed to agree in a lot of ways. Both Art and Horace were very, very aware of what they wanted to do. They wanted to get away from the jazz scene of the early ‘50s, which was the Birdland scene—you hire Phil Woods or Charlie Parker or J.J. Johnson, they come and sit in with the house rhythm section, and they only play blues and standards that everybody knows. There’s no rehearsal; there’s no thought given to the audience. Both Horace and Art knew that the only way to get the jazz audience back and make it bigger than ever was to really make music that was memorable and planned, where you consider the audience… (Schaffer 2010)

According to Cuscana, Blakey and Silver were consciously breaking away from emphasizing the typical ad hoc-band repertoire of the time, and shifting toward written compositions with consistent arrangements that were specifically written by and for the members of the group. Embedded in this repertoire were cultural and musical signifiers that were intended to engage audiences, and especially African-American ones.

Soon after, Blakey (using the banner of “The Jazz Messengers”) and Silver (leading groups under his own name) would split their partnership and function for decades afterward as separate bandleaders – albeit with personnel that turned over every few years. While the sound and indeed identities of both of their groups did change as various musicians put their stamp on the group as improvisers (and as composers, in

69 Mosaic Records is a record label that has reissued many classic jazz recordings in recent years – most often in the format of comprehensive CD box sets.

70 While Blakey and Silver were obviously not seeking an exclusively African-American audience, they were on the record about their concern about the jazz scene losing that specific audience – and decided that emphasizing the blues sent a very clear message to that audience. (Hence, the “message” in Jazz Messengers.) As a result, whether entirely consciously or not, the group established an identity that did grow that particular audience for them – as Brubeck did with predominantly white college audiences in the 1950s with his quartet.
Blakey’s case), both bandleaders maintained not only a way of playing but also a brand (in the contemporary sense) to jazz audiences that was immediately identifiable.\textsuperscript{71} This allowed both to have long-term viable careers with ensemble personae widely known to the jazz world.

Other groups in the 1950s formed that also used a stable line-up for significant periods, each taking very different approaches to re-contextualizing bop practices. Gerry Mulligan and Dave Brubeck would each form quartets under their own names playing music that would come to be labeled “cool jazz.” Both groups had approaches that contrasted with those of Blakey and Silver (the influence of contemporary composition’ technique including mixed meter in the case of Brubeck; the use of improvised counterpoint in the front-line with no comping instrument in the case of Mulligan). These were honed by performing regularly as a stable group. Meanwhile, John Lewis and Milt Jackson formed the Modern Jazz Quartet which, apart from changing drummers once early on, had the same personnel for forty years. The group utilized counterpoint and even at times adapted classical repertoire in their highly specific and rehearsed arrangements, but they also, at the same time, emphasized blues practices and repertoire.

There were other extremely influential groups as well. Miles Davis formed a unit in the mid-1950s that eventually came to define the mainstream for jazz. The group may be especially problematic to label as “cool” or “hard bop” given the nature of its diverse repertoire and practices, but it came to use very distinctive arrangements and approaches closely identified with its leader. Ornette Coleman was arguably even bolder, forming a

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\textsuperscript{71} The fact that these two individuals eventually split to become leaders points to the fact that neither was comfortable remaining in a stable group as something closer to a collective which the Messengers were closer to being earlier in their career. As leaders of their own long-standing groups, both Blakey and Silver maintained a core aesthetic, albeit in different ways. While both grounded their groups in a so-called “hard bop” sound with their playing and through ongoing mentorship, their compositional contributions to the group were different – Silver composed almost of his groups’ entire recorded repertoire while Blakey sought out sidemen who, in addition to how they played, could contribute compositions that could be molded into the Messenger sound. However, these were stable groups that did initially a have a particular take on jazz tradition and, in the years afterward, sought out young talent to refresh the group’s approach. Meanwhile, as previously described, Armstrong’s All Stars was initiated as a conscious throwback to his New Orleans heyday with featured players that were often of his generation (e.g. Earl Hines, Jack Teagarden, etc.). There is a distinct difference between these approaches – even if neither is a collective.
quartet in 1959 that explored the possibilities of jazz performance without strict forms or harmonic sequences. While drummer Billy Higgins would eventually leave after more than a year to be replaced by Ed Blackwell and bassist Charlie Haden would be replaced by Scott LaFaro shortly after, the band clearly developed its highly novel approach initially by its very long residency at The Five Spot at 1959 and their extensive group rehearsals.

Later, from 1964 to 1968, Miles Davis led another widely influential quintet in existence that took more daring, open-ended approaches to cyclical jazz forms, creating a way of interacting reliant on the specific relationships of the group’s members only possible given the group’s longevity. In his liner notes to the box set of this group’s studio recordings, Todd Coolman cites Wayne Shorter’s composition “Orbits” on Miles Smiles (1967)—a piece which has a great deal of formal ambiguity including no chord changes during the solos—as an example to indicate how band’s long-term relationship as a group that allowed for this performance to “hang together”:

In spite of these ambiguities, we can hear the piece “hang together” because of the high level of listening and interaction within the quintet. It is their improvised performance which brings the entire piece into focus. This could only have been achieved by musicians united in a single cause, close musically and personally, and willing to provide whatever the moment called for. (Coolman 1997)

Later, Coolman expanded on this, indicating that it was not just their musicianship and dedication, but also “their confidence in one another, on and off the bandstand” that made their risk-taking practices possible (Coolman 1997).

Pick-up groups and jam sessions continue to be a central part of jazz performance, whether among celebrated, canonized performers with recording careers or local professionals across cities in North America. It is this aspect of performing that harkens back to what Harry Berger calls the “folk process” that is inherent in much of jazz tradition(s) (Berger 1999: 114). Both strategies—jam session-oriented groups and stable

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72 In writing about the pervasiveness of this group’s influence, pianist Ethan Iverson has suggested that “…it is arguable that the rhythm section [of the Miles Davis Quintet] has been too influential at this point (how many times have we heard bad imitations of their style?)” (Iverson 2007).
bands—have always been part of the tradition of small group jazz performance, though there have been periods and regions in which one or the other been more prominent.

Historians and other jazz scholars, meanwhile, have avoided the relationship of individual performers to ensembles, and particularly the affect of having a long-term group. DeVeaux has pointed out that for jazz historians, “[h]istorical narrative plays a crucial role in the formation of a canon, in the elevation of great musicians as objects of veneration…” (DeVeaux 1991: 525). While the groups of these innovators may be mentioned in such histories, their practices are rarely dissected in terms of their group interaction, made possible by their longevity. This is true throughout most of jazz studies, in which analyzing the “greatness” of assumed “masters” as soloists has taken up an inordinate amount of the discourse:

In the academy…canonizers are more likely to adopt the strategy of romanticizing the artist. The improvising jazz artist is, after all, a composer as well as a performer, not unlike the mythologized composer/performers of the Romantic Era such as Liszt and Paganini who improvised on well-known works…A disproportionate amount of jazz scholarship is and has been devoted to finding the most effective means for identifying and exalting favored artists. (Gabbard 1995: 8)

2.3  << The Stable Group in Contemporary Jazz >>

In recent decades, many of the most internationally prominent jazz musicians have been members of stable groups with a distinctive approach. The trade magazine with the widest circulation, Downbeat, has had a Critics Poll and a Readers Poll every year since 1953 which has traditionally served as a barometer for what the jazz community is most aware of in general. The broadest award categories (i.e. those not strictly based on instrument or individual ensemble role) today are Best Artist (a category in existence since 1980), Best Group, and Best Album. From 2001 to 2013, the two artists that, by far, have received the most mentions in both Readers and Critics Polls were Dave Holland (Critics [10] and Readers [12]) and Wayne Shorter (Critics [5] and
Readers [5]). While both are long-time veteran musicians, both also recorded almost exclusively with groups they formed and continued to play with through most of this period. In addition, both groups were comprised of personnel significantly younger than the leader. More significantly, both groups have been noted not only for their broad appeal in the jazz community, as evidenced by numerous awards and consistent prominent engagements at festivals and large venues worldwide, but also for having markedly distinct practices from prior groups that their already famous leaders had participated in.

Admittedly, there are other high-profile jazz musicians who continue to garner accolades but do not neatly fit this trend of having a recently formed long-term project that explicitly challenges jazz conventions. Pianist Keith Jarrett has one of the highest profiles among active veteran musicians, but despite currently having a long-established project—a still-active stable trio formed in the 1980s—his sidemen are also veterans, and they play using an approach that typically favors playing standards utilizing much of earlier jazz performance conventions. It is an approach which the group has been refining for decades. Sonny Rollins, similarly, is a veteran—albeit a veteran going back to the late-1940s—that continues to maintain a high profile and active performing schedule—again, playing repertoire and utilizing performance conventions that are, by now, familiar to jazz audiences. Unlike Jarrett, however, he has not done so in the context of a group with a long-term stable lineup and a strong ensemble identity or persona. As a result, he

73 Holland’s quintet had two changes in personnel during its tenure, but both were several years apart and did not change the distinctive instrumentation of the group.

74 Nonetheless, the trio has a distinctive voice that is definitely that of a cohesive group. This voice is definitely one that emerged as a result of their shared past, but it is also clear that Jarrett started the project to avoid carving out a conscious “way” of approaching jazz tradition(s), than to rely on their individual skills and particular ways of interacting together in playing the most shared jazz repertoire, songbook and bebop standards. Jarrett recalls explaining to the rest of the trio what he had in mind in starting the group: “In the beginning, I sat down at dinner with them and scared the shit out of Gary by saying, “Well, we’ll do the things like ‘All the Things You Are.’…You both know what a privilege it is to be a sideman. What if we were all sidemen? In the music itself?’ We don’t have to rehearse. I don’t want any of that. So that’s how it’s forever been with the trio: We show up, we do the soundcheck, we have dinner backstage, we chat” (Iverson 2009). This, in other words, is not a group forging “new ways” of interacting with tradition(s). On the other hand, it is possible to argue that the very idea of these players returning to such standard repertoire when they did in the early 1980s, given their recent histories, challenged what jazz fans and musicians may have expected of them as a group.

75 It is noteworthy, however, that he had used bassist Bob Cranshaw (until his recent death) more than any other bassist for nearly 50 years, and has continued to use him in many of his recent tours (Iverson 2014).
is even more distant from this current phenomenon of jazz. In any case, while there are notable exceptions (particularly among such veterans), this does not negate the significance of a notable trend in the twenty-first century jazz landscape so far—musicians staying in long-term projects that allow for a wide variety of distinctive approaches.\footnote{76 Compare this with even the 1980s, in which Miles Davis, Wynton Marsalis, the Art Ensemble of Chicago, Art Blakey’s Jazz Messengers, and, to a lesser extent, Jack DeJohnette’s Special Edition dominated the Downbeat awards. Davis did use certain players repeatedly during this time for a number of years, but it would be harder to claim that he used a single, stable group live or in the studio over this time. The Art Ensemble and Jazz Messengers are stable projects (though there was a lot of turnover in the Messengers in the 1980s), but all involve an approach and brand that had been established for decades prior—it would be hard to refer to these groups as staking “new” ground. DeJohnette’s Special Edition (which actually had a lot of personnel changes) and Marsalis’s quintet (and, later, quartet) were really the only relatively stable bands with mostly younger players to get significant accolades in Downbeat and elsewhere. So, while there were celebrated stable projects in the 1980s, there were perhaps fewer of these acts at the very center of the mainstream. The individual soloist (e.g. Michael Brecker or John Scofield) was, arguably, a bit more in fashion.}

Indeed, many of the younger prominent musicians in groups led by these veteran leaders like Holland or Shorter, have spoken to the importance of having their own regular groups to allows them to develop not only their personal style, but also a collective approach. They note that working regularly with the same musicians helps them establish their ensemble’s brand in the jazz marketplace, sometimes explicitly mentioning the importance of interaction or the similarity to pop aesthetics of having “a band.” Ethan Iverson, pianist for The Bad Plus, answered a query on his blog about why he and the other group members have prioritized having a regular band and, even more important, having one without a clear leader in the name (i.e. “Leader’s Name” Trio):

“…most of our favorite rock bands were real bands, not a singer/songwriter with back-up (which is often less interesting). Rush, Led Zeppelin, and the Police come to mind, there are many more” (Iverson 2011). In an interview, The Bad Plus drummer Dave King specifically differentiates between these two models of jazz playing—the “band” model versus a leader-plus-sideman straight-ahead model—and why he tends to favor the former (whether in TBP or his other prominent New York-based group Happy Apple):

I've done sideman gigs, but I've never really wanted it to be about making a living doing it…The band concept works for Happy Apple too. I know musicians that
are able to walk into a certain situation and be the musician that is needed without really knowing the people they are playing with. I admire people like that. But I'm more effective, if I'm effective in any way, if I'm allowed to be a part of the moment. (Quoted in Hendrickson 2004)

King, here, associates the capacity for a heightened (or at least specific) kind of giving into “a part of the moment” explicitly with the trust and competencies that a regular band has.

Contemporary piano trios appear to be at the vanguard of this concept. Iverson, in his obituary of Swedish pianist Esbjörn Svensson—the leader of the influential contemporary piano trio E.S.T. (Esbjörn Svensson Trio)—indicated how E.S.T.’s particular approach was only possible due to the band concept:

E.S.T. was Esbjörn, Magnus Öström, and Dan Berglund. No subs were allowed. This insured that their show was always on a high level: clear, unique, and with no music paper in sight. If more jazz musicians committed to the band concept, the state of jazz would be healthier. (Rock musicians understood this years ago).” (Iverson 2014)

Iverson points out this trio and his own can only function at a high level, if at all, by this kind of long-term commitment. For pianist Jason Moran opted to call his trio “The Bandwagon,” though his own name is often also attached. He describes the group’s approach as most often “operating as a collective where all three members determine the improvisational direct hand outcome.” Moran came to prefer this method because it allowed the band to develop its own distinct approach or “language,” as he puts it (adopting the typical jazz cliché): “When we first started playing together, I wasn't sure what [bassist] Tarus and [drummer] Nasheet [Waits] were doing…I was unclear. But as a result, I thought this is going to be the best group for me because we can work together to figure out a language to play the music—and that’s what we’ve done” (Ouellette 25).

Pianist Vijay Iyer, a musician similarly known for taking on long-term projects, has emerged as a dominant presence in the jazz world. He has had the same trio since

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77 This has included accolades such as winning numerous Down Beat awards, 2010 Musician of the Year and 2012 Pianist of the Year by the Jazz Journalists Association, and a MacArthur Fellowship. Most
2005, which, in turn, emerged out of the rhythm section for a different stable group he had with his long-time collaborator saxophonist Rudresh Mahanthappa. Iyer has pointed out how working together as a group has allowed a distinct approach to emerge with his trio: “At this point [in 2011] we have so much shared experience together, it’s just easy to make music together. And we keep pushing ourselves and each other, rethinking the obvious and trying to find new sounds and textures…” (Russonello 2011).

Brad Mehldau, who has led a widely influential trio since the mid-1990s (with the same bassist but changing drummers once), indicated how he developed their approach to using mixed meters with his first trio over a period of years until such time as they could improvise and interact in the challenging frameworks more fluidly and intuitively:

One way I can mark the progression [with the first trio] is that at first [bassist] Larry [Grenadier] and [drummer] Jorge [Rossy] and I had a lot more to say to each other about the music…Jorge and I would have these sessions, and work specific things like playing in odd meters. All three of us would talk about whether or not something was working on a given night, what it was about, what we could do to make it better. Over the years…it became easier to play together intuitively… (Panken 2008)

More recently, Mehldau has explicitly stated his preference for a more “democratic” approach to developing all of his own compositions for his trio:

Having a band and playing jazz means different things to different people, but that’s what it is for me – I’ve seen some really cool bands where the leader is strict and tells the other players pretty specifically how he or she wants it to be, even in the improvisation. I try to stay away from that rigidity if I can, though, and perhaps it’s most challenging on your own tunes, because you may carry more specific ideas that you’re wedded to, about what you wrote and how it should be heard. Ideally for me it’s democratic, veering towards anarchic, and being the leader means mostly setting the agenda – bringing in the material… (Mehldau 2012)

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recently, he was hired by Harvard University to the posting of Franklin D. and Florence Rosenblatt Professor of the Arts.
While each of these trios has a different way of operating, with the bandleader viewing his role differently in each case, these groups are have developed a sound over time that has benefited from a stable line-up.

2.4  **Conclusion**

A stable line-up in an instrumental jazz group supports approaches to group practice that are often not possible with groups with more fluid membership. In addition, post-bop instrumental jazz performance in the context of a stable group, can involve a variety of approaches on ends of a kind of continuum: at one extreme, such groups typically feature highly prescribed forms of interaction, strict “discipline,” and defined arrangements; at the other extreme, there are groups that are more interested in honing a fluidly interactive approach that relies on risk.  

In my study, however, I am most interested in stable groups that not only seek a particular way of interacting among themselves within highly established idiomatic constraints, but also those that consciously attempt to interact with musical tradition(s) themselves, including jazz. In so doing, I have tried to show that there have been several of these groups throughout jazz history, that these groups have been quite influential, and that this model has also become a kind of trend in recent decades among prominent international jazz musicians.

Such international élites, many American, continue to serve as primary inspirations for Canadian jazz artists including those in Toronto. And yet, Toronto has its own distinct history – its own jazz scene. Jazz musicians in this city have had to deal with significant changes with regard to venues and audiences over the last several decades,

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78 Various iterations of Oscar Peterson’s or Ahmad Jamal’s trios are arguably good examples of the former approach while Miles Davis’s mid-1960s quintet or Ornette Coleman’s “Five Spot” quartet (with Charlie Haden, Billy Higgins and Don Cherry) are examples of the latter. Of course, no group is truly only one extreme or the other. Virtually any stable jazz group combines established arrangements/compositions or “predictability” with elements of risk and fluidity – rather, the emphasis contributes to a given group’s musical identity.
and especially in the last 20 years. These contextual factors have had a significant impact on their performance practices, especially in the context of stable groups.
Chapter 3
Toronto and a History of its Jazz Scene(s)

3.1 << Toronto’s Geography and Recent Demographics >>

The Greater Toronto Area (hereafter referred to as “GTA”) sits within 125km of the Canada-United States border in the province of Ontario and comprises the largest municipality in Canada.\(^79\) Since its municipal amalgamation in 1998, the GTA has been comprised of the city’s center as well as four surrounding municipalities – Durham, Halton, Peel, and York.\(^80\) The borders of the GTA region are Lake Ontario to the south, the Kawartha Lakes to the east, the Niagara Escarpment to the west, and Lake Simcoe to the north (see Figure 1).

My study is focused on venues that are found in specific areas in the center of the city – also known as the City of Toronto (which I abbreviate to “CoTO”). To clarify, the CoTO includes the historical core (which used to be called the “City of Toronto” until 1998 and now is called “Old Toronto”) as well as its immediately adjacent suburbs (see Figure 2).\(^81\) Though not formally indicated on the City’s municipal maps, many residents break down the “Old Toronto” region even further into four “regions” – Downtown Core (Central), East End, North End (sometimes divided into Midtown and Uptown areas), and West End (See Figure 3).\(^82\) Bloor Street, the main west-east thoroughfare in Toronto, is a key geographical demarcation in “Old Toronto” – it separates the North End and the Downtown. While there has been less population growth in the CoTO than in the

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\(^79\) The population in 2011—which is close to the beginning of my study—was 6,053,823 (Statistics Canada).

\(^80\) Each of these larger regional municipalities is divided into smaller municipalities based around a given city or town. For example, the Peel regional municipality includes the cities of Brampton and Mississauga and the town of Caledon, which have their own smaller municipalities.

\(^81\) What is now called the “City of Toronto” includes the historical central core as well as the suburbs of York-Crosstown, East York, Etobicoke, Scarborough and North York that immediately surround it (Figure 2).

\(^82\) These regions are, for more official municipal purposes, divided into smaller municipal “neighbourhoods.”
municipalities, this area has seen a significant uptick (14.9%) in its population from 1991 through 2011 (the most recent available data).

The City of Toronto is, as the Canadian Encyclopedia puts it, “the main urban cultural centre in English Canada.” This is borne out in the ethnic diversity and relatively high education of its population overall; furthermore, relative to the rest of the country, there is a great deal more citizens engaged in professional artistic activity (The Canadian Encyclopedia Online 2013). The cultural diversity of the GTA consists broadly in its vibrant immigrant culture, which is especially culturally diverse in the CoTO where diverse ethnic populations run a variety of cultural organizations, many of which support music venues. As of 2006, 49.9% of CoTO residents were born outside of Canada (City of Toronto website). With respect to education, CoTO residents are far more likely than residents of other Canadian cities to have a Bachelor’s degree or higher (69%) and are also more likely to work in Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation (+11%) (City of Toronto website). Having such a diverse, robustly educated citizenry with so many people working in the culture sector has helped create the conditions for Toronto’s vibrant artistic scenes.

These scenes are reflected in the long-term strength of the City of Toronto’s “traditional” flagship cultural institutions. Two of North America’s largest museums (the Royal Ontario Museum and the Art Gallery of Ontario), as well as dozens more public and private galleries, stand in downtown Toronto. The city’s impressive theatre scene, which some rank third in the English-speaking world after London and New York, comprises, as of the mid-2000s, 168 nonprofit theatre companies and several high-profile commercial enterprises including the highly successful Mirvish Productions (Gardner 2006). Numerous festivals and other institutions are also part of the CoTO’s music scene. Of these, the Western Art Music institutions include a well-funded, world-class symphony orchestra and opera company, one of the biggest musical theatre scenes in the

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83 Comparatively, however, in that same time frame there has been a population in the surrounding municipalities – the range in growth in the municipalities has been between 60 and 105% in the same time period (Statistics Canada 2012).
world, and nightclubs featuring a spectrum of popular musics. In addition to two jazz festivals, the city’s annual summer cultural programming also includes a huge two-week long Caribbean festival (the Caribbean Carnival – formerly called Caribana), which takes place at an enormous variety of venues.

Figure 1: Map of The Greater Toronto Area (GTA)

84 Meanwhile, Chapter 4 deals with Toronto’s present-day jazz-specific venues in detail.
While the entire city’s expansiveness, diversity, and multiplicity of musical venues are important contextual considerations, my study is focused on specific venues in *Old Toronto* – the area which includes the downtown neighbourhood and other adjacent neighbourhoods (see Figures 2 and 3). I focus on Downtown and West End areas of Old Toronto (see Figures 4 and 5) because there have been and are currently more jazz and so-called creative-music venues operating in these areas of the city. Indeed, the three venues that I view as critical to the Toronto young stable group subscene are all situated in these neighbourhoods. Another informal consideration is that while many of the veteran jazz musicians live in other parts of the GTA (i.e. the suburbs), I have observed that the overwhelming majority of younger musicians active in this subscene reside in Old Toronto or in the sub-regions immediately adjacent to them – this area is where this jazz subscene literally lives.
Figure 3: Map of City of Toronto #2
* “Old Toronto” / Central Toronto Area is Within Dark Lines

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Figure 4: Map of Toronto’s West End

Figure 5: Map of Toronto’s Downtown Core
3.2 **A History of Toronto’s Jazz Scene(s)**

The Toronto jazz scene has seen many changes since the earliest jazz events took place in the city almost a century ago. Broadly, the first several decades of jazz performance in Toronto established the city’s vibrant “mainstream” jazz industry. By the 1960s, there was a circuit of several venues which continued to expand into the 1990s. Contracting considerably in the mid-2000s, due to a variety of factors, the “mainstream” jazz venues and performance practices of this circuit maintain a vital presence in the city.

Meanwhile, “alternative” jazz subscenes, often based in alternative venues including rock clubs, community centers, and collective-run spaces, have cropped up since at least the 1980s. These spaces have tended to cater to musicians more inclined to experimentation with jazz practice such as avant-garde practices or stylistic hybridization. As I will describe in greater detail below, until the last ten or fifteen years, the musicians involved in such scenes have not regularly participated in the Toronto mainstream scene.

The subscene that is my focus is unique largely because it bridges the previously segregated alternative scenes and the more mainstream scene. Furthermore, many of the musicians, ensembles, and venues that I have studied have quite consciously attempted to cross-pollinate personnel and performance practices from across jazz and other musical traditions.

Understanding the historical context in which the TSGJ subscene emerged will help to contextualize the implications of interactions between personnel and performance practice. To that end, the following brief history of Toronto’s jazz scene(s) emphasizes what I view as the “bigger picture” – the shifts in local jazz culture and industry including its venues – rather than a comprehensive description of Toronto’s most famed musicians and the styles/genres that they performed in.85

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85 While there are many individual veteran musicians that have influenced today’s younger Toronto jazz instrumentalists, I have tended to include in my history only a handful of those who have had the greatest influence on the overall shape of the scene and its venues. As a result, I admit to omitting the overwhelming majority of Toronto’s most famous musicians.
3.2.1 **The First Live Jazz in Toronto**

According to Canadian jazz historian and journalist Mark Miller, the two earliest clubs in Canada to regularly program jazz-related music were both based in Toronto: the Palais Royale Ballroom, founded in 1917, and the short-lived Onyx Club, which operated from 1938 to 1939 (Miller 1998). Regardless of venue, when Canadian audiences heard live jazz in the 1910s and early 1920s, it was usually performed by visiting Americans (Miller 2001: 469). For example, Jelly Roll Morton appeared in Toronto at cabaret shows in 1919 and 1921.

By the mid-1920s, however, homegrown talent was beginning to find a foothold. Canadian jazz-inflected dance, novelty, and/or “syncopation” bands began to form, including, most famously, Guy Lombardo and his Royal Canadians. Meanwhile, in 1926 one of the first—or possibly the very first—Canadian jazz recordings may well have been a version of “St. Louis Blues” by the Toronto-based Gilbert Watson Orchestra (Canadian Encyclopedia 2007).

Swing music (as opposed to “early” or New Orleans style jazz) reached Toronto in the 1930s when Harry Lucas formed an African-American sextet called the Harlem Aces (later called Rhythm Aces and Rhythm Nights) which would cover the repertoire of Jimmy Lunceford and Duke Ellington at Toronto clubs. As Miller points out, in its earliest stages, musicians in these and Canada’s other fledgling urban jazz scenes were quite isolated, and therefore looked to the United States for inspiration or career advancement, even more so than today:

Typically, the early history of jazz in Canada is a history of jazz in the major cities, each an insular “scene” with only tenuous links to the others. The connections that were so important to early American jazz history—between New Orleans and Chicago, Chicago and New York, and later Kansas City and New York—had few if any parallels in Canada, where musicians generally limited themselves to their own regions. Those of a mind to advance their careers looked to the United States as often as they looked elsewhere in Canada. (Koskoff 2000)

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86 Tellingly, when they featured a solo improvisation in this version, the group went with an imported American – Buffalo-based trumpeter Kurt Little.
At this time, both musicians and Canadian audiences were isolated from the American jazz world because of the lack of jazz recording and broadcasting industries at this early stage.

Once it found its way to the radio, however, jazz, including jazz by Canadian artists, came to a much wider Canadian audience. This started with the first CBC show called 1010 Swing Club (1941-48) – a show which was later renamed Jazz Unlimited (1948-1965). As part of its mandate, this show featured jazz by both Canadians and international stars and thereby generated momentum in creating the Toronto’s “mainstream” scene by mid-20th century. Indeed, it was CBC broadcasts of performances in 1945 featuring a very young Oscar Peterson on piano that helped to make him Canada’s first nationally, and soon internationally, renowned instrumentalist. Peterson’s success would help to generate momentum in creating the Toronto’s “mainstream” scene by mid-20th century.

3.2.2 << Establishing a “mainstream” Toronto jazz scene >>

3.2.2.1 << Early developments >>

By the late 1940s and 1950s, the live jazz scenes in most metropolitan cities in the United States had severed into two distinct subscenes – a smaller but fervent revivialis tradition of so-called “(New Orleans) Traditional Jazz” (sometimes problematically referred to as “Dixieland Jazz”); and the new vanguard of practitioners, venues, and “hipster” fans of bebop-related subgenres. While bebop-related music eventually took hold as the dominant form of jazz played, these new developments in jazz did not take
hold with the public, limited in their impact due to less airplay and lower sales relative to the heyday of swing-related music.\textsuperscript{87}

In Canada, however, the early New Orleans jazz subscene has shown remarkable staying power, even as it became increasingly marginalized in most American cities by the 1950s. Arguably, New Orleans jazz is its own subscene within the larger jazz scene in Toronto. Supporting this idea, Canadian jazz journalist Jack Batten went so far to say that “New Orleans jazz…” had, at this time, found “…its true and flourishing home in Toronto” (Batten 1976). Early on, Mike White’s Imperial Jazz Band was a notable Toronto group performing this music in the 1930s, and they brought many famous guest soloists from the US to appear with them (469). Further, while, for a long time, British and European expatriate musicians dominated this “Traditional Jazz” subscene, today many homegrown musicians participate. Indeed, Mark Miller has indicated to me that right up to today, so-called “traditional” jazz has had “…remarkable durability with Toronto audiences” (personal interview, September 14, 2013).\textsuperscript{88}

Nonetheless, by the 1950s, bebop and post-bop (and, sometimes, swing) practices became dominant in the fledgling Canadian jazz scene in the clubs and jazz recording industry across Canada; notably, Toronto’s jazz scene became the biggest in scale. During the 1950s, two of Toronto’s primary jazz venues emerged on Yonge Street in the heart of the Downtown neighbourhood: The Colonial Tavern, which favored A-list American jazz groups and, later, blues artists (most often without Canadian participants) (Jennings 2013); and the Town Tavern, which did program a significant amount of Canadian talent and is notable for being Oscar Peterson’s favored club when appearing in Toronto (Bradburn 2015). The former venue backed off on its jazz programming by the

\textsuperscript{87} There was still swing-oriented music being performed throughout this period too, but this was on the decline in radio airplay, album sales, and in live programming throughout the 1940s and 50s – popular singers and eventually R&B took its place in the zeitgeist. Of course, there were revivalist venues for swing music including, notably, Norman Granz’s Jazz at the Philharmonic concert-hall series. In addition, many “swing musicians” such as Coleman Hawkins adapted to the practices of bebop quite readily. A more nuanced account of how bebop, swing, and popular music interacted in the United States during this period can be found in Scott DeVeaux’s The Birth of Bebop: A Social and Music History (1997).

\textsuperscript{88} To this day, The Rex Hotel and Jazz Bar—a venue I studied (see Chapter 4)—often has a 1930s “hot jazz” group perform weekly at an early slot on Fridays (The Hogtown Syncopators) as well as the Excelsior Dixieland Jazz Band performing for a weekly Sunday brunch gig.
early 1970s while the latter continued to be a major jazz venue until near the end of the 1970s.

3.2.2.2 << The Studio Industry “Boom” and its Relationship to the Emergent Mainstream Scene >>

Much of this expansion in the Toronto jazz scene was built on its thriving recording industry. Emerging in the 1960s and growing exponentially in the 1970s, Toronto would eventually have the largest studio scene in Canada. While recording actual jazz music was only a tiny part of the industry, these studios did regularly employ many jazz instrumentalists; those with a more diverse skill set (i.e. fluent sight-reading, stylistic versatility, etc.) were frequently employed to play with popular acts as well as for soundtracks in commercials, television, and film. In the vast majority of cases, these studio musicians from the jazz world were, as jazz players, most influenced by and most interested in performing in the milieu of bebop and post-bop of the 1950s and 1960s rather than avant-garde / free improvisation practices or fusions with rock, R&B and funk.

Toronto’s recording industry grew in the 1960s as overall record sales increased in Canada, but an even greater boost came in 1970 with the establishment of a Canadian media regulatory body – the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunication

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89 In fact, as James Hale points out, “few commercial recordings of Canadian jazz musicians were made in Canada before 1980” (Hale 2006).

90 This is true generally but there were notable exceptions – especially with regard to fusion. Late in the 1970s, some of these “mainstream” musicians from the scene would flirt with adding electric instrumentation or some of the rhythm section practices of R&B and rock of its era (for example, flautist Moe Koffman, notably, had a famous “Bach meets jazz-rock fusion” album; also, a handful of arrangements of Rob McConnell for the Boss Brass are in a “funk style” as well). However, I have found no record of a functioning nationally-recognized Toronto ensemble in the 1970s that was primarily known for fusion-oriented practices – that is, integrating funk and/or rock practices and instruments in the manner of bands like early-to-mid 1970s Miles Davis, Herbie Hancock’s Headhunters, Chick Corea’s Return to Forever, or John McLaughlin’s Mahavishnu Orchestra. The earliest high-profile Toronto fusion bands appear to be from the 1980s – the most prominent probably being Juno-winning Latin-rock fusion band, Manteca (Hale 2006).
Commission (also known as the CRTC). In 1971, they regulated that AM broadcasters were required to play a weekly minimum of 30% Canadian material. For a recording to be considered “Canadian content” (the industry term being “Can-con”), the legal requirement to this day is that a Canadian must be responsible for two of four elements – composition, performance/recording, production or writing lyrics (CRTC). As a result, there was a significant increase in Canadian recording output at this time and while much of it favored the growing trend to rock and singer-songwriters, Canadian musicians across musical genres benefited.\(^91\)

Furthermore, Toronto’s jazz musicians were, up to a point, supported by the then relatively adventurous musical programming on Canada’s public radio broadcaster, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), which flourished during a time of expansion from 1950 through the mid 1970s.\(^92\) CBC programming included a considerable portion of classical music but also, to a lesser extent, the work of big bands and “mainstream” jazz performers. Until the early 1970s, the CBC also regularly utilized studio orchestras that employed Toronto jazz musicians. After 1970, the loss of employment and exposure for these musicians caused by dissolution of these orchestras was somewhat counterbalanced by more broadcasts of recorded live jazz performances. This practice, however, has been on the steady decline since the many rounds of cuts in the CBC’s music budget since the 1990s.\(^93\)

The jazz performer that was perhaps most emblematic of the studio industry “boom” was Toronto flautist and sometime saxophonist Moe Koffman. Arguably,
Koffman was, aside from Oscar Peterson, the most visible Canadian jazz instrumentalist in this period. Unlike Peterson, however, he spent nearly his entire career in Canada, remaining a central figure in Toronto’s music scene. Koffman was, in some ways, the archetypal studio-employed jazz musician – he had undeniable bebop “chops” but also had polished skills as a sight-reader, stylistic versatility, and was able to “double” on multiple woodwind instruments. As I will discuss later, he was also central to Toronto’s freelance jazz scene in ways other than his well-regarded playing.

Koffman was also part of the ensemble that became most identified internationally with an emerging mainstream “Toronto sound”: Rob McConnell’s Boss Brass. This group was a big band formed in 1968 by trombonist and composer-arranger Rob McConnell. The band’s sound was closely identified with McConnell’s renowned compositions and arrangements, many of which are still regularly programmed by professional and university jazz orchestras to this day. His approach as a composer was most influenced by the big band writing of composer/instrumentalists Gerry Mulligan and Thad Jones. These musicians were known for their unique approaches to adapting bebop’s rhythmic vocabulary and extended harmonies to that ensemble format.

To interpret these highly stylized, technically challenging arrangements with a minimum of rehearsal required a particular kind of polished musicianship and skill set which were typical among seasoned studio freelancers. Former Boss Brass trumpeter John MacLeod described a perceived “Toronto jazz sound” as being the product—at least in part—of the disciplined, “tight” studio-scene performance practices – a sound that was perhaps at its zenith in the Boss Brass:

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94 Toronto music journalist argued that Koffman was, in fact, the foremost figure in the overall mainstream Canadian jazz scene of the time and that his example was helping to bring jazz to greater national cultural esteem: “But it is in large part through Koffman’s example and influence that modern jazz has in recent years become an undeniable and attractive element in Canada’s culture, ranking on a level with the fiction of writers like Richard Wright or the art of painters like Christopher Pratt, not large and cosmic but small scaled and accomplished. There is even, thanks to Koffman and his fellow musicians, something now recognizable as a distinctively Canadian brand of jazz” (Batten 1980).

95 Noted composer-arranger Fred Stride notes that McConnell was probably admired most for how he adapted the harmonic choices of key 1950s jazz figures to his orchestrations for the Boss Brass: “If one had to single out one distinctive feature of Rob’s writing it would probably be his sense of harmony. His harmonic work really reminds me so much of pianist Bill Evans, always full of beautiful tension and release. He also maximizes these harmonic colours by using rich, full ensemble voicings along with a great sense of orchestral colour, especially with the additional French horns and woodwinds” (Stride 2010).
I guess I would characterize the [Toronto] sound as being about being teamwork, more than about individualism. I think that came out of the history of big band playing – in particular the Boss Brass, which was made up primarily of studio musicians… what they did to make a living was to do commercial recordings. So they were very ensemble-based. Because it’s not about individuals, you’re mostly creating music that’s background, so you don’t want things to jump out. Things tend to blend more, so the more disciplined as a team, high level of professionalism. Other things that would characterize our sound? As I say, it’s not necessarily even about jazz. It’s about guys who were very serious about accuracy and that sort of thing. (McConchie interview, my emphasis)

To summarize, according to a central figure in the band that remains a high-profile local practitioner, the ensemble that was most emblematic of the “Toronto (jazz) sound” was “not necessarily even about jazz.” By this, MacLeod meant that the group placed a far greater value on “accuracy” in interpreting the arrangements of its leader and arranger rather than on its creative, improvisational practices. Of course, many of the band’s musicians were featured as improvisers within the confines of these arrangements and many of these very players were among the busiest playing small group jazz in clubs. Nonetheless, this statement about their practices is very telling – the group’s polished approach to bebop and post-bebop practices exemplifies the longstanding reputation of the mainstream Toronto jazz scene.

3.2.2.3 << The “First Wave” of Venues For the “Mainstream” Scene >>

Arguably, the venue that would cement the dominance of this “Toronto mainstream jazz” sound and serve as its scene’s initial epicenter was George’s Spaghetti House. Owner Doug Cole established George’s in 1956 just east of the downtown core. At first, he programmed jazz only on weekends, but by 1960 there was music six nights a week. Broadcaster Ross Porter emphasizes how the Boss Brass was truly a kind of nexus for the mainstream Toronto jazz scene of this time: “The 1970s were glory days for Rob McConnell and the A list of players who made up the Boss Brass. In Toronto work for musicians was both plentiful and profitable. At night the clubs were hoping with the sound of jazz echoing out onto the streets and during the daylight hours there were plenty of studio gigs to choose from. Everything from session work on albums to performing jingles for commercials to providing music scores for television and radio” (McConnell 2014).
week performed almost exclusively by Toronto musicians. Mark Miller confirms that it was Moe Koffman, rather than Cole, who eventually booked the venue, and as a result the programming reflected both Koffman’s professional and personal circle as well as his aesthetic. As Miller put it, at George’s “[Koffman] tended to look for the most part to his fellow studio musicians” to fill the bill – this meant a very closed scene of a handful of musicians playing there on a regular basis (personal interview, September 14, 2014).

As Miller put it to me, many of these musicians were the very sort of players who would record film and television scores as well as commercial jingles in the studios, play in the Boss Brass and other big bands, and then play jazz sessions at night. Given the skillset and aesthetic of Koffman’s colleagues, it is not surprising that the club had a reputation for the highly professional, polished, bop and post-bop related “Toronto sound” I elucidated above. Eventually, in 1984, the Spaghetti House changed ownership and the jazz programming moved into a smaller room above the restaurant; this room continued programming jazz until 1994 when it shut its doors for good.

In 1971, Cole opened a second prominent jazz venue on Queen Street West called Bourbon Street. This club became the model for another kind of mainstream jazz programming that, save for special events, no longer exists in Toronto – having a prominent international musician featured with a local rhythm section for several days, or even most of a week. Virtually all of the rhythm section players used on these dates were from what had become an established scene of bebop or post-bop oriented musicians. Many of these players had risen to prominence in the preceding two decades by performing not only with the city’s best jazz players but also by appearing with the most

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97 There was a brief period in the mid-1960s in which US musicians were regularly featured as well but this eventually gave way to almost exclusively programming Canadian artists.

98 In a documentary about Koffman, Ross Porter emphasized how critical this club, and Koffman’s role in it, was for establishing Toronto’s own musicians in their jazz scene: “In the late fifties, the jazz scene in Toronto was alive but scattered. There were a handful of clubs that booked jazz artists but none that were exclusively dedicated to it. It was around this time that Moe [Koffman] was approached by Doug Cole, a police officer who also owned a restaurant. He had a proposition. He wanted to hire Moe to become the musical booker at a venue that would feature jazz six nights a week. The idea took off and quickly the restaurant became legendary, eventually becoming one of the longest, continuous running jazz venues in the country…Apart from giving many new musicians their big break and many established musicians a steady place to play…” (McConnell 2014).
renowned international acts.\textsuperscript{99} When Bourbon Street eventually shut its doors in 1983 (joining the Town Tavern, a short-lived club which closed just before in the late 1970s), George’s Jazz Room was left as the only prominent, long-term jazz venue that survived from the 1960s and 70s.\textsuperscript{100}

3.2.3  << Alternative Scenes to the Mainstream in the 1970s and 80s >>

By the early 1970s, Toronto had an established jazz scene based in bebop-related performance practices and a close relationship to the studio industry. At this time, however, other jazz subscenes began to emerge that served as alternatives to this “mainstream.” They were “alternative” in two senses: the kinds of venues they played in and the musical practices they favoured. Indeed, the specifics of these venues and practices were, by and large, unfamiliar to the overall Toronto jazz scene to this point.

Avant-garde scenes in other cities served as a primary inspirations for alternative subscenes in Toronto – in particular, the trend in the 1960s and 70s toward collectives and concert series. Prominent examples included the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM) that started in 1965 in Chicago; Derek Bailey’s Company Week festivals (started in 1976) across Europe; and the loft scene of the mid-to-late 1970s in New York. Toronto musicians sympathetic to improvising without the constraints of the bebop idiom eventually developed their own distinctive subscenes with their own venues, usually emphasizing avant-garde approaches including free improvisation.

According to Mark Miller, it was The Music Gallery, a non-profit, musician-run venue, that eventually became “the core of the free improv scene” (personal interview,

\textsuperscript{99} To take two prominent examples, Paul Desmond and Jim Hall were among the American musicians who not only came through regularly but eventually released notable albums of live performances from this venue using local players.

\textsuperscript{100} Meanwhile, several other venues came and went during the 1980s including, perhaps most notably, The East 85th Jazz Club, another venue which also often featured collaborations between major American musicians and Toronto groups.
September 14, 2013). Musicians Peter Anson and Al Mattes founded this space in 1976. They had already formed a “free music orchestra”—the Canadian Creative Music Collective—which initially performed there twice a week and later once a week (CCMC 2013). This orchestra’s members ran The Music Gallery from its inception through the 1990s, which led to a measure of consistency in its programming. During the 1980s and most of the 1990s, The Music Gallery had several weekend festivals over the course of the year and built a regular and relatively consistent, if niche, audience. By 1991, growth had increased to the point that the organization moved their venue to a larger site nearby that, at its peak, hosted up to 150 concerts a year. In 2000, however, The Music Gallery was shut down when the building’s landlords decided to make way for condominium development. While this venue and its administration are no longer strictly associated with the avant-garde jazz subscene (see Chapter 4), The Music Gallery established the precedent of having collectives to support ongoing non-profit or musician-run venues, a practice that continues, however fitfully, to this day.

Meanwhile, in the 1980s, another short-lived alternative jazz subscene of groups emerged playing a kind of free-form jazz-rock fusion in their own alternative venues—specifically, a handful of adventurous rock clubs located on Queen Street West. According to Miller, who was covering the jazz scene for the Globe and Mail at the time, the primary inspiration for many of these groups was Ornette Coleman’s Prime Time band. This group— intermittently active from the late 1970s through 1995—fused Coleman’s approach to free improvisation (that he called “harmolodics”) to rock-oriented instrumentation and practices. This scene served as an important precedent to the current-day TSGJ subscene in two important respects. For one, rather than regularly playing at the venues best-known for programming mainstream jazz, these groups found other (less-lucrative) venues to appear at – the Rivoli, the (now-closed) Spadina Hotel, and the

101 In its original location, this venue was in the downtown core very close to another major Toronto jazz club, The Rex (see Chapter 4).
102 Today, the organization describes themselves as “a center for promoting and presenting innovation and experimentation in all forms of music, and for encouraging cross-pollination between genres, disciplines and audience” (Music Gallery). While free improvisation groups related to jazz tradition are sometimes programmed there, it is no longer the primary mandate, and this stated “cross-pollination” appears to manifest itself in many concerts with either composed “new music” or world/contemporary-pop crossover projects.
Beverly Tavern. But perhaps even more importantly, the groups in this Queen Street Prime Time subscene portended the TSGJ subscene in that they were clearly directly inspired by the archetype of a rock band – groups that tended to have stable lineups in service of collective personae.¹⁰³

Both the “Queen Street Prime Time subscene” and the “Music Gallery subscene” were, notably, very distinct from the mainstream subscene; I could find little evidence that more than a handful of jazz players active in the mainstream subscene at the time played in either of the other two.¹⁰⁴ This segregation of jazz subscenes at the time continues to some extent today, but it is notable that, among bands in my study group, Drumheller in particular has musicians who have performed in avant-garde and mainstream venues with varying regularity. More importantly, the alternative subscenes of the past set a precedent for today’s growing emphasis on a “band concept.” Indeed, they helped to set a precedent for the very kind of activity that would become very prominent several years later – but not before the last wave of mainstream jazz.

3.2.4 << The Second Wave of Mainstream-Scene Venues (1990-2006) >>

A distinct transition to a new era in the “straight-ahead” Toronto jazz scene began early in the 1990s with the founding of three clubs (two of which remained open until the mid-2000s) – the Bermuda Onion (1990-92), Top o’ the Senator (1990-2005) and Montreal Bistro (1991-2006). From 1990 to 1992, all of these clubs, in addition to

¹⁰³ According to Mark Miller, groups active in this subscene that had something of a following included Whitenoise, Not King Fudge, and Noise R Us (all led by the alto saxophonist and guitarist Bill Grove), Gotham City, Malcolm Tent, and N.O.M.A. (“Northern Organic Musical Associations.”).

¹⁰⁴ Part of the problem is that this scene was never well-documented. Few of the recordings are available anymore and there is little written history. So while I do not have any detailed historical data about the audiences at these venues, if Mark Miller’s anecdotal descriptions in my interview are to be believed, it is likely that there were only a few dedicated and open-minded jazz fans that frequented both mainstream venues and these subscenes. I have, however, heard anecdotally that there were a few musicians involved in both the mainstream scene and one or more subscenes. I have, however, heard anecdotally that there were a few musicians involved in both mainstream jazz and alternative subscenes. Among them are trumpeter Jim Lewis, keyboardist Richard Underhill, and trombonist Terry Promane. There is as yet no comprehensive published information about these musicians’ mobility between jazz subscene and practices.
George’s Jazz Room (which eventually closed in 1994) as well as The Rex Hotel and Jazz Club (which I describe in Chapter 4) were regularly programming jazz. In other words, for this brief time, there were six prominent Toronto venues presenting professional jazz groups several times a week in intimate rooms for professional wages. Even after this short window, four of these venues remained open until 2005. Mark Miller is among many jazz fans who have expressed a nostalgia for the Toronto jazz scene of this time – “The 1990s was kind of a ‘Golden Age’ which has passed” (personal interview, September 14, 2014).

With the Bermuda Onion and George’s Jazz Room meeting their demise in the mid-1990s, downtown Toronto definitively became the city’s epicenter of mainstream jazz. The new dominant venues were The Top o’ the Senator and the Montreal Bistro; both were centrally located in downtown CoTO. These two clubs had similar programming in that they would feature international and local mainstream-oriented artists for a week at a time. The 120-seat Montreal Bistro was also unusual in its relatively strict “quiet policy,” which afforded a relatively pristine listening environment for patrons. The Senator, though not as overtly strict, was known among fans and musicians as having developed a culture of being a relatively quiet listening room as well.

One telling exception to these programming models was the short-lived club, The Red Guitar, which opened in the downtown in 2005. Bassist/composer Andrew Downing wistfully remembers its radically different approach:

The owner there wanted to make sure everyone got paid to play. For me, it was one of the perfect places to play because she wanted you to just do your thing. The room was small and the acoustics were great. It had an acoustic piano. This is

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105 The Bermuda Onion even attempted to carry forward the tradition of Bourbon Street of featuring an internationally renowned jazz artist for a week’s residency accompanied by a local rhythm section – but when it shut its doors in 1992 this marked the last time any venue attempted this kind of programming mandate in Toronto.

106 The Top o’ the Senator was called this because it was situated above The Senator Hotel; hereafter I refer to as it Toronto jazz scene participants did – “The Senator.”

107 Prominent Toronto trombonist Terry Promane offhandedly described to me the owner of this club animatedly shushing patrons from the stage on more than one occasion.
amazing. And, of course, it went out of business after less than a year. (August 7, 2013, personal interview)

The Red Guitar’s strict for-profit model combined with an open policy for programming and a commitment to offering truly professional wages, then, was tried but ultimately did not prove to be sustainable – it shut its doors in 2006. Given that such a model was not tried again, Downing argued that this set the stage for what happened next in the acoustic jazz scene, especially among young players: “What [the closure of The Red Guitar and the other clubs] did do, changed the music – since no one is getting paid to play, you might as well do exactly what you want” (ibid.). In the wake of the closure of not only this club but many other mainstream venues, the contemporary downtown Toronto jazz scene would become dominated by younger musicians performing original music with approaches tied to their stable groups.

3.3  << Jazz in Post-Secondary Schools in Toronto >>

Since at least the 1970s, many of the musicians active in jazz scenes across Canada, including in Toronto, began by developing their skills at one of the many universities and colleges that offer diplomas or degrees in jazz performance. Many of the first post-secondary schools to offer jazz studies as part of its music program were based in Toronto: York University (which offered a full-fledged Bachelor’s program); Humber College in 1972 (which offered a three-year diploma); and the University of

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108 Jazz studies came somewhat later to universities in Canada than the United States. By 1947, North Texas State had already offered the first university degree in jazz studies; through the 1950s and especially 1960s, jazz studies in American universities were on the rise. Meanwhile, it was not until 1972 that Concordia University in Montréal and York University became the first Canadian universities to offer a program in jazz studies while St. Francis-Xavier University in Antigonish, Nova Scotia was the first to offer a full-fledged Bachelor’s in Music in Jazz Performance in 1985 (Kearns 2011). For some time, St. Francis-Xavier and, eventually, McGill University were the only schools to offer a full-fledged performance degree until a wave of schools in the 1990s and early 2000s that had previously been offering only specific jazz courses or a diploma program began to offer full-fledged four-year Bachelor’s degree programs (starting with the University of Toronto and eventually including Grant MacEwan University, Vancouver Island University, Capilano College, University of Brandon, and University of Manitoba).

Toronto in 1973 (which, for some time, only offered jazz courses until the degree program was approved in 1991).\footnote{An important precursor to these schools was the Advanced School of Contemporary Music, a short-lived project from 1960-1962 which was spearheaded by Oscar Peterson (King 2013).}

At most of these Toronto schools, the first faculty hired were often products of the then dominant studio scene and/or the mainstream jazz scene – in the case of horn players, many of these were in the best-known big bands such as The Boss Brass.\footnote{At the University of Toronto, its first head of jazz studies was acclaimed composer/clarinetist Phil Nimmons. He was a central figure in the mainstream Toronto scene, having long directed one of the most acclaimed large ensembles, a kind of friendly rival to The Boss Brass eventually called the Nimmons ‘n’ Nine Plus Six (Hale 2012); he and eventual architect of the degree program Paul Read were its only full-time faculty for many years. Meanwhile, Humber College was initiated by keyboardist/composer Tony Mergel; initially, the faculty was comprised primarily of pop-oriented rhythm section players who were busy in the commercial studios. By the mid-late 1970s, though, they had more jazz performers and composers including composer Ron Collier and post-bop saxophonist Pat LaBarbera (who remains on faculty). Meanwhile, York University’s program was started by bassist/ethnomusicologist Robert Witmer who had a dual background as a classical and jazz performer. Nonetheless, many of its earliest faculty, including eventual co-director pianist John Gittins, were also mainstream jazz performers, and as it expanded these faculty (including guitarist Lorne Lofsky and drummer Barry Elmes) were and are prominent in that scene.}

Partially due to this background and partially due to the pedagogical inheritance from American curricula, these programs initially favored training in alignment with mainstream jazz performance practice. As in most American programs, the model was to have a big band as the “flagship ensemble” to which the most rehearsal time was devoted and which was typically used to promote the program.\footnote{To an extent, this is tied to how jazz became a part of public school band programs with the “stage band” (a rough equivalent to a big band) phenomenon - “the limited 'stage-band-only-approach'...tends to be the norm in today's music education programs” (Elliott 1983: 98). Small group performance was virtually nonexistent in public school programs and, to this day, that is still largely true. Given that university jazz programs recruit many of their students from such band programs, it is perhaps unsurprising that big bands still play a large public and curricular role in their programs.}

Nonetheless, eventually all of these schools also developed small group ensemble programs and courses in improvisation – though these were definitely oriented toward a post-bop model of performance, much like their American counterparts.\footnote{Tellingly, when Canadian music programs were surveyed in David James Elliot’s landmark study published in 1983, the course offered most consistently by these programs was “Jazz Ensemble” or big band (exactly two out of three programs) (Elliott 1983: 96-98).} Typically, this involved developing a so-called “vocabulary” which was developed by studying canonical repertoire, transcribed solos of canonical bebop and post-bop musicians, patterns and scales, as well as an overall approach to “jazz theory” partially culled from...
Furthermore, as Michael Kearns found, small group composition and mentoring new ways of performing were not part of the original curricula, nor, certainly, was any sense of playing outside of harmonic structures: “I found little literature that addresses this genre in Canadian jazz education. Free jazz would seem to be the ultimate departure from the chord/scale relationship and an area of study that is lacking in Canada” (2011: 22). In its earliest days, it is perhaps only reasonable that the curricula would reflect its earliest faculty’s background and the precedents from the United States.

During the 1990s, all of the Toronto programs grew in size and began to hire more and more full-time jazz musicians often seeking work with the demise of the studio scene and the leadership of key individuals. Paul Read at the University of Toronto was critical for establishing the Bachelor of Music program in jazz there and in solidifying a curriculum with a more firm pedagogical foundation, albeit still one oriented toward a bebop-oriented mold of performance. As current Jazz Coordinator Terry Promane puts it:

In the early days, the core theory, ear-training and improv was mostly bebop practices for sure - Paul was the architect of the basic philosophy… All of the teachers currently teaching materials/ear-training/arranging composition are all former students of Paul's from Humber or U of T so that certainly says a great deal regarding his influence.” (email correspondence, July 26, 2016, his emphasis)

The alumni of all these programs, if nothing else, had a reputation for developing a high level of instrumental musicianship that could be parlayed into many professional environments. In addition, many of these graduates later were among the relative “elder

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114 Chord/scale theory became the orthodoxy of jazz theory; it permeated much of mainstream jazz education after being disseminated through pedagogical texts and other aids by the likes of David Baker, Jerry Coker, and Jamey Aebersold. While I do not have room for a thorough explanation of this concept here, chord/scale theory is basically a simplification of George Russell’s widely circulated *Lydian Chromatic Concept* (1959) (Glawischnig 1996).

115 Elliot’s dissertation (1983) provides greater detail on the improvisation curricula of Canadian university jazz programs during the early 1980s.

116 No jazz program’s pedagogical approach, however, have been rigidly tied to one part of its traditions, especially given the divergence in faculty approaches. Promane points out that while the University of Toronto jazz program was under Paul Read, there were voices that pointed to other directions: “Second year [jazz] materials was taught by Toronto-based film composer Jim McGrath who was very interested in 20 century theory and practice so after 1st year things got interesting” (email correspondence, July 26, 2016).
statesmen” of the TSGJ subscene including pianist Adrean Farrugia (of his own quartet and WPBE), saxophonist Kelly Jefferson, and numerous others.\footnote{Kearns’s dissertation (2011) provides ample description of the contemporary pedagogical trends at Canadian universities.}

In the last decade, the three programs have hired younger faculty, some of whom have been influenced by contemporary developments in small group performance outlined in Chapter 2. Terry Promane became the University of Toronto Jazz Coordinator in 2006. While associated with the Boss Brass and a big band composer-arranger, he has supported a gradual shift to supporting small group original composition as students mature through the program:

When I replaced Paul [Read] at the helm, I was naturally more interested in the materials that support the composer/arranger. We had a strong improvisation course in place but I felt students were lacking basic compositional experience. I discussed the situation with Jim Lewis and Dave Neill and we decided to emphasize compositional techniques as the main event in theory classes. Over the ensuing years, we have developed a huge number of excellent composers and arrangers - many are the fulcrum of [this dissertation]. (email correspondence, July 26, 2016, his emphasis)

Furthermore, there have been full-time faculty at all three schools. For example, University of Toronto professor, trumpeter Jim Lewis, was hired in recent years and is known for his versatility – he plays in contexts that includes not only post-bop but also “chamber-jazz,” avant-garde, and original music projects in line with the TSGJ subscene. Certainly there are several more part-time instructors who have been hired in the last decade at all of these schools and who have a high profile as leaders of groups in the TSGJ subscene:

**Figure 6: Bandleaders in the TSGJ Subscene Who Are Part-Time Faculty at Toronto University Jazz Programs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>P/T Instructor &amp; Bandleader</th>
<th>School Affiliations</th>
<th>Groups led in TSGJ Subscene</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nick Fraser</td>
<td>U of T</td>
<td>Drumheller, Nick Fraser Quartet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew Downing</td>
<td>U of T</td>
<td>Otterville, Melodeon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelly Jefferson</td>
<td>U of T, York</td>
<td>Kelly Jefferson Quartet, Jefferson-Grant Quintet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Carn</td>
<td>U of T, Humber</td>
<td>William Carn Quartet, Run Stop Run</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adrean Farrugia</td>
<td>York</td>
<td>Adrean Farrugia Quartet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tara Davidson</td>
<td>York</td>
<td>Tara Davidson Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris Donnelly</td>
<td>U of T</td>
<td>Myriad3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ernesto Cervini</td>
<td>U of T</td>
<td>Myriad3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nick Morgan</td>
<td>Humber, York</td>
<td>Nick Morgan Quartet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Given their example and mentorship, these instructors have undoubtedly had an impact on the more recent graduates of these programs who, in turn, are now often participating in the TSGJ subscene. Music schools have been one important site for the gestation of the subscene, and it is those venues that I will describe in detail in the following chapter.
Chapter 4
The Contemporary Downtown Toronto Jazz Scene (2006–)
(and the Stable Jazz Group Subscene Within)

This chapter describes the scope of the TSGJ subscene and its place within the larger contemporary Toronto jazz scene. First, using a somewhat informal survey of younger musicians on the scene, I confirm the existence of this subscene with data about where prominent stable groups have been performing. Then, I describe the venues and concert series that support jazz in the contemporary scene and the factors that shape the kind of programming they favor and the audiences they attract. I begin with those venues that would be less hospitable to this subscene and therefore serve as a useful counterpoint. Then, I describe in greater detail the three primary venues of my study—The Tranzac, The Emmet Ray, and The Rex Hotel—and how they have fostered the kind of artistic activity associated with the subscene. Overall, in this chapter I am providing context that is important for future chapters, but especially for Chapter 7 in which I describe how groups’ performance practices interact with their environment.

4.1 Confirming the Scope of the Subscene

While musicians I interviewed for this study have consistently, if anecdotally, noticed a trend of long-term stable projects among younger jazz musicians in Toronto, I wondered if I could find data that would confirm it. To that end, in December of 2013, I created an informal survey through SurveyMonkey’s website. I circulated the survey through a personal Facebook status update and a mass email to many Toronto musicians. In the years since moving to Toronto, I have cultivated many friendships and relationships with local musicians, which gave me a substantial base to start with. I also encouraged anyone receiving the invitation to forward the link to anyone who would fit the definition of “a young downtown contemporary jazz musician.” Of course, because I
alone am the hub of this survey’s distribution, there is bound to be some measure of bias. Unfortunately, there is no straightforward way to survey jazz musicians en masse in Toronto, and particularly to target this subset. Therefore, I make no claims to my findings in this survey being scientific, but I hoped at least to get some informal confirmation of the existence and scope of this scene.

In all, 63 musicians completed my survey. Of that number, early questions in the survey revealed that 50 met the criteria of my study. This criteria asserts that to be part of this subscene the musician should be:

- between the ages of 18-44 (at the time of completing survey)
- living in the Greater Toronto Area
- performing jazz on average at least twice a month in the City of Toronto (central Toronto)
- these live engagements should be promoted as “jazz.”

The survey also asked if they were members of stable jazz projects and, if so, what activities and venues they participated in in relation to those projects. I found that 38 of these 50 younger musicians performed in an ongoing basis with at least one jazz group they would describe as a “stable project or group.” Thirty-two were in at least two such groups. Of the 38 musicians who were in at least one stable project, 33 of them performed with their busiest stable project at least three to five times in 2013, and 27 performed six times or more. In addition, 17 of these 38 were bandleaders of at least one project. While recognizing the limitations of such an informal study, this data would suggest there was, in fact, a “scene-within-the-scene” of younger musicians playing in stable groups.
**Figure 7: Survey Results - Correlation of Younger Toronto Musicians to TSGJ Subscene's Primary Venues**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Venue</th>
<th>Performance Frequency</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Rex</td>
<td>33/50 (66%) - perform at least 3-5 times per year</td>
<td>30/38 (79%) - when limiting to only those in stable bands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24/50 (48%) - perform at least 3-5 times per year</td>
<td>24/38 (63%) - when limiting to only those in stable bands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Tranzac</td>
<td>24/50 (48%) - perform at least 3-5 times per year</td>
<td>17/50 (34%) - perform at least 3-5 times per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16/38 (42%) - when limiting to only those in stable bands</td>
<td>16/38 (42%) - when limiting to only those in stable bands</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The survey also helped to clarify the venues in which these younger Toronto jazz musicians were performing. I had already, by the time of my survey, chosen the primary venues for my study because it appeared obvious to me that so many of the kinds of groups I was interested in were playing there – The Rex Hotel and Bar, The Tranzac (Southern Cross Room), and The Emmet Ray (Monday series). But while anecdotal conversations with musicians and fans during the course of my research supported my thinking about these venues, the survey data confirms it.

With regard to the Tranzac and Emmet Ray, the correlation between being involved in at least one stable group and performing at these venues is virtually exact; for The Rex, the correlation is still close. Most musicians in this subscene did not indicate that they performed regularly with their stable band projects at other jazz-related venues in the city (e.g. The Jazz Bistro, Array Music, and many others described in section 4.2). Also, while many of these groups perform at the three primary venues I mentioned,
others do play at other jazz and “creative music” venues (see Part 2), or other alternative spaces such as rock clubs, loft spaces, and “art spaces” – most of which are fleeting either as a regular venue or in their commitment to programming jazz.

There also appears to be some correlation between how active these groups were and how often they performed at the primary venues of my study. I describe a band as “active,” if, during my study, they released at least one album, were a part of at least one tour and/or played multiple music festivals, and played at least four engagements per year in the city of Toronto. When looking at archives of the jazz listings for the five most prominent clubs during this time (The Jazz Bistro, Trane Studio, and the three primary venues of my study), it is apparent that many of the most prominent and active bands in this subscene gravitated to the primary venues more than the Trane Studio or The Jazz Bistro.

**Figure 8: Correlation of Representative Stable Groups to TSGJ Subscene’s Primary Venues**

Note: Below, I have checked off which downtown Toronto venues that each of these “long-term groups” performed at regularly (more than three times overall and averaging at least once a year) during my study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Venue</th>
<th>Dates Started</th>
<th>Dates Ended</th>
<th>Active Period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Jazz Bistro</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>15 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trane Studio</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>16 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Downtown Venues</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>15 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The dates after each venue indicate roughly how long it has been an open jazz venue. Meanwhile, the dates after each band indicate when it formed through to when it played its last engagement, unless of course it is still an active band as of this writing.

118 Bloomsday, one of the primary groups in my study, does not technically meet these criteria in that they did not release an album. Furthermore, they ended up having a significantly shorter life than the other groups. The determinate factor in their demise was drummers Fabio Ragnelli (semi-permanent) and Ethan Ardelli (temporary) moves to New York City. Bandleader David French has indicated to me that he had little interest in continuing the band without these musicians. This reliance, though, on specific personnel for its band sound made it, in my estimation, a perfect candidate for study despite its somewhat shorter shelf life and being slightly less “active.” In addition, this was also a band with a challenging set-up (see next chapter) which limited where it could perform. As a result, it did not perform as often or tour as regularly. Even Bloomsday, however, performed at least four times per year during my study, and often at prominent stages like The Rex and more than once at the Toronto Jazz Festival.

119 I have heard all the bands listed in the following table. I only regularly attended the performances of the first four – those four were the groups I chose to interview in gathering my data.
In the following section (and in later chapters), I discuss why certain groups have gravitated to particular venues. Nonetheless, the fact remains that all of these groups performed in at least one, and often two or all three of my study’s primary venues. In addition, few of them have been employed by the Jazz Bistro, which has more “mainstream” programming. This is not to suggest that musicians in the subscene are “unqualified” or against playing there. I confirmed a very long list of musicians from these specific projects that have appeared at this club as sidemen with other acts.\(^\text{120}\)

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\(^{120}\) From this shortlist of bands from this subscene, I could confirm a very long list of musicians that have not performed at the Jazz Bistro as part of these specific groups nor as leaders of their own long-term projects, but that have appeared there as sidemen with other acts: Chris Gale (f. Worst Pop Band Ever); Nick Fraser (f. Drumheller, Lina Allemano Four, Peripheral Vision); Jon Maharaj (f. Bloomsday, Allison Au Quartet, Harley Card Quintet); Allison Au (f. Allison Au Quartet); Todd Pentney (f. Allison Au Quartet); Fabio Ragnelli (f. Bloomsday, Allison Au Quartet); Ethan Ardelli (f. Harley Card Quintet, Bloomsday); David French (f. Bloomsday, Harley Card Quintet); Andrew Downing (f. Lina Allemano Four) and Don Scott (f. Peripheral Vision). So while the musicians involved in the mainstream (sub)scene and the “young project” subscene overlap considerably, it is clear that some venues feature these projects while some, such as the Jazz Bistro, usually do not.
This means that a new model based on alternative venues programming these stable jazz groups has emerged in Toronto. While somewhat distinct from the “mainstream,” many TSGJ subscene musicians who are also involved with this part of the scene to varying degrees. What all of the venues involved in the small group subscene do provide, however, is a place for musicians and approaches to jazz that might not be as friendly to audiences expecting the “mainstream sound” exclusively.

4.2 << Toronto Jazz Venues Apart from the TSGJ Subscene >>

From 2011-2014 there were “Old Toronto” venues that offered mostly or exclusively jazz and creative music, and were broadly advertised as jazz venues. Several other spaces offered jazz regularly but were not marketed to the wider public as “jazz clubs.” In order to give some sense of the overall shape of the Toronto jazz scene during my study I begin with a snapshot (not an exhaustive list) of the best-known jazz venues in Old Toronto – excepting the three venues that were most central to the TSGJ subscene. First, I describe private businesses, restaurants, bars, and clubs, and then consider prominent examples of non-profit concert series. The descriptions of these mainstream venues provide context, but also give a sense why these venues are not as central to the stable group jazz subscene that is the focus of this study. Many factors play into the kinds of musicians and audiences that attend jazz-related venues, and whether they end up functioning as venues for the younger stable group subscene. Such factors include the venue’s location, physical layout, staffing, admission fee (or “cover”) policies, and programming preferences of the booker and/or management. Many of these

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121 While the Jazz Bistro tends to adhere to the older, more exclusive notion of “mainstream programming,” The Rex in particular features various kinds of jazz acts ranging from mainstream-oriented ensembles of freelancers to these younger stable projects.

122 At this extreme, there is the sometime-use of a DJ with Worst Pop Band Ever or guitarist Eric Chenaux from Drumheller, neither of whom has skill-sets that would fit easily in a conventional jam session. As future sections will illustrate, these musicians (as well as others) provide techniques and timbres that fall outside of this mainstream paradigm and are essential to the character of specific repertoire, performances, and/or recordings.

123 In the latter case, however, many musicians and fans in the greater Toronto jazz scene would be aware of the regular jazz programming in such venues and therefore sometimes did refer to such spots as “jazz venues” or “jazz clubs.”
policies are partially the result of economic imperatives (especially in business versus non-profit organizations), but it is also partially the result of the preferences of the venue owners and managers.

4.2.1 << Mainstream Venues: Restaurants, Bars, and Clubs >>

There have been several jazz clubs that are well-known to Toronto audiences and musicians and have been, to at least some extent, open to original jazz music by younger bands. The Trane Studio was, during the time it was open (2001-12), one competitor to Toronto’s best-known mainstream jazz clubs (The Top o’ the Senator, Montreal Bistro, and The Rex). Trane Studio Owner and manager Frank Francis referred to the venue as an “art bar” and claimed that Coltrane served as a “signifier” for how he programmed the club: “…while what we call jazz was the underpinning of the space, we brought in other elements around the music, avant-garde stuff, creative music, free music, whatever it is. As long as the artist had a vision and pushed that envelope, we were happy to lend a space for that” (Green 2012). After looking at the archives of the club’s schedule on its now defunct website and discussing the club with jazz scene participants, it appears there was some stylistic diversity and inclusion of less traditional bands comprised of younger musicians. On the other hand, Francis appeared to favor only a handful of bandleaders and a lot of the music being performed by their groups was not acoustic jazz (as in the TSGJ subscene) but rather, could be loosely described as “pop-crossover/smooth” or “world music-fusion,” and often with a reliance on some electric instruments. Most telling, as verified both in my survey and discussions with scene participants, it was rare for musicians or ardent jazz fans to regularly attend this venue.

124 One prominent exception I could find – prominent stable group Peripheral Vision had its CD release there in 2010. In looking at the archives of its defunct website, this appears to have been at the tail end of the club’s support for acts of this nature.

125 See Chapter 7 for analysis and categorization of audience behaviour and listener competence in relation to live jazz.
In recent years, a number of other Toronto clubs have featured small groups or duos playing straight-ahead jazz for restaurant patrons. Such venues do not favor a concert atmosphere friendly to original repertoire or experimental performance practices. The Pilot Tavern in the heart of the Downtown (near Yonge and Bloor), a prominent venue among these, is a telling case. While this venue used to feature jazz several nights a week in the 1980s and 1990s, acoustic jazz groups are now only hired on weekend afternoons and in the bar area only. The Pilot places a significant emphasis on booking well-known veterans such as Mike Murley, Alex Dean, and Bernie Senesky. Audiences tend to be significantly older than at most other jazz venues, and they generally prefer hearing older songbook standards performed in swing and bebop-oriented jazz styles.

Regular jazz fan Bill Smith explains:

> When I used to hang out at The Pilot, I used to hang out with these old geezers and if someone had the temerity to play an original composition, these guys would be appalled. I was speaking to one guy I know there who would grumble, “I came here to hear music” which meant to him, a song he could recognize…this guy, he wasn’t livid but he wasn’t happy. He told me that he considered good music to be music when musicians were playing songs from the songbook, tunes that he knew well. If they had the temerity to deviate from this for one tune he didn’t like it. (personal interview, September 25, 2013)

Given these kinds of audience expectations, few projects in the young stable band subscene have played there. In contrast to the pre-2006 “boom,” there is now substantial overlap between the musicians playing at this kind of conservative Toronto jazz venue and the musicians that are part of the TSGJ subscene.

In early 2013, a new club, The Jazz Bistro (not to be confused with the now-closed Montreal Bistro), opened in downtown Toronto. Sybil Walker books the music at the club, continuing the role she once had at The Senator, in the past a venue adjacent to The Jazz Bistro. Walker has maintained her emphasis on programming acoustic

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126 Some of the more prominent regular venues for this during my study included Gate 403 and the Home Smith Bar in the West End, Harlem Restaurant and Joe Mama’s in the Downtown, as well as Chalkers Bar on the North End.

127 However, several individuals from bands in that subscene have appeared at The Pilot as sidemen; some, including Nick Fraser, Ethan Ardelli, Fabio Ragnelli, Adrean Farrugia, Jon Maharaj, Ernesto Cervini, speand Dan Fortin, are regulars.
“mainstream” or “straight-ahead” jazz, primarily utilizing relative veterans on the Toronto scene or touring artists that will sometimes appear with a local rhythm section.\textsuperscript{128} Young Toronto drummer Ethan Ardelli, like many other musicians in the TSGJ subscene, felt as if the venue’s management valued presentation more than musical creativity, given how it was aiming for an upscale audience: “…places like The Bistro – they’re catering to a bunch of things including jazz, but also a nice meal and certain wine and having a classy night out on the town, but the music is kind of a secondary position. It’s not people out just to hear the music…” (personal interview, August 6, 2013). As he put it, they were unlikely to program “any music that might disturb conversation at the table or whatever” (ibid.). While they have attempted to add more younger programming with a “Young Artists Series,” the vast majority of the groups programmed at this venue do not correlate to the phenomenon I am studying. None of the groups that I studied in-depth, to date, have performed at this venue, and few of the members of these groups, despite their relative prominence in the scene, have played there with any regularity.\textsuperscript{129}

\section*{4.2.2 << Non-Profit Venues >>}

Over the years, a host of different galleries and loft spaces have programmed jazz in Toronto, not unlike many other urban centers. These venues tend to be temporary or only program jazz from time to time and, as such, rarely become hubs for any scenes or subscenes.\textsuperscript{130} In recent years, however, regular jazz or jazz-related concert series have

\textsuperscript{128} While the club is, in some ways, a throwback to the earlier heyday of mainstream jazz venues in Toronto, The Jazz Bistro, tellingly, does not offer week-long residencies to groups as The Senator and Montreal Bistro did.

\textsuperscript{129} There were signs, as I am completed my data-gathering, that the venue’s programming may be evolving. Myriad3, a trio that I discuss briefly in Chapter 5, had their CD release at this venue in August 2014, and recent University of Toronto graduate Ben Hognestad also played that month with his trio. The venue has also recently increased the number of shows in their Young Artist Series, though typically using such players in solo and duo formats playing standards, which is not akin to the originals-focused, small ensemble music I have studied.

\textsuperscript{130} There are a number of such venues, though, and many of them are used for special events for these groups like CD releases. Gallery 345 in the West End, an actual art gallery space in a converted warehouse, began to feature jazz on a monthly basis during the time of my study. The venue actually programs, on
been more relevant to the subscene I am describing, largely because they are more stable and reliable sites for performance than galleries and lofts.

4.2.2.1 << Spectrum Music >>

Formed in 2010, Spectrum Music is one such concert series presented from autumn to spring each year by a collective of young Toronto-based performer-composers. Their self-described focus has been on programming “innovative, genre-defying themed concerts” of their own compositions (Spectrum Music). Artistic director and co-founder Ben Dietschi admitted that the founders were very conscious of emphasizing particular musical aesthetics compositional approaches and performance techniques – an approach he referred to as “chamber jazz” or “concert music.” While Dietschi’s interest in exploring and building on jazz tradition(s) with a stable collective of musicians resonates with the goals of the stable bands in the subscene at the centre of my study, his focus on compositional technique over more fluid improvisation, in addition to the group’s more formal manner of presentation, set Spectrum apart from the stable group subscene, and the jazz scene in general.

average, only about one jazz performance per month, and the performers are only sometimes local, and even more rarely younger. Since mid-2013, meanwhile, a similar space called Gladstone 90 (a yoga studio by day) has been rented out to musicians, and increasingly to many young jazz groups. These spaces are relatively inconsistent on a week-to-week basis, however, so they are not truly hubs for the subscene, relative to my primary venues of study.

131 The average age of the composer collective is roughly thirty to thirty-five.

132 When asked to break down what is “innovative” and “genre-defying,” about the musical practices of the original music taking place at Spectrum, Dietschi specifically mentioned “longer through-form composition,” as opposed to the cyclical forms common to jazz practice. He suggested this kind of programming inherently demanded a particular kind of attention from audiences and that a concert venue could accommodate this: “longer through-form composition…doesn’t do well if the listener doesn’t listen from start to finish” (personal interview, October 23, 2013). In addition, he pointed out that the composers tended to employ “extended instrumentation” from a jazz perspective, utilizing more string instruments and wind instruments not always associated with jazz (e.g. double reed instruments).
Dietschi argued that Spectrum’s chamber/concert music aesthetic required the concert hall. He pointed out that when music is performed in any club, the musicians are, at least to some extent, catering to businesses that are serving customers consuming beverages and/or food. By contrast, the Spectrum took place in its first two seasons at a concert hall situated in downtown Toronto. As he put it, this venue suited the aesthetic goals of Spectrum in that “the location, the fact that they could provide a soft-seat theatre experience – which at the time was our sole goal and still remains our primary goal” (personal interview, October 23, 2013). In other words, this kind of venue allowed for a formality and the kind of “chamber jazz” practices the collective wanted.

At the same time, Dietschi insists that improvisational practices associated with jazz tradition are vital, if not as central, to the collective’s aesthetic:

…one of the things that definitely differentiates [our collective] from other “new music,” even other ‘new music’ with improvisation because we don’t sound like avant-garde improvisers or whatever you call that school either… the jazz tradition comes through in all of that, so it’s there, and it’s part of what we’re always wanting to make sure that we do; it should be a defining characteristic. (personal interview, October 23, 2013)

For Spectrum, these improvisational jazz practices, however, are subservient to the composed materials: “…just by necessity of the way the composition works and the direction they want to go…[composers] have started to thread the solos very carefully into the composition. That’s a goal - that we always do that. So we choose our players carefully to exemplify that” (ibid.). So while this composers collective and the musicians performing their works are invested in jazz practices and tradition, they are ultimately

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133 There has been a long tradition of attempting to bring elements of jazz practice in a “chamber” or “classical” form to the concert hall. This arguably began with 1924 An Experiment in Modern Music at Aeolian Hall with Paul Whiteman’s Orchestra and the premiere of Gershwin’s Rhapsody in Blue and continued through “jazz orchestra” concerts by prominent jazz composers (such as Ellington’s Black Brown and Beige concert at Carnegie Hall in 1943) and the so-called Third Stream movement of the 1950s. Many prominent jazz artists have also since played their typical small group practices in concert halls, but it would fair to acknowledge that few jazz artists find the typical concert hall the ideal acoustic environment for most small group performances. In particular, because of the heavy reverberation in many concert halls, the larger rooms tend to be especially problematic for rhythm section clarity.
subservient to stricter compositional goals that are not typical of the smaller jazz group, and therefore I elected not to make it part of my study.\textsuperscript{134}

\textbf{4.2.2.2 << The (New) Music Gallery >>}

After The Music Gallery was evicted from its space in 2000 (see Chapter 3), a new organization relocated the venue to the St. George the Martyr Anglican Church;\textsuperscript{135} this organization proceeded without formal oversight from the CCMC.\textsuperscript{136} Some avant-garde or “free” music as well as jazz-related music has been performed there—both in their own series and when local musicians rent the space—but the Music Gallery organization tends to program more “new music” (i.e. contemporary music based on Western Art Music practices), “world musics,” and underground popular musics, rather than jazz-related music. Spectrum Music administrator Ben Dietschi told me why he declined to use the space for his series: “from a broad perspective, I felt like [Spectrum Music] should carve out our own identity….and then also it’s an acoustics thing. I don’t think that really the acoustics are good for the music we play” (personal interview, October 23, 2013). Drummer Nick Fraser, speaking at a forum in 2006, reinforced why this venue has, increasingly, been less important to the Toronto jazz scene:

I’ve been living in Toronto for ten years now and I’ve had two paying gigs at the Music Gallery. I’ve had a few other gigs where I, in essence, rented the space. I quickly gave up on that because I couldn’t afford it and I found that it didn’t do much for me. If I could have made my money back then I would have done it because I liked the previous (Richmond Street) venue. Their new venue, the [St. George-the-Martyr] church, is not very conducive to improvising musicians, especially drummers. (Scott Thomson, personal interview, September 18, 2006)

\textsuperscript{134} Indeed, most of the core composer-musicians in Spectrum are a part of regularly performing long-term stable projects in the subscene - bassist Matt Roberts (founder of Circle), trombonist Heather Segger (member of the Mark Segger Sextet), saxophonist Chelsea McBride (founder of Chelsea and the Cityscape), as well as the brothers Ben and bassist Jesse Dietschi (members of Tunnel Six).

\textsuperscript{135} By 2006, musician and Somewhere There concert series founder Scott Thomson, was confident in declaring that “the association between CCMC and the Music Gallery is mostly historical these days” (Critical Studies in Improvisation / Études critiques en improvisation, Vol. 2, No. 1 (2006).

\textsuperscript{136} This site happens to be very near the original downtown site within a few blocks of The Rex Hotel.
So while the Music Gallery via St. George Church continues to be site for special events in the sub-scene I am studying, it is no longer a venue that consistently programs jazz-related music and is thus, tangential to the subscene at the centre of my project.

4.2.2.3 << The New Toronto Avant-Garde: Array Space and Somewhere There >>

In some ways the downtown Array Space has become the hub for Toronto’s contemporary avant-garde, filling the gap left after the closure of the Music Gallery. Programming at the venue included “new music” composition but found more room for improvised music, including avant-garde improvised music (i.e. free jazz). Much of this jazz programming has been booked under the auspices of its monthly “Array Sessions” series. Jazz programming has increased even more since 2013 with the demise of Somewhere There’s space (see below). Again, while individual musicians who were members of stable group subscene ensembles have performed there on occasion, it was rare that the groups themselves did.

During the early stages of my study, the concert series most central to the avant-garde scene was, arguably, the Somewhere There series. Scott Thomson, its artistic director and a trombonist and composer formerly based out of Toronto, said that he initiated the series given the frustrations of playing avant-garde music in conventional clubs:

…in general, the experience, especially in bars… [the managers] just wanted to sell some beer in most cases and when there wasn’t enough beer being sold they’d

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137 Their own site has indicated they are directly trying to conjure the spirit of the old CCMC Music Gallery events of yesteryear with this series (Array Music).
138 It should be apparent that this series had little to no overlap with the practices and the veteran musicians of the mainstream jazz in Toronto. On the other hand, as at Array, there have been some individual musicians who are a part of the stable group subscene who have performed at this series. This once again speaks to a greater openness in the subscene I am studying in comparison to the old mainstream model.
say, “Well, that’s it. The series is over.” So all the effort that had gone into creating a series, to create a sense of collegiality between the players and develop an audience was put on hold… (September 18, 2013, personal interview)

For Thomson, “the impulse to start Somewhere There” was “to provide a space where these external forces would be mitigated a bit – external forces of commerce.” He specifically mentioned “the Music Gallery as a model” in how the musicians could retain more “control over what we wanted to do” (Scott Thomson, September 18, 2013, personal interview).

The space that Thompson did open was, originally, the former storage space for a larger furniture store and, as such, relatively small. It could seat up to 75, but typically seated 25. The size made it unsuitable as a commercial venue, but it was ideal for this series’ purposes. In addition, it was centrally located, had “clear, isolated acoustics,” and had comfortable seating that was close enough to create “a sense of intimacy and proximity between musicians and audiences.” Thomson was convinced that these conditions “gave…the different kinds of music-making its life” (personal interview, September 18, 2013). As the board members for Somewhere There found funding, they outfitted the place with donated house instruments (drum set and upright piano) as well as a small public address system. While Thomson stressed that “there was quite a remarkable range of different kinds of composition, arrangements, media…” the kind of bebop and post-bebop focused projects regularly performing at The Senator or Montreal Bistro were not, as a rule, programmed there – nor would many of those musicians likely have wanted to play there, given that they could not offer typical professional compensation (ibid.).

At its peak, music was programmed five to six nights a week with frequent weekly residencies and frequent recording sessions. The venue attracted a dedicated cluster of fans. In 2010, Thomson backed away from running the space, but helped to instigate the creation of a board that would try to continue to program concerts. Unfortunately, at around the same time, as this newly formed board was about to renew the lease to their space, their landlord hiked their rent and they were forced to quickly
find another even smaller venue – one which Thomson readily admits “was a compromise” (personal interview, September 18, 2013). Because of repeated noise complaints at that building, Somewhere There did not renew its lease in 2012 and so it has become an organization without a venue.

According to their website and other online announcements, the organization still programs occasional concerts in various spaces and they have an annual festival at The Tranzac, a primary venue of my study described in the next section. While no longer a “venue” in any real sense, for most of the period I studied, the original space served as one of the true centres for this subscene of improvised music, serving as a precedent for the kind of programming for The Emmet Ray in particular. In the meantime, three other venues became the centers for the subscene of stable group, original, improvised, jazz based music that is the focus of my study.

4.3 << Primary Venues in the TSGJ Subscene >>

The three primary venues in the TSGJ subscene are quite distinct: a building run and booked by a non-profit organization (The Tranzac); a recently opened whisky bar that eventually offered a weekly jazz series booked by a musician (The Emmet Ray); and a relatively traditional nightly jazz venue that emerged from a rough, ramshackle hotel decades ago (The Rex Hotel). All of them have often booked groups making them part of the TSGJ subscene, but they all have differences related to atmosphere, physical layout, geography in Toronto itself, and staffing demographics. Such contextual factors will lead to attracting particular audiences and booking particular kinds of jazz groups to perform for these audiences.
4.3.1  << The Tranzac Toronto Australian New Zealand Club >>

“The Tranzac] is the home of a specific community and the audience is mostly compromised of people from that community…They’re trying to do something of their own that’s different. And, clearly, it’s young.” – Mark Miller (personal interview, September 15, 2013)

On its website, The Tranzac describes itself as not merely a “venue” but a “non-profit supported community organization with a focus on promoting arts, music, and theatre” (Tranzac 2015). Originally, however, The Tranzac was founded in 1971 as a meeting spot for a social group of New Zealanders and Australians. As the social club’s original cultural mandate eroded, it has, in recent decades, become a haven for a broader spectrum of artistic activity in Toronto. The venue has formal alliances with what they call “official subgroups” that have included organizations as diverse as Flying Cloud Folk Club, the Nomads Acting Group, and an Irish music and dance club.

The Tranzac hosts artistic performances—mostly music and community theatre—almost every night of the week in its two main rooms: the larger Main Hall and the smaller Southern Cross Lounge which was more often used for jazz shows. While all of the other rooms in the facility are typically rented by a variety of organizations (including various performing groups), the Southern Cross Lounge is programmed by the venue itself. It is the busiest room with mostly local entertainment and artistic productions every night. The Southern Cross Lounge has become a haven for the groups in the stable group subscene, and all four of the acts with which I conducted in-depth research played there with some regularity during my fieldwork. While not as well-known to the broader public as The Rex or The Jazz Bistro, even the music press in Toronto has acknowledged the Tranzac’s place in Toronto’s broader jazz scene, as evidenced by this concert review from now-defunct weekly culture magazine The Grid:

“…for years now, there’s been an extremely fertile indie-jazz movement located in and

139 In keeping this name and by mentioning its origins in some of the promotional description of the venue on its website, the venue still maintains this branding connection to its cultural origins.
140 In addition, there is a smaller third room, the Tiki Room, that is used for meetings and smaller social events.
141 In fact, my own anecdotal experience has been that this room is so prevalently used that most musicians and fans in this subscene use “The Tranzac” as shorthand, but clearly referring to this particular room.
around the Annex’s longstanding DIY culture hub, The Tranzac” (Lina Allemano - Reviews).

The Southern Cross Lounge has a public address system that is occasionally supervised by a volunteer sound engineer from the venue. In addition, the venue provides a few house musical instruments: bass and guitar amplifiers (rarely used by jazz musicians who tend to bring their own gear), a drum kit, and, more recently, a (slightly) upgraded upright piano. At the back of the room is a bar where the musicians and regulars in the audience tend to gather (see Figure 9). Throughout the room, there is general seating in the form of somewhat mismatched and “worse-for-wear” tables and chairs. Both the customers and the volunteers working there frequently move all of this furniture around; for some larger events in the room, all of the tables are taken out to allow for more seating. Generally speaking, the sightlines to the performing area are unobstructed. There is a rack of stage lights controlled from a rudimentary console at the bar. They can provide additional focus to the band and, thus, are often used for evening performances. The ceiling is relatively high (approximately 15-18 feet at its highest) and slopes slightly toward the bar. There is a significant amount of resonant wood in the ceiling; between this and the shape of the room, the room has a reputation among most small group jazz musicians and fans for above average acoustics. Though there is always a certain amount of local artwork on the walls, the room is very informal – there is a huge tube from the ventilation system visible on the ceiling, a significant amount of clutter (at least by comparison to other venues) and dilapidated surfaces and objects around the room. For many, the Tranzac’s casual atmosphere and good acoustics are part of “funky” appeal. Saxophonist and Spectrum Music Artistic Director Ben Dietschi summarized the consensus I often heard: “It’s weird how [The Southern Cross Room] has this ineffable quality of it being welcoming and sounding awesome for musicians, but it’s also a sort of ‘junk room’” (October 23, 2013, personal interview).

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142 The piano is only occasionally tuned, and is not, as a point of reference, an instrument that would even be deemed worthy of being a practice piano in most university or college music programs. Nonetheless, it has been used on occasion by some groups and it does hold its tuning to a greater degree than the last little-used instrument.
The music performed in the Southern Cross Lounge varies widely. As Dietschi puts it, this may have to do with the booker’s rather informal method of programming:

“To my knowledge, there’s not a whole lot of thought put into the curation – it just sort of happens. It just sort of grows out of the community of artists” (personal interview, October 23, 2013). Dietschi also takes pains to point out that he sees this as a net positive for the overall Toronto jazz scene:
It’s really important to have forums for free expression like The Tranzac. I feel like in the scene it functions as a place where art is first and everything else is second and that has sort of caused it to self-identify as something really interesting… It’s incredibly important and is closest to being the heartbeat of the artistic community than any of the other venues, because it just kind of provides a kind of open forum for sharing artistic ideas. (ibid.)

This “community of artists” that Dietschi refers to has, to a great extent, emerged as a direct result of the informal, open nature of venues like The Tranzac and The Emmet Ray (and possibly The Rex as well). Their programming practices have not only provided a forum for these stable groups to develop more distinct approaches, but also to develop their own audiences. Rather than trying to fit their projects into a “mainstream” paradigm, these groups can, at a venue like The Tranzac, build a community, a scene-within-a-scene, for themselves and the most devoted fans of their music.

Given The Tranzac’s diverse programming, modest promotional budget, and limited walk in traffic, the acts performing there, including jazz-oriented ones, do not typically attract sizable, high-spending crowds. What this context does appear to engender, however, is significantly more attentive, invested audiences. While that may not be the prescribed goal of the venue’s governing board or the room’s booker, Dietschi explains why it appears to be the result:

There’s no other reason to be at The Tranzac except the music. You don’t go there for the quality of the wine. You don’t go for the décor or the finish of the washrooms. You go there because those [musicians] are playing there. You want to hear the music. So that thins it out. Those other places are restaurants so you get people who are going for a dinner out which opens up those rooms to audiences who are thinking, “what’s going on?” Or, “they’re playing jazz, I like jazz.” They have no idea what to do with [the music] when they get there. They think they can climb over it or that it’s background music or whatever. So there’s multi-purpose functions [sic] to those other rooms, whereas with The Tranzac there’s just one reason. (personal interview, October 23, 2013)

Bill Smith, a highly visible fan in the TSGJ subscene and a Tranzac regular, agrees that while audiences are not consistently large they are more committed:
The people who go there, though sadly small in number, are committed to being there to listen to music, so generally they don’t talk. And to me, it’s kind of a comfortable, welcoming vibe. And I guess possibly most importantly my favourite bands play at The Tranzac on a regular basis. Lina Allemano, Peripheral Vision, Bloomsday, Michael Davidson group, Ken McDonald's Quartet, Ryan Driver’s Quintet… (personal interview, September 25, 2013)

It is no coincidence that the groups he lists are all specific to this phenomenon of younger stable groups. Ethan Ardelli, drummer for Bloomsday, the Harley Card Quintet, and many other groups to play at The Tranzac, concurs: “I think people who are actually jazz fans…and other musicians – folks out really for the music – are more likely to go to the Tranzac or Emmet Ray” (personal interview, August 6, 2013).

4.3.2 << The Emmet Ray >>

Opening in late 2009, The Emmet Ray is a self-described “whisky bar” located on College Street in Old Toronto’s West End. This neighbourhood is home to many other establishments that cater to a slightly younger (mid-20s to early 40s) clientele. As one online Toronto magazine’s review put it – this area near Ossington Avenue and College Street had a reputation for its “hipster” residents and establishments that catered to them: “Any venue this close to Ossington that calls itself a whisky bar is treading dangerously close to too-hip territory” (Toronto Life 2013). Another early review of the bar noted the clientele was “a sedate mix of 30- and 40-somethings out for a casual drink and a bite to eat” (BlogTo 2009). That assessment typifies the crowd I typically saw at the front part of this venue (although I think many patrons may be as young as mid-20s on some nights). On the other hand, the age of the crowd nearer to the music in the back room varied somewhat depending on who was performing and the crowd a given group happened to attract.

The owner/manager of the bar, Andrew Kaiser, did not initially intend the Emmet Ray to be a music venue, but jazz bassist Patrick Reid immediately saw potential for this
back room as a performance space. He convinced Kaiser that a jazz series would help bring additional traffic to the bar on Monday nights, which were typically less busy than other nights of the week.\footnote{As of the spring 2015, given the success of the series, The Emmet Ray has regularly added jazz on Sundays as well.} Reid’s prediction proved to be true, and within months of the Monday night jazz series’ inception in 2010, a sizable group of people regularly came specifically for the music as well as the bar’s welcoming environment.

In email correspondence with me, Reid indicated he hoped the venue would “fill what seemed an unfortunate void in the community” (personal communication, September 26, 2014). His “initial goals” for the series were:

1) to provide enough incentive and support for ensembles to perform well-rehearsed original music;
2) to provide enough incentive for some of the older musicians in Toronto to branch out and collaborate with younger composers
3) to maintain a higher standard than was typical for some of the less lucrative performance spaces;
4) to create a sense of community through diversifying the type of music performed. (ibid.)

Such goals make it clear that, from the beginning, Reid was actively trying to create a venue that would cultivate the “band concept” and original practices that are my analytical focus. He explained to me that he wanted to cultivate his series at the Emmet Ray as a way to provide an alternative to what he saw as a polarization of venues and musicians in Toronto’s jazz scene prior to 2010: “What was mostly visible to me was young musicians playing new music for little or no money with other young musicians and older musicians playing mostly standard repertoire for slightly more money than none” (personal communication, September 26, 2014). While The Emmet Ray has never paid a lucrative amount, it has offered a modest flat rate, a percentage of bar sales, as well as whatever audience donations the band could procure. This is a better financial reward than many comparable smaller Toronto venues in recent years. Reid noted that the few venues that did pay a higher rate had “pretty confining stipulations” with regard to the kinds of music programmed. He also said that the bookers for these other venues “rotated the same players with little permutation.” Reid indicated that, in contrast, he wanted to
showcase new, original music from slightly younger bands in a way that would help to bring the overall jazz community together: “I wanted to connect some of the dots within the community here and hopefully entice namely the older sections of the music community to come and check out the young players and their original music…The older community was just starting to become more regular audience members when I left for New York [in 2011]” (personal communication, September 26, 2014). While Reid, in his programming, sought to showcase original music played at a consistently “higher standard” of musicianship than some of the other informal venues and concert series in Toronto, he was also most interested in those participants who wanted to build a sense of community:

I booked bands based on mostly their desire to play their own music and their enthusiasm for the space. If people were coming out to support others they usually were booked pretty promptly. Folks that didn’t show up I perhaps was less pressed to accommodate but I certainly didn’t turn away [sic]. (personal communication, September 26, 2014)

Coming out to see other musicians was deemed important for him as booker, which meant that the venue’s jazz series was specifically tied to building a subspace rather than merely bringing in a crowd (though that was also important). Regarding the “higher standard,” Reid explained that this both referred to the music itself and how it was compensated for.

In 2012, Reid moved to New York City, leaving the booking of the Monday Jazz series in the hands of fellow bassist Dan Fortin – a busy young jazz musician who was already a central figure in the young Toronto jazz scene. Fortin has collaborated extensively with his peers as well as some of the city’s best-known veterans. With this background, he was in a good position to take on Reid’s duties. Ben Dietschi observes that that while The Rex and especially The Tranzac have been positive for the scene but “all over the place” in their programming, the reason for the Emmet Ray’s very particular reputation is that it is “well-curated…[Fortin’s] vision has had a good influence as the bands are consistently good” (October 23, 2013, personal interview). More so than any other venue, this curation has meant a focus, not exclusively but heavily, on younger
groups with a more distinct “take” on jazz tradition(s). Not all of these appear to be regular on-going projects, but the majority of them certainly have been. Below I have provided a snapshot of one month of Mondays at the Emmett Ray from July 14th thorough August 19th 2014 with every Toronto group that had personnel averaging under the age of forty in boldface and those groups that I know to have maintained a relatively stable personnel for at least six months in italics.

Live Events on Monday Jazz Series – The Emmet Ray: July 14-August 19, 2014

July 14th
7pm: not listed
9 pm: Roarshaq
Joel Visentin (keyboard/piano), Jeff LaRochelle (saxophone), Mark Godfrey (bass), Derek Gray (drums/percussion)

July 21st
7pm: Adam Teixeira's Elixir 4tet
(Personnel not listed, but this is apparently a regular group.)
9 pm: Swamp Groove (Rhodes edition)
Ken McDonald (guitar), Alan Zematis (keys), and Simon Dennis (drums)

August 4th
7pm: “Bill Smith”: David French (tenor sax), Jon Maharaj (bass), and Fabio Ragnelli (drums)
9pm: David French (tenor sax), Perry White (saxophones), Dan Fortin (bass), Morgan Childs (drums)

August 11th
7pm: Ethan Ardelli Quartet
Luis Deniz (saxophone), Reg Schwager (guitar), Devon Henderson (bass), Ethan Ardelli (drums)
9pm: Florien Hoefner Group
Hoefner (piano) [guest artist from New York] with Dan Fortin (bass) and Ethan Ardelli (drums)

August 19th
7pm: Marika Galea Trio
9pm: Adrean Farrugia Quartet
Kelly Jefferson (tenor sax), Dan Fortin (bass), and Ethan Ardelli (drums)
This evidence alone would suggest how important this series has been for the young stable band jazz-oriented original music subscene.

The Emmet Ray is, however, a for-profit business serving drinking customers. Therefore, while it does provide an excellent forum for music, the environment is not strictly oriented around the music in the same way as The Tranzac or some of the non-profit spaces. Still, there was a lot of positive sentiment about it expressed, even from those musicians who did not program their own groups there. Nick Fraser indicated that he liked playing there with some bands, but that the venue does not work for every band in the (sub)scene including Drumheller, the band he led: “I like the Emmet Ray. It can be a bit noisy. Usually it’s a ‘strength-in-numbers’ thing. If enough people come out to hear you, then it can work better” (personal interview, December 10, 2014). Fraser tried booking Drumheller at The Emmet Ray for special occasions, but he eventually stopped doing so – in part, because he already had a long-standing monthly residency at The Tranzac. It is revealing, though, that his leeriness in playing the venue is also a result of Drumheller’s performance practices. The band plays with a very wide dynamic range including at the extreme soft end, as evidenced by their frequent episodes of only two musicians interacting. Meanwhile, such episodes or practices were more rare for a band like Harley Card’s quintet, which may be part of why his band has been a regular at both The Tranzac and The Emmet Ray. In this way, a venue’s environment can inform the kind of group practices that can thrive there and which groups are ultimately programmed.

Audience-performer interaction is also significantly affected by a venue’s architecture and layout and The Emmet Ray is no different (See Figure 10). The Emmet Ray (like The Rex) has a part of the seating area in closer proximity to the band while another area has significantly worse sightlines and is far enough from the stage to make the music difficult to hear. Card summarizes how he sees the audience behavior’s relate to the Emmet Ray’s layout:

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144 In any case, Card tended to be a good “draw” for the venue – every time I attended, the back room was near full.
145 This topic is addressed in detail in Chapter 6.
At the Emmet [Ray], a lot of times there’s the back room [with the stage] where people are there to listen and the front room where people have nothing to do with the fact that there’s a show happening. A lot of people like that there’s a band happening, but they’re not as engaged as the people in the back room. (personal interview, August 7, 2013)

Given the way in which part of the space between the rooms is both walled off and has a landing step, this helps to create a sense that the back room is somewhat discrete from the rest of the venue, allowing it to function as a performance space.

In my diagram, I have labeled the area just outside the back room that is closest to the bar as the “bar area.” From here, it is still possible to see and, on most nights, hear the band. I find it very commonplace for some musicians and other scene regulars to congregate in the bar area given that drinks are more accessible and socializing is less disruptive than in the back room. Finally, there is the “true” front seating at the Emmet Ray that is closest to the front door. In this area, the band is never clearly audible and customers usually appear to be uninterested in the music; they are there to drink and socialize.

Though Card has expressed enthusiasm for playing at the Emmet Ray, he admits that, to an extent, it can be a compromise due to the venue’s audience dynamics: “… if you play the Emmet Ray and there’s only five people in the seats in the back room then it feels like you’re more up against this wall of sound coming from the front sometimes” (August 7, 2013, personal interview). Again, as a group that usually has most of its musicians playing at once, Card’s ensemble does not have to “fight” the undesirable noise from the front area. In contrast, there are groups in the younger stable group subscene that cannot play at the Emmet Ray as easily because of its layout and audience dynamics that are partially related to that layout (see chapter 6).\(^\text{146}\)

\(^\text{146}\) As I will discuss at length in Chapter 6, the Lina Allemano Four, a very prominent, successful group in this scene, would have difficulty on some nights translating their, at times, very quiet, sometimes free-improvised practices here or especially at The Rex.
Figure 10: Venue Diagram - Layout of The Emmet Ray
4.3.3  << The Rex Jazz & Blues Bar >>

The Rex has a unique place in the Toronto jazz scene as possibly its most literally “visible” jazz venue. The club is centrally located near the very center of the city on the busy downtown thoroughfare of Queen Street West. Its prominent “title signs” on the south and west sides of the building are visible from several blocks away, as is a giant mural of a trumpet player on its upper west side. In addition, The Rex also features a sizable marquee over its front door indicating the performers featured each evening.

The Rex began, though, as merely an inexpensive hotel. Two entrepreneurs took over the business in 1960 and eventually expanded the floor space of the bar, which helped make the Rex become known as a drinking establishment as much as a hotel (Boles 2014). At that time, the bar catered to a working-class male clientele who were often employed and lived in the area. By the mid-1970s, these demographics were changing. When now long-time owner of The Rex, Bob Ross, inherited the bar from his father around this time, he began to transition the place from what was reputed to be a “dive” to one that would cater to a more diverse, somewhat younger and more affluent clientele.147 His efforts would include not only renovations but also making the bar into a music venue, which would eventually make it a part of the burgeoning Queen Street music scene in the 1980s.148

At first, Ross was very cautious in making these changes. Initially, he wanted “…to accommodate the changing clientele of the area, not turf out old customers and tenants and start from nothing” (Mays). Part of this accommodation to existing customers included keeping some of the hotel at the back part of the building while making room for a stage that would overlook Queen Street. As a nod to the blue-collar tastes of then-traditional customers, though, Ross started with booking music to cater to them –

147 Ross describes in two different interviews what the clientele was still like when he took over in the 1970s: “…primarily semi-skilled workmen from the area…who come in for lunch and after work, as well as neighbourhood residents who came in the evening to socialize…” (Boles 2014). “They made good money, and they drank it…This was the wild west. In the old days, there was lots of laughter, and also fights. The street was rougher, vibrant in a different way. The blue-collar worker does not exist down here any more.” (Mays).
148 See Chapter 2 to read about the Queen Street popular music scene of this era.
specifically, blues and rockabilly-related acts (Boles). By about 1985, however, Ross began booking at least three to four jazz acts a week, and this part of the programming eventually came to dominate.

Even with the renovations, shifting demographics, and shift in music programming, however, the bar retained some of its “dive” associations well into the 1990s. This was, in part, because, relative to its competition, The Rex still had a dilapidated architecture and a less polished approach to artistic presentation. As Ross himself pointed out in an interview about various Toronto “dives,” The Rex’s clientele did get a bit less rough as the 1990s progressed, but the atmosphere remained similar:

We got rid of the scruffies. It was an excruciatingly slow change. Before, women wouldn’t come in, but now they do. Part of the aura is the tarnish and the fact that it’s not a spit-and-polish bar. There are lots of those in Toronto and we have no intention of competing with them (Eckler 1999).

Though The Rex was substantially renovated with several upgrades in 2006, it still eschews the gloss and semi-formality of former spots like The Senator, The Montreal Bistro, or the recently opened Jazz Bistro.

In addition, even during the 1980s-90s Toronto jazz “boom,” The Rex was not only less formal in appearance, but also significantly less expensive to attend than those other high-profile jazz establishments. Even to this day, there is no cover for the acts programmed before 9pm. The bandleader typically comes around with a tip jar on set breaks and this suffices for “payment.” During late sets at 9 or 930pm, there has been a modest cover to support a more typical professional wage for performers. This cover can range from five to fifteen dollars, depending on the number of musicians, night of the week, and the prominence of the act.149

Journalist Mark Miller indicated to me that The Rex’s jazz programming increased dramatically as of 1991. In 1995, this led to the hiring of Tom Tytel, a full-time manager to oversee booking the acts – a role that he has to this day. Through the 1990s,

149 For special events with international or touring artists (not including the Jazz Festival), the cover may range from fifteen to, very rarely, twenty-five.
the Rex’s bookings continued to be primarily local acts. Miller points out that The Rex, while it became “a viable contender with the Bistro and Senator” during the late 1990s, it also established the more specific reputation for being “a place where you could more reliably hear the younger musicians” (September 25, 2013, personal interview). As a result of Tytel’s booking preferences, The Rex become very important for many of the city’s younger jazz musicians, including some of the stable groups of the TSGJ subscene.

4.3.3.1 << Audience Behaviour at The Rex >>

The Rex’s location, coupled with its low cover and informality, appear to have had a significant impact on the kind of audiences it attracted and their behavior. This in turn, has implications for the practices of all musicians playing there (which I describe in greater detail in Chapter 7). Bill Smith, perhaps one of the most persistent regulars at all of the establishments in my research, had strong opinions as to the correlation:

…every arsehole [in the audience] has this deep-seated feeling of unearned entitlement…Whatever you want to do, if that’s what you want to do…So I know for instance if you were to go up to someone at The Rex who is shooting her mouth off and ask her to be quiet she’ll say “I paid my cover charge; I’ll do whatever I want.” Or, they’d be affronted because they think they’re in a bar so… They wouldn’t even be aware that there was this music playing that was like anything more than an adjunct to their conversation. When Dave Douglas played at The Rex, cover charge was $20 so that…kept out most people but there was one couple. And when [Rex staff member] Ted came over to talk to them, they apologized and moved to the back where they could talk. This wasn’t normal, though. (personal interview, September 25, 2013)

I was also at the Dave Douglas concert Smith refers to and noted this very incident. It was easily the quietest audience I had heard there in months, with a quorum of listeners so invested in the concert that, as Smith suggests, those who were less attentive to the music and engaging in distracting behaviour would be noticed. I was also at The Rex for three events in a week-long concert series curated by New York pianist Henry Hey in 2010 that included international talent and slightly higher cover charges (Nineteen-Eight
Records). The attendance, overall, was higher than the weeknight norm and the audiences were notably more attentive. They talked less and more frequently positioned their bodies to suggest a clear focus to the stage.\textsuperscript{150}

In the course of my study, however, I have attended late night and even early sets for local acts at The Rex that have had audiences ranging from somewhat to very attentive. Whether or not a critical mass of people paying attention establishes the norms for a given set appears to be at least in part a matter of luck. However, I have noted that more prominent veterans and the most visible young players will sometimes bring an audience of fans or colleagues and friends that will help in establishing such an attentive audience environment.

 Nonetheless, my experiences and the observations of interlocutors suggest that there is at least some correlation between both the presence and amount of cover charge and the potential attentiveness of an audience. When The Rex charges a cover comparable to venues like The Jazz Bistro, they get almost comparable results in terms of audience behavior, even though the demographic of their audience is notably different. Yet it would be difficult, arguably even inadvisable, for the Rex to consistently charge higher cover. The owners and management of The Rex, on their website, made affordability (along with artistic credibility) a central part of their venue’s brand: “The Jazz & Blues Bar continually attracts Canada's finest musicians and is unique in that it remains distinctly inexpensive and affordable for the budget-conscious” (The Rex 2015).

While cover charge is often a factor in determining audience makeup, it is also clear that where The Rex is situated in the city has a great deal to do with its typical audiences. Much of the nearby area immediately to the west of The Rex is referred to as the Fashion District – an area that was once dominated by independent fashion but which is now dominated by global fashion brands.\textsuperscript{151} Further, the neighbourhood’s own website breaks down this area into two areas: “the eastern part of Queen Street West has become

\textsuperscript{150} Again, I address audience attentiveness (including at The Rex) and its possible effects on performance practice in greater detail in Chapter 6.

\textsuperscript{151} Indeed, it is telling that even the umbrella association for the commercial property owners and tenants (Queen West Business Improvement Area) describes the area as having “spearheaded the growth in Toronto’s cultural life in the 1980s and “90s” rather than in the present day.
a major shopping district while the western half retains its unconventional roots” (City of Toronto 2015). In fact, the area west of the Fashion District, is a spot often referred to as “Queen West” – an area which, in the 1980s and 90s, arguably had more cultural caché. While some clubs near The Rex are vestigial from Queen West’s peak prominence, there are now far fewer music venues nearby. On the other hand, The Rex is at the northern edge of what has been called the “Entertainment District,” and therefore also gets some limited patronage from those going to other high-profile cultural events in the area.152

Therefore, for early sets at The Rex between 6 and 8pm, this appears to lead to a certain amount of foot traffic related to the proprietors, staff and patrons of the adjacent businesses and pubs in addition to various people commuting from other parts of town. Later in the evening, foot traffic may also spill over more from other more generic pubs. As always, these audience members combine with whatever audience is there to specifically experience the music – either because these attendees want to see and hear “jazz” (which could entail any number of expectations) or the artist or group in question. Given, however, the volume of traffic coming in off of the streets, performance dynamics vary widely depending on how much of their own crowd a particular group generates. The other clubs do not have this much foot traffic. The Tranzac, despite being relatively central, is not directly on Bloor while The Emmet Ray is in an area that tends to attract people from the neighbourhood and those that seek out the bar. As a result, people tend to be seeking out the Tranzac and Emmet Ray for one reason or another, while The Rex gets more customers coming from off the street. Musician Cory Weeds contrasted how The Cellar, the Vancouver club he formerly managed, drew different crowds relative to The Rex due to how it functioned: “People come to The Cellar because they're making plans to come to The Cellar. They're not coming to The Cellar because they happen upon it as

152 This factor is less important than it might seem, however. While it is true that the Entertainment District has other tent-pole cultural institutions in Toronto such as Second City Comedy Theatre, Roy Thomson Hall, Royal Alexandra Theatre, and especially the very close Sony Centre For The Performing Arts. These audiences did not appear to have the close affinity for The Rex that similar crowds going to theatres slightly east of this once had with The Senator. I speculate that this might have to do with the relative informality of The Rex which may not be the ideal pairing with a symphony concert, Broadway-style musical, or the opera for middle-to-upper class couples and retirees (the typical demographic) dressed for the venues mentioned above.
they're walking by. That's good for us. I like that because we don't have to educate people that way” (McGregor 2013).

Figure 11: Venue Diagram - The Rex Hotel Layout

Additional Seating (slightly raised)
4.4 << The Venues of the TSGJ Subscene in Relation to the Toronto Jazz Scene >>

The landscape of Toronto’s jazz scene includes a variety of venues that accommodate particular kinds of jazz groups that utilize particular practices. At a kind of extreme, The Tranzac is particularly forgiving acoustically, has been programmed by very open-minded bookers, and has tended to attract unusually attentive audiences – all of which was ideal for the groups in my subscene. On the other hand, the compensation and the size of these audiences can be limited. (In addition, there is not a quality piano.) A second venue, The Rex, has inconsistent attention from audiences, less-than-perfect sound, and is less friendly to a more avant-garde leaning group. On the other hand, some later time slots do compensate better and audiences can be significantly larger. (Plus, there is an adequate piano.) The Emmet Ray represents a compromise given its acceptable but confining acoustics, mostly attentive audiences in a somewhat loud venue, and pay that is in between these two venues. Many other venues on the scene are possible for many of these stable groups including several non-profit venues and sometimes even the very mainstream-oriented The Jazz Bistro. All of this points to how this subscene does not have rigid boundaries in relation to these venues, but intersects with the entire overall Toronto jazz scene. Groups in this subscene will end up appearing at these sites depending on which of them correlates best with their personae and how they function as a collective. With collective musical persona in mind, in the next chapter I describe the four primary groups of my study.
Chapter 5
Introducing the Primary Groups of the Study:
The Role of Social Dynamics

5.1 << Introduction >>

In Chapters 3 and 4, I described the changing landscape of the Toronto jazz scene. I portrayed how, in the wake of the mid-2000s collapse of the “second wave of mainstream jazz” in Toronto, three sites have emerged for a new subscene of younger, stable long-term groups. In this chapter, I introduce the four primary bands in my study.

As I indicated in Chapter 1, all four primary groups self-identify as “jazz groups,” and are therefore, in some fashion, influenced by jazz’s musical and social tradition(s). To that end, I pointed out in Chapter 2 that there are traditions around how stable lineups have been used in jazz groups – and therefore there are many jazz groups from the past that have provided inspiration.

However, I also suggested in Chapter 1 that the paradigm of the rock band—with its emphasis on building a long-term collective persona—appears to be an important precedent. Like the archetypal rock band, each of the groups in the study tried to build its collective musical persona around the collaborative way they played their repertoire and especially their original music. Like many rock bands, each of these groups was seeking their own “original, authentic sound.” Even more so than with typical jazz practice, this meant relying not just on highly skilled colleagues but trusted friends willing to commit to developing a collective approach.

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153 I am leaving aside the notion of the “cover band,” which is a polar opposite to this archetype. Given that cover bands usually attempt to carefully imitate the work of another band or possibly a handful of related bands, this indicates that the band playing its own material is the archetype.
5.2  << The Role of Social Dynamics and Bandleaders on Jazz Groups  >>

Musicians in the local scene of any genre typically form groups based on prior relationships – relationships that are both musical and social. Given the typical emphasis on interactivity and dialogue, social compatibility is often especially valuable in jazz practice:

With growing sensitivity to the nuances of collective improvisation and a new perspective on earlier musical encounters, [jazz] performers attach special significance to the support and emotional warmth they had formerly shared with players in particular bands. Over time, they increasingly discriminate in forming their associations. (Berliner 1994: 507)

However, most jazz performances are not played by a long-standing group with a consistent lineup. Instead, in most local jazz scenes, as well as among the most famous historical groups, there is a greater reliance on frequent clusters or pairings of musicians (even though, as I described in Chapter 2, the alternative tradition of stable groups has been critical to jazz’s development).\(^\text{154}\) Again, this contrasts with the dominant paradigm in rock music (at least, by the mid-1960s). And, in fact, many groups playing jazz of some description on a given occasion—whether at a jam session, for background music, or even a featured concert—will be an entirely ad hoc grouping of musicians who may or may not have even met before.

\(^{154}\) Arguably, this is because many jazz contexts rely on prescribed idiomatic roles, making social compatibility less critical. Where this social-musical compatibility typically is most critical is in rhythm sections, which is why certain nexuses have remained more consistent rather than full bands. Consider the many consistent pairings of bass and drums (e.g. Charlie Haden and Paul Motian; Richard Davis and Elvin Jones), piano and drums (e.g. “Red” Garland and “Philly” Joe Jones; McCoy Tyner and Elvin Jones; Kenny Kirkland and Jeff “Tain” Watts), and entire rhythm sections (e.g. Count Basie’s early rhythm section of Basie-Green-Page-Jones; Wynton Kelly-Paul Chambers-Jimmy Cobb; or Hancock-Carter-Williams). Each of these units was utilized over the course of several years to anchor many famous recordings. Also, consider Miles Davis’s group from 1955 through 1962, which is universally considered to be among the most commercially and artistically successful “consistent” group of its period. He used three different pianists, two different drummers, two tenor saxophonists, and added Julian “Cannonball” Adderly on alto saxophone, but only for roughly two years. The only true constant apart from Davis was Paul Chambers on bass.
Nonetheless, it is often argued among jazz musicians and fans that the “best” jazz occurs among colleagues that at least trust and respect one another. To that end, Ingrid Monson utilizes sociologist Erving Goffman’s term “face work” to describe how, among jazz performers, their common lingua franca will often provide a way to “save or enhance one another’s faces,” particularly when there is a “breach” or “gaffe” in performance practice, however defined by the context of the genre or repertoire (Monson 1999: 176). Therefore, trust and cooperation are very important to jazz groups, even while acknowledging the individual responsibility of acquiring the skills and knowledge necessary to play:

There is something very personal about jazz improvisation at its best, something very moving, both literally and figuratively. However much a musician may desire to prove himself or herself the best in relationship to his or her peers, most jazz performances involve a fundamental dependence on the cooperation of others in achieving this end. Goffman emphasizes that face is a social construct, rather than a solely individual attribute…While much literature about jazz has emphasized the competitive or cutting quality of the relationships between jazz musicians, it is also important to remember that solidarity and emotional bonds with other musicians are emphasized when players talk about what they love best about performing, what they love most about being a part of a musical community. (Monson 1999: 177)

Jazz always involves leaning on a certain amount of this trust in any performance, and, as Monson, points out collective trust is a quality that has arguably been underemphasized.

However, in long-term stable jazz projects playing less conventional original music, trust is paramount from the beginning. These compositions often contain highly specific challenges. Therefore, I found that all of the groups I encountered in the scene demanded social compatibility as much as musical compatibility, and that, further, their distinctive musical practices were only enhanced as the musicians got to know each other better over the course of working with each other in each other’s projects. But while there was a greater sense of collective identity fostered among the primary groups in my study, a bandleader was always involved to initiate and shepherd the project.

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155 This process was facilitated in other musical projects, both jazz-oriented and otherwise, that did not meet the parameters of my study.
Indeed, this reliance on a leader to at least initiate the group was one important nod to jazz convention.\textsuperscript{156} In each case, the leader began by contacting the other musicians and suggested a location to either try out his original compositions or “just jam” in some fashion—either with mutually familiar tunes or with feels—to “test the waters” and see if the musical chemistry worked. Berliner describes how the bandleader’s selection of personnel, even in “mainstream” jazz situations, amounted to being an act of “composition”:

The configuration of musical personalities and talents within each band establishes its fundamental framework and determines its unique possibilities for invention. For those reasons, the leader’s initial selection of personnel is itself a compositional act, requiring a special kind of sensitivity. Precise musical vision, knowledge of performance styles of prospective players, and prescient judgment of their potential as interacting improvisers profoundly affect the group’s chances for success as an artistic enterprise. (Berliner 1994: 509)

With all of the study’s primary groups, one leader was more responsible for bringing the group together in the beginning, though why this leader did so, and the manner of the original contact between the musicians was often very different. However, given that these musicians were being selected for possible long-term projects with specific approaches, this selection of band members was especially critical—much more so than in mainstream projects.

After band membership was solidified, leaders typically continued with many responsibilities unrelated to playing or composition—though often other members might contribute in other ways, depending on the kind of project. These responsibilities typically ran from the practical to the more overtly artistic, to aspects that are in service of presentation at the event (though, in reality, all of these are interrelated and difficult to categorize):

1) Practical: scheduling rehearsals, printing/copying parts as needed, booking gigs/tours, applying for public grants, and more

\textsuperscript{156} Though there were other examples of groups in the TSGJ subscene that appeared to have no single leader, acting as a completely “pure collective” in their organization from the beginning, these groups appear to be outliers.
2) Artistic: writing compositions, suggesting or confirming possible “cover repertoire,” contributing to arrangement of repertoire (either with written arrangements or suggestions in rehearsal)

3) Presentational: designing set lists, making announcements from stage

All of these roles (aside maybe from notating compositions) would be typical of rock bands as well; however, I left out one key artistic contribution that all members of a jazz group obviously make – improvisation. While it is true that the way the individual musicians perform songs is also important to the identity or persona of any rock band, jazz musicians are, in most situations, given far more creative license once repertoire has been decided upon. Certainly original songs in rock bands can sometimes be composed and credited collectively (see Chapter 1) and this can make rock composition a more “collaborative” and “shared” responsibility. However, because of improvisation’s central role in performance, creative contributions by members of a jazz group are typically much more collaborative than in rock, no matter who wrote the compositions.

5.3  << Introducing the Primary Groups: “Origin Stories” and Social Dynamics >>

While all of the groups in the study relied to some extent on a bandleader to shape or steer their creative collective persona, the degree of reliance varied. Perhaps most critical to this issue was who was responsible for composing the material. Two groups, Worst Pop Band Ever and Drumheller, ended up involving many compositional voices whereas two others, Bloomsday and the Harley Card Quintet, were shaped much more strongly by the compositional voice of their leaders. Therefore, I classify these groups with this difference in creative dynamics in mind. I focus on how each band originated, how social dynamics influenced their origins and subsequent band tenures, and how the bandleaders and the rest of their members inter-related to make the band function.157

157 In Chapter 8-11, I provide in-depth discussion of three of the groups’ musical approaches. In Chapter 7, I use Worst Pop Band Ever as the primary example for how performance practice relates to venue context.
5.3.1 << Groups With Multiple Compositional Voices >>

Both Worst Pop Band Ever and Drumheller were initiated by bandleaders who brought in their own original compositions. However, both of these groups ended up having multiple musicians provide compositions and arrangements for their repertoires. This gave their groups a compositional voice that was somewhat more collective in the manner of many rock groups. On the other hand, this is unlike the overtly collaborative process in some rock bands in which repertoire is “composed” together in rehearsal (i.e. “group composition” as Berger would call it – see Chapter 1). Nonetheless, these are groups that built a persona a bit more “organically” over time as a result of this eventual diversity in their repertoires.

5.3.1.1 << Worst Pop Band Ever >>

Band timeline: 2005-
Typical personnel during my study:
Tim Shia - drums and bandleader
Chris Gale – tenor saxophone
Adrean Farrugia – piano / keyboards
Drew Birston – bass

Common substitute personnel:
Gordon Mowat – bass

Common collaborators:
LEO37 (Leo Shia) [original member] – turntables
Dafydd Hughes [original member] – piano / keyboards


Most common Toronto venue: The Rex
Toronto venues appeared at: The Tranzac, The Emmet Ray
International Music Festivals: TD Toronto Jazz Festival, Ottawa Jazz Festival, NXNE Festival
Awards: Shortlisted for NOW Toronto’s Soundclash competition
Drummer and bandleader Tim Shia grew up in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. He later studied psychology at university, but even at that point played a great deal of jazz and pop music. In 2007, he began studying music at Humber College (see Chapter 3). Since completing his studies, Shia has performed and recorded with many notable Toronto musicians not only as a freelance drummer at virtually every significant Toronto jazz venue, but also in many pop contexts as well. While he primarily makes his living as a drummer, he has also been a private instructor and teacher. In addition, he is composer-arranger not only for jazz-related groups but also for television and film projects. Worst Pop Band Ever (WPBE), however, is the group that Shia is best-known for and the one that he has spent the most time on in his professional career.

While Shia was friendly with all of the members of the group before forming it in 2005, WPBE, unlike the other primary groups was not built exclusively on friendships. Nonetheless, part of the reason for starting the group in the first place, according to Shia, was a close relationship – he wanted “an outlet” to collaborate with his brother Leo, a turntablist (personal interview, March 30, 2012). Not long after starting the group, though, Leo became unavailable as a regular member for various reasons and the group eventually settled on using him only for special occasions (e.g. an album release).

Meanwhile, the other original members of the band were not all mutual friends at that point. This original lineup featured Leo Shia on turntable, Kelly Jefferson on tenor saxophone, Dafydd Hughes on piano, Drew Birston on bass, and Tim Shia on drums. Tim Shia indicated to me that the band had, initially, one rehearsal with a few of his original compositions and some other arrangements of popular songs (see below). In 2005, they played their first engagement at The Rex (email correspondence, June 6, 2016). In one of their earliest gigs after this, they used saxophonist Chris Gale—well-known in Toronto and someone with whom he had just worked professionally—as a substitute for Jefferson.
Tim Shia confirmed that, at the time, he and Gale were barely acquainted (ibid.). However, Jefferson, being one of the most in-demand saxophonists in Canada, soon became a challenge to book for gigs or rehearsals. Drummer Shia, meanwhile, wanted a more committed group and thus ended up continuing to use Gale, whose playing also fit well with the band’s ethos (see below). Adrean Farrugia became the regular pianist after Hughes joined pop star Feist’s regular band and then returned to grad school. Farrugia was also friends with Gale and Hughes facilitating this fit. Meanwhile, Birston knew Shia well but was not a friend or regular colleague of any of the other musicians in the group.  

Shia indicated to me that, as bandleader, he formed the group with specific aesthetic/artistic goals in mind. Specifically, he wanted to play in a jazz group that, in his words, favored “melody versus pyrotechnics” and specifically avoided playing repertoire with “non-singable melod[ies]” (personal interview, March 30, 2012). In other words, it was important to choose and compose repertoire that kept a more overt connection to popular music (melody, but also groove) while still maintaining a close connection to jazz tradition(s). In doing so, of all the primary groups’ leaders, Shia was perhaps the most conscious about wanting to attract more general audiences—rather than just musicians and the most intense jazz fans—to the music, without necessarily targeting any one specific market demographic. (For more on playing for various audiences, see Chapter 6.) To accomplish this, he had specific repertoire, and just as critically, specific personnel in mind.  

In particular, Shia made clear that he wanted musicians that, on the one hand, would not only be at least socially compatible (if not all close friends at first), but would also be comfortable with bringing this “popular music” sensibility to a contemporary jazz group. According to him, saxophonist Chris Gale, original pianist Dafydd Hughes, and current pianist Adrean Farrugia all listen to and play jazz more than anything else but that

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158 Socially, Gale was a good fit, though, given that he and Hughes went to university together and were friends before that.
159 At times, though, the band has used Hughes when Farrugia was unavailable and even sometimes both of them together (with Hughes playing electronic keyboards).
160 Gordon Mowat, a frequent substitute for Birston in subsequent years, did know everyone in the group.
they have all had experience and genuine appreciation for a wide array of popular music (albeit all with different preferences). Hughes, as mentioned, played with Feist and other adventurous pop acts; Shia has played drums in a wide range of rock, blues, singer/songwriter, and R&B contexts; and Gale has played with famous rock and folk acts like Blue Rodeo, Ron Sexsmith, and Colin James.

Meanwhile, jazz-trained bassist Drew Birston has been well-known in Toronto popular music scene for high-profile sideman gigs, including performances and recordings with prominent Canadian pop singers Chantal Kreviazuk and Sarah Slean. Shia and other members of the band have suggested that Birston’s skillset and experience in popular music has been especially important. He provides a more “grounded” time feel and a stylistic versatility, both of which come to the fore when performing groove-oriented arrangements. And yet, he also has the training and experience to competently use jazz practices when necessary. Similarly, Shia also has the training and experience as a jazz musician but grew up listening to a considerable amount of hip-hop which informs his practices within the group and the fact that he has incorporated synthesizers and hip-hop DJ practices, particularly on their studio releases (again, sometimes including brother Leo).^{161}

As mentioned, Shia started the group by bringing his own compositions as well as “covers” with sparser, more “singable” melodies. He invited similar contributions in repertoire from the rest of the band with an implicit suggestion of fitting in with this aesthetic. True to the band’s namesake, they have included a number of modern popular songs in their ongoing repertoire including:

“Close to You” by The Carpenters
“Crazy Games” by Mary J. Blige
“Everybody Wants to Rule the World” by Tears For Fears
“High and Dry” by Radiohead
“If You Want Me To Stay” by Sly and the Family Stone
“Life on Mars” by David Bowie
“River Man” by Nick Drake

Farrugia and Gale also have plenty of experience as freelance musicians working with pop artists as well, though the bulk of their performing activity is more jazz-related.
While he indicated to me that he hoped that this material would connect with non-jazz fans, Shia stressed that the specific songs his group chose to interpret were selected because of their personal resonance to him or other members – not because they were attempting to reach a specific audience demographic. Ultimately, it was important for the repertoire to reflect the band’s own persona and thereby allow the audiences to approach the band on its own terms.

The band has used a variety of approaches in performing these compositions. In some cases, the approach of other influential musicians to this repertoire has inspired their arrangements. The Bad Plus, a band Shia has openly admired, has recorded “Everybody Rules the World” in a similar manner; “River Man” has become a kind of contemporary standard since Brad Mehldau’s recordings of it; and Shia has stated that they literally adapted the arrangement of “Crazy Games” from trumpeter Dave Douglas’s recording *The Infinite* (2002). Even given that they inherited some details from these other musicians’ arrangements, they found their own way into the songs. On some tunes like Sly and the Family Stone’s “If You Want Me To Stay,” the core bass ostinato and drum pattern remains relatively constant, particularly for a jazz context in which there would typically be more fluidity. Shia indicated that in this case he thought that “the bass line was the whole reason for doing [that song]” (March 30, 2012, personal interview). As suggested, this kind of bassline was tailor-made to exploit the skillset of Birston and Shia. In other cases, they used the melody and accompanying harmonies in standard “leadsheet” format and fell into more traditional roles and arrangements around the tune, which was, to a degree, the case for “Everybody.”

Though WPBE was known for playing some arrangements of modern popular songs, like all of these stable groups in the TSJG subscene, they prioritized performing their own repertoire. While much of their core repertoire has come from Shia, over time everyone in the group has contributed compositions to the group. In general, even their originals have retained some of the character of popular melody and/or groove. Indeed, one piece Farrugia brought in to have the band play—“The 10000 Things”—is one he has played with his own groups, but he chose it specifically to adapt for WPBE because it is
the kind of tune that lent itself to their aesthetic.162 In general, Worst Pop Band’s collective voice is found in compositions from all of its musicians – and their bandleader ensured that this diversity was reflected in their album releases and setlists.

Beyond their popular music aesthetic, their band name hints at WPBE’s overall approach on-stage, a demeanor which starts with their bandleader. Shia, often described as gregarious and fun-loving, considered how the personnel he enlisted has a particular way of performing influenced by their shared penchant for in-jokes and irony: “Everyone in the band is an idiot...All of us are goofs. That's the main thing about this band. We're not trying to become the ‘premiere jazz group’ of Toronto” (personal interview, March 30, 2012 [his emphasis]). While these are, without a doubt, highly qualified “idiots,” Shia picked them for their ability to play with the popular music sensibility, a sense of humour, and a social compatibility that is immediately apparent upon seeing the band live. They constantly make jokes with one another on and off stage. These members were chosen for particular musical traits to be certain, but there were also social reasons built into how the band operated that have had clear repercussions. Here, the marketing of the band meets his approach to personnel (more on this in the next chapter). While the group’s members are not equally gregarious, there is an evident shared sense of humour. At The Rex, they often laugh between tunes (and sometimes during). There is a certain postmodern humour and irony as well as an approachable melodic style to their group’s persona that is a result of the way these musicians interact and especially how they interact through their repertoire.

162 Farrugia spoke at greater length about how the band’s performing identity—which he characterized as having a stylistic “looseness” or “openness”—was manifested in how they adapted this tune in particular: “I think largely the looseness is in the willingness to let it go certain places stylistically. It’s not unusual for a tune to go spontaneously to break out into a groove that might not happen in a more traditional jazz setting. I have a tune I wrote for the band in which Tim sometimes breaks out into a full-out disco groove. It’s a tune called ‘The 10,000 Things.’ So stylistically, you know, almost in the way that some of Frank Zappa’s music would...you would suddenly hear his music go into a polka groove all of a sudden, and then a hard rock groove, and then a hokey Dixieland groove. That willingness to let it do that which ironically enough which is more in line with tradition of jazz is as an art form than a lot of what you hear. A lot of jazz is about being spontaneous and being open in the moment without constraint. For a swing tune to suddenly go polka, in a weird sort of way is very jazzy because it’s like true improvisation” (personal interview, September 21, 2013).
Band timeline: (2003-2013)

Personnel:

Nick Fraser – drums (bandleader)  
Brodie West – alto sax  
Doug Tielli – trombone  
Eric Chenaux – guitar (often absent during my study; living in France)  
Rob Clutton – bass

Typical Toronto venue: Tranzac

Also appeared at: Emmet Ray


Drummer and bandleader Nick Fraser recalls the specific events that led to the genesis of this group. In 2003, at an engagement at a now-forgotten venue, he appeared in a one-off “free improvisation” concert with guitarist Eric Chenaux and saxophonist Brodie West. He had known these two musicians for a while as musical colleagues and as friends, but they had never played as a trio. There were qualities in their ensemble interaction he liked immediately: “It was swinging and yet light in a way that free improv[isation] often isn’t…It didn’t have the dramatic highs and lows dynamically. We played in a narrow range for the entire gig, which I liked. It was melodic – they weren’t trying too hard to make something happen” (personal interview, February 4, 2013). This language, especially “swinging” and “melodic,” suggests that what Fraser valued was that their rapport seemed to be grounded in aesthetics and traditions aligned with jazz and, to an extent, popular music. Shortly after this informal performance, Fraser heard Brodie West playing in a similar context with trombonist Doug Tielli and bassist Rob Clutton, both of whom Fraser referred to as “old friends” (ibid.). He noticed that this trio also appeared to have a similar musical rapport. At this point, it seemed natural to Fraser to get everyone together to play.

Fraser was aware from the beginning that this was not a group that could have effectively performed a typical mainstream jazz performance. Their musical backgrounds
differed and thus their aesthetics occasionally clashed. Yet Fraser was aware that their differences were also complementary and that any related tensions contributed to the group’s collective persona in inspired ways:

One thing about Drumheller is we’re not all jazz musicians. Eric and Doug would refute the idea that they are jazz musicians…When you talk about the shared language of a jazz musician – Eric and Doug have some of that language but not all of it. In a sense, nobody has all of it. But Rob and Brodie and I, if we went to do a gig where it was calling jazz tunes we could go and do it. We could be: ‘All the Things You Are?’ ‘OK, sure I know that tune. What key?’ We could have that conversation. (personal interview, February 4, 2013)

In describing Doug Tielli’s skillset specifically, Fraser pointed out that mainstream criteria for jazz musicians may not apply in a group like Drumheller that is meeting jazz on its own terms: “That may be an old fashioned notion and possibly out-of-date – what jazz musicians can or should be able to do that these days at this point in the game because I really like the way Doug plays. And the fact that he might not be able to negotiate a bop tune, I’m not really concerned about that” (ibid.). In general, Fraser agreed the band had a collective musical persona built on musical personalities as individuals: “It’s a band concept but it’s also a personal concept. Doug is a very personal kind of trombone player as indeed all those guys are on their respective instruments” (ibid.). Therefore, instead of a more conventional idiomatic kind of conversation or interaction, their group thrived on the different members of the group negotiating differing conceptions of jazz itself. This negotiation was partially accomplished in how the individual musicians compose for the group and partially by how they interact as a group within those compositional frameworks. But by choosing such contrasting yet complementary musicians to perform this way together, Fraser made an initial artistic choice that turned out to be key to the group’s emergent collective persona.

As a result, at the group earliest “sessions,” the group tried a similarly open-ended approach as they had on previous concerts – not using compositions or “tunes” of any kind: “At first, we did some free improvising…Sometimes instead of purely improvising, we’d call off a tempo and/or a feel and start improvising” (personal interview, February
4, 2013). Eventually, though, the band started to move organically in another direction – one that better served their practical needs as they searched for a group persona:

...at a certain point, we started playing each others’ tunes and that seemed a better and more fruitful direction...Free improvising is really unreliable unless you’re really committed to it and five people is a lot to handle with that. The thing with playing tempos and feels, or tunes that we didn’t all know, we were searching for more structure in how we played. So when we started playing each other’s music, then this felt like “oh, this makes more sense; here’s the structure.” (ibid.)

As a result, they settled on embracing the convention of having a more stable repertoire. In the beginning, this involved some use of famous jazz compositions (those of Thelonious Monk and Ornette Coleman in particular), but eventually the band settled on playing its own compositions exclusively.

Fraser describes an apocryphal, if somewhat anomalous, performance in which the band took a turn to more conventional jazz practices. This was a rare occurrence of using substitute players – a bassist and pianist. The default to jazz conventions did not sit as well with everyone in the group:

We played some Drumheller tunes and some non-Drumheller tunes. Doug [Tielli] said to me afterward ‘Why is jazz always so long?’ And I know what he meant, because every tune we’d go around the horn – there’d be a sax solo, trombone solo, piano solo, bass solo, and then trading... That’s assumed among a lot of jazz musicians and it’s not assumed for Doug. He has a problem with doing it the same way on every song. He’d ask: ‘why are we doing this?’ (personal interview, February 4, 2013)

In fact, bowing to convention in routine fashion is exactly what TSGJ bands like Drumheller tended to avoid. With this band, the clash of the musicians’ backgrounds usually prevents it. Several of the members (Fraser, Clutton, and West) had extensive experience in mainstream jazz (while remaining open to a lot of other music) while Tielli and Chenaux, certainly had jazz-related backgrounds, but unlike Fraser or Clutton in particular have not appeared at venues most commonly associated with the mainstream jazz scene in Toronto (see Chapters 3 and 4).
The group continued for years with Fraser organizing rehearsals, booking gigs and eventually cross-Canada tours, instigating recording sessions for Canadian independent label Rat Drifting, crafting the setlists, and serving as the band’s “emcee” on stage. Eventually, he secured a monthly residence at The Tranzac, which was especially helpful in developing the band’s approach as well as its own audience. In crafting setlists, Fraser valued keeping the collective compositional voice of the band front and center: “I am usually the one that decides which tunes to play and I try to make sure everyone is represented. Not in every set. But if we did three gigs and none of Rob [Clutton]’s tunes that would be weird” (personal interview, February 4, 2013). Fraser, in speaking to his role as bandleader, also knew it was important to address the audience (an issue I deal with in greater detail in Chapter 7):

I address the audience. I think in general, talking to the audience…it’s important. I think you get them on your side by how you do it. I know that some of the music we play is unconventional… if you just go ‘this is a tune called blank,’ then I think that you’re not offering the audience what you could offer. You’re not allowing them to come in. (ibid.)

Through his role as “emcee” for his band, Fraser provided a way to build an audience for this group. As he did so, he demonstrated an awareness that part of his group’s musical persona was their overt subversion of mainstream jazz conventions.

As I described, the band had many social connections previous to joining the band, and these were only strengthened after many years of playing together. West, revealed his own aesthetic preferences in his explanation for why he joined the group: “Part of the reason I joined it and like the band is that I’m more comfortable in a more open situation where I think it’s more about knowing each other personalities and approaches” (personal interview, August 9, 2013). In other words, to West the group is grounded in the very idea of knowing each other. This band only functions because of this very specific kind of social and musical openness and compatibility.
5.3.2  << Groups With the Leader’s Compositional Voice  >>

Bandleaders David French and Harley Card had similar practical and presentational responsibilities to Tim Shia and Nick Fraser. For example, French and Card also booked rehearsals, performances and studio sessions, acted as “emcees” on-stage, and were involved to some extent in promotional strategies. However, for these two bandleaders, their artistic responsibilities extended even further. This was because these bandleaders started these groups specifically to interact within their compositions. I place emphasis on the term “interact” because these bandleaders expected the musicians in their groups to still have a great deal of creative latitude. After all, both of these musicians were quite adamant that they were leading jazz groups, and thus various levels of improvisational practice were expected in their compositions – though this varied depending on the composer and the composition.

Though each group was clearly a reflection of its leader and his compositional voice, their compositions often demanded very specific and unconventional practices that demanded a long-term group. Indeed, in some cases, particular musicians were necessary to enact the bandleader’s compositions and the group’s way of interacting within them.

\[163\] As it turns out, both French and Card have presented their music on stage with a more low-key personality. They typically announced titles of their compositions (and the occasional standard) but would only occasionally make jokes or involve audiences in the manner that Fraser or especially Shia did.
5.3.2.1 << Bloomsday >>

Timeline: Jan 2012-Jun 2013

Regular personnel during my study:

David French – tenor sax / bass clarinet / leader
Kevin Turcotte – trumpet
Michael Davidson - vibraphone
Jon Maharaj – bass
Ethan Ardelli – drum set
Fabio Ragnelli – drum set

Other personnel:

Jon Challoner – trumpet [original member]
Dan Fortin – bass [common substitute]

Saxophonist David French initiated Bloomsday in early 2012. He had spent most of the previous two years on the road touring with pop acts including Canadian superstar singer-songwriter, Feist. In between tours, he was a freelance musician in Toronto, often playing jazz. This included local performances with his newly-formed quartet of slightly older jazz musicians. This group recorded an album in 2011. French told me he was on the road less frequently by 2012, and had begun to play more with jazz musicians his age and younger.

Eventually, a few of the players he played with most often with would become part of the original lineup of Bloomsday, a group formed to play some of his then recent compositions. French valued these musicians for their high level of musicianship and their compatibility with his creative voice. In addition, he told me he knew from the start that the project would demand more rehearsal investment, a long-term commitment and relatively stable personnel, and would thus be more likely to succeed with friends willing to make such sacrifices (personal interview, April 1, 2012).164

As bandleader, French had a more specific artistic mandate for Bloomsday than the other bandleaders I interviewed. He told me that he initiated the group with “specific

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164 In discussing the project with the original band members, all of them appeared very enthusiastic to be involved from the beginning for social reasons as much as anything. As Ardelli put it: “I did it because the base of the band is really all of my favourite people” (personal interview, August 6, 2013).
musical experiments” in mind (personal interview, April 1, 2012). First, he wanted to lead a jazz group larger than his prior quartet (a sextet, in this case) that focused on rhythm as the primary creative and expressive variable, which he considered something of a departure from mainstream jazz convention:

Sometimes I hear people talk about expressivity, and they are frequently talking about melodic expressivity through the use of dynamics, texture and all of that. I do believe that if you ask even a good baroque violinist about this, that rhythm is the primary means of musical expressivity in terms of notation. (ibid.)

French indicated that despite how much rhythm is emphasized in jazz generally, for mid-sized groups (larger than a quintet) having rhythm as the primary expressive device broke with jazz convention: “…as [small jazz] groups grow…they tend to operate under these circumstances as an inverted pyramid where rhythm isn’t a category that’s expanded on. For lack of a better way of putting it, it often becomes kind of ‘chamber music’ plus a drummer” (ibid.). For most jazz players and fans, the term “chamber music” or “chamber jazz” tends to denote music that utilizes less overt rhythmic interplay and a narrower, softer range of dynamics, which foregrounds greater density in harmony and/or more chromatic and florid melodies. These elements are usually drawn out by the result of carefully crafted arrangements. In contrast, French’s compositions for Bloomsday typically did not emphasize dense harmony but rather some melodic counterpoint and substantial rhythmic complexity. Furthermore, French indicated to me that he paid particular attention to matters of tempo, feel, and groove as they applied to this repertoire, given how important these aspects were to the musical persona of this group (ibid.).

Among the most distinctive aspects of the group was French’s decision to have two drummers both playing a full drum kit – an instrumentation which underlined French’s emphasis on rhythm. He told me he was initially inspired by being on tour alongside Tortoise – a Chicago-based popular instrumental indie prog-rock band. Tortoise used two bass players, a mallet percussionist playing vibraphone and marimba, and two drummers. They rarely improvised; rather, they played more elaborate compositions, often utilizing what French referred to as “interesting rhythmic textures,”

165 I analyze French’s compositional voice in greater detail in Chapter 10.
“overlapping rhythms,” and “metric modulations” that were made more pronounced because of having two drummers (personal interview, April 1, 2012). Also, though French noted he was not interested in capitalizing on this inspiration to build a specifically rock audience, he found that their two-drummer instrumentation led to an “extroverted” energy he thought might translate to audiences in general. Though he was unaware of other jazz musicians utilizing the two-drummer approach, he thought the concept might work in a jazz setting if the group were to use his compositions orchestrated, in part, to exploit the possibilities of this instrumentation and if, in particular, he were to use the right drummers.166

To that end, French needed two drummers who were not merely high-skilled, but complementary and who could easily work with each other. Accordingly, French has always maintained that Bloomsday was built around drummers Ethan Ardelli and Fabio Ragnelli: “This isn’t a band where any two drummers would do” (personal interview, April 1, 2012). Perhaps not surprisingly, they were long-time close friends and even lived together for a time. Beyond this, they had complimentary approaches with similar influences. However, as I demonstrate in my analysis in Chapter 10, Ragnelli has a slightly more extroverted approach than Ardelli. In general, with two drummers, there was always the potential for overwhelming a primary soloist or the overall texture with too much percussive density. Ardelli indicated that his long, close friendship with Fabio Ragnelli allowed for more sensitive interaction:

Especially when you’re accompanying somebody, you have to be somewhat giving. If they’re going a certain way, there’s options but no matter what – you have to listen and be engaging and responsive. If it’s friends, it makes it that much easier. Because Fab [Ragnelli] and I are such good friends, we don’t try to outdo each other; there’s zero ego involved…Maybe I’ll leave him some space to shine rather than outdo him or vice versa. (personal interview, August 6, 2013)167

Again, French knew that in general this project would rely on strong musical and social ties tied together by a common artistic purpose:

166 In addition, he spoke to me about how musical inspirations from various sources influenced his compositional approach. I elucidate that aspect in greater detail in Chapter 10.
167 This was evident in several performances. In Chapter 10, I’ll be returning to this concept, analyzing details from one representative composition.
The question of the players’ characters can’t really be discounted…A lot of it has to do with everyone in the band I think is aesthetically allied. Which isn’t to say that we like the same thing all the time, but we’re allied and working together. (personal interview, April 1, 2012)

For French, the social and musical were evidently inseparable.

Vibraphonist Michael Davidson, bassist Jon Maharaj, and original member trumpeter Jon Challoner were all peers and friends of about the same age – all of them, like Ragnelli and Ardelli, attended either Humber College or the University of Toronto (see Chapter 3). All of them have been recognized among their peers to be among the most virtuosic and versatile musicians to emerge from the city in recent years. When Challoner left for New York, however, he was replaced by veteran Toronto trumpeter Kevin Turcotte. This may speak to the fact that the trumpet parts, while challenging, were not as convention-shifting in terms of instrument role as the rhythm section parts.

In any case, Bloomsday’s “we’re-all-in-this-together” attitude also reflects rock band ethos far more than mainstream jazz convention. French told me that when both drummers moved away to New York City at different times between 2012 and 2013, it necessitated ending the group – testimony to the importance of the specific collective and these drummers especially. As a result, this band was the most short-lived of all the projects I studied. This is again reflective, however, of the resemblance to rock practice – rock bands are usually more reliant on a lineup and are more likely to “break up” once a key band member or two leave.
5.3.2.2 << Harley Card Quintet >>

Timeline: Quartet - 2004-2008  Quintet - 2009-

Personnel:
Harley Card – electric guitar / leader
David French – tenor and baritone saxophone
Matt Newton – Rhodes piano
Jon Maharaj – acoustic bass
Ethan Ardelli – drum set

Common Substitute: Fabio Ragnelli – drum set

Common Toronto venues: Emmet Ray, Tranzac, The Rex

Albums: Non Fiction (2008), Hedgerow (2013)


Harley Card has spent most of his adult life as a guitarist based in Toronto. He began studying jazz, though, at Mohawk College, a smaller applied college in Hamilton just outside Toronto. A year later, he transferred to the University of Toronto where he eventually received a Bachelor’s degree in Performance (Jazz). Ever since, he has been active in Toronto in many jazz and “creative music” projects both as leader and sideman. Many of the projects under his leadership have toured widely and received grants from provincial and municipal organizations. In addition, in 2008, he was a semi-finalist in the internationally prestigious Montreux Jazz Festival Competition. Card, in sum, is highly visible among younger jazz musicians in Toronto.

The roots of the Harley Card Quintet go back to the University of Toronto in late 2003-2004 when Card formed a group for the small group performance class that included Ethan Ardelli and Matt Newton. Newton was, at one point, the co-leader and as a result the group’s repertoire included his compositions as well as Card’s.\(^{168}\) Card, like all leaders of the groups in my study, pointed out that having a close social relationship with Ardelli and Newton was important for making the group easy to rehearse: “You want to play with people whose musicianship you respect, but you also want to have a

\(^{168}\) Since bowing out of the leadership role, Newton has had his own groups that have focused on his works.
hang…[and] treat it as an opportunity to have fun with your friends” (personal interview, August 7, 2013). Eventually, in late 2004 or early 2005, he added bassist Jon Maharaj to the group. Card admitted to being intimidated to ask Maharaj to join because of the bassist’s musical prodigiousness at a young age. He also told me that his discomfort was eased by the social relationships that Maharaj had with other members of the group:

I remember when we first started playing with Jon [Maharaj], I was intimidated the first few times I played with him because he’s such a fantastic musician. The fact that I knew him socially a bit is what gave me the confidence to ask him to play more gigs and then become part of this group. (ibid.)

It is apparent to anyone watching the band in performance the ease the band has with each other – a quality I describe in greater detail in Chapter 7.

From 2005 to 2007, even before Card had graduated from U of T, the group became the primary vehicle for the bandleader’s own compositions, maintaining a visible presence at many Toronto venues (including all three primary venues in the TSGJ subscene). In 2008, the quartet recorded Non-Fiction, Card’s debut album as leader. The album was critically well-received and had considerable airplay on jazz shows on CBC Radio (Canada’s public broadcaster).

After graduating with his bachelor’s degree, Card wanted to continue with these same musicians because they were accustomed to playing together and in particular, because they were used to playing his compositions. By 2009, though, Card was writing compositions that he thought would benefit from an additional melodic voice – specifically, a saxophone or trumpet (a nod to convention). He tried out various players but by mid-2009 settled on David French. This was not only because of his high-level musicianship and stylistic compatibility but because he was a good social fit:

…the plan was always to expand it to a quintet, and shortly after meeting Dave [French] and playing, I invited him to play with us… We played with a bunch of gigs with different horn players when we hadn’t really decided, or I hadn’t, on who would be a permanent member of the group. And part of the reason why we, or rather, why I kept coming back to think about writing for Dave… was not only because of the way he plays and the aspect of the jazz tradition his playing
accesses in my imagination, but there’s also he can be just such a great guy. (personal interview, August 7, 2013)

Card told me that he settled on French, in part, because “the way he plays” in relation to “jazz tradition” inspired a particular development of Card’s compositional voice – a voice that would contribute a great deal to the band’s collective musical persona. In addition, though, interpersonal dynamics were key – French was well-known to everyone in the band and Card clearly enjoyed being around him.

The Harley Card Quintet is, in some respects the most convention-oriented group of those in the TSGJ subscene – especially in relation to leadership dynamics. In presenting the band in performance, Card was low-key and stayed close to what is typically seen in mainstream jazz. He simply announced titles of compositions and introduced individual members of the group. The band had a highly conventional name with the name of its leader featured in a way that might suggest a less collective sense of identity – i.e. “Harley Card Quartet/Quintet.” Indeed, early on, when the group was still a quartet but under Card’s sole leadership, he admitted that he usually maintained a tighter control over his compositions. However, as Card became more enmeshed in this TSGJ subscene this gradually shifted to a more collaborative, collective approach:

I’m a lot more open-minded than a few years ago when I started the group. I’m not that married to any of my ideas anymore. I think that just comes from having done more collaborations with other groups where it is more open like that. You’ve got these brilliant musicians in the room. You might as well use their expertise. If they’ve got a strong opinion, or even a mild one, it’s probably worth considering or checking it out. (personal interview, August 7, 2013)

In Chapter 11, I will consider this group’s evolution in relation to Card’s specific compositional approach in greater detail. Nonetheless, the point is that as a result of Card’s compositional voice and the greater input of the group’s collaborators, this is a group that has a collective voice, albeit one arguably more strongly tied to its leader than any of the other projects.
5.4   **Conclusion**

These four TSGJ subscene groups were all founded because a bandleader initially invited musicians into a room to play. Musical compatibility was, obviously, a key consideration, but social compatibility was critical from the beginning. As each of these bands developed a collective musical persona, some were driven by the leader’s compositional voice. Even in these cases, the leader tended to compose for the specific musicians in his group and the way they play and interact rather than for a “default” jazz group. For those bands with several composers, they were still obviously influenced, at a minimum, by the specific personnel that the leader chose in the beginning (the “initial act of composition”) and the emerging persona that this grouping of musicians was creating. In any case, for all of these bands, the ongoing bandleader’s shepherding of practical and artistic concerns was critical in developing this collective musical persona. In Chapter 6, I describe a revealing practical matter in relation to persona – how the primary groups in my study as well as other TSGJ subscene groups describe their collective identity publicly in promoting themselves.
Chapter 6
Promoting the Collective Persona of the Stable Jazz Group

6.1 << Introduction >>

In Chapters 3 and 4, I described the larger Toronto jazz scene, past and present. In so doing, I have pointed out how certain venues—and in particular my study’s three primary venues—have become sites for what I am calling a “subscene” of younger stable long-term groups. Then, in Chapter 5, I introduced four of these groups that I studied in-depth. I focused on the role of the bandleader and the importance of social dynamics of the band – all in relation to how these groups developed a “collective musical persona.”

In this chapter I describe the concept of a band’s projection of themselves to their potential audiences – what I call a promotional front. Furthermore, I hypothesize that all of these bands find ways of projecting their musical personae in how they publicly connect themselves to musical traditions – through jazz certainly, but also other traditions including popular musics. In the next section, I theorize about trends I have seen about how these groups accomplish this.

Then, I consider how my study’s primary groups as well as other prominent groups in this subscene have promoted their bands, with a focus on projecting their respective personae. Specifically, I describe how they present this on two of the most common platforms for contemporary freelance musicians: online and in press interviews. Also, while this chapter is not focused on analyzing these groups’ musical approaches in detail, I stress how these groups present themselves as connecting to jazz and popular music tradition(s).
6.2 << Developing a Promotional Front >>

As I described in Chapter 1, it was rock culture in the mid-to-late 1960s that solidified the paradigm of the “band” which works to develop a group identity or “collective musical persona.” In so doing, I am tweaking Philip Auslander’s concept of a “musical persona” (2006). Auslander points out that there are parts of a group’s persona that contribute to the impression left on an audience that are not strictly musical. He points to sociologist Erving Goffman’s description of a performer’s “personal front” which has two key facets – “manner” (i.e. behaviour) and “appearance” (Goffman 1959: 22-24). While Auslander highlights some examples of musicians making conscious decisions to mold such a front in performance, both of them indicate that much of the process of creating such a front there happens “unwittingly” (Auslander 2006: 108). Auslander and Goffman are mostly focused, however, on the individual and how s/he projects this front in performance.

Musicians can develop a “front” outside of the stage. Ultimately, most independent musicians—which is to say those not in the employ of an institution or supported by a major label—will develop what I call a promotional front. Furthermore, a front can also be applied to the group. That is, groups will utilize various strategies to try to project the collective persona to a potential audience.

The extent to which a musical group develops its promotional front varies widely, not only according to its promotional ambitions, but also in relation to the (sub)genre’s conventions around promotion. For example, classical groups, or at least those performing works primarily pre-1950, tend to follow narrower constraints in promotion. The genre tends to have a much more formal promotional style which would appear to correlate with its more rigid performance conventions. Posters or event announcements of a classical concert featuring a group will prominently list the name of the ensemble and the listing of composers being programmed (and sometimes the specific works) with a very conservative font. Pictures, when used, are almost always of those composers or, alternatively, of the musicians in formal or semi-formal wear with their instruments.
(Rarely, it may be a canonical Western European visual artwork that is in keeping with the theme of a given program.) Even in cases in which groups deviate from these conventions such musicians are very self-aware of doing so.

Meanwhile, rock musicians use a much wider array of possible strategies – in fact, the spectrum is so broad that it is beyond the scope of this paper to comprehensively list and categorize all of them. The larger point is that while rock bands will often play off subgenre tropes, they are often quite self-aware of creating a “promotional front” that, relative to classical music in particular, is specific to the group. It is typically a front that will get across the idea that this is a group playing “their own music” in service of a collective persona.

The first step in solidifying a rock band’s persona, and the basis of its promotional front, is the band name. Ruth Finnegan, in her study of pop/rock groups in Milton Keynes, England, found that deciding on a name was a turning point in forming identity:

When a group was first formed it had no real identity, but once it had a name took on a new quality. The very fact that the band had its own title gave its players a mark of unity and shared purpose for both themselves and outsiders. The life-cycle of bands was short and their organization [sic] informal and precarious; but through the system of band names, each group marked out its well-recognised [sic] claim to its own unique identity and pride. (1989: 265)

There are many informal ways that bands choose names, and this leads to many different ways in the relationship of band name to its identity. Many bands opt to signal a subgenre/stylistic affiliation – sometimes overtly (e.g. The Beach Boys, Metallica, The Bluesbreakers), but more often through a reference to a symbol within that subgenre (e.g. The Rolling Stones). Also, the band may want to project a specific tone – which itself can sometimes be tied to subgenre (e.g. The Clash, Rage Against the Machine). In other cases, the band may want to express some other affiliation – for example, geography (e.g. The New York Dolls, Alabama Shakes), politics (e.g. Gang of Four, U2) or even sexual identity (e.g. Queen). As often as not, however, such names can seem more abstract and

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169 Mind you, given subgenres will sometimes be stricter about conventions within rock as well. There are certainly tropes to be found in, for example, death and thrash metal promotional materials from the 1980s.
merely a way to provide a memorable banner for a group. Without prior knowledge, it would be hard to assume a specific tone or subgenre from a name like “Cream,” “Radiohead,” or especially the ultimate anti-name, “The Band.”\(^{170}\) Again, there are those cases of bandleader-driven bands, but even then there is still usually a similar band name for the so-called “backing band” (e.g. Prince and the Revolution, Jimi Hendrix and The Experience, Bruce Springsteen and the E-Street Band).

Only recently have some chamber groups in classical music and a greater number of acoustic jazz groups named their groups in similar fashion. Convention for classical chamber groups was much more rigid – they have most often tended to identify themselves using the name of the place (often a city) they were founded in or a canonical composer and attached this to the conventional term for the type of ensemble (e.g. Tokyo String Quartet, Leopold String Trio, etc.). Meanwhile, convention in jazz was already described in detail in Chapter 2, and when followed it may have been even more rigid – it typically meant naming the bandleader and the size of the group (e.g. Miles Davis Quintet, Bill Evans Trio). I described the gradual evolution in naming conventions in jazz, but this paradigm has remained common to this day.

In fact, this paradigm remains a popular choice in jazz, even among groups that are clearly long-term stable groups (e.g. Harley Card Quintet). I would argue that this may be because, for one thing, some groups want to signify their connection to jazz tradition more directly in their band name, and, for another, some groups want to indicate those projects that are the result of a single compositional voice (see Chapter 5). In considering “promotional fronts,” starting with band names, I wanted to begin with listing a number of prominent, relatively successful stable long-term groups in this Toronto subscene. I have set the following criteria for “prominence” and “success” – and all of these groups meet at least five of the following six criteria:

- lasted as a unit for at least three years with a lineup that remained the same or had only one member change

\(^{170}\) There are plenty of apocryphal stories of rock bands electing to pick their name “randomly.” R.E.M. lead singer Michael Stipe has claimed that the band name was chosen by flipping through the dictionary (Buckley 2002).
• toured twice or more in multiple cities beyond the Greater Toronto area
• received regular radio airplay on Toronto stations (Jazz.FM91, CIUT Community Radio, CBC Radio) or charted on nationwide campus/community radio charts
• won or been a finalist for national music industry / creative awards
• recorded and released at least one full-length album
• developed a local Toronto following that attended their concerts

Prominent Toronto Groups:

- Peripheral Vision
- Run Stop Run
- Daniel Fortin Quartet
- PRAM Trio
- Myriad3
- Allison Au Quartet
- Lina Allemano Four

This is, admittedly, a somewhat random sampling from a much larger (sub)scene. There are certainly other groups that have more conventional jazz “band names.” Nonetheless, all of these particular groups, as well as Worst Pop Band Ever, Harley Card Quintet, Bloomsday, and Drumheller, were mainstays at one, if not two or three, of the subscene’s primary venues – The Rex, The Emmet Ray, and The Tranzac. At the very least, this would suggest there is, in this subscene’s naming practices, a confluence of jazz and rock convention.

In any case, the TSGJ subscene had examples of both kinds of names, but there does appear to be some correlation between having a name tied to the leader and having the group play his/her works. As I indicated in Chapter 5, Drumheller’s concerts have always included compositions from every member of the band and, as I will look at in more detail in Chapter 9, they took a more collaborative approach to interpreting these compositions. For most other local Toronto groups with band names not referencing an

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171 This criterion is arguably the loosest, given that I am basing the existence of a “following” on observing multiple concerts from all of these bands, rather than on any precise data.
individual leader—including Worst Pop Band Ever, PRAM Trio, Myriad3, and Peripheral Vision—more than one member of these groups contributed compositions or arrangements. Meanwhile, Harley Card indicated to me that it was rare that other musicians contribute compositions to his Quintet, and this model appears to be the same for the groups led by Lina Allemano (Lina Allemano Four) and Allison Au (Allison Au Quartet). David French’s group Bloomsday is the outlier here, as the band exclusively plays covers and his compositions. Typically, though, to at least this extent, the band name is a way to signify to its jazz audience whether the group has a more overtly collective or leader-driven voice, especially compositionally.

Obviously, the larger point is that this range of naming strategies suggests, at a minimum, a much greater range of approaches to a “promotional front” than is typical for mainstream jazz.

6.3  << Promoting the Stable Jazz Group’s Collective Persona  >>

Beyond the name, how are these bands representing their personae – asserting their collective musical personae? The most common contemporary forums for promotion I saw were either through press interview or in Internet promotion. While I have already theorized that bands in this subscene have distinct musical personae, I have also noted patterns in the language they use to promote their personae emphasize the collective, rather than focusing on the individual improvising skills and talents of individual members. As a result, I found common themes in the language of how these musicians describe their bands:

1) They will often directly address that their band, in fact, has such a distinct collective identity or persona. This will often result in language about the

172 Postering at the venues themselves was also a part of most groups’ promotional fronts, but I opted not to study this in detail.
band/group/collective having a “voice,” “identity,” “philosophy,” “aesthetic,” “way of playing” or other similar descriptors.

2) In so doing, the musicians will frequently make a point to suggest that their groups interact with various parts of jazz tradition(s) rather than just a homogenous sense of “jazz.”

3) Often, “tradition” and especially “jazz tradition,” are invoked, but this is usually offset by emphasizing how a given band also interacts or engages with “other” musical influences or practices; sometimes, this is implied by merely stating that the band is, in some sense, “contemporary.” The nature of these “other influences” that are deemed “beyond traditional jazz” will differ from project to project. How this differs will often be central to the band’s musical persona.

4) Many bands emphasize their group’s approach to group interaction – which, as I have already described, can be heightened due to the familiarity after performing together for so long. (As a closely related concept, then, musicians may, again, make mention of having a sense of a “collective” or its equivalent.)

5) In many cases, musicians will point to the kind of repertoire their band performs, and how this is different from “mainstream jazz” practice - specific musical terminology is sometimes even used to underline the point. Usually, there is a focus on band members’ original compositions.

All of the following bands describe their projects in promotion and the press in very similar ways utilizing many, if not all of these themes. (Please consult Appendix A for greater detail on the groups referenced in this chapter that were not described in Chapter 4.)
6.3.1 << Online Promotion >>

All of these bands made use of various Internet platforms to build their promotional fronts. Specifically, these groups would promote events, albums, and, overall, project a sense of who they were. Leaders of these groups expressed to me how critical these aspects were. Bassist Michael Herring, co-leader of Peripheral Vision describes his group’s approach:

We’ve tried to have an online presence as we’ve tried to bring some of the strategies that DIY musicians in the non-jazz world have used. Everything is online these days including promotion...We present ourselves as a collective...as a band. (email correspondence, June 24, 2016)

For Peripheral Vision, as well as many of these other groups in the TSGJ scene, independent bands from other popular music genres approach to promotion have served as inspiration.

6.3.1.1 << Use of Social Media and Independent Online Music Vendors >>

In the next section, I delve into various groups’ official websites (i.e. hosted on their own domains). In this section, though, I wanted to provide an overview of patterns of how these groups opted to use various online promotion strategies – an especially those on existing platforms. The most common platforms can be categorized as: 1) social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter); 2) audio/video hosting sites (e.g. YouTube, Soundcloud); 3) independent music vendors (e.g. CdBaby, Bandcamp); and 4) individual pages on the Canadian public broadcaster’s music site (music.cbc.ca). At a minimum, every project I mention in this chapter has used Facebook to promote events, either through “event

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173 I am leaving out iTunes in this chart. Apple operates iTunes on its own platform rather than through the main online conduit – the browser. In any case, all of these bands except Bloomsday sold their music there as well.
pages” or at least status updates from members of the band to their “friends” or “followers.” In fact, as a researcher, this was often one of the main ways I found out about activity going in the TSGJ subsence myself. Beyond this baseline tactic, though, I wanted to demonstrate the breadth of how these groups are trying to reach potential audiences online. Therefore, the table below shows cases in which bands have their own dedicated “page,” “channel,” or the equivalent hosted on the site:

**Figure 12: Online Presence of Various Stable Groups in the TSGJ Subscene**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Band</th>
<th>Facebook</th>
<th>Twitter</th>
<th>YouTube</th>
<th>Soundcloud</th>
<th>Cdbaby</th>
<th>Bandcamp</th>
<th>CBC Music</th>
<th>“Official” Artist/band site</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>WPBE</td>
<td>✔️</td>
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<td>Drumheller</td>
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<td>Bloomsday</td>
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<tr>
<td>Harley Card</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peripheral Vision</td>
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<td>Myriad3</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRAM Trio</td>
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</table>

The outlier is obviously Bloomsday, a band that used none of these strategies. While French and other band members used social media to promote individual performances (including Facebook events), French never organized a thorough online promotional strategy. It is quite possible that the group might have attempted such a strategy if it had lasted longer and recorded an album, but after both drummers left Toronto, this (among other factors) precipitated the demise of the band (see Chapter 5). Nonetheless, the lack of promotion was probably a factor in how their performances (usually at The Rex) were surprisingly sparsely attended, given the high esteem the players were held in and how enthusiastic the audiences in attendance were.

Bloomsday was, however, the exception. As this table makes clear, most of these bands were using many available platforms to reach audiences (in addition to official
websites). When using a common online search engine like Google to find these bands, these various platforms would provide for a variety of results to emerge for anyone curious about their groups. Indeed, the musicians actively tried to make these various pages intersect. For example, usually, individual tweets and/or Facebook status updates from band members or the official page would often provide the link to Facebook events. Official Facebook artist pages or, sometimes, the brief Twitter bio would provide links to their official websites, those websites hosting audio clips of the group (SoundCloud, YouTube, CBC music), or online vendors (Bandcamp, CDBaby) selling their digital or hard copies of albums. Almost all of these groups had a page on one of the online vendors and/or sold their music on iTunes (though the latter was not preferred given its less favorable revenue arrangement). This also has parallels to the independent popular music industry as a whole – bands and solo artists tend to rely on those models for selling digital copies or CDs. However, while all of these bands (apart from Bloomsday) used these various portals in a variety of ways, they also valued having their own independent “official” website to assert and promote their projects’ personae.

6.3.1.2 << Official Websites >>

While design and various multi-media content play an important role in these sites, I focus on the language the musicians used describe their own groups. As indicated, each band described its own collective artistic persona on its website quite consciously by using a term like “voice,” “philosophy” or the like. This description would typically be provided on the home page or on a page marked “bio.” Often, mention was made as to how the group related to jazz tradition(s), what “outside” musical influences contributed to the group’s persona, how the band interacted together (collectively), and how their repertoire – especially original music – contributes to the band “sound.” Again, they were promoting themselves only as jazz groups, but as bands with distinct personae
Drumheller quite consciously promoted a collective persona that how they interacted with many musical traditions, including jazz. This is how they described their approach on their (now-defunct) website:

The music we play is jazz, drawing from its entire tradition (from traditional to avant-garde) and also drawing from our diverse experiences in free improvisation, folk, notated music, punk, and groove music. We embrace collective and solo improvisation strategies, with compositions that range from short sketches used as jumping off points for free improvisation to through-composed pieces. (Drumheller 2012)

Rather than identifying with mainstream post-bop practice, the group was suggesting a more idiosyncratic relationship to jazz tradition(s). In general, they were self-aware of having a musical persona specific to its own musicians and the various performing and compositional practices they employed.

Meanwhile, Peripheral Vision’s “bio” on the home page of their site touches many of these themes as well:

Peripheral Vision is one of the most exciting and innovative jazz quartets to have recently appeared on the international jazz scene. Based in Toronto, the creative leaders of the group are long time musical collaborators, guitarist Don Scott and bassist Michael Herring. They have assembled a synergistic musical unit designed to push the boundaries of jazz while engaging the listener with a grooving, toe-tapping immediacy. Their distinctive musical voice bridges tradition and innovation, with deeply felt influences ranging from jazz, rock, classical, and improv, with a focus on dynamic group interaction. …While the compositions are Herring and Scott's, Peripheral Vision is defined by its group rapport. Bringing back the anything-is-possible democratic approach of both 1960's jazz and garage bands, the music takes shape as a collective process. This no-holds-barred philosophy is at the root of Peripheral Vision's explosive performances. (Peripheral Vision 2015)

The first paragraph mentions how the band has a “distinctive musical voice.” At the same time, they describe pushing “boundaries of jazz” and “innovation” while at the same time evoking jazz’s “tradition.” Interaction is mentioned both in terms of how various musical genres interact (with jazz mentioned first) as well as how they interact with one another (“group interaction”). The second paragraph begins by emphasizing original music by its
two co-leaders. At the same time, the paragraph re-emphasizes its “group rapport” and “collective process.” This is then put in the context of the band having a particular aesthetic “philosophy” which is described as “no holds-barred.” Using signifiers like “no holds-barred” and “garage bands” in addition to its emphasis on its group voice strongly suggests aspects of “rock authenticity.” And yet, the entire description begins by describing it as a “jazz quartet.” As Michael Herring pointed out to me, they “function as a jazz group” even while consciously flirting with the paradigm of a rock band (email correspondence, June 24, 2016). In other words, this is a group promoting themselves a collective or *band*, but one that musically still strongly identifies with jazz tradition(s).

Piano trio Myriad3, on their website’s description of the band, used the term “collective” immediately to describe their approach:

The band is a true collective. Each member acts simultaneously as a leader and a sideman. They play mostly original music that features different aspects of jazz improvisation, ensemble playing and contemporary composition. Myriad3 is modern jazz, meets classical, meets pop, meets Oscar Peterson. (Myriad3 2015)

Not only do they immediately label their own band as a “collective,” but they opt to reinforce this with the modifier “true” to assure the reader of a (rock-like?) authenticity to the band’s commitment to this philosophy.

While many of the groups on the TSGJ subscene do have a leader performing the traditional responsibilities (seeking bookings, calling rehearsals, selecting setlists, etc.), Myriad3 has been a band in which certain responsibilities are divvied up while other decisions are made collectively. This is definitely highlighted as part of their promotional front. Again, jazz improvisation is carefully juxtaposed with “ensemble playing” (meant to evoke a variety of techniques presumably not covered by “jazz improvisation”) and “contemporary composition” – an open-ended term that could suggest contemporary “classical” music. Again, no mention is made of the individual talents of the members of the band – the focus is exclusively on the ensemble. Of course, the individual talents do come up in interviews in due course, but it is telling how ensemble is stressed consistently.
PRAM Trio, a young group whose members are all in their mid-twenties, opted for more use of press quotes in their band’s description:

Pram Trio has been described as “edgy and interactive, often urgent, and very much in the school of the modern-leaning piano trios” (Dan McClenaghan - Allaboutjazz.com). The group combines elements of the traditional jazz piano trio with contemporary styles of music beyond the jazz genre. Their music is “very contemporary, composed and multi-sectional” (Peter Hum/Ottawa Citizen Jazz Blog) and puts a strong focus on collective improvisation, creating an experience that appeals to listeners both familiar and unfamiliar with jazz. (PRAM 2015)

Interactivity is immediately emphasized. The first quote uses a variety of evocative adjectives (“edgy” “modern” “urgent”) within the context of describing its “interactive” approach. Meanwhile, at the end of the paragraph, the band reinforces a focus on “collective improvisation.” In addition, the description also evokes jazz tradition (specifically, in relation to the piano trio) but also mentions how it interacts with “contemporary styles beyond the jazz genre” and they are at pains to describe how the experience would appeal to listeners who may be “unfamiliar with jazz” tradition(s). While they take great lengths to make the ties to these traditions explicit, they still describe an “experience” – suggesting a quality within this that is unique to the band.

Worst Pop Band Ever has cultivated an artistic and marketing persona that points to their adoption of popular music’s repertoire and practices, while maintaining a sense of irony and humour reflected in their band name. In keeping with this sense of humour as a band, they often use a more sardonic description of their persona: “…the ugly lovechild of Miles Davis & Radiohead” (WorstPopBandEver Bandcamp 2015). On their own website they tie the band specifically to the “indie” aesthetic by calling it “a Toronto based quintet that tries to combine a love of improvisational jazz and indie pop” (WorstPopBandEver PPFHouse 2015). To underline their credibility in this regard, they also make a point of listing how individual band members (though without, notably, naming them individually) have performed with major Canadian pop acts such as Feist and Blue Rodeo.
6.3.2 << Press interviews >>

When interviewed, members of these groups have stressed their sense of collectivity.\footnote{Usually it is the bandleader interviewed, but not always.} In an interview for an online journal, Don Scott, one of the co-leaders of Peripheral Vision, emphasized how having a long-term collective is critical to the band’s success: “I think musically we know each other well. Playing with someone, when you intuitively understand where they are going, helps the flow of the performance…” (Daddone 2011). In addition, he points out how the band’s approach to interaction, which is emphasized in their own promotional literature, is heightened by the fact that they are in this long-term project: “Our goal for Peripheral Vision is to very much be a \textit{working band}. We work on playing regularly” (Daddone 2011, my emphasis). Peripheral Vision not only manifests this phenomenon in how they play – it is clear it is a conscious choice on behalf of the members of the band, and especially its co-leaders.

In a 2014 on-air interview (later distributed as a podcast) on Toronto’s privately owned jazz FM radio station, two of Myriad3’s members, Fortin and Cervini, were interviewed while promoting their album, \textit{The Where}. Fortin was asked to describe the band’s approach: “That’s the way we’ve always worked together – we each individually bring in tunes an then really workshopped them for the band to try and figure out how the song will serve our individual voices and our collective voice” (Cervini and Fortin 2014). This stresses the collaborative approach similar to many rock bands – even though the compositions are not built from nothing in rehearsal as with some rock groups, the band does “workshop” them as a group. Later in the interview, Fortin pivots to the band’s process from the interviewer’s question about the kind of music they play. Immediately, he referred to the band’s original music and how they use it to shape a “collective voice” (albeit one that also serves “individual voices” as well):

\begin{quote}
I think this is the case with a lot of musicians of our generation – we all fell in love with the jazz tradition at a pretty young age but also grew up in the 1990s and 2000s so it’s pretty important to keep in touch with the musical culture that
\end{quote}
you grew up in. So with us, that’s classical music, rock music, pop music – but also connect that with this separate tradition that we’ve all fallen in love with and studied. So it’s trying to keep a foot planted in different worlds in a way. (Cervini and Fortin 2014)

Here, Fortin elucidated the band’s philosophy by not only evoking “jazz tradition” but by connecting this tradition to the individual experiences of the members and the broader musical culture around them. This dialogue between jazz music, contemporary music, and various popular music (in addition to “classical” music, in this case), is indicative of how many musicians described their projects. Cervini, meanwhile, answered a question about the album by referring to how members composed for the group:

I think we were all excited to do some more writing specifically for the band now that we had more of an idea of the sound that we were going for. Doing the music for [2014 album] The Where – it actually wasn’t as challenging because we were excited about this new sound that we discovered and that we were moving forward with. So we just started bringing in new tunes right away and we played together a lot as a band, even when we’re not touring we try and rehearse weekly and get together - if not to rehearse to just get burgers and hang out. (Cervini and Fortin 2014)

Cervini stressed that the original music has been specifically written for this band and how this relates to developing the band’s “sound.” He also pointed to how the individuals are invested in the band, which has not only been demonstrated by its commitment to regular rehearsals but by their social ties.

Bassist Mark Godfrey, leader and founder of PRAM Trio, described the attitude the group had in early rehearsals: “Let’s bring it to a point where it’s improvised-based [sic] but still based on these forms and our original compositions…” (Hum 2012). Godfrey, in fact, has acted as bandleader of this trio since its inception – spearheading rehearsals, tours, applications, and the like. Nonetheless, this is a group that Godfrey has stated gelled in its original conception as a result of the personal relationships of its original lineup – that all of them contributed to its creative approach. The three original members developed this approach at the University of Toronto in 2010 where they met one another and learned about how to approach jazz tradition(s) together:
[Pianist] Jack [Bodkin] was a big part in introducing me to many of my musical influences in the jazz genre. As a result we both share a pretty strong connection in terms of musical tastes. [Original drummer] Richie [Piasetski] really played the same kind of role but a number of years later. He was just starting jazz studies while I was in my third year of the program and his “new-kid-in-a-candy-store” vibe regarding the music was contagious. I’d be checking out whatever music he was into or was learning at the time and then sessioning the tunes or exercises. (Hum 2012)

Godfrey was also very conscious about how they developed a “band” approach—one with original repertoire and particular ways of interacting—that was predicated on a long-term lineup:

This band is actually a band. It would be difficult to sub one of us out and still have the same type of collective musical experience. Each of us brings in tunes and the goal at any point is to create the best music possible in that moment…when three musicians are doing everything they can to align themselves in a musical situation, real music begins. At the end of the day its [sic] just three friends who are committed to making music together as a unit and trying to create a unique sound that can only be replicated in this situation. (Hum 2012)

Friendship actually came up repeatedly in Godfrey’s interviews. Given that the very close friendship between he and Bodkin, Godfrey communicated that this specific closeness has consistently facilitated interaction and particular approaches:

So much of it is the friendship. Jack [Bodkin] and I…have known each other all of these years. It’s not a challenge to play with one another and it’s not a challenge to interact. So if you can interact as human beings if you have that ability to play music with one another you can really explore some cool textures and cool areas because you’re comfortable with what you’re doing and who you are as people. (Hum 2012)

Later, when Piasteski left the trio, Godfrey asked drummer Eric West to replace him. West was chosen because not only was he was musically and personally compatible with both Bodkin and himself but he was willing to commit to the project. Godfrey points out that the band maintained continuity in its overall approach, but nonetheless had a distinctly different musical persona with the introduction of a new bandmate:
The repertoire we’re doing is stuff we’ve been doing since the last record came out…The music we’re recording this time is very similar to what we did before in the sense that it’s original compositions and it’s coming from a similar place, similar inspirations – but we have a new drummer who’s been playing with us now since the release of the last album – Eric West. And he’s brought something really unique to the band as well…So there’s something different now. (Godfrey 2014)

This quote points out how musicians in these long-term bands are typically quite aware of how a different member changes the public persona of the group.

Godfrey argued that the way PRAM trio interacts with popular music is a reflection of how younger groups will often sound different than those of earlier generations: “The older generation has a specific way of going about things which was a result of the environment in which they learned to play. It’s different for musicians in their twenties because the popular music isn’t the same as it used to be” (Godfrey 2014). PRAM Trio, with the specific inspirations and influences present in its members, had its own particular way of interacting with popular music which both this quote and their web materials point to.

Shia has often been asked to talk about Worst Pop Band’s identity given its provocative name. In an interview with the Ottawa Sun, Shia describes his band’s musical persona as having much in common with popular music as well as an overall sense of being “contemporary.” He contrasts being “contemporary” with “popular” or mainstream jazz, which he describes as being overly concerned with “tradition”:

Unfortunately, a lot of popular jazz is a throwback to more traditional jazz. That’s too bad there isn’t more attention paid to the new progressive stuff. We’ve been fortunate as crossover band because we’ve gotten good attention from both jazz and popular music critics. (Armstrong 2012)

In such interviews, Shia has to address the band’s distinctive name and the branding message it may suggest. In defending the use of “worst” in the band name, he has pointed out that it is partly humour but also partly a way of lowering expectations to allow for creative possibilities: “We set the bar pretty low…because we want to be able to try anything. There isn’t much we won’t play once. With a name like ours, what do you
expect?” (Armstrong). In another promotional interview for the Soundclash Harbourfront Jazz Festival, he was asked again about the name and he acknowledged the humour but also how the band merges popular and jazz traditions with their personnel:

It’s just kind of tongue-in-cheek. We all play in jazz contexts and we all also play in pop contexts and we all love both of them, and so we just tried to make a relatively happy marriage between the two of them. We’re able to improvise but still with the melodies, hooks, and riffs of pop. (The Worst Pop Band Ever Interview - SoundClash 2011)

Shia has obviously been quite conscious of how the band’s particular “brand name” relates to its musical persona and has sought to communicate and clarify this to the public via interviews as well as promotional materials.

6.4 << Conclusion >>

All of these musicians have been, to varying degrees, conscious about how they were not in a “conventional” jazz group, but in bands. In so doing, they present a collective, promotional front – one that usually indicates how the musicians interact with jazz tradition(s) and music that is considered not to be central to jazz. All of them began as projects with musical goals other than strictly performing within a “mainstream tradition.” Rather, there was a conscious attempt with all of them to develop a persona more independent of this tradition.

To this point, I have not discussed the details of how such groups enact this persona in performance. I want to examine each of the primary groups in my study and explore not only their origin stories and how their personae developed over their tenure, but also how their performance practices were informed by contexts – the local context of physical venue and audiences on the Toronto scene as well as the broader context of jazz and popular traditions and how these bands interact with them. First, I will address the context of audience and venue in general, and then follow that up with analyzing how
specific performances by Worst Pop Band Ever performances appear to have been influenced by that context.
Chapter 7

How Local Factors Can Affect Performance:
Venues and Audiences

7.1 << Introduction >>

The two contextual factors that most affect live performance are also inherently intertwined. On the one hand is the venue. Its variables that can affect performance include the overall atmosphere, the layout, and the management’s artistic and economic mandate. On the other hand, there are the audiences that these venues and the groups attract. Audience backgrounds and their related behaviours can vary widely. Though it is difficult to quantify the effect these factors have on a given jazz performance, Paul Berliner stresses that they invariably have an impact:

Within the lives of bands, circumstances surrounding each performance introduce a bundle of variables that affect the art of improvisation. From nightclubs to concert halls to recording studios, the design and acoustics of a particular venue contribute to the “vibrations”—the general atmosphere—of music making, influencing the nature of musical invention. At every site, local management imposes unique conditions on the presentation of jazz, and correspondingly upon its formulation. Moreover, band members interact with different audiences whose responses may also guide the course of an improvisation. (Berliner 1994: 547)

I, too, will consider contextual particulars like “design and acoustics,” “atmosphere,” “style of presentation,” artistic mandate of venues, and, finally and most critically, the “different audiences” that attend performances. Berliner points out that “learning to adapt to changing performance conditions constitutes critical training for improvisers” (1994: 547). This kind of adaptation is no different for the musicians and their bands playing at the Toronto venues that are the subject of my research.
7.2 << Physical Venue >>

In the subscene I studied, all three primary venues—The Rex, The Tranzac, and The Emmet Ray—are smaller clubs as opposed to studios or concert halls (see Chapter 4). Indeed, all of the Toronto venues that program local jazz music on a weekly basis are similarly sized. Concert halls program jazz very rarely, except in the case of university-related events or in the rare high-profile concert programmed at larger halls such as Roy Thomson Hall or Sony Performing Arts Center.\(^{175}\)

The context of any club will inevitably affect the performance practices of jazz groups. As Berliner put it, “Like an extension of the improviser’s instrument itself, the physical characteristics of a [jazz] venue have the capacity to mold and shape an artist’s sounds” (1994: 548). Though each of the spaces in my study had its own physical challenges, all of the bands I spoke to wanted, ideally, to achieve two objectives in relation to situating themselves in the space.

One objective was to situate themselves in the stage area so as to achieve a desirable musical balance for a given group (i.e. “balancing” the instruments’ sonically) both on-stage for musicians and in the “house” for audiences. In relation to balance, I have observed that few acts operate in these clubs with no amplification, particularly since all of the bands I studied had drummers. In particular, bassists, playing without amplification, could easily be covered by the rest of the band. In addition, the Emmet Ray has no piano and the Tranzac only has a “questionable” piano, so many groups (including Harley Card’s Quintet with Matt Newton) tend to bring an electric piano.

A second objective, which at times can be in conflict, was to position the musicians to facilitate interaction via visual communication with eye contact or body language. The Tranzac’s relatively ample space and unobstructed sightlines usually made this straightforward. In contrast, with its relatively small stage, its often loud crowds

\(^{175}\) In the latter case, this might involve a high-profile group or veteran musician in a one-off event (a reunion of the Boss Brass for example). However, no more than a handful of these happen in a calendar year.
impeding clear hearing, and its house layout with poles obstructing the audience view of the stage, positioning was sometimes a challenge at The Rex. All of the bands had to adapt to the particular kinds of spaces they were in.176

Beyond how the music sounds, the physical space will obviously affect how the performers are visually presented to audiences, which in turn can influence what kinds of audiences attend events and how they respond. As described in Chapter 4, each of the primary venues I studied has very different seating layouts and resulting sightlines which affect the audience’s visual and auditory experience. Other aspects of the overall atmosphere can have subtle effects as well—the décor, the interior design, the manner of the employees (often based on management style and training), and even the venue’s tidiness or cleanliness. At the very least, these aspects can attract certain kinds of musicians and audience members and may discourage or even come close to excluding others.

Certainly, there have been many older jazz fans that were patrons of Montreal Bistro or The Senator—some of whom now attend the Jazz Bistro—who rarely, if ever, go to The Rex and never to the Tranzac or Emmet Ray. These latter two spaces have an environment that is not as attuned to their tastes—with its more informal physical décor, more artistically open booking policies, and lower covers. While regular fan Bill Smith indicated he has rarely attended concerts at the Jazz Bistro, he told me he did attend some 2013 TD Toronto Jazz Festival events there. He characterized the audiences he saw this way:

I saw people that I hadn’t seen since the demise of the Montreal Bistro—people who wouldn’t be comfortable at The Rex. I don’t want to presume anything too much…but they wouldn’t be comfortable with [The Rex’s] loud talkers. I did see some well-heeled older couples that I would only have seen before at a place like the Montreal Bistro. Expensive sweaters about the shoulders and that… (personal

176 The notion of making preparations for interacting with a venue’s physical space was also in keeping with Berliner’s findings: “To mitigate these [acoustical] problems, musicians on stage try to situate themselves proximately enough to hear fellow players clearly without being overwhelmed by anyone instrument. Recent practices combining acoustic instruments with electric instruments and synthesizers have increased the ordeal of balancing instruments of unequal volume and disparate qualities” (Berliner 1994, 549).
In combination with the indication of age, the signifiers of “well-heeled” and “expensive sweaters” signal a very different audience demographic who would be more likely to have narrower expectations about what to see and hear at a “jazz performance.” On the other hand, these audiences tend to be, on average, somewhat attentive, or at least less not intrusive.\footnote{Furthermore, they spend more which allows for higher covers and even, in some cases, higher sales of merchandise.} Given, though, how bands on the subscene I studied tended to thrive on playing with jazz conventions, this is why such audience would be less likely to be receptive.

Meanwhile, while the Tranzac is beloved by many musicians in the subscene for its acoustics and artistic openness, many admit that it is as not as favourable to attracting the broadest possible audiences, and especially the high-paying, older, upper-middle to upper-class demographic. In Chapter 4, I already quoted saxophonist and Spectrum Music artistic director Ben Dietschi pointing out the esteem the venue has among musicians and insiders despite the Southern Cross Room being, in his words, a sort of ‘junk room.’” He went on to say, however, that rooms like the Tranzac with such openness, informality in its décor, are important for the (sub)scene but do not necessarily serve the “general public”:

> It’s really important to have forums for free expression like The Tranzac. I feel like in the scene it functions as a place where art is first and everything else is second…I think those venues have a very special function in that they can serve the general public perhaps in a good way, but that’s certainly not their goal and they probably fail at that a lot. (personal interview, October 23, 2013)

Dietschi’s use of the word “welcoming” speaks to an ongoing theme in my conversations with subscene participants as to how various venues could be more or less inviting to both musicians and audiences. Audience regular Bill Smith bluntly describes how different rooms serve these different audiences, referencing the idea of “scene” explicitly (and without provocation): “I think if you really, really like The Tranzac, which I do, and you say ‘well that pretty much epitomizes my scene,’ then you’re not necessarily want to
go to a place like The Bistro” (ibid.). He recounts how he thought the “more welcoming” venues functioned:

Much of it has to do with people, and by that I mean the owners and the staff. When you go to a place and you quickly become aware that the proprietors actually care about the music – that makes a big difference. When that isn’t the case, the music and the audience feel like kind of an aside or even a nuisance. I’m not going to name names, but there has been a few clubs that weren’t de facto jazz clubs but that they had jazz on a regular basis, but you could tell that jazz musicians didn’t really like playing there that much and that they weren’t made to feel welcome. (ibid.)

For all of the invested participants in the subscene, the context of each venue can have a direct effect on the musical event.

In other words, economic factors may be a factor in decisions about programming music. Venues will develop reputations which are dictated by owners, managers, and/or bookers who may have their own artistic and economic goals:

The general policies and attitudes of management in presenting jazz also differentiate clubs. In some establishments, the music’s primary function is as entertaining background music. Its presence contributes an ambience for customers, justifying inflated costs for food and liquor, thus ensuring the club’s economic survival. (Berliner 1994: 551)

A strictly non-profit, volunteer-run venue like The Tranzac will have different priorities than businesses like The Rex or the Emmet Ray. Furthermore, the people involved in programming these venues have to balance the economic imperatives with their own artistic interests.

Below, I describe the three primary venues’ programming mandates. artistically, they overlap but they are also somewhat distinct. One of the most important factors is the booker’s level of autonomy and how this relates to economic factors. I describe how this results in differing atmospheres with differing audiences at the venues in the TSGJ subscene and in turn how this affects performance.
7.3 << The Audiences at Jazz Venues and Their Relationship to Performance Practice >>

“...the establishment, consolidation, or liquidation of human relationships among participating players—not to mention audience members—affect all levels within the interactive musical process” (Monson 1997: 189, my emphasis).

As I have already suggested, a venue’s qualities can attract particular kinds of audience members. They, in turn, often end up having direct and indirect effects on jazz performances. In their pilot study of a single London jazz club, Gail Brand et al contrast how jazz prioritizes the context of venue and audience by comparison to classical music. The authors assert that, for classical performance, these factors are “...not a high priority” (Brand et al 201: 635). By contrast, the authors argue that jazz performers, given their heightened sense of performing in-the-moment, must not only keep in mind the given composition and performance conventions but also “...what the musicians assembled make of [that composition], in a given time and place, with all the specificities of mood, venue, audience, and atmosphere” (636). Berliner makes clear that how a group performs a given composition can change depending on the venue and its audience on a given night:

...the artist-audience relationship is a dynamic and variable one, in part because, as improvisers well know, every audience is different. The composition of each audience depends, in turn, on many factors, including the performance center’s location, admission fees, hours of business, taste in booking, and general management policy. (Berliner 1994: 555)

The venue itself, however, is in control of many factors that affect which audiences typically walk through the door for a given performance.

Two of the most important factors the venue is responsible for in attracting particular audiences—though not the only ones—are the admission fee (or “cover”) and the venue’s location. As an example, during the early 7-9pm slots at The Rex on weekdays, there is no cover. When playing The Rex, Worst Pop Band Ever has played
almost exclusively in this slot. They will usually take on a weekly residency on Wednesdays for a month three or four times a year.\textsuperscript{178} Payment is typically by audience donations into a jar that is passed around on set breaks – a phenomenon common to all three primary venues except for the later sets at The Rex (which usually pays a fixed rate). Given, however, that The Rex is situated on one of the busiest downtown streets with plenty of foot traffic, it is more likely that people entering at this time of day will not necessarily be seeking a specific jazz group or even be jazz fans (see Section 6.2.2 in which I categorize audience member “types” – these are #2, 3 or 4) but rather the more casual audience members (type #5). This results in a very different experience for bands and jazz fans alike.\textsuperscript{179}

I did not conduct an in-depth ethnographic study of audiences but I did record the most obvious behaviours. In general, I looked for whether audiences appeared attentive or possibly even enthusiastic; relatedly, I noted those occasions when audience members overtly participated in the performance experience. In such cases, this usually tended to affect performance in a negative way. In addition, I spoke to musicians about their philosophies around their relationship to audiences. While these varied, musicians generally did seek positive reactions from audiences. A positive reaction in jazz, though, can vary and is, to a degree, predicated on the degree of familiarity with traditions and musical/cultural associations that a given performance is referencing. This is particularly true with regard to rhythm and “groove,” as Monson points out:

\begin{quote}
I am suggesting that interactive musical conversation in real-time performance, combined with the intermusical and intercultural associations musicians and audiences bring to the conversation over time, have much to do with where the feeling in rhythmic feels comes from (Monson 1997: 185-186).\end{quote}

This interactivity with audiences, often though not exclusively rhythmic, was very evident in relation to the groups I studied and some of the audience behaviours made this apparent.

\textsuperscript{178} At The Rex, this kind of arrangement is common with young performers who have established themselves in the jazz scene.

\textsuperscript{179} Mark Miller’s blunt assessment was that The Rex eventually developed a reputation for such audiences: “The Rex was an awful club for listening…It was always very loud” (personal interview, September 14, 2013).
It is difficult to classify audience members overall as “attentive” or “inattentive.” One can observe, however, traditional signs of interest or positive response from familiarized jazz fans:¹⁸⁰

- clapping – at the end of performances, but sometimes also for individual solos with groups that played more “easily identifiable” forms (e.g. Harley Card Quintet would sometimes engender this response for solos given that the forms and conventions were, at times, more typical.)
- whooping – for the most exciting, rhythmically-charged moments (the climax of a particularly exciting solo or the end of a much-appreciated, exciting performance)
- looking in a sustained way at the stage and, especially, specific performers or, contrastingly, closing eyes in an apparent display of rapt attention
- tapping of feet or hands, snapping, head nodding, swaying, or other movement in apparent response to musical stimuli
- minimum of talking (though not necessarily strict silence) so as to maintain attention on music and minimize disruption

Of course, demonstrating all or even most of these behaviours does not necessarily make an individual audience member more attentive than others. It would be impossible to classify each audience member definitively (nor, again, was this my primary research focus). However, I think it is fair to say that most musicians and serious jazz fans would regard an audience member exhibiting some of these traits rather than their inverse (i.e. not clapping, talking throughout at a loud volume or even indiscriminately yelling, not looking at the stage, etc.) as a more attentive audience member. Also, an audience that includes more of such “attentive” audience members can cumulatively create a heightened atmosphere which is typically better for jazz performance, even if such effects are hard to quantitatively measure.

Furthermore, not every part of a performance nor every kind of jazz group will

¹⁸⁰ These are very similar to many (though not all) of the audience behaviours mentioned at various points by Berliner in his study, though unlike Berliner I am listing all of the behaviours at once and not hypothesizing a hierarchy as to which behaviours indicate more attention than others (Berliner 1994: 455-457).
demand exactly the *same* atmosphere. While a louder group playing its most intense composition may engender more clapping and whooping without being a distraction, a ballad from a dynamically restrained group may require a more hushed attention. (Whooping, in fact, might be viewed as negative or distracting attention for some groups.)

The larger point is that jazz performance is based on improvisation and interaction. While the audience may not be a “primary participant” in a jazz performance (as in many African-American derived musical traditions), they are at least peripherally part of the conversation. This is quite distinct from classical music convention. Berliner argues that jazz audiences have a real stake in the music:

> These observable interactions recall the improviser’s description of collective improvisation as a group conversation. In the metaphor’s broadest sense, audience members enter into and broaden the base of the conversation, responding to the musical statements of band members as if they were literally speaking with them. (1994: 569)

He also notes, however, that such influence on performance practice is not always overt:

> The audience does not always affect musical events in such specific ways as eliciting particular phrases from an artist or influencing the development of these phrases into motives. It may rest, instead, on the periphery of the musician’s consciousness, remaining, nevertheless, a powerful motivating force. (1994: 571)

My study showed that musicians in the TSGJ subsence react to audience along the “periphery of consciousness” that Monson suggests. Audience members with similar jazz tastes tend to gather together within the club. Their group presence – in tandem with other contextual venue circumstances – tends to affect performance on any given night.

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181 Samuel A. Floyd insists that to properly analyze African-American music “…an Afrocentric approach is indispensable.” He refers to a cumulative list of five interacting characteristics in a theory he calls “Call-Response” which includes as its second point “…a tendency to make performances occasions in which the audience participates, in reaction to what performers do.” He further argues that it is this very quality “which leads in turn to…a framework of continuous self-criticism that accompanies performance in its indigenous cultural context” (Floyd 2002: 68). The performance strategies of cultural critique through music are, according to Floyd, indebted to deeper roots in African notions of audience participation.
7.3.1 types of audience members at jazz events

After collating the data of my observations and interviews at various Toronto jazz venues, I have attempted to loosely categorize “types” of audience members. I delineate them by their backgrounds and the reasons that they are attending. I have noted that these factors have strong correlations to the investment and attention they have to performances at these venues. I want to stress that while I do think there are some obvious audience member “types,” the categorization I provide below is inherently blurry and subjective.

1) *Other Toronto jazz musicians.*

For obvious reasons, these are often among the most discerning audience members (though sometimes the long-term, enthusiastic fans [see category #2] can have an even more detailed knowledge bases of the scene to draw from). I have found, in the main, that even when audiences are very thin for one of these younger stable bands, it is other young musicians in the subscene (sometimes a few, sometimes several) who can be counted on to attend. On the whole, these audience members usually exhibit the greatest signs of attention.

2) *Long-term Toronto jazz fans who seek out the widest array of styles within the scene.*

These rare fans go to several different venues to hear jazz across the city, hearing a wide range of music including projects that might be labeled by a jazz concertgoer as “straight-ahead,” “fusion,” or “avant-garde” (to use only three common examples) or they might seek out bands that are not as easily categorized, which, arguably, might be true of all of the bands I studied. This kind of fan likely appreciates veterans on the scene, but, as an explorer, deliberately seeks out new musicians as well. Most often, they will also attend artists of international stature as well because of their fandom, but this varies depending on

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182 There are exceptions. Some musicians, if overly comfortable with their surroundings and/or over-familiar with a given group, may be among the least attentive. In this subscene, however, this was not the norm that I observed. Collegiality and community were too important, especially for musicians at The Emmet Ray and Tranzac.
whether they can afford such concerts.

These people are sometimes well known to musicians or other jazz fans. They tend to attend a concert every week, and sometimes several times a week. Depending on how strictly this kind of fan is defined (and without having done exhaustive data gathering akin to an ethnographic study) I would estimate this may include up to about ten people, with only one or two (e.g. Bill Smith) that are known to virtually everyone who participates on the scene. My observations and interviews show that these Toronto “super-fans” and the audience types in #3 tend overwhelmingly to be white, male, and over forty years old. These audience members tend to demonstrate the most overt signs of attention, even relative to musicians.

3) Regular jazz concert attendees who tend to focus on a particular jazz subscene (the one I studied or another part of the jazz scene).

Most often, these fans attend jazz events at their favourite venue or two to hear artists that utilize a narrower range of performance practices. Most of these fans are older and still somewhat male – though less so than with type #2. In many cases, these are fans that used to attend at venues like The Senator or the Montreal Bistro but now would typically attend the Jazz Bistro, Chalkers, or The Pilot depending on their tastes and the kind of atmosphere they preferred. Another contrasting example of regular Toronto jazz event attendee, however, is a fan primarily interested in the “avant-garde.” Therefore, s/he is more likely to attend concerts in spaces like the Tranzac, Array Music, and other alternative spaces.

Whatever their preferences, these fans typically attend concerts on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. They usually have a narrower understanding of Toronto’s scene that is limited to the musicians that regularly play at their favourite venue(s). They may not attend international artists quite as often, unless members of their scene actively support them. This kind of fan is a significant quotient of the best-attended performances across the board and can be a very significant factor on performance practice, as I will discuss below.

A distinct fan base of weekly concertgoers may be on the verge of emerging for
these younger stable bands. However, as of this writing, they still struggle to attract fans in this category on a regular basis. This is, in part, because these bands defy overt genre categorization. Still, there is a handful of non-musician “regulars” that I see at these venues who attend these bands specifically (especially at The Tranzac and Emmet Ray which heavily favor these groups) that are not fans of the larger jazz scene.

4) Those concertgoers who are supportive of one or two artists or groups, more than any part of the jazz scene.

This is an important group of audience members that the “band” model tends to foster. Many of these concertgoers are already part of the social circles of the musicians and this partially motivates their attendance. For a given band, this grouping of concertgoers may, however, expand well beyond that depending, in part, on the ambition of the band’s promotional strategy (see prior chapter).

For example, upon attending the Lina Allemano Four on a very late gig on a Sunday at The Tranzac (August 12, 2014), I was struck by the fact that much of the audience appeared to be very different from the musicians and other Tranzac regulars who attended other acts. In speaking with Allemano and other band members after the performance, they made clear to me that the crowd included many regulars of her concerts; that night, bassist Andrew Downing pointed out to me that few of these fans were to be seen at any other jazz events around town, even at The Tranzac.

Nonetheless, some of the audience members who begin as fans of a given group may even evolve to a more enthusiastic fan of the scene (#3, or even #2) as they get to know related projects at these venues through their social connections.

5) Incidental listeners who only happen upon the venue or have only sought out “jazz” as a background to a social outing.

Typically, this kind of audience member has a minimal understanding of various traditions of jazz performance. I argue that the quotient of this part of a given audience is one of the key differences between the three primary venues. Their presence can have a significant impact on how musicians perform. I break
down this grouping into two subgroups by their relative investment and subsequent behaviour:

a. *Appreciative, but somewhat intermittently attentive, listeners.*

Berliner describes this kind of group succinctly as “assembled listeners who lack a serious interest in jazz but nevertheless appreciate it in nightclub settings” (556). Many of these concertgoers may only go to a “jazz” venue as a novel night out though their associations and expectations with “jazz” as a term may be murky and vary widely. It may mean expecting certain instruments associated with famous musicians (e.g. the saxophone or trumpet) or particular kinds of repertoire. This varies widely. At times, these audience members may be very engaged when something musically catches their ear or the moment otherwise suits them, but at other times may revert to socializing at their table. The one upside to this kind of audience member is that sometimes she may have fewer expectations than audience “types” one through four. Therefore, this audience “type” may, paradoxically, be more willing to accept a band’s novel approach.

b. *Audience members who are more consistently disruptive or distracting to musicians or other audience members.*

It is this kind of audience member that can have the most direct influence on a performance, as there are occasions when this kind of audience member will be heard or even sometimes seen by musicians while performing. (By contrast, positive audience effect on a performance tends to be more cumulative – the result of a positive response and environment created by such attentive audience members over the course of an entire performance.) It is not always easy to neatly categorize an audience member as a) or b), but at the extreme it is evident when someone has become very disruptive (an example is provided later in the chapter). Furthermore, it is often true that a social group attending an event will tend to have a range of people in the party who fall somewhere in the spectrum between a) and b).
Perhaps Berliner is a bit too forgiving, then, in suggesting that by “returning the affection and respect of improvisers, jazz audiences are fully aware that their responses may be contributing to the creation of an ephemeral musical masterwork” (1994: 572). This awareness may, indeed, be present among more invested and acclimatized jazz audience members (#1 through 4 to varying degrees), but by definition not as much for those in #5a) or #5b). In the broadest terms, Berliner sums up the ways in which musicians absorb and interpret audience behaviours, potentially leading to alterations in how they perform:

At the same time that the audience interprets the behavior of improvisers, improvisers interpret the behavior, or, one might profess, the performance of the audience, assessing its competence and relative sophistication…In subtler terms, improvisers can determine how well an audience understands jazz from the particular events that inspire applause and from the appropriateness of the audience’s body language in the context of the music. (Berliner 1994: 564)

7.32 **How Musicians Relate to Their Audiences**

Fundamentally, there are two questions to consider in how a musician relates to any audience: 1) How does s/he view the audience-musician relationship? 2) How does this affect his/her performance practices and how they present themselves?

It starts with how musicians present themselves to audiences. Dress and demeanor are certainly part of this equation, but, also, how performers socially interact on-stage. With regard to dress, Berliner found that “the choice of suit jackets and ties accords with a particular notion of dignity and professionalism, whereas the adoption of street clothes projects an image of naturalness and, in some instances, a rejection of perceived pretensions of classical music presentations” (1994: 560). Certainly, all of the venues I studied were informal in their presentation and décor. To an extent, all of the primary groups of study dressed and comported themselves accordingly.

Bassist and composer Andrew Downing, who has performed across all parts of
the Toronto jazz scene since the early 2000s, has noted how musicians presented themselves in mainstream clubs (e.g. the now-closed Senator or Montreal Bistro) versus venues like The Tranzac:

One of the things could possibly be that formerly those [mainstream jazz] clubs were a mix of art and entertainment…There was an aspect of building the gig into a show. There was a way to entertain. The band dressed up. If you go to The Tranzac, the band wears the same thing as if they were going to the bar. That's not a judgment but an observation. (personal interview, August 7, 2013)

Dressing more formally is therefore a way of “presenting” to a particular kind of audience that expects or at least appreciates a more formal attire (audience #3 types especially). It is reflective of values for these venues and the groups that perform in them – they are more interested in presenting “their music” as defined by a given group than a show.

That stated, there were groups in my subscene—Myriad3 and PRAM Trio were two consistent examples—who often dressed semi-formally at The Rex. For these groups, this appeared to be a part of their public image (or what I referred to in Chapter 6 as a promotional front); some promotional photos for both of those groups on their websites featured them wearing either suits or semi-formal wear. I am not convinced, however, that the overall prevailing informality is a strict rejection of classical presentation or even the “bebop mainstream,” but rather an embrace of popular music informality and, especially, the “rock band ethos” (see Chapters 1, 5 and 7). It is certainly in keeping with the overall aesthetic of the physical venues they were playing and most of the audience who attended them.

Beyond what musicians wear though, Berliner points out that “…improvisers ultimately evolve stage personalities that work with audiences and feel comfortable” (Berliner 1994: 562). For one thing, “displays of mutual admiration by improvisers put listeners at ease and draw them into the group’s intimate musical discourse” (1994: 563). Routinely, I observed overt displays of appreciation from band members in various projects in ways that are very different from classical musicians. After individual solos, there were times one could see another band member nod their head in appreciation.
When surprising musical events happened in the course of performance—whether temporary “mistakes” in execution or exciting confluence in interaction—eye contact and even laughter was a very common unconscious response.

During a Harley Card Quintet show at the Emmet Ray (September 3, 2012), I observed ongoing laughter in the performance of one his compositions “Hedgerow,” particularly from bassist Jon Maharaj. Harley Card recounted his memory of what happened:

There were definitely some form things or fuck-ups on everyone’s part that caused laughter [that time] and that’s all that is…There’s an inside joke with “Hedgerow”…it’s scribbled into the chart that we worked out – and it was [drummer] Ethan [Ardelli]’s suggestion – to break up two of the sections by putting 4 bars of an EMaj7#11 just to set up the new section. And I think the first 4 or 5 times we played that tune, somebody different screwed that up in the band. (personal interview, August 7, 2013)

While it was my suspicion at the time that something unintentional had occurred, an overt, noticeable mistake was avoided to any but the most attentive and knowledgeable observer. Moreover, it was telling that their first reaction as a band was laughter, as these were all friends having worked together in this project for some time. It allowed them to fix the aberration in the form in the moment and allow for continuity in the performance. Furthermore, while less “staged” and decidedly informal, this behaviour also, in a way, more open – it “let the audience in” on the process.

Meanwhile, at The Tranzac on April 7, 2012, I attended a Bloomsday performance which also maintained this openness and informality – perhaps to something of an extreme. The gig was booked last-minute which was a likely factor in it being poorly attended. There were only five audience members there at any one time. The band was noticeably looser than other concerts I had seen around this time at The Rex. This was probably partially because of the size of audience, but also due to the informal environment of The Tranzac itself. Even more than usual, French, was very casual in his demeanor – he openly admitted to the audience more than once that the band was trying out certain compositions for the first time and he made several off-to-the-side jokes to
band members. This kind of behaviour in these environs, especially under the circumstances, did not seem out of place at The Tranzac, but would have been very out of place at the Jazz Bistro or a similar club catering to a paying, older audience with different expectations around showmanship.

These two examples point to how interpersonal dynamics are part of presentation. By contrast to these examples, Berliner points out that “...obvious dissension within bands also affects listeners, who typically share the discomfort of the abused parties, possibly dampening audience response to the music” (1994: 564). Perhaps due to the fact that all of the groups that that I studied had built a personal and professional rapport over years of working together in their respective projects and across the jazz and related music scenes in Toronto, I did not witness any overt examples of this occurring in my study. I have experienced first-hand as a musician, however, instances in which even something as subtle as discrepancies in harmonic choices when performing standard jazz repertoire will lead to noticeable tension between rhythm section players. More overtly, I have been in the audience when musicians have little in the way of musical and personal rapport because they do not ordinarily perform together.183

Musicians often stressed to me that audience response did not dictate overall artistic direction; nonetheless, they frequently mentioned that they accommodated anticipated audience response in how they shaped a given performance’s sets from their existing repertoire. Harley Card, for example, indicated that in programming his sets, he liked to add a certain number of jazz standards: “[the standards] were certain tunes that we had a unique take on or we played it enough that we had a sound for it and it fit in for the set. They were tunes that you didn’t hear all the time so it was more interesting for the audience” (personal interview, August 7, 2013). In particular, Card appears to be looking

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183 One negative scenario I have occasionally observed is when musicians are made to perform with each other as a result of an institutionally mandated concert such as with university faculty or with adjudicators at an education-oriented music festival. Given the ad hoc ways in which such ensembles come together for these events, this can lead to aesthetic and/or social conflicts and then to less-than-ideal ensemble practices in concert. Audiences, listening to these groups, may not be able to pinpoint the precise nature of the musical tension, but it is often manifest visually. Sometimes musicians simply avoid engaging with one another visually at all or, worse, give into a show of “obvious dissension” with glares or other evident body language. This kind of behaviour was rare in the subscene I studied because of the social situation – these were all musicians known to each other and, indeed, invested in each other’s artistic work.
out for audience members from categories 1, 2 and 3 (see above) who might be more familiar with these conventions.

Certain venues and their typical audiences, then, allow for certain kinds of practices and repertoire, and that, in turn, leads to which kinds of bands end up being typically programmed. In particular, there is a close relationship between crowd behaviour and ensemble dynamics and texture. In this subscene, this was most evident in how certain practices would be less effective when audiences were at their least attentive. Harley Card opined that musicians always keep in mind the differences in venues and the audiences they attract, though how much repertoire or performance practices actually change will vary. As a more overt example, he also reiterated the consensus view of playing at The Rex: “Generally speaking, you know, the joke among all the musicians is ‘you’re playing at The Rex, don’t play any ballads’ – that kind of attitude. You do consider that – you do think about what you’re going to play based on the environment you’re playing in” (personal interview, August 7, 2013). In general, this kind of atmosphere was most often the case for earlier sets at The Rex.

Similarly, Ben Dietschi indicated why music programmed in the Spectrum series—which he described as “longer through-form composition that doesn’t do well if the listener doesn’t listen from start to finish [and has] a greater dynamic range and far greater subtlety”—would not work in sound environments and audiences like those The Rex or even The Jazz Bistro specifically:

...there are plenty of people that would disagree with me but I think if you took a decibel meter and measured what goes on at The Rex and measured what goes on at our concerts you’d definitely find more contrast. You know what happens when you play quietly at a jazz club - it’s just often not heard and people don’t listen. That’s all debatable... (personal interview, October 23, 2013)

Bandleader/trumpeter Lina Allemano also indicated that she no longer was interested in trying to book her group (the Lina Allemano Four) at The Rex for related reasons: “I

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184 Former manager of long-standing, now-defunct Vancouver jazz club The Cellar, Cory Weeds, was also quite blunt about the venue restricting the same practice: “Try to play a ballad at the Rex and see how far you get. Sometimes you can do it. It’s pretty noisy in there” (McGregor 2013).
have’t really wanted to play at The Rex for a long time now. I think it’s changed a bit
now, but when I stopped liking it…there was such a noise level from the audience that
you couldn’t play music like this [referring to her performance]” (personal interview,
September 17, 2013). Allemano indicated that she preferred having her band play The
Tranzac instead, especially late on a Sunday. At that time, her own audience would seek
out the concert rather than a generic “jazz audience.” Playing to “her crowd” has allowed
her band to do things that were not possible at other venues including The Rex:

We can play acoustically—totally acoustically—which I really appreciate, so
people listen. There’s usually no talking at all. That’s hard to come by at any of
these other venues…Also, as our music became more and more free and
improvised, we need a certain space to play in. So it needs to be a formal concert
where people are seated and quiet or something like this [at The Tranzac] where
people are quiet…We really need to hear every detail. Somehow here it’s become
more of a listening room, it seems like, at least for me. Occasionally, someone
comes in who is really talking and you really notice it and it’s really hard. (ibid.)

Clearly, audience attention is a key contextual factor for Allemano’s group’s distinctive
practices. 185

On the other hand, Bloomsday and Harley Card Quintet regularly played both The
Rex and The Tranzac as their approaches could more easily be accommodated at both
venues. Bloomsday, in particular, as a two-drummer ensemble with more groove-oriented
repertoire was a better fit for The Rex; they would not often be drowned out or distracted
by audience noise. That two-drummer instrumentation, however, made booking the
Emmet Ray, with its small back room and minimum of space, impossible. This is despite
the fact that the personnel of the band overlaps a great deal with Card’s group and that
the audience for both bands I noted to be similar. Meanwhile, Worst Pop Band Ever
became more or less accustomed to variable audience behavior at The Rex due to playing
their regularly, as Farrugia attests to: “talking, to me, when people are talking at a club
and especially at The Rex – I’m used to it, it’s usually neither here nor there for me”
(personal interview, September 21, 2013). Nonetheless, more extreme negative

185 The Rex was unsuitable for her band for more reasons than just her group’s use of dynamics, however.
Despite the group’s prominence and success as a touring band, the band’s avant-garde/free approach would
be off-brand for The Rex or even The Emmet Ray’s programming, to some extent.
behaviours will often eventually affect performance in overt ways, as I will outline later with this very band.

One consistent theme from participants in my study was that positive “energy” and behaviours from an audience at any venue was always helpful, and a significant factor; there were, though, different expectations regarding the specifics depending on personal and, especially, band aesthetic and philosophical preferences. Upon asking Worst Pop Band Ever pianist Adrean Farrugia what makes a “successful performance” for any jazz group, he pointed to a sense of “empowerment”:

All parties involved are empowered. I’m empowered by the music that happened, and I can only be empowered that happened if I perceived the other guys in the band as being empowered by what happened. Also, I can only really feel totally empowered as well, if there’s a reasonable perceivable empowerment of the audience too. There have been great gigs where [sic] there’s been three people there, and it’s hard to tell if the band feels great about how they played together. (personal interview, September 21, 2013)

For Farrugia, this empowerment is collective – all parties are linked in an ideal performance setting. Nonetheless, particularly inattentive audiences for him were a distraction and he viewed it as problematic for the entire experience: “Whatever you have to say can’t possibly be that important, and if it is, go somewhere else. Ugh. It’s just that level of entitlement, you know?” (ibid.) Card, meanwhile, admitted attentive or responsive audiences can help not only in musical terms, but also in the economic bottom line for the band: “I think I feel really lucky the other night when [the quintet] played at The Emmet Ray and we had a really nice attentive audience. And, a full bar so we could all come away with a few dollars. So, we had a really nice night” (personal interview, August 7, 2013, his emphasis). He, like Lina Allemano, found that The Tranzac was a “great listening room,” but he also warned against having too great an expectation of ideal behavior in every case, and that it was a blessing to play music for others:

But you’ve got to be careful. You got to appreciate when you play the Tranzac and it’s always a listening room and you have that kind of audience. But to expect it, and too get too dark about it when it’s not the case – I think you still have to remember that we’re lucky to be playing music, and if there’s anybody in those seats, we’re blessed to have that opportunity to play music for people no matter
how it functions in their mind and how we perceive how that interacts with their
lives. The fact that they’re just there is a good thing. (personal interview, August 7, 2013)

Farrugia ultimately agreed with having this mindset with regard to audiences:

I try to go into a gig with a position of gratitude. These people have been kind
eighty to choose to give me a chunk of their time, whereas I think that a lot of
young musicians come in with a preconceived idea that ‘this is going to be above
people’s heads so screw them for being stupid.’ Or a sort of pompous idea that
‘I’m here to enlighten you in your ignorance…musicians like that don’t go very
far…If you have the attitude that they’re stupid or incapable, they going to
perceive that really quickly. (personal interview, September 21, 2013)

Clearly, having an invested audience matters to the musicians in the subscene I studied.
In addition, certain spaces work for certain bands as it pertains to attracting such
audiences and having a physical space that allows for the band’s typical repertoire and
performance practices to “work.” Even in venues that typically work for a given band,
there are nights where the audience forces the band to adapt and this is usually due to
inattentive behaviour.

7.4 << Examples of “Negative” Audience Behaviour Affecting Performance >>

As previously indicated, it is the negative audience behaviours—which are
usually perpetrated by “type five” audience members—that will tend to have the most
direct and observable effects on performance. Obviously, this will often affect
performance negatively. Musicians can become distracted and/or group morale can be
hurt as Berliner found:

In the presence of inattentive listeners, improvisers pursue any number of options,
each having its own ramifications for the performance...Many times, however,
musical efforts to engage problematic audiences fundamentally undermine
performances. One leader, unnerved by a small group of undemonstrative
listeners scattered throughout a large auditorium attempted to draw them out by
increasing his performance’s “energy.” (Berliner 1994: 564-565)

My own research, however, has found that musicians may also creatively adapt in the moment to these conditions to avoid a “fundamentally undermine[d] performance.” Though such interruptions are rarely considered to be desirable or ideal by the performers, there are ways in which it may also refocus the musicians and find new creative strategies to overcome these distractions in-the-moment. In other cases, however, the behaviour—for the musicians involved on a given day—is too much for musicians to fully accommodate and appears to result in a more definitively negative result: a breakdown of performance practice or even a confrontation between musicians and audience. Of the three venues I studied, the one most likely to attract the most inattentive kinds of audience members was The Rex – but most especially at the earlier 7pm slot on weekdays. This happened to also be the most common setting to hear Worst Pop Band Ever in Toronto. Two incidents of this band’s performances follow – one an example of creative adaptation, but the first involving behaviour so intrusive that it led to creative breakdown and eventual confrontation.

While I was at The Rex during one of the typical live engagements for Worst Pop Band Ever at the early evening slot on a Wednesday (730-915pm), I witnessed a specific and more extreme incident that not only interfered with performance but eventually also the overall environment at the venue. At one of the long tables immediately in front of the stage (see Figure 11 from Chapter 4), there was a group of about a dozen law students. They appeared to be in their mid-twenties and were proportionally 2:1 in favor of males. Even considering it was an early set on a weekday at The Rex, this was a particularly loud table. While the musicians’ body language made it clear from early on that they noticed this disruptive table, by mid-way through their first set this behaviour became a more disruptive issue when one male audience member crossed the edge of the stage, nudging saxophonist Chris Gale out of his position on stage. This occurred as the audience member while attempting to return to his seat with his back to the wall near the front. Gale was noticeably upset; much later, he told me just how angry he was and admitted that it distracted him from the music-making in the moment.
Shia, before the composition was over, realized, at least in part, what had happened. (He exchanged glances with Gale and there was some kind of either verbal or non-verbal communication while they played.) As a result, after the tune was over, he decided to deal with it on microphone, telling the audience member politely but very directly he was not to do it again. The audience member audibly protested, denying any culpability and providing some kind of excuse (though his exact words were inaudible from my vantage point), but Shia on microphone sternly cut him off: “No, we saw it. You were on stage. Don’t do it again.” At this point, for those audience members in the front of the room, this did change the atmosphere and the momentum of the performance. People exchanged sideways glances and focused their attention on the individuals involved instead of on the music. One upside to this unfortunate occurrence was that the table of students was noticeably less intrusive after this point.

I asked Shia a few days afterward about why he decided to handle it this way and he outlined how there was, in his mind (as well as Gale’s and Farrugia’s minds, as they were also demonstrably upset), an extreme violation of the codes of behavior around musician-audience interaction with physical space at its core:

There wasn't a whole lot of thought that went into it. There wasn't time...All I knew was that [the audience member] went on stage and that was sufficient for me to be upset… That was…a breach of personal space and professional space. It's like going into his office and sitting on his table while he's working – it’s uncalled for. (personal interview, March 30, 2012)

Even with the relative informality of the venue, Shia and the rest of the ensemble strongly believed that there should still be a line (almost literally) that not be crossed between audience and performers. Shia’s comments frame the matter, in part, as a case of basic courtesy and professionalism. On the other hand, Shia also wanted to maintain band solidarity, and felt a duty to the rest of his band as bandleader: “I knew Chris was upset and so I just thought I'd call the fellow on it…I would probably have had harsher words if I had known he had bumped Chris at the time” (ibid.). In the end, though, his instinct was to enforce these dynamics to protect the band’s space personally and artistically:
Maybe [the offending audience member] was oblivious to the fact that he'd done something wrong, and I just wanted to let him know that wasn't tolerated and that he shouldn't do it again. I had a sneaking suspicion that if he did it once, that he'd do it again. So I called him on it, so when he tried to make excuses and to me they just seemed lame. He could have done any number of things instead. (personal interview, April 22, 2015)

Not every bandleader would have handled a similar situation in a similar manner. Shia, compared to even other bandleaders I have observed, might be described as extroverted and strong-willed. Nonetheless, it is also unlikely to imagine such a breach not affecting performance dynamics.

On another occasion, I heard a Wednesday early set in August 2013 in which saxophonist Chris Gale was absent. The band opted to adapt its repertoire and use no horn player. For the entirety of their first set, there was a loud table of patrons off to the side near the pillar to the right of the main doorway. It was a group of friends who were engaged in loud conversation, with one particularly loud female patron cutting through all sound in the venue. Farrugia was clearly distracted by the table at a few points in the set, turning fully around from the piano to look at that table. On the setbreak that followed, he made clear to me that he did have some expectations around audience attention, expectations he couched in ethical terms:

It’s somewhat narcissistic to think that people should sit there in absolute silence and give you 100% of their attention when you’re performing. However, when it comes to the point where somebody’s volume is deterring the musicians from doing what they do and getting in the way of those that do want to listen… now you’re becoming completely oblivious to the impact of your actions on others and if you’re older than five years old, that’s not really appropriate behaviour… Glaring at that them did nothing because they were completely oblivious. I don’t know if you noticed…it was my audio line where I was sitting; that they were bouncing off the pillar into my ear. To me, it was quite loud and distracting. (personal interview, August 21, 2013)

This was a case where performance practice was drastically affected, and I suspected it immediately in Farrugia’s solo in his own composition “The Ten Thousand Things” (Audio Example #1).
This composition involves solos over a prolonged E minor vamp at a medium-to-up tempo with a contemporary straight-eighth note feel. When it came to his solo, the rest of the band initially dropped out and he began his solo by playing a vigorous, highly syncopated, Afro-Cuban inspired pattern in the mid-to-low register. This eventually broke down into a brief but very loud, out-of-time, cacophonous episode that Farrugia told me immediately after performing was a direct result of the behavior of this woman, who at this point was very loud: “That prolonged loud smashing in the bottom octave in ‘10,000 Things’ was for those loud people. It was an instrumental ‘Shut the fuck up’” (personal interview, August 23, 2013). Farrugia’s body language and the ferocity of his playing suggested he was intensely concentrating but also, at times, clearly partially in the throes (for better or worse) of the frustration at this audience member – I confirmed with him that he mouthed “I’m going to do this for another forty minutes” to his band-mates before moving on from this episode. Following this, he returned to highly syncopated patterns in the low-to-middle register but now in double-time which increased the density and energy, and while he was still loud, he was no longer as dynamically extreme as before. Eventually, Shia responded on the drums by laying down an overt “four-on-the-floor” disco pattern which bassist Drew Birston responded to with a complementary genre practice in disco in a low-register eighth-note octave line. This feel continued for the rest of the solo and going into the first part of the outgoing statement of the melody. (One can still hear, on my field recording, the woman in question very loudly bellowing as the band fades out on a closing vamp.)

For Farrugia, this offense was particularly glaring because the venue had an area for audience members to sit that were not near the band where they would not have interfered (see Chapter 4, Figure 11): “It was irritating that they chose to sit there and talk the whole time rather than go in the back, which I really would have had no issue with at all. It was the fact that they were right beside the musicians and still sort of talking oblivious to the snide remarks I was making about that; it sort of made me laugh a little bit” (personal interview, August 23, 2013). In the end, while the musicians may not have preferred this kind of behaviour, the adaptation and reaction did result in a unique performance that would certainly not have occurred under different conditions. This, in
itself, is particularly critical in jazz performance overall, but is especially pronounced because of the local conditions: 1) the informality and other aspects of the environment (in this case, at The Rex) that results in such behaviours that were not commonplace at other venues (such as The Senator or Montreal Bistro); 2) when such behaviours interact with the more specific group dynamics of these younger stable bands this can result in much more distinct practices. These behaviours did not result in a jazz musician merely playing louder or “losing the form” as a “mainstream” band might, but rather adaptation and recontextualization.

7.5 **Examples of “Positive” Audience Behaviour Affecting Performance**

As already stipulated, it is inherently more problematic to analyze the effects of positive audience behaviours, because it is impossible to measure how performances would hypothetically have been different as a result of the positive reaction from audiences at a given venue. What can be observed: 1) specific positive reactions and behaviours (as mentioned in the list above) in response to the music that helps improve the overall atmosphere in a given venue and; 2) specific performance practices that are arguably only effective and even attempted because of this attentive behavior of an audience.

In hearing Worst Pop Band Ever once cover David Bowie’s “Life on Mars” (a favourite popular song of Adrean Farrugia’s) I noticed a table of young women beside me conversing excitedly in hushed voices. They all realized they could recognize the instrumental as being a famous popular song but were not sure of its origin right away. Then, suddenly one of the women at the table sat upright and exclaimed “David Bowie! Right?” She leaned over to me at this point and asked me for confirmation which I, in turn, gave. She then turned to her companions at the table: “See? I knew it!” A look of pride in recognition came over her face. The table then all turned to face the band and appeared to listen with attention. This, without doubt, was a table of audience members
firmly in the #5a) category – intermittently attentive with a general interest in jazz at best, but appearing not to have a specific interest in the band in question (yet, at least) or the scene as a whole. Nonetheless, this speaks to a kind of positive reaction that I often observed at The Rex from audience members in this category – the recognition of popular songs or, in some cases, more subtle cues like grooves and feels that came from popular music or folklore.

Meanwhile, I have heard other practices at The Tranzac (and sometimes The Emmet Ray) that would be unlikely at The Rex, especially in its early slot. The Lina Allemano Four played Aug 10, 2014 to a room of about fifteen to twenty people (in my experience, a decent turnout at 1030pm on a Sunday for this small room). The audience stayed in rapt attention, with the only sounds being one individual typing in a corner for a brief period. The band played completely acoustically with alto saxophone, trumpet, acoustic bass and drum set. There were several episodes with only two of them interacting or sometimes an individual soloing unaccompanied, often at a very low volume. None of these practices would be effective at The Rex or even The Emmet Ray. Similarly, while Drumheller plays regularly at The Tranzac for similar reasons, they have found that their preferred musical style does not consistently work in other situations. Alto saxophonist Brodie West said: “We played outdoors at a concert in 2006 and it’s hard to play some of the music that’s quiet, static – it literally wouldn’t carry. But we’re always going to play our music” (personal interview, August 9, 2013). This last comment is indicative of the broader consensus among these groups – while some bands and bandleaders might make modest adjustments based on a venue or audience, all of them would continue to play “their music” and not switch to “conventional/mainstream” jazz (standards, hard bop) even in difficult circumstances.

Even those groups that tend to play loudly more consistently and/or with consistent groove-oriented pieces (true of Worst Pop Band Ever and Bloomsday) seemingly played with the same volume and intensity regardless of an audience. A small or overly inattentive audience, however, often left some musicians in these bands appearing deflated after a set (i.e. shaking of heads, shrugging of shoulders, comments to one another or me). I asked musicians from these bands about this, and Farrugia agreed:
“There have been great gigs where there’s been three people there, and it’s hard to tell if the band feels great about how they played together” (personal interview, August 23, 2013). Audiences may be a difficult factor to measure with regard to performance practice of these groups in this subscene, but there can be little doubt that this context matters.
Chapter 8
Rationale for Analysis of Jazz Performance Practices in the Toronto “Stable Group Jazz Subscene”

8.1 << Introduction >>

In Chapter 4, I described the primary venues that make up the TSGJ subscene. I pointed out how the people involved in booking, as well as the physical layout of the rooms, allowed for stable jazz groups with their own collective musical personae to emerge and thrive. In that chapter as well as in Chapter 7, I indicated that the venues attracted different audiences as a result of their booking preferences, layouts, and even the geography of where the clubs were situated in relation to Toronto’s downtown. However, in general, there does appear to be a relatively small, but consistent audience to hear these groups at these subscene venues.

In Chapter 6, I described how bands in the TSGJ subscene molded promotional fronts to project their personae to the listening public. I examined how many such projects used promotional strategies to describe how they operated as a band that interacted with various musical traditions including, and especially, jazz. Meanwhile, in Chapter 7, I considered how musicians, focusing on Worst Pop Band Ever (WPBE) in particular, adapted their performances in relation to the venue and its audience. Starting with this chapter, I transition to more detailed analyses of the performance practices of the other primary groups.

Before I delve into musical analysis (Chapter 9-11), however, I want to outline how I have adapted existing analytical methodology to do so. In adapting existing analytical tools, I aim to demonstrate how each of the primary groups adapted jazz and popular music tradition(s) on their own terms to build their own musical persona. Furthermore, I do so in such a way to stress how this adaptation is only possible through these musicians’ commitment to long-term groups. In addition, I compare and contrast
band persona within a contemporary jazz context with the ethos of the tradition most closely aligned with the “band model” – rock music.

8.2  << Adapting Analytical Tradition(s) for Performance >>

8.2.1  << Adapting Contemporary Jazz Analysis >>

Audiences can potentially encounter a wide range of musical approaches when attending a “jazz performance.” At the core of many of these approaches, however, is an aesthetic that involves contesting and playing with musical traditions through interactive, in-the-moment performance. Sometimes this involves interacting with and within standard popular and jazz repertoire, while at other times musicians will create new repertoire to engender new ways to initiate more distinctive frameworks for improvising. As I pointed out in Chapter 1, regardless of the specific repertoire, the very idea of Signifying upon musical traditions in this way is inherently informed by African-American cultural meaning-making.

One of the most time-honoured practices in jazz is interacting with the materials of popular music, especially through repertoire choice. Scott DeVeaux, in his article “‘Nice Work If You Can Get It’: Thelonious Monk and Popular Song” (1999), provides evidence to hypothesize that Thelonious Monk’s compositional and improvising approach and aesthetic was the result of a creative engagement with popular song.

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186 Much depends on a given listener’s exposure to various musics presented as jazz to him or her, whether in recorded formats or live including instrumentation, repertoire, and approaches to performance practice. In a contemporary context, audience expectations around jazz performance vary too widely to be able to nail down one set of characteristics that they might see as important. A given audience member might expect something as specific as seeing a saxophone or trumpet, to hearing standard repertoire played in ways that makes it recognizable for him/her, to something as general as hearing individual improvised solos or a swing beat (and what constitutes the latter would be contested as well). In any case, while I did not do exhaustive research of audience expectations surrounding jazz performance, I have described in Chapter 3 that it is typical of the audiences at the specific Toronto venues I studied that they do not consistently expect a narrow range of practices and repertoire to be present in hearing a jazz performance as they might have in many of the “mainstream” venues of the 1980s and 1990s.

187 In Canada, many of these cultural markers are similar, given the porous border with the United States and the dominant influence of American popular culture.
Furthermore, through this analysis, DeVeaux refutes an assumption of conventional narratives of jazz history that bebop was the result of jazz artists rejecting popular music aesthetics. Instead, he postulates that the aesthetic of bebop itself, was actually predicated on a more complicated connection with popular music:

I suggest that [Monk’s] aesthetic was forge not in some idealized space, like the backroom of Minton's, shielded from the corrupting influence of 'commercial' music, but through an engagement with popular song…I strongly suspect that [this affinity] is shared by most other musicians of Monk's generation and that it is more deeply embedded in jazz as a whole than its most ardent champions might care to admit. (DeVeaux 1999: 183)

Further, DeVeaux analyzes Monk’s musical practices as an urge to “defamiliarize the familiar” – that is, take specific details of these popular songs (especially the intervallic character of their melodies) as a way to inspire novel orchestrations and harmonizations. This language resonates powerfully with Gates’s notion of Signifyin(g) – “repetition with a signal difference.” More importantly, DeVeaux suggests that this engagement with song led to creative ideas that informed all of Monk’s jazz practices.

I want to make the concept of “defamiliarizing the familiar” in jazz performance central to my analytical foundation. That is, I will demonstrate that how the groups in my study interact with and defamiliarize jazz and other musical tradition(s) (especially popular music) serves to create their groups’ musical personae. This defamiliarization of these traditions occurs on different levels – individually and collectively, within small details and large-scale concepts of both compositions and improvising. In any case, seeking this kind of confrontation, conversation, and interaction with musical traditions may well be the central “jazz impulse” in jazz performance practice. In describing Joe Henderson’s improvisational approach, ethnomusicologist and jazz scholar John Murphy describes how Henderson initiates musical conversation among all participants in the jazz event including the audience:

By invoking and reworking music that is familiar to the audience, the jazz performer involves the audience in the process and makes it meaningful for those who recognize the sources. This also can be accomplished in ways that are more similar to the vernacular-speech kind of Signifyin(g) than the literary. Often a
performer will take up an idea from a soloist or an accompanist and later transform it during the same performance (Murphy 1990: 9).

This kind of musical dialogue requires a familiarity with some part of jazz tradition(s). This familiarity is what allows for the kind of transformative moments of defamiliarization that, ideally, will bring in the listening audience. Murphy quotes Henderson in this article, which speaks to his process as an improviser: “You know how you use quotation marks. You know how you quote people as a player. You use semicolons, hyphens, paragraphs, parentheses, stuff like this. I’m thinking like this when I’m playing. I’m having a conversation with somebody [his emphasis]” (1990: 15).

Henderson points out here that the jazz musician is always interacting across genres, including and especially folklore (especially of the American and the Pan-American variety), popular culture, and jazz tradition(s) themselves (which it is intrinsically linked) while interacting with fellow musicians on stage, and the audiences or listeners.

All of the groups in the TSGJ subscene that I heard interacted with jazz tradition(s) and folklore/popular music in a variety of ways, allowing for differing approaches to jazz performance that helped establish these groups’ collective musical personae. On the one hand, neither Harley Card Quintet or Drumheller performed modern popular songs regularly in the way that Worst Pop Band Ever and other bands in the subscene did (e.g. David Bowie’s “Life on Mars” or Tears For Fears’ “Everybody Wants to Rule the World”). On the other hand, episodic forms—a trope among many prominent contemporary jazz groups—were regularly but quite differently used by Bloomsday, Drumheller, and sometimes the Harley Card Quintet, but were not as often used by WPBE.188 There were many other similarities and marked distinctions among how groups

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188 Jazz composer Ted Pease clearly describes the convention of “episodic form” in jazz performance: “Episodic pieces have separate, complete sections that divide the whole of a piece into a series of self-contained musical units. The individual sections may contain important themes, changes in mood or tempo, or tonal or metric modulations. A given section may even contain its own separate song form or perhaps a blues form, and that form may be repeated as a basis for improvised solos” (Pease 197). While Pease gives examples from the 1970s and 1980s from Jaco Pastorius, Joe Zawinul, and Chick Corea, the practice in small group playing goes back to at least the early 1950s with Horace Silver and John Lewis – both of whom were, of course, maintained long-term stable groups for decades. Ellington, of course, arguably had through-composed episodic elements in his big band works going back to at least the 1930s. Still, in small group performance this compositional practice—particularly with more radical stylistic, tonal, and metric
in this subscene interacted with jazz and popular music all of which contribute to each group’s distinct musical approach. And yet, these groups all self-identified as *jazz* groups that find ways to connect to the traditions and conventions of jazz performance.

**8.2.2 Transitioning From Traditional Musicological Analysis**

I have opted to draw analytical tools and concepts from ethnomusicology and popular music-oriented musicology. Many scholars in these fields, in turn, have used the lenses of cultural studies, semiotics, linguistics, and literary theory to deemphasize the focus on the written score that has dominated classical musicology since the nineteenth century. I think avoiding overemphasis on the score is especially important for studying jazz, popular music, and folk musics all of which, to varying degrees, more often rely on aural ways of learning and transmitting relative to Western “classical” music. Even when using Western notation, the traditional tools for analyzing the techniques of classical traditions involving Western notation may need significant revision or adaptation, when not replaced altogether.

Musicologist Richard Middleton provided a useful critique for how older musicological and theoretical approaches can be problematic especially when applied to popular music (Middleton 2000). I find his framing of these issues to be useful as a starting point for my developing my own approach to analyzing the jazz practices of the groups in my study:

1) “*In older musicological tradition, there is a tendency to use inappropriate or loaded terminology.*”

In my analyses, I am particularly cautious about using the terminology inherited from classical music. These terms sometimes connote aesthetic values that do not fit with those of jazz tradition(s). For example, I avoid using a term like “repetitive,” which often connotes negativity in traditional musicology and analysis unless additional clarifying

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shifts—tended to be relegated to a handful of composers and groups for a long time. Many of today’s most prominent performers, however, are noted for incorporating this approach.
language is added. Motivic and rhythmic repetition is often essential and valued in many jazz contexts. To that end, there are other terms that are in common use by jazz musicians, as well as terms that are often referenced in popular music traditions, that will prove to be more useful in my analysis (‘vamp,’ ‘repeated riff,’ etc.).

ii) “There is a skewed focus. Traditionally, musicology is good with pitch structures and harmony, much less good with rhythm, poor with timbre....”

This prioritization is especially problematic in analyzing jazz performance – varying timbre can be central to performance technique and, furthermore, having an individually unique timbre on the instrument (a musician’s “own sound”) is a prized musical trait. Moreover, timbral heterogeneity is inherited from African-American music-making traditions (as in Olly Wilson’s “heterogeneous sound ideal”). Accordingly, I prioritize ensemble texture of groups in my analyzing how they perform, and in so doing how they enact their respective personae.\(^{189}\)

Furthermore, rhythm is usually of paramount importance in jazz performance and African-American-rooted music in general. I reflect this in not only analyzing composed and improvised choices, but also the nuances and interactions that lead to ensemble “groove” and conjure genre or style. On the other hand, many elements in their performances and compositions do have a basis in tonal language. Therefore, with some compositions and performances, aspects like harmony, voice-leading, counterpoint, melodic development, and the like are still of critical importance with some frequency – though rhythm tends to permeate all of these other musical elements in jazz practice.

\(^{189}\) There are, to be sure, counter-traditions of textural homogeneity in jazz that have developed as well. To take a somewhat extreme example, there is an approach to contemporary big band performance that has prized this kind of precision and approach to texture – Alex Stewart describes this in his study of contemporary New York big bands: “The most polished [New York big] bands follow an aesthetic similar to that of the classical music tradition. Players cultivate darker sounds that are more easily blended, work obsessively to correct tiny idiosyncrasies in the intonation of their instruments, and develop a fluid and consistent technique in all registers. In performance, they coordinate attacks and releases, interpret rhythms exactly the same, and follow a rigorous and constantly shifting hierarchy of the lead trumpet and their section leaders” (Stewart 2007: 10). Given the approach to polished performance in studio orchestras and big bands that mainstream Toronto jazz musicians had been known for, it is arguably this aesthetic and approach that greatly influenced the approach of small group performance in Toronto jazz clubs and recordings. Meanwhile, it is this very approach that some of these groups in this subscene are pushing against or at least revising with their stable groups.
iii) “‘Notational centricity’...tends to equate the music with a score. This leads to an overemphasis on features that can be notated easily (such as fixed pitches) at the expense of others which cannot (complex rhythmic detail, pitch nuance, sound qualities).”

Given that pitch nuance, sound quality, and complex rhythm will necessarily be of importance in many examples that I analyze, I have found ways to adapt traditional notation with markings to indicate some of the jazz specific performance nuances I encountered. In other cases, I used alternative visual methods to describe such elements.

iv) “The most common aesthetic is one of abstractionism. Musical meaning is equated with an idealized image of the ‘work’...This procedure is at its most extreme in formalist modes of analysis, which tend to reduce meaning to effects of structure, ignoring emotional and corporeal aspects.”

I have already pointed out that abstractionism has arguably been over-emphasized in much of the earliest published jazz analysis. Yet, looking at form and structure as it pertains to meaning is still very valuable – even if these aspects need to be adapted to the contexts of jazz performance. Cyclical forms, for example, are still a commonly employed tactic of all the groups I studied, albeit to varying degrees. For a music grounded in dance rhythms and popular music that is more directly emotive (see below), however, the corporeal and emotional aspects are especially important to consider.

v) “Listening is monologic. What the analyst hears is assumed to correlate with ‘the music’, and the possibility of variable aural readings is ignored.” (Middleton 4)

I do not intend my analyses to be closed or “definitive” readings, but rather offer a possible interpretation of how these groups are forming personae through a selective description of what musical practices, including but not only jazz, are referenced in the musical examples, how these practices connect to each other as a result of the context of where and when they are being utilized, and how these musical decisions may relate to a broader cultural context.

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190 In Chapter 1, I outline this tradition starting with Schuller’s highly influential Rollins analysis and including a plurality of the scholarship in its wake.
8.2.3 << The Avoidance of Sound In Popular Music Musicology >>

For the last few decades, some analysts and musicologists have begun to try to meaningfully engage with popular music traditions, and in doing so have often emphasized cultural context in seeking possible musical meaning. More recently, however, other scholars have pointed out that this prevailing concern with context has too often resulted in not engaging with the actual sounds being performed (i.e. “the music”).

As I alluded to in Chapter 1, by the 1970s, cultural scholars like Dick Hedbidge and his colleagues at the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies studied groupings of musicians and fans as subcultures. In so doing, such scholars put the “meaning” of popular music (with punk music as the typical focus) more in the hands of its fan bases. The tendency was to describe the music’s relationship to social and extramusical behaviours and general aesthetic codes but without any meaningful attempt at describing specific details of the musical sounds themselves. Often, when music was analyzed, there was more emphasis on lyrical content. Music critic Simon Firth is indicative of this consensus in his insistence that technical details of music are not as important in popular music analysis because listeners are supposedly not aware of them (Frith 1996: 64).

Middleton counters this insistence on avoiding describing sounds. He argues that in singularly focusing on socio-cultural context without any analysis of sound his contemporaries may have been missing the larger picture:

In the context of a concern with textual analysis, the most forceful point of criticism is, precisely, the tendency to neglect the text: interpretation of the music is often scanty, vague, after-the-event, or taken direct from fans, and it is hard to avoid a sense that, in any ‘resonance’ between music and subcultural style, the music has been made to get a pre-existing picture” (Middleton 2000: 7-8).

Robert Walser makes a similar plea: “We should be historicizing all music and accounting in each case for the particular pleasures that are offered and thus for the values on which they depend and to which they appeal” (Walser 2003: 20). In his
criticism of Frith and other similar scholars, Walser goes on to defend the importance of analyzed sound:

If we don’t take seriously the technical and interpretive statements of musicians and music analysts, we’re likely to end up mystifying music and dismissing musicological discussions as academic obfuscations. Such explanations – ‘without the mediation of meaning’ – ultimately trivialize and essentialize popular music and those who participate in it, by implying that sounds work on selves that are unconstructed by culture, by not facing the question of why only some people get such pleasures (Walser 2003: 21).

It is only in the last decade or so that this point of view has begun to take hold in popular music scholarship such that detailed analysis of musical sound and materials (however self-reflexively defined) are included, let alone emphasized.

Walser summarizes what would be common sense to most jazz analysts that “any cultural analysis of popular music that leaves out musical sound, that doesn’t explain why people are drawn to certain sounds specifically and not others, is at least fundamentally incomplete” (Walser 2003, 21-22). Like Middleton, he points out that any musical analysis will necessarily not be definitive but only a possible reading which is necessarily “reductive,” but that this is precisely what makes the analysis useful: any analysis of musical sounds will reduce what aspects to emphasize in light of the particular goal(s) of a given analysis (2003: 24). That is, what is it that I, as analyst, hear in the music that is worth analyzing?

8.3  << My Analytical Rationale >>

8.3.1  << The “Rock Band Ethos” as Inspiration for Long-Term Contemporary Jazz Groups >>

As I describe in Chapter 1, the ethos of the typical rock band is grounded in a development of a collective musical persona. While part of this involves developing a
promotional front (and I described how bands in this subscene often used rock band tactics here in Chapter 6), much of the creative, musical persona of a rock band is still in its authorial voice. After all, songwriting, more than any other aspect, is the creative hallmark of a typical rock band’s output.¹⁹¹

Harris Berger describes the range of typical songwriting processes in modern rock: “Broadly speaking, we can understand composition in rock...as falling within a continuum from group composition to leader composition” (1999: 45). The latter, “leader composition,” will typically involve individuals or pairs of musicians may bring in most of the structure of a song to a band (e.g. Keith Richards/Mick Jagger with The Rolling Stones; Kurt Cobain with Nirvana). “Group composition” is at the other end of this spectrum. In this model, members of the band form a new tune in rehearsal or jam sessions, often starting from fragments (i.e. a “riff” or “line” from a given member of the band) and building on this with musicians trying out (i.e. improvising) new ideas from this foundation. This process often works in fits and starts with negotiation between members until a more fixed entity begins to form. Ruth Finnegan, in an earlier study, described group composition as the “rock mode.” She describes the relationship of group composition to the performance of the final product: “…bands engaged in prior composition through joint practice, followed by a separate performance of the work that had by then reached a relatively fixed form through this joint development” (Finnegan 1988: 132). Finnegan, here, hones in on a key difference between jazz and rock modes – that the goal in rock is usually a “fixed composition” while in jazz, in the performance of any composition, at least some amount of fluid ensemble improvisation and/or solo improvisation takes place. This improvisation, moreover, is usually a focal point. Accordingly, group composition was, at least in its strictest form, not a compositional method that I came across among jazz groups in my study.

¹⁹¹ There is, however, an entire part of the rock tradition for bands that make instrumental solos or even, more rarely, improvisational interactive practices part of the band’s identity. Cream was among the earliest bands to make both solos and a slightly more fluid approach to rhythm section interaction a hallmark of their identity; perhaps not surprisingly, this was not only a band with not only an influential blues guitar soloist but also a jazz-influenced drummer and bassist, Jimi Hendrix and the Experience, The Allman Brothers, and The Grateful Dead were among the bands that all utilized longer, improvised soloing. Many bands using more improvisation have followed in their wake including some in the prog-rock or jam band traditions.
Nonetheless, I think the rock band was an important model to the younger stable group subscene in that: 1) all of these groups did strongly value playing original compositions; 2) members of the groups made key contributions as part of a long-term ensemble. In fact, more than just valuing originals, to varying extents all of the groups in my study played original compositions as a part of its artistic mandate. This has parallels to rock aesthetics in which authenticity (at least post-1965) is strongly tied to bands developing an authorial voice.

Furthermore, as I will demonstrate in my subsequent analyses, members of my study’s primary groups did regularly make key contributions to compositions in rehearsal and performance. In some bands with certain compositions, the composer sought explicit feedback from the very first reading. This process tended to happen with greatest regularity in bands that were not as “leader-focused.” All of the bands, though, communicated to me that key elements of many compositions changed as a result of hearing the band interpret the music and follow-up on its execution. That is, it was rare to have arrangements that arrived fully-formed and did not eventually evolve.

As I wrote about in Chapter 4, the bands operated differently with regard to which members contributed compositions, meaning that were two different models for developing a authorial voice within this subscene. For bands like both Bloomsday and the Harley Card Quintet that exclusively performed originals by their respective leaders, their bands’ repertoires and resulting authorial voices reflected the respective leaders’ approaches and aesthetics. And yet, in these cases, these leaders’ approaches, at least to an extent, were shaped by the personnel in their bands. As time went on, both David French and Harley Card changed key elements of compositions upon hearing their pieces performed. More critically, the leaders’ repertoire and overall approaches depended on having consistent band members that could engage with unconventional practices and creatively contribute at a high level. Given the contributions of the other band members, authorial voice in these cases managed to be both that of its leader and the band at once.

Meanwhile, the other bands in my study did not build a repertoire around one composer. The Worst Pop Band Ever, for example, had contributions not only from the
leader, Tim Shia (who had the most writing credits) but also all recent members of the group. Nonetheless, the pieces that were brought in appeared to reflect the ethos or artistic mandate that bandleader Tim Shia started with—a focus on “popular melodies” with a contemporary jazz framework. In addition, everyone in Drumheller contributed some compositions over the course of its existence, and while all of them wrote significantly differently, they all did so with a sense of the individuals in the group. In Chapter 9, I attempt to demonstrate how Brodie West’s composition, and the way band came to an arrangement, was closely related to the practices of these individuals.

As a result, to a great extent, all of these groups relied on a consistent lineup to play original compositions. This lineup, moreover, often informed the way the compositions were written. Even on occasions in which substitutes were used, all of these bands sought to use musicians who were very familiar with the ensemble’s repertoire and were highly complementary with the band’s musical approach. Therefore, the roster of substitutes regularly used by a given jazz group in my study was relatively small (when it existed at all). This, in itself, was similar to how typical rock bands function at least in the ideal—most of them rarely, if ever, substitute personnel for individual performances.\(^\text{192}\)

In rock practice, this consistency is at least as much about maintaining the band’s public “brand” given that they are competing for possible commercial viability.\(^\text{193}\) Meanwhile, jazz musicians—especially in the current Toronto environment (see Chapter 3)—are less likely to be focused on potential large-scale success with these groups. Rather, they are building a musical persona and, to an extent, an audience, however limited, that will engage with it.

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\(^\text{192}\) The extent to which this is true, of course, can vary. Fans can, overall, accept a substitution of a member of a group who is viewed as less integral to the creative identity and public persona of a given member of a rock band. (Arguably, having Darryl Jones substitute long-term for Bill Wyman in the Rolling Stones as of 1994 was viewed by fans less of a shift than transitioning from Mick Taylor to Ron Wood on guitar in 1974. This may have been reflected in the fact that the band opted to make Wood a full-fledged ‘official’ member while Jones became a salaried, though permanent, touring musician.) Also, famous, established bands that are driven by a charismatic singer-songwriter or lead guitarist may have less problem with a shift in other personnel. However, for independent, emerging rock bands, there is often strong reliance on the entire collective. It is in this spirit, that these jazz groups are most similar.

\(^\text{193}\) Also, in many cases, musicians in an original rock band are not, at the same time, freelance musicians in the way many jazz musicians are and, therefore, can be counted on to be available for a given engagement.
Obviously, for all of these jazz groups, the specifics of their practices and creative processes were often different from rock. And yet, there remains a parallel in having the group rather than the individual as the persona. That is, while these groups and many of their individual members in the younger stable band subscene participated to varying degrees in other parts of the jazz scene (including the “mainstream”), these bands were not collections of musicians performing according to idiomatically expected norms. Rather, these are “bands” carving out their own creative identities, their own “sounds” and sonic personas. Adam Behr’s description of the rock band’s collective self-sufficiency has parallels to the jazz groups in this subscene: “The [rock] band, usually comprising the personnel needed for composition and performance, is a relatively self-contained unit in terms of its creative operations” (2015: 111). Behr contrasts rock bands with institutions like orchestras or opera companies which rely on substantial economic capital and support personnel to even get started. While eventually resources and personnel around venues and recording becoming an issue, in their initial creative phase neither rock bands nor long-term jazz groups require this.

In any case, while the jazz groups in the subscene I studied may have been seeking distinct creative personae, they also did not attempt to disguise their embrace of jazz “signifiers” in their compositions and improvisational practices in the way that many groups associated with the avant-garde typically do. In fact, one of the key aspects of the groups in this jazz subscene is that they actively tried to find a voice by subverting or tweaking conventional practices in jazz tradition(s). Typically, this started with the compositions written for the band’s membership. Composers in the band often also found unconventional ways to integrate the musical codes and practices from various popular genres through specific gestures, motivic ideas, and structural changes. Individual musicians interacted and improvised within these conventions in individual ways but with an attention to a group expression. Indeed, to a certain extent, musicians that compose for these groups must accommodate and embrace the other musicians’ ways of

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194 Derek Bailey’s concept of “non-idiomatic improvisation” is often cited when describing this propensity to avoid signifying on genre or idiom in avant-garde music: “[Non-idiomatic improvisation] is most usually found in so-called ‘free’ improvisation and, while it can be highly stylised, is not usually tied to representing an idiomatic identity” (1993, xii).
performing, technical abilities, and aesthetic sensibilities. In so doing, whether more by leader’s “design” or by “organic” evolution, each of these stable long-term jazz groups develops what Behr—in describing rock band dynamics—refers to as a “musical method” or “style”:

…musicians in a band have to be able to play together to a minimum degree if the enterprise is to get off the ground. If this is to happen, then they must be able to deal with each other’s playing styles and methods of musical communication. In these circumstances, technical ability does play a role. Musicians with different levels of ability can, and do, co-exist happily in the same band but theoretical and technical disparities must be accommodated. Modes of musical expression and communication are elements of the individual’s radius of creativity that must be negotiated against those of bandmates to create a habitable centre ground. (126)

Negotiation, then, takes more than just on-stage negotiation of typical forms, chord progression, and idiomatic language – rather, it is an ongoing process of deciding how to perform.

This flies in the face of the core convention of mainstream (i.e. bop or post-bop) small group jazz practice in which it is assumed that all musicians have similar (verging on identical) musical knowledge and technical fluency. In any musical idiom in which a mutually understood “dialect” is assumed, any sense of collective musical persona tends be predominantly realized, first, as an accumulation of the individual soloists’ approaches to performing in the idiomatic dialect. In mainstream jazz, such a persona tends to be realized, first, in how individual improvisers in the group utilize and “pronounce” (i.e. articulate) particular phrases and vocabulary from within the idiom in building their solos. These elements were also part of the persona of many groups in the younger stable group subscene as well, but given that the performance contexts and the repertoire can be very different from customary practice, this emphasis on the individual improviser is sometimes downplayed. Even when individuals do improvise, the contexts of these original compositions tended to lead even those musicians who were well-versed in mainstream jazz language to find alternatives during their solos. Second, typical mainstream bands’ personae are often achieved in the nuances of how the rhythm sections “converse” within the confines of this language according to conventional roles
to create an idiomatic groove. How a bassist and drummer play “ahead” or “behind” the beat while playing together is one important consideration. (Again, these elements are often still at play for these subscene groups as well.) But whereas a mainstream jazz group is likely to focus their creative energy on the nuances of how they interact within established conventions, these stable bands were instead attempted to find ways to converse not only with each other but with jazz tradition(s) themselves in search of a collective musical persona.

In this sense, all of these groups in my study and across the subscene attempted to function creatively, in effect, as what Becker calls “new art worlds” (Becker 1980: 310-314). As I alluded to in Chapter 1, Becker indicates that an “art world” is a “...network of people whose co-operative acts, organized through a shared knowledge of conventions, produces art that this world is known for” (1980: x). On the other hand, Becker also points out that

...people who cooperate to produce a work of art...rely on earlier agreements now become customary, agreements that have become part of the conventional way of doing things in that art. Artistic conventions cover all the decisions that must be made with respect to works produced, even though a particular convention may be revised for a given work. (1980: 30)

Even a new art world cannot exclusively be about “breaking convention,” or there is no reference point whatsoever for either its practitioners or its audience. Indeed, all of the groups, to one extent or another, relied on some conventions of jazz and other musical traditions. This is key not only for effective, efficient performance, but also for communicating to its jazz audience, even an audience that, in this subscene, may expect unconventional practice. As Becker puts it: “In general, breaking with existing conventions and their manifestations in social structure and material artifacts increases artists' trouble and decreases the circulation of their work, but at the same time increases their freedom to choose unconventional alternatives and to depart substantially from customary practice” (1980: 34).
Later, Becker paired up with Robert Faulkner in their book-length study of jazz musicians and their repertoire called *Do You Know?: The Jazz Repertoire in Action* (2009). In the book, they focused on the kind of playing that freelance players most often engage in professionally – an informal, unrehearsed meeting in which the players play a common repertoire together. Becker and Faulkner refer to the body of tunes that are “called” most often on these gigs as “network-specific repertoires” (Faulkner and Becker 2009: 200) – the network here can refer both to the larger “jazz network” and its body of “standard tunes” and possibly a local scene’s particular propensity for certain tunes within that larger repertoire. Given the nature of the repertoire that these bands in the Toronto stable group subscene are performing, the “network” in play is the ensemble itself. And while any of these groups also, in a sense, are a part of network of venues and audiences, these groups are more “co-independent” as entities which is different than the more fluid network of musicians that is typical of the mainstream subscene.

In each of the bands whose music I will analyze, their musical approach and persona is informed by how the musicians compose for the band. While this method is related to (and perhaps even inherited from) rock tradition, rock bands will typically write more defined, “fixed” songs, while jazz composers—including the musicians in my study writing for their bands—typically write pieces that also create contexts for improvisational, interactive performance. The difference in the stable band subscene is that these pieces are often in the service to a band’s distinct approach to improvisation and the jazz tradition(s). For these bands, their approaches, then, are most-often defined by three closely related elements:

1. The particular ensemble texture (which is often closely but not strictly related to instrumentation)

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195 As cited elsewhere in this dissertation, Ruth Finnegan’s description of “modes” of performance in relation to composition in classical, jazz, and rock she found in a local music scene in a small English city is key (1988). Her study was, of course, ethnomusicological and reflected local conditions – she describes a stark contrast between rock bands playing mostly original music and jazz groups playing standard repertory almost exclusively. Not only does this contrast substantially with the stable band subscene I study, but it is not reflective of cosmopolitan jazz scenes in general in North America whose most prominent groups—even in mainstream settings—will include a significant amount of original compositions.
In both the case of Bloomsday, a group with two drummers, as well as the case of WPBE which, in its earliest manifestation, had a turntablist, mainstream jazz conventions pertaining to ensemble texture were adapted or altered. From the beginning, both groups found compositions and arrangements to exploit and highlight their distinctive approach to texture. Even in groups that appeared more conventional when looking at a listing of the lineup were not in reality. In many cases, given the individuals’ approaches to performing their instruments either in terms of timbre or in the adoption of techniques and language arguably less associated with jazz. This factor brings me to #2.

2. Specific skill-sets and aesthetic mindsets of individual musicians

As I will demonstrate in Chapter 9, in the case of Drumheller, the individual musicians’ own specific backgrounds were central to their repertoire and ensemble practices. In particular, Eric Chenaux on guitar was a particularly “unconventional” guitarist from a mainstream jazz point of view and this was reflected in how he was utilized in their repertoire. Bandleader Nick Fraser was quick to point out how, in the many performances they had without him while he lived abroad in France, the identity of the band was severely affected. This is factored into the analysis of the performance of Brodie West’s composition for the band in their chapter. In other cases, musicians’ backgrounds in specific avant-garde, classical, and popular music fields were clearly utilized in how the bands operated.

3. Social and musical relationships between specific band members, which often were inter-related

In any jazz group, of course, its collective musical persona is predicated on the musical and social relationship of particular players. As I described in Chapter 4, this musical relationship was founded on a particularly close social bond for the bands in my study. This was especially important for these bands wanting to stay afloat for longer periods of time. More critically, these relationships made certain kinds of performance not only
“work better,” but also, in some cases, made them possible to begin with. I will demonstrate how Bloomsday’s unorthodox instrumentation, for example, was not predicated on having any two drummers, but specifically the two drummers that French asked to be in the band. Overall, my analysis of the bandleader David French’s composition “Kool Keith” demonstrates how he was able to write compositions that would only work with specific, interactive demands could only function optimally with these musicians. This factor was definitely at play in a heightened fashion for all of the groups in my study.

8.3.2 << Common Ground for Jazz Groups in a Jazz (Sub)Scene >>

And yet, beyond these factors that differentiated the bands from one another there were key elements that made them part of jazz tradition(s) – part of a jazz (sub)scene:

1. In their performance practices, these bands regularly referenced jazz tradition(s) through their use of practices and/or repertoire utilized by prior landmark performers in recordings and performances. I recognize that it can be problematic to definitively pinpoint when jazz performers are referencing jazz tradition(s) (versus other sources). Nonetheless, I attempt to identify practices and/or repertoire that the musicians in the band, other jazz musicians, and jazz audiences could potentially recognize as referencing its traditions. When playing with these “jazz signifiers,” these groups are invoked tradition(s), however loosely. With certain performers, these jazz signifiers were so engrained that they would not likely even be that conscious that they were using them in their playing or even their compositions.

Among the many potential jazz signifiers these bands employed often included: a) playing the actual compositions written or often performed by other jazz performers broadly known in the jazz world; b) utilizing standard jazz harmonic forms (e.g., rhythm changes, blues); or c) having the band interact in archetypal ways – in particular, having the rhythm section play grooves, parts, or at least recognizable roles in the traditions
associated with jazz (e.g., a New Orleans “second-line feel” alone or with accompanying bass part, a walking bass line alone or with “spang-a-lang” ride cymbal beat, etc.). These were only a few of the most obvious among many other possible practices. Though common in the mainstream part of the jazz scene, the time-honoured approach of referencing the way in which a prior jazz performer had performed canonical repertoire tends to be avoided in this subscene. After all, all of these groups were trying to carve out their own ways of interacting with jazz tradition(s).  

2. In their ensemble approaches (especially with regard to rhythm section practices), instrumental textures and timbres, rhythmic interaction (especially with regard to the rhythm section) and, in the most overt cases, the use of repertoire, these musicians actively maintained connections to other popular music practices or musical folklore (particularly of the Americas). The popular and folkloric traditions invoked may be present day or of a historical nature but in referencing other traditions through performance practice, there were often parallels to the kinds of practices mentioned in #1. In fact, these practices were often shared – the line between jazz, popular, and folkloric practice is, at the very least, blurred. The difference may be that jazz musicians were not typically just enacting these popular music practices verbatim; rather, they were—to reference Henry Louis Gates—troping tropes. To be more specific – in this case, they were troping tropes of the genre, by finding new ways to interact with these practices. In the process, they were effectively signifying on the culture in which they are a part of. While it may be impossible to trace all of the threads in any definitive way, it was clear that all of these groups were aware that there was such a connection.

3. Utilizing a variety of practices as outlined above, all of these groups took a distinctive approach to performance that was reliant on, and explicitly designed to exploit and assist in, maintaining a stable group with its own persona. This is in contrast to the freelance, one-off (or even a short-to-medium term project) approach to jazz performance which

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196 A typical example might include playing a standard like “Green Dolphin Street” with the same feel changes from “Latin” to swing as the Miles Davis Quintet had in the late 1950s.
197 Gates at one point describes Signifyin(g) as “the black trope of tropes, the trope of tropes, the figure of figures” (1988: 81).
typically did not require significant rehearsal nor close personal bonds within the ensemble. By contrast, in many cases, these projects required having a stable lineup because either the compositions and arrangements were written with the specific personnel of the band in mind or they were substantially changed as a result of this personnel’s input.¹⁹⁸

Therefore, I analyze the musical approaches of these bands in the context of cultural connotation and musicians’ own sense of their creative processes. While I use some notation including original sheet music utilized by musicians and some transcription, I also rely on my own descriptive language, given that much of the most important musical events happening musically relate to aspects such as timbre, texture, nuances of rhythm section interaction, inflection of rhythm and pitch that are not easily notated but, as I have indicated, were central to these groups’ approaches in various ways and, indeed, to much of jazz performance. In general, I want to give a sense of how each of these groups have developed a collective musical persona in how they interacted with jazz tradition, and—to draw on Becker’s language (see Chapter 1)—how this was only possible through the musicians’ commitment to each group’s own “jazz world.” For the next three chapters, I seek to give some idea of how three Toronto bands each inhabits and interacts its own “jazz world,” creating a distinctive collective musical persona.

¹⁹⁸ This is a compositional approach with a very established jazz pedigree. To take one well-worn example, it is one of the widely held understandings of Ellington’s method as composer for his own band — hence, “Concerto for Cootie” (specifically, Cootie Williams) and not “Concerto for Trumpet.” See Chapter 2 for more examples of this phenomenon in jazz history.
Chapter 9
Drumheller

9.1 << Introduction >>

In Chapter 5, I introduced Drumheller and the other three primary bands of my study. I described how the band’s musical persona was the result of musicians that had not only very different musical backgrounds and skillsets, but clashing notions of what jazz meant to them. The way the band negotiated these differences while integrating a wide range of other musical traditions into a kind of “collage” (to use a word from their own website), helped to define their collective musical persona. This was a band that was also shaped by multiple compositional voices – musicians that brought their various aesthetics and backgrounds into play with these frameworks. And yet, in each case, the group took a very collaborative approach to coming up with a way to perform the music – unlike a typical mainstream group, this was not a group in which practices were largely already dictated by a strict framework such as “fast rhythm changes” or “medium blues.” I study the collaborative approach the group takes to a composition provided by alto saxophonist Brodie West.

9.2 << Interacting with Jazz Tradition(s) as a Band: “Nifac63Charlie” >>

The approach that Drumheller develops to playing “Nifac63Charlie” is illustrative of how the various musical personalities and backgrounds of the members of the band found ways to cohere into a collective musical persona. Indeed, the band could only have come to this way of interacting with West’s composition through being a group invested in long-term collaboration.
West’s composition is an example of a common compositional trend in this Toronto subscene – episodic form (see footnote on page 183). Drumheller in particular often played with the jazz conventions around form not only through the use of episodic forms, but also the incorporation of the so-called “time/no-changes” approach, outright “free” playing, or changing the traditional roles of band members to circumvent how circular forms actually work. On the other hand, “Nifac63Charlie” does include the traditional overall “arc” – that is, it has some of the same melodic material bookend the performance while the most obviously improvisational activity occurs in the middle; such an arc (“head-solos-head”) is, at least, a version of a commonly embraced jazz convention.

Fraser indicated to me that the composition was initially introduced with very rough written sketches in a rehearsal (personal interview, February 4, 2013). These have since been discarded. Eventually, though, the material from these sketches was consolidated into a more coherent chart. This became used by some of the musicians as a reference in performance, but—as I will describe below—not in the same way a traditional jazz leadsheet would.

The two initial sketches amounted to two distinct “episodes.” Each had its own melodic content with a very bare harmonic framework (mostly triadic) suggested by chord symbols. From the beginning, West had some idea that these episodes were to have contrasting styles and tempi. He also had some ideas of how they might be put together in a longer form, but purposely left the complete shape open to suggestion (personal interview, August 9, 2013). These first sketches were threadbare: they only contained notes written in concert key in treble clef without any indication of separate parts for different instruments. Furthermore, there were no articulations or other expressive markings, dynamics, articulations, or even stylistic indications. The sketches were designed to allow other group members to determine a finalized compositional form collaboratively. In general, all of the musical variables were, to varying degrees, open to negotiation.
On the initial sketches, the first episode of the piece only consisted of a brief introductory melody with only triadic chord changes written underneath. No meters or time signatures were indicated, despite the fact that the measures have an unequal number of beats in this section. If this melody had been written in a way to reflect how it was actually played, it would have been written in fourteen unequal bars ranging from three to six beats (it is quite possible, though, that on the initial pair of charts there were few bar lines at all; I had contradictory accounts about this). As I suggested, this introductory section did not have any interpretive indication whatsoever, but was intended to be performed rubato with a particular phrasing, which I will describe later.

The contrasting episode of the piece, meanwhile, was another written melody in concert key. While this was similar to the final chart, the original sketch did not formally indicate the style or tempo to this section, but was always intended by West to be interpreted in a medium tempo “calypso” style (more on this later). It was written as if in 4/4 but it was played as if it were based on a half note pulse (cut-time). The form is written as: 1) four bars of 4/4 and one bar of 2/4 on the tonic chord; 2) eight 4/4 bars on the dominant chord and; 3) two 4/4 bars of the tonic chord. Since the tune is felt by the performers as if it were in cut time, this amounts to an unconventional melodic form of fourteen and a half bars.

West intended for the “calypso section” to include calypso-style solos following presentation of the melody on a tonic chord vamp. In addition, he wrote a kind of syncopated send-off figure as five bars of 2/4 in the parallel minor that could be used to follow the solo or the melody. He indicated to me that he was not sure about where this would be in the form—after the solos or after a reiteration of the calypso melody—and that he had considered changing it after the band normalized their approach to the rest of the composition (personal interview, August 9, 2013).

West apparently had some notion of the ending they did ultimately use (Fraser remembers that he conveyed it verbally at first). This was to play the introductory melody again at about its halfway point starting at the C minor. Though I do not have the original written sketch, it appears from conversations with the band that little more was included.
West recalls that, given the relatively bare nature of the written music he provided for the band members in rehearsal, he had to give verbal instructions about aspects of the piece that he considered most important, including the style. Tellingly, he indicated in an interview “I didn’t say that much” and that mostly he just gave a few words to denote the genre connotation or stylistic feels in the main parts of this composition like “free time,” “rubato” and “calypso” (personal interview, August 9, 2013). The first section was particularly challenging to make it “work” as the phrasing was very specific and not notated in a fashion that would precisely delineate its interpretation.

The “B” section, in particular, points to a critical of a part of the band’s identity that West contributed to. This became the first in a series of compositions with melodies and implied stylistic feel that signify on the calypso genre. At the time that “Nifac63Charlie” was introduced to the band, the other musicians were not especially familiar with calypso. West admitted that he had to give fairly cryptic advice in rehearsal to drummer Nick Fraser; he did not know how to precisely communicate how he wanted calypso style adapted to the drum kit. Yet this approach, as I will show, has interesting creative results that speak to one of the sensibilities common among musicians in the TSGJ subscene.

9.2.2 << Performance Analysis >>

In my analysis, I aim to demonstrate how Drumheller exemplifies two aspects that are common to stable groups in this subscene that are closely related. I want to demonstrate how Drumheller interacts with jazz and popular music traditions in the ways that they interact together with West’s piece. In addition, though, I want to show how these ways of performing and interacting are, to some extent, specific to the musicians in the group and supported by their long-term investment in the group.

To that latter point, the question lingers – could a highly competent jazz musician (by “mainstream” or some other standards) adequately perform some or all of these techniques? I aim to demonstrate in my analysis that cumulatively this composition
presents so many unorthodox and/or unwritten techniques, expressive nuances, changes in tempo and style, and the like that it would be highly unlikely for virtually any musician to sightread the “group part” without, in various ways, rendering the performance of the composition, at a minimum, far less effective. It may be true that one could find a substitute musician that could try to mimic these aspects after listening to recordings, careful study of the parts, and/or some private practice (though the extent of this depends on the instrument). However, relying on such mimicry would only prove the larger point. In such a case, the musician would then be attempting to be a substitute for how a specific member of Drumheller interprets and interacts within the composition. This is in direct contrast to the typical “mainstream” small group jazz aesthetic in which, even in situations with more elaborate parts, tend to rely on conventions. Apart from whatever technical demands the given “heads” might have, the substitute would rely on their own idiomatic skills and understandings to improvise solos and play according to their ascribed role. In this composition, among many others in Drumheller’s oeuvre, leaning on these skills and understandings would be, at times, problematic or insufficient.

In fact, when I asked Fraser about this very issue, he agreed that having freelancers play “Nifac63Charlie” would be problematic for any of the reasons that I brought up but that “this isn’t even one of the harder Drumheller compositions to try to sightread that way” (personal interview, February 4, 2013). In other words, this composition and how the band plays it is indicative of how the band works in general and how specific the demands of its original compositions are. Therefore, a substitute musician playing a typical evening with Drumheller at The Tranzac would be faced with interpreting about a dozen to fifteen compositions, all of which have unwritten and/or unorthodox elements to them. All of these elements are, to a significant degree, specific to ways of interacting together that these musicians have developed over time. Even if learning how to perform all of these compositions in a passable manner was possible for a given substitute (which is doubtful), in reality no qualified musician would invest the kind of time required to learn so many compositions idiomatic to the band Drumheller
In my analysis, I will look at how members of the band utilize various performance practices and make creative decisions in performance that speak to these very qualities. There are times throughout in which I am referring to their approach to the tune in general. Unless otherwise stated, when I provide a transcription or analysis, I am referring to their studio recording on the album *Glint* (2010) which is online Audio Example #2.

9.2.2.1 << The Finalized Chart: More Conventional…But Still Unconventional >>

My analysis is based on a revised version of the chart that was made by West as a reference several weeks after their initial rehearsals of the piece (see Appendix D). It should be pointed out that this finalized chart is the result of not only West’s original ideas but also, as my subsequent analysis makes clear, some input from members of the group as well. However, this chart is still missing key information that would make it difficult for a freelance musician (or a substitute) to interpret the tune at sight in a way that would work with Drumheller’s specific modes of performance.

The chart of “Nifac63Charlie” does have some notation and direction, some of it adhering to jazz conventions, to help in reminding the group of key details. It provides the melodies in concert key in the treble clef with chord symbols underneath to indicate the harmony. Unlike the initial sketches, the chart now has additional slashes next to the chords to denote harmonic rhythm at points in the opening and closing sections. There are rehearsal letters (“A,” “B,” “C,” and “D”) to denote structural points; and there are a handful of sparse performance directions that indicate form to some degree and a few (but nowhere near all) of the specific performance practices to apply to these materials.

While at first glance then, the chart might seem in step with jazz leadsheet conventions, Drumheller does not realize this composition according to “mainstream”

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199 As I have tried to describe before and will demonstrate in future chapters, Drumheller may represent the most extreme case in this respect, given how diverse the compositional voices are in the group and the variety of challenges presented within these compositions. Probably at least half of Harley Card’s and WPBE’s repertoire as well as a third of Bloomsday’s repertoire were notated as conventional leadsheets and tweaked rather than dramatically shifted mainstream jazz conventions. Meanwhile, leadsheets were comparatively rare with Drumheller.
jazz conventions. For example, the harmonies West indicates are not “extended” in the manner so common to post-bop performance. Rather, all of the chords indicated are triadic except the dominant chord, which includes the seventh. More importantly, the rhythm section did not, in practice, realize the written harmonies consistently, nor do the musicians keep with more typical instrumental roles. The guitarist, for example, never fleshed out the chords; instead, he played counter-lines and other textures. Meanwhile, the bassist only delineated harmonic movement sparsely in both sections. I will describe some of the techniques of both of these musicians in detail later.

The chart contains a few other written directions to demark the “roadmap” as well. These include the following:

1) a mention of a “vamp” during which a particular bass-line is to be played over and over in the first “B” (a kind of intro to “B proper”);
2) an indication, “open until cue,” that calls for a repeated 1-bar pattern to be played after the “B” melody is stated twice over an implied G major tonality, which is marked as “solos”;
3) a written indication that, after the solo send-off at “C,” that: “finally guitar strikes a C minor chord and bass moves to C minor.” This section also contains an indication of “free”
4) “D” is also marked as the “ending.”

Beyond these directives, there is little in the way of formal, expressive or stylistic markings (other than the mention of “free” at “C”). Furthermore, there is no indication of how the band often usually interpreted the form – they usually went back to the melody at B after the solos before going to the send-off at C. These are all elements that did not take final shape until well after this chart was made.

This sheet music serves as a more-detailed sketch, but given how much is left off the page, it also shows us how essential maintaining a group with its own stable personnel is in making this piece actually “come alive” in performance. This not only includes some of these practical roadmap concerns and general aspects about instrument roles, but also a host of idiosyncratic techniques and qualities the musicians bring to how they play. This very idiosyncrasy is what makes this interpretation come alive. With this band approach in mind, I analyze how the musicians perform the two major “episodes” of this piece separately.
West described the first episode to me as “…feeling to me kind of like an introduction or prologue. It’s kind of simmering before the [calypso] groove comes in” (personal interview, August 9, 2013). Texturally, the alto saxophone and trombone are most prominent in the Episode 1. They performed a written melodic line in octaves (though written as a single line in treble clef). Though unwritten, they played this melody in highly rubato fashion with dynamic shading to reflect the melodic line. While I do not analyze this facet of the interplay, Clutton’s approach on bass was to rhythmically interact with this line in a distinct way, clearly deliberately not playing the harmonic rhythm precisely “with” the melody. He utilized a great deal of double stops and short motives using notes of the triad primarily in the mid-to-low register.

Having stated this, the sheet music (Appendix C) has little to indicate even this overall concept. The episode is written as a series of unmetered set of phrases written as quarter notes and eighth notes with chord symbols. The phrases have chords with slashes underneath to indicate the harmonic rhythm. Even a highly competent, freelance professional jazz trombonist or saxophonist sight-reading this sheet music on the bandstand would have many questions. Or, worse, they would attempt to play idiomatically “as written” which would invariably be out of sync with the group’s approach. Even if he/she was told verbally the basic concept of playing the melody with another member of the group rubato, this would still lead to issues, whether voiced out loud or just in the mind of the performer – “What meter is this in? How does that work?” “Do I play all of the melody or do I ‘lay out’ anywhere?” “Is there an implied loose swing to the eighth notes or are they straight?” “Are the phrases legato?” “Are there caesuras [pauses]?” “Are there accents or other articulations?” “How about dynamics?” None of these questions could be answered quickly on the bandstand in a practical

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200 These techniques reminiscent of Charlie Haden and subsequent bassists informed by his way of playing. This is yet another way in which Ornette Coleman’s ouevre informs Drumheller’s practices.
fashion before playing it unless they heard and studied a recording, especially given the combination of West’s very loosely intended interpretation and how the band eventually evolved into their interpretation of this part of the piece.

Particularly problematic for anyone trying to read the music for the first time is the intended rhythmic and dynamic phrasing of this melody which West, at least initially, took the lead on. Fraser and West both recall a certain amount of aural learning for this part of the “A” section. This was especially true in working with Doug Tielli, who had to perform most of it together in octaves with West. By the time they recorded the song in the studio in 2010, and certainly by the time I had heard it live from 2011-2014, Tielli and West had developed a particular way of phrasing that deviated slightly from performance to performance, but nonetheless had cohered into a defined practice.

The legato phrasing and dynamic shading, neither of which is indicated in the sheet music, is specific and key to the execution of this composition. The two keep very close dynamic contours in their legato playing, blending quite well. (From time to time, Tielli’s fuller tone on his instrument will slightly overtake West’s sound dynamically and timbrally in spots such as bar four and twelve which I have indicated with a deviation in dynamics [see Appendix E], but even this is relatively subtle and he appears to adjust immediately.) West has indicated to me that his primary inspiration for using rubato in this fashion was Albert Ayler, who often performed unmetered pieces that had a melody played in unison or octaves with another horn player. Ayler, however, rarely achieved (nor did he necessarily seek) the kind of more careful blend and unity of rhythmic approach that Tielli and West do here and in other performances.²⁰¹

The most substantial disjunctures between the notated part and its interpretation are rhythmic. The way West and Tielli interpret the chart requires that I refer to quarter notes and eighth notes when speaking about the original leadsheet (Appendix C) and timecoding (as indicated on my transcription of their studio recording) to discuss the actual durations of the pitches as performed. Each bar in West’s sheet music typically

²⁰¹ An exception to this rule might be the record Vibrations (1975), Ayler’s lone collaboration with Don Cherry – a trumpeter who placed high value on (and had uncanny skills at) achieving blend and clarity with difficult tunes that had out-of-time phrasing. He had demonstrated this skill early on in his collaborations with Ornette Coleman – who was another ongoing inspiration for Drumheller.
ends with a held note (i.e. a fermata) that is notated as a quarter note. These “quarter notes” are played at significantly varied lengths.\textsuperscript{202} In general, though, these held quarter notes are consistently much longer than the quarter notes played earlier in the bar.\textsuperscript{203} Meanwhile, the eighth notes are also interpreted with a great degree of variety.\textsuperscript{204} In general, they are played with much shorter durations than expected (i.e. much shorter than half of the average quarter note).

Despite the variety in the musicians’ interpretations of the notated eighth notes they play the line with remarkable synchrony. The most noticeable discrepancies stand out since they are rare.\textsuperscript{205} For example, in bar four, Tielli appears to come in sooner than West may have expected. But this discrepancy is almost “corrected” by the end of the bar. Later, there is an extreme ritardando in bar fourteen that leads to differing entrances and releases of the penultimate note and last note in the phrase. Yet these discrepancies do not ultimately read as “wrong,” especially given West’s aesthetic inspirations (Coleman and Ayler). Drumheller makes use of physical cues to synchronize their performance of the song. However, there is so much unwritten nuance and detail that it would be hard to imagine anyone other than these two performers interpreting this part as effectively without a great deal of discussion and/or rehearsal. Furthermore, this is only one part of one composition. Performing a repertoire of such original works requires a band.\textsuperscript{206}

\textbf{9.2.2.2 << Episode 2: Interacting with Calypso, Interacting with Jazz Tradition(s) >>}

\textsuperscript{202} Specifically, 1.35 seconds at the end of bar eleven, 1.05s at the end of the first bar, and .80s at the end of bar nine and thirteen. Duration is measured from the beginning of the note to its release (usually before a breath).

\textsuperscript{203} These “quarter notes” are also highly variable in length. They range from .75s for the first one in bar nine, to .55s for the first one in bar one, to .30s for the first quarter note in bar three.

\textsuperscript{204} Usually, these are somewhere between the range of .15s to .35s.

\textsuperscript{205} I describe highly noticeable discrepancies in entrances or releases as being those that are at least .5s apart. Even in these cases, a certain amount of discrepancy may have been desired.

\textsuperscript{206} Though I opted not to analyze it in detail, Clutton’s decisions on bass here are also not at all implied by the part, at least if one was reading it according to any kind of “mainstream” bop practice.
The “B” section is the “heart” of this composition. It contains the most overtly “tuneful” melody and is also in the style to which the band adheres for most of the performance of the song. While musically referencing a Caribbean genre like calypso might not seem as overtly jazz-like as 4/4 swing, in fact, such signifying is actually a kind of direct link to the very roots of jazz tradition(s).

Jazz, from its beginnings, has incorporated Caribbean influences as numerous scholars (e.g., Tucker 2010) have pointed out. Calypso, “...a song-dance complex which evolved in urban Trinidad in the latter decades of the nineteenth century,” is certainly part of this history (Monestel 2014: 104). The genre became more broadly known across North America in the 1940s. It was on the heels of calypso’s second wave of popularity spurred by Harry Belafonte’s 1956 hit “Banana Boat Song,” however, that jazz musicians began to interact with calypso.

Pianist Randy Weston and saxophone Sonny Rollins—both jazz luminaries of Caribbean descent—recorded different versions of a tune originally called “The Lincolnshire Poacher.” Both musicians assumed legal authourship of the tune, but both utilized slightly different phrasing and harmonizations. They also used different titles. Rollins’ version—“St. Thomas”—became the most famous, arguably establishing calypso as a viable feel in a jazz context. So pervasive is the influence of St. Thomas, that if a present-day jazz musician, especially in Toronto, is asked to play calypso at a jam session or a freelance club date, it is the typical default.

Drumheller creates musical meanings by finding their own way to interact with various calypso associations and as I show later, other musical traditions through West’s

207 After the first New York recordings of Trinidadian musicians were disseminated around this time, and when members of the American Navy were introduced to it with the establishment of a naval base in Trinidad, American popular singers subsequently adopted the style.
208 While Belafonte’s music from the album Calypso became the most common musical reference for “calypso” throughout North America, most of the album was closer in practice to mento, a post-calypso genre that developed independently in Jamaica. Eventually, “calypso” began to be used in America to signify many related traditions in the Caribbean in much the same way that “salsa” did.
209 This British folk melody had already been frequently adapted with different lyrics and rhythmic approach throughout the Virgin Islands (Gioia 2012: 357).
210 In the wake of “St. Thomas” and other popular songs on the hit parade, one of the few jazz albums by a highly visible figure to predominantly feature overt use of calypso-related practices was Dizzy Gillespie’s now largely forgotten Jumbo Caribe in 1964.
composition. As individual musicians with quite different musical backgrounds, they all interact with the associations in the compositions differently, bringing their own instincts to bear in their improvising. As these individuals’ approaches interact with one another in this composition, they create a singular collective approach. This collective approach becomes a web of *re-contextualization* for various musical associations, often without a great deal of intent, and frequently *indirectly*. In playing a tune with calypso associations, this will inevitably bring to mind for some listeners the way jazz musicians have referenced calypso before (i.e. “St. Thomas”). Or, it is quite possible that a listener might hear any number of related Caribbean folkloric and popular traditions of various eras.

In coming with their own approach, especially important is the “core” of the rhythm section—bass and drums—which are the foundation of the groove. However, they have adapted their roles in ways that are, by varying degrees, distinct from typical calypso practice. The bassline suggested in the chart (see Figure 13), however, is a 1-bar pattern that is typical of many calypso-related genres. It may be played by lower-pitched steelpans in a pan orchestra or by electric bass in disco and soul-influenced soca groups.

**Figure 13: Typical 1-bar calypso bassline**

![Typical 1-bar calypso bassline](image)

On the recording of Nifacs63Charlie, Drumheller bassist Clutton adds a subtle rhythmic variation in every other bar from the start of the “B” section, effectively creating a 2-bar pattern (see figure 14) for every vamp. He also plays the part an octave above what is written because the D below the staff is not in the bass range.²¹¹ His part, then, sounds closer to the baritone-tenor register:

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²¹¹ Bass notation sounds an octave below what is written.
Figure 14: Rob Clutton’s typical bassline in performances of “Nifac63Charlie”

In the original studio version, he sticks resolutely to this melodic-rhythmic figure with only rare rhythmic variation, especially during the melody; he also adapts the line to accommodate the root and fifth of the D7 that happens part way through the phrase. On the live versions I recorded years later, Clutton plays a bit differently, introducing some significant variations to the figure melodically and rhythmically, particularly at this dominant chord. This is revealed in his playing at a live performance at the Tranzac (June 25, 2014) in which he varied the part from bar 6 to 13 of this episode (starting from the first 4/4 bar of D7):

Figure 15: Transcription of Rob Clutton’s Bass Playing in Bar 6-13 after Rehearsal letter ‘B’ of “NiFacs63Charlie” (Refer to Audio Example #3)

In Figure 15 one can see deviations from the original pattern. Starting in bar 2 Clutton plays the sixth degree of D7 (B), using it in the next bar to approach the seventh degree (C) before returning to the basic melodic pattern in bar four. Bars five and six have the most distinct melodic deviation with the third degree (F#) with its chromatic approach (F natural). In bar seven, Clutton deviates from the basic rhythm by repeating the dotted quarter-eighth figure that normally happens in the first half of each bar. This slight
change adds momentum at the end of the phrase, while the ascending, traditional jazz-like walking pattern in the last bar (D-E-F#) leads directly back to the tonic chord (G major). Again, none of these variations are present during the B section melody on the studio recording. More importantly, they exemplify the way in which long-standing groups with a jazz-oriented mindset will introduce more interactivity and flexibility within precomposed material once it becomes familiar. Nonetheless, such small variations do not undermine the fundamental rhythmic pattern and remain very anchored in diatonic harmony. Thus in isolation from the other instrumentalists, the bass line as Clutton performs it, maintains strong links to “calypso” practices. Arguably, without Clutton’s playing (and West’s decision in the composition), “Nifacs63Charlie” would not signify on calypso or even Caribbean in the same way or, I would argue, to the same degree.\(^\text{212}\)

The role of drumset in calypso has been less codified than bass. In older, more “traditional” calypso (including the earliest New York-based recordings from the 1930s and 40s), drum kit was only rarely used.\(^\text{213}\) It was only in the mid-1970s with the influence of disco, R&B, and even rock that drumset gradually became commonplace and codification began to emerge in earnest.\(^\text{214}\) It is noteworthy, though, that even today the drum kit is rarely used alone in authentic calypso settings, but rather is used in tandem with other percussion. To create what Dudley calls the “composite rhythm” for calypso, he points out that the drummer usually assumes a sparser, less “polyrhythmic” role. Dudley provides a graphical notation to describe the one-bar composite rhythm “…typical of, but not exclusive to, calypso in the early 1970s.” (By using one-bar, his diagram showing one two-beat bar equates to my cut-time bar of four quarter notes.)

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\(^{212}\) Clutton explained to me his approach to the part at a performance in 2014: “I just played what West wrote on the page. I did what I was told.” In this case, Clutton truly understood his role to be to maintain a kind of “integrity” of the composition and style.

\(^{213}\) Traditional calypso songs are rooted in call-and-response French songs performed by African-American slaves, that were performed in Carnival without drum set (Leu 2000: 45). With the so-called “golden age” of calypso in Trinidad and Tobago (late 1920s-mid 1930s), there was some sporadic use of drum set given the influence of swing music (especially in New York). Nonetheless, drum set was still rare and not used in any consistent fashion until at least the 1960s (Nichols and Robbins 14).

\(^{214}\) While the rhythm section Dudley uses to describe the “composite rhythm” for calypso does include drum set, he admits that he is describing early 1970s calypso practices (Dudley 1996: 205). In other words, it may have been used to some degree earlier, but there is wide consensus that drum kit was not common in the earliest decades of calypso.
diagram, included below, includes what role each instrument in the rhythm section plays not only in relation to rhythm (represented by its placement horizontally in relation to “1” and “2”) but also in relation to timbre and accent (darker shade indicating greater emphasis and smaller box indicating lighter timbre).\textsuperscript{215}

Figure 16: Modern Calypso “Composite Rhythm” for Rhythm Section (Shannon Dudley 1996: 276)

Figure 16 illustrates that calypso rhythm section practice has qualities that are quite different from the salsa and Brazilian traditions that are more common reference points for jazz musicians. For one thing, the individual rhythm and accent patterns in calypso rhythm sections are less complex.\textsuperscript{216} Compare such patterns from Figure 16 to other fundamental patterns from Latin America and Brazil such as the cross-stick rim pattern in much of bossa-related music or the bell patterns or cascara in salsa:

\textsuperscript{215} Dudley explains: “The bottom instruments (bass, kick drum and snare) are most important in giving rhythmic emphasis or weight to pulses, and are therefore represented by larger and more darkly shaded boxes. The top ones (high hat and bells) contribute more to the general rhythmic texture and are represented by smaller and more lightly shaded boxes. The middle timbres (conga and strum) contribute both to texture and rhythmic emphasis” (Dudley 1996: 276).

\textsuperscript{216} Modern calypso is essentially known for its critical “syncopated” accent on the fourth sixteenth note of beat “1” (using Dudley’s framework) which lines up across several instruments including the snare, kick drum, low conga, and strum. The strum has a moderately syncopated pattern but this is merely three repeated “off-beat” sixteenths; furthermore, the strum tends to be buried in the texture.
In general, rhythm sections tend to play a wider variety of complex rhythmic patterns in salsa and samba-based genres than in calypso. When calypso’s simpler percussion patterns are combined this creates a much less polyrhythmic effect than in traditions like samba or salsa. Instead of a lattice of interlocking rhythm as in these traditions, in calypso, rhythm section instruments tend to reinforce each other’s patterns.\textsuperscript{217}

More fundamentally though, Dudley’s diagram also illustrates that calypso is based on a one-bar pattern. This stands in contrast to Brazilian and salsa-related genres in which two-bar patterns inherited from some West African music, are key organizing principles. The subtleties of these timelines, are beyond the scope of this study. However, it suffices to say that in Cuban and salsa related genres variations of a two bar pattern known as clavé strictly orients all other ensemble voices, whereas two bar

\textsuperscript{217} There are two such groups apparent in Dudley’s diagram: the hi-hat, bell, and high congas all reinforce one basic rhythm, while the low conga, kick drum, and snare reinforce another. Only the strum, usually a much less prominent instrument, creates any muted sense of polyrhythm.
timelines are somewhat more fluid in a number of Afro Brazilian musical traditions, but provide rhythmic foundations for the ensemble and even define genres.\textsuperscript{218}

Given the overall role of rhythm and the drum set in calypso-related traditions, Fraser’s choices in this calypso-oriented composition are especially interesting. He evades any close associations with the typical drum set and percussion practices of “authentic” calypso or popular music labeled as calypso (e.g. Belafonte). Furthermore, he does not play in any way that resembles Max Roach’s drumming on Rollins’ studio recording of “St. Thomas.” The most fundamental departure from calypso convention is that Fraser plays a two-bar drum groove. An underlying pattern involved not only has no relationship to calypso traditions, but does not appear to any one Latin-American or Caribbean tradition:

\textbf{Figure 19: Underlying rhythmic ground to Fraser’s ride cymbal pattern in ‘B’ Section of “Nifacs63Charlie”}

This pattern underlies how Fraser plays on the ride cymbal or the accents when playing on a turned-off snare with his hands. As suggested by recordings from different times, Fraser slowly developed this approach. In all three recordings, he establishes the timeline by playing this pattern exactly when the “B” section vamp begins. The pattern has no strict relationship to clavé or typical Afro Brazilian timeline patterns. However, it is possible to conceive this in a comparable stable/tense relationship (Vurkaç 2012). With its strong pulls to “1” and “3,” the first bar is the “stable side” of the pattern; bar two, with the push from the prior bar (from the “& of 4”) as well as the continuing offbeats on the “& of 1” and the “& of 2,” is the “less stable side.”

\textsuperscript{218} See Mehmet Vurkaç’s exploration of clavé as a “cross-cultural grammar” (2012). He points out the “controversy” as to the role of clavé in Brazilian music, which is a larger discussion than for this project (2012: 43).
Fraser, as is common for elite jazz drummers today, does not play this pattern strictly. Instead, he frequently plays around it throughout the performance. Instead, he frequently plays around it throughout the performance. On the studio version, when the initial vamp begins he uses the turned off snare as a hand drum with his hand.219

Figure 20: Transcription of studio recording (Audio Example #2): Fraser’s playing on first 8 bars of “B” section (the vamp before melody)221

Beyond the variations mentioned above, he uses other ornaments such as the triplet sixteenths in bar 3 of this example and the sixteenths on the + of beat 4 in bar 4, both of which serve to provide more interest after establishing the fundamental timeline in the first two bars. Over a minute into the saxophone solo, Fraser switches to the ride cymbal. He sometimes plays the cymbal’s bell for additional accents.

219 I am generalizing, given that there are specific modern jazz contexts in which playing a strict cymbal pattern for several bars over many phrases might occur. The exceptions among famous recordings stand out, however (e.g. “Poinciana” by the Ahmad Jamal Trio). In general, playing strictly consistent cymbal patterns on hi-hat or ride cymbal is far more common to drum set in Latin-American and post-1960 popular music traditions than modern jazz.

220 Given how lightly Fraser plays the bass drum in this feel and that the sound of the instrument can get absorbed into the articulation of the double bass to some degree, the use of his bass drum is especially speculative.

221 In my drum set examples, I use the Percussive Arts Society Standardized Drumset Notation (appendix A). Other examples I give from other texts may use slightly different notation. In these cases, this is clearly notated with SD (snare drum), RS (ride cymbal), BD (bass drum), FT (floor tom), ST (mounted rack tom).
In the live versions I recorded, however, Fraser had evolved his way of interpreting this section – and his use of the ride cymbal was most critical. Instead of hand drumming on the snare, he usually played the ride cymbal at the very beginning of the B section. The louder, piercing sound of the ride cymbal immediately launched a more energetic feel. In addition, he has also added a number of very quiet flourishes to the “A” section rather than remaining silent as he does on the recording. Figure 18, a transcription of Fraser’s performance at Drumheller’s 2013, their CD release in 2013, illustrates how differently he plays the first eight bars of the “B” section vamp in a live context:

Figure 21: Transcription of live 2014 performance (Audio Example #3): Fraser’s playing on first 8 bars of “B” section (the vamp before melody)

In every case he accented the last beat to “send off” the melody rhythmically. This new approach was the result of a musician developing a relationship to original compositions over a longer period of time.

A calypso “purist” seeking some kind of “authentic” approach to percussive playing, calypso or otherwise, would not find it in Fraser’s playing here. Notice in Figure 22, however, that together the bassline and ride cymbal pattern actually cohabitate musically into a groove quite coherently:
As one can see from my markings, the groove is bookended with accent patterns that line up exactly; however, within this pattern there is a more overt polyrhythm as bass and drums diverge. Then, looking at figure 17 and 18 above, one can also factor in the closed hi-hat on beat two playing in between the first two pitches of the bassline while lining up with the last pitch in each bar. It is this push and pull that makes any polyrhythmic groove from this part of the world have the connotations of Caribbean genres in general; in any case, jazz musicians interacting with tradition are not necessarily intending to pass an “authenticity test.” It is true that the rhythm section, and drum set especially, do not play in relation to any sense of clave from Latin-American music. But as Malabe and Wiener point out, there is a sense in which “any rhythmic figure can serve as a clave” (1990: 9). The groove registers as pan-Caribbean on the group’s own terms – leaning to calypso on the basis of the bass pattern (archetypal calypso) and the overall polyrhythmic interaction with the Fraser’s underlying rhythmic pattern. This, even though the pattern that is not strictly derived from calypso (seeing Dudley’s diagram) or any other better-known traditions.

In addition to the rhythmic foundation provided by the bass and drums, West’s melody of the “B” section’s also signifies on calypso. While carnival songs at the turn of the century were more improvisational and involved a call-and-response between a leader and the public, this had changed by the 1920s and 30s. By then, as the entertainment industry catered to Trinidad’s emerging middle-class, the norm became a featured singer
singing a more consistent melody written in verse-chorus format became the norm (Dudley 2005). Since World War II, most calypso songs were written in a diatonic major mode with few chromatic notes and mostly step-wise motion (Fairley 2015). Shannon Dudley analyzes melodic rhythm in calypso music by using the example of “Money is King” by Tiger (Neville Marcano), but he transcribes parts of the melody in 4/4 and analyzes the tendencies accordingly:

…the melody usually articulates the fourth sixteenth note of beat one, and the upbeat of two – both accents which are important in the composite feel. The upbeat of two receives particular emphasis because it is almost always the place where the singer comes back to the eighth note pulse after a period of syncopation. Followed by articulation of the third beat, this creates a consistent feeling of “-and 3” in the melody, and this is one of the most salient qualities of the fixed rhythmic group's feel. (Dudley 1996: 282)

One can see these tendencies—fourth sixteenth of beat one, upbeat of two, and arriving on beat three—present in this part of Dudley’s transcription of Tiger’s hit “Money is King” (Dudley 1996: 281):

Figure 23: Transcription - vocal line to excerpt of “Money is King” by Tiger (1935)

Translating these tendencies to a 2-bar pattern of cut time would mean that a typical calypso melody would stress the “and of 2” and beat 4 in the first bar (with particular emphasis) as well as beat 1 in the second bar:

Figure 24: Typical accent pattern for calypso melody, written in 4/4 (as in Figure 23)

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222 I elected to notate my example in cut time rather than 4/4 (utilizing eighth notes rather than sixteenth notes) given that it would have made it harder to read. This was the convention used by West as well, though he used 4/4 and it was interpreted as cut time in its interpretation.
Obviously, almost none of the melody in West’s composition adheres to what Dudley refers to as “salient qualities” present in the rhythmic phrasing of archetypal calypso melody (1996: 282). (Only in bar three does the tune articulate one of these accents – the “and of 2,” and this would appear to be incidental.) In the latter part of the phrase, this becomes even more pronounced as the horns interpret the written melody—which in its original guise resembled calypso practice more—as close to quintuplets, though with some variability from performance to performance. In any case, quintuplet groupings are even more distant from typical melodic rhythm in calypso.

On the other hand, calypso singers were known for a flexible phrasing that was often close to triplets and in any case intentionally not as closely tied to strict patterns against pulse as other musicians in an ensemble. Their flexible approach to this part of the phrase, often laced with Keil’s “participatory discrepancies,” is often apparent among the canonical recorded calypso singers. As Dudley puts it: “flexible adherence to a rhythmic archetype is…evident in the calypso singer’s tendency to play ambiguously between straight syncopation and triplets” (Dudley 1996: 283). Furthermore, West’s melody references calypso’s primarily stepwise motion in major as well as, at the beginning of the phrase, the syncopation. In addition, during later performances West began harmonizing the melody in strict thirds and sixths above the trombone line. This too is common, albeit not unique, to much of Caribbean music (especially steelpan). Cumulatively, all of these practices do strongly connote calypso. So West’s composed

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223 Certainly, the frontline are closer to playing this grouping than the straight syncopations written on the leadsheet; evolving new ways of playing not reflected on their original music that are never “corrected” is typical of the band.
my analysis so far leaves out a key member of the group, guitarist Eric Chenaux, whose performance practices are least indicative of calypso in virtually every respect. Rather than playing “strumming patterns” as typically played in the genre by acoustic guitar or cuatro (the smaller guitar popular in the West Indies), Chenaux played long sustained single notes in the middle to extreme high register of the electric guitar. More importantly, he altered the timbre and volume by using combinations of a fuzz effect pedal, wah pedal, and volume pedal simultaneously. In fact, Chenaux has always played with a volume pedal and spring-loaded wah pedal. While engaging the “wah” with one foot, he often simultaneously decreases volume with the other because his wah pedal amplifies his guitar’s signal. At the same time he engages in this “counterbalancing” with his feet—and in a seated position—Chenaux’s shifts his timbral colour “on the fly” with his right hand by adjusting the five knobs of his Vexter’s Fuzz Factory unit, which is placed on top of his amplifier behind him. Utilizing these accessories for this purpose is actually indicative of Chenaux’s approach overall, and therefore became a key part of the band’s sound.

None of these sounds are especially calypso-like. Indeed, Chenaux does not play a traditional rhythm section role at all; nor does he play a traditional frontline melodic jazz role either. Instead, he performs a kind of counter-line that is somewhat akin to the trombone’s role in early jazz. Trombonist Brian Thacker describes this “tailgate trombone” approach thus: “…[it] served as a source of counter-melodies or rhythmic accents, often linking harmonies with slurred chromatic glissandi” (Thacker 2010). Thacker also suggests that rather than “chops,” control of timbral effects was more important. On trombone, this includes techniques such as the glissando, smear, and growl. What Chenaux does is not entirely different, in that he plays a counter-melody that also links the phrases together with distortions, bends, and timbral affects. Note how jazz

\[224\] In addition, he uses a Holy Grail Electro-Harmonix Reverb that appears to stay on all of the time with the same settings. Rather, it is just a part of his overall sound.

\[225\] As Toronto-based professional blues and jazz guitarist Neil Hendry explained to me, this effectively allows for a kind of “…in-the-moment foot-controlled compressor between the wah pedal and his amp[ifier]…That’d be really hard. I could not pull that off” (personal interview, October 2, 2014).
composer Mercer Ellington describes how the trombone growl and wa-wa are typically employed and controlled:

There are three basic elements in the growl: the sound of the horn, a guttural gargling in the throat, and the actual note that is hummed. The mouth has to be shaped to make the different vowel sounds, and above the singing from the throat, manipulation of the plunger adds the wa-wa accents that give the horn a language. (Dietrich 1995: 24)

Chenaux’s approach certainly evokes Dietrich’s description. The difference, however, is that he plays guitar and creates the effects with electronic devices.
My approximate transcription of Chenaux’s playing on the studio version makes clear that his playing may suggest several other genres, but certainly not conventional.
calypso. Most of his playing during the melody section is a counter-melody. However, on the original recorded version of the composition he actually enters playing the first few notes of the “B” melody with the frontline. By bar two, though, rather than continuing with them, he suddenly pivots to a sustained G (the tonic and root and of the chord) above the melody with a waveri
ging and piercing timbre produced by his more subtle that usual use of both the wah and fuzz pedals. Later in the phrase, his floor pedals enable him to create the impression that he is bending a note from G to D and back up to G in a manner not unlike a trombone glissando.

In the latter half of the phrase, Chenaux’s sustained guitar line is even more independent of the rest of the ensemble and the attacks even more obscured. Nonetheless, this line has a role – it connects each two-bar quintuplet motive in the main melody using target pitches (also known as “guide tones”) that outline the harmony. There is a straightforward line moving from the seventh of the dominant chord (C) in bar six through to the tonic pitch of the tonic chord in bar 13. Throughout this line, Chenaux’s entrances and releases are obscured by his use of “wah” pedal, which, again, is an effect akin to early trombone playing. The various aspects of Chenaux’s approach to this section points to the kind of distinctive interactive ensemble practices that Fraser has described to me as typical of the group’s overall approach.

Despite the possible affinities of Chenaux’s interpretation with early jazz trombone, upon hearing electric guitar with wah-wah and fuzz, many listeners or musicians will hear the allusion to rock or post-70s funk, including “psychedelic” guitar stylings of Jimi Hendrix, Jeff Beck, or Jerry Garcia. Referencing other popular genre

226 It should be noted that all of the rhythms notated in his part are approximate given that his entrances are intentionally obscured by the distinctive use of his pedals.
227 I think it is likely, though, that he actually articulated the D separately with his pick and obscured this with his electronics.
228 Throughout, Chenaux’s entrances lazily interact with the frontline melody. When he starts the second half of his counterline, he begins on the seventh of the chord (C) at about the “& of 3” in bar nine of the phrase. This entrance occurs just after the frontline’s melodic motive lands. Then, in bar eleven, he plays the sixth of D7 (B), an appoggiatura, at a place that, again, is just after the frontline melodic motive lands. He then contrast this by shifting quickly to the fifth of D7 (A) in bar twelve. Finally, he lands with the frontline on the tonic pitch (G) of the tonic chord (G major) in the last two bars of the phrase with the main melody.
229 Looking at his Fuzz Factory pedal, with its psychedelic hand-painted lettering, it is clear that the makers of the product knew what the association was for its customer base and exploited it.
practices directly in the middle of a calypso feel is not only distinctive, but it has become a signature part of the band’s sound. The point is that their group musical persona relies on the distinctive ways that the specific musicians involved musicians interact among themselves, with the music that one or more of the members brings to them, and most of all, particular musical traditions in particular ways.

9.3   << Conclusion >>

Drumheller “defamiliarized the familiar” tropes of jazz and a number of other popular/folkloric music traditions as a band. I have cited the apparent relationships their performances of “Nifacs63Charlie” have to jazz (in musical roles and instrumentation), Caribbean music (especially calypso, but also possibly Cuban music), and psychedelic rock. Yet none of these references could be seen as presented in a “familiar” fashion, even by jazz standards. Furthermore, there is little in the sheet music nor in the default jazz traditions used to typically interpret and perform jazz that would suggest the way they arrived at playing this composition. Rather, they utilized the personnel they had and negotiated a collective way to approach playing the tune that drew on their strengths individually and collectively. Some of the practices were tied to freelance/mainstream playing; some are closer to avant-garde music; and some resemble other kinds of popular music. And of course, my neat categorization of these practices is only one interpretation. The point is that Drumheller and other ensembles in the TSGJ subscene here are trying to interact with a variety of traditions including, but certainly not only, jazz; and they are committed to doing so over time, as a stable band.
Chapter 10

Bloomsday

10.1 Introduction

Bloomsday, in some ways, was an anomaly among the primary groups of my study. From speaking to various participants in the TSGJ subscene, it was clear that Bloomsday was the least well-known. There are several likely factors: the band performed less often, did not release an album, and bandleader/saxophonist David French rarely made a significant effort to promote the band using social media or traditional formats like posters (see Chapter 6). Despite the prominence of the musicians in Toronto’s overall jazz scene and the audience enthusiasm I observed at performances, attendance at Bloomsday shows was the sparsest of all the groups in my study. Furthermore, it was also the most short-lived of all the projects I studied, lasting only about two years.

In other key respects, however, while it existed Bloomsday was had many hallmarks of the TSGJ subscene phenomenon. First of all, they played almost exclusively at two of its primary venues - The Tranzac and The Rex. Like other groups in this subscene, they primarily performed challenging, distinctive original music. Due to French’s compositional voice and the group’s makeup including the novelty of two drummers. Bloomsday also had a very distinct persona. Furthermore, as I described in Chapter 5, the two specific drummers, Ethan Ardelli and Fabio Ragnelli, were key to making the two-drummer concept function. Without them, French felt that the band had to fold. This reliance on the contributions of specific musicians suggests that to some extent Bloomsday’s musical persona, like typical rock bands, was more reliant on individual musicians than a typical mainstream jazz group.

At the same time, like all of the other groups in this subscene, this was still a group that self-identified as jazz. Certainly, unlike groups like WPBE or Drumheller, all of the musicians would promote themselves jazz musicians first. Also unlike Drumheller,
all of the musicians were involved, to varying degrees, in mainstream jazz events in Toronto and certainly had advanced skillsets to perform in that context. Bloomsday’s connection to jazz tradition was also very apparent in French’s compositional voice, which, arguably more than any other factor, guides the group’s musical identity.

10.2 << David French’s Overall Compositional Voice: Interacting with Musical Traditions >>

French told me he often half-jokingly described Bloomsday’s musical persona in a way that suggests a multitude of influences: “Sonny Rollins, Shostakovich, and Public Enemy doing the robot to Lester Young records” (personal interview, April 1, 2012). While such a description might suggest a kind of fusion of styles, French insisted: “I’m very wary of pastiche. I’m not trying to fuse anything with anything. I’m not trying to fuse hip-hop with jazz or twentieth century music with jazz. This is a jazz band” (ibid.). French wanted his compositional voice and the group’s way of interacting with these compositions to reflect what he calls his own “obsession with jazz tradition,” at least, as he understood that tradition (ibid.).

There is a distinction being made here between interacting with other musical traditions on a jazz terrain and developing a new musical idiom or tradition. Consider scholar Kevin Fellezs’s description of the actual fusion genre in which key figures during the 1970s “created an explicitly transgeneric form of music” with the intent of “creating a new tradition” (2011: 4). The idea, often explicitly stated by musicians, was to create a music in-between two genres. The word jazz was often avoided or folded into a term like jazz-rock, jazz-funk, or jazz fusion. Furthermore, in the context of the 1970s, the very notion of bringing rock and/or funk into dialogue with jazz was considered far more controversial given how these genres were culturally and aesthetically segregated:

…these young musicians’ musical mixtures generated critical heat in the 1970s because of the disparate, even diametrical, ways in which jazz, rock, and funk were positioned as genres at the time… [Fusion] musicians troubled genres by

230 “I’m in love with [jazz tradition], from Sidney Bechet to [contemporary saxophonist/composer] Steve Lehman” (personal interview, April 1, 2012).
staying between them, creating an informal, even feral, set of musical practices and aesthetics. By doing so, they articulated a way of being both inside and outside of genre categories, disturbing assumptions about musical traditions… Most important, they transformed the relationship of individual musicians to musical traditions. The point I would like to draw is this: the “ain’t jazz, ain’t rock” music of these young musicians was not so much a hybrid as an “in-between” categorization… Importantly, their music remained between genres. (2011: 4-5)

While genre segregation is hardly extinct, in a digital, post-modern context it is no longer “controversial” for a young Toronto jazz musician to interact with other musical traditions. Such interaction is commonplace. More important, in Fellesz’s framing, in fusion at least two (sometimes more) genres were being bridged in a new terrain – a new idiom of its own.231 Again, this notion of establishing a new idiom (or working in an existing hybrid) that is not on jazz terrain is distinct from French’s intent with Bloomsday. In fact, in parsing his humorous description, I think it is noteworthy that French frames the group’s “sound” or persona in terms of musicians that have influenced his compositional voice dancing to Lester Young. Bloomsday is not a “mash-up” of jazz and other genres. Instead, this description invokes an icon of jazz tradition and his recorded legacy providing the energy for a playful dance with other musical inspirations. Jazz tradition is ultimately the driving force.

To veteran jazz historian and journalist Mark Miller, Bloomsday’s connection to jazz tradition(s) was highly apparent. Miller went so far as to insist that the group was “…the most tradition-based of [primary groups of my study].” He argued that “…part of it is the repertoire” in which French, as bandleader, made the links to jazz tradition(s) explicit: “You’re hearing [Thelonious] Monk, you’re hearing Billy Strayhorn, and then you’re hearing some of David’s stuff…” (personal interview, September 14, 2013). But he also heard a particular lineage in French’s playing that was different from some of the key musicians in other projects. Comparing French to alto saxophonist Brodie West from Drumheller, Miller argued that “David himself has roots and while he is an original thinker…he comes out of the tradition in a way that let’s say Brodie West isn’t – which

231 Herbie Hancock certainly agreed: “Jazz fusion is another idiom. It uses elements of jazz and elements of popular forms, but it established its own idiom” (as quoted in Fellesz 2011: 15).
isn’t a slight to Brodie. The things that David has an allegiance to are different than things Brodie has an allegiance to” (ibid.). These allegiances are, indeed, a way of carving out an identity as a bandleader and musician that permeate the entire band.

As I indicated in Chapter 5, with Bloomsday, David French sought to upend the jazz convention related to mid-sized groups (of about six to eleven musicians). Specifically, he wanted to move away from the typical “chamber jazz” aesthetic for groups of this size, which tends to rely on tightly orchestrated, harmonically dense arrangements, toward compositions with less fully realized harmony, some use of counterpoint (usually 2 or 3 voices), and greater rhythmic experimentation. Nevertheless, French stressed that he still “wanted to do more small group orchestrations rather than lead sheets” which allowed for a particular characteristic sound to emerge (personal interview, April 1, 2012). With less information about harmony he found that, the players he had tended to “improvise in a more free-wheeling fashion,” particularly with regard to rhythm (ibid.). The use of two-drummers underlined this emphasis.

When we spoke French was quite thoughtful about the relationship between the music he has admired and his own writing. He also told me how his compositional approach was grounded from indirect influence and inspiration: “I’m getting more interested in the idea of indirect association. In other words, I listen to certain music and I like the way that it makes me feel and I want to reproduce that feeling, but not by the same means” (personal interview, February 4, 2013). He mentioned how in listening to a specific recorded live performance of the song by “Excursions” hip-hop group A Tribe Called Quest, there was a particular “feeling” he had every time he heard when the “beat dropped.” French said that he wanted to recreate such a feeling, though not necessarily by quoting musical material or adopting the specific techniques in that performance or song: “I don’t want to make that music that sounds like that but make those kind of feelings. So sometimes I’m trying to write portraits of other pieces of music but where the association

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232 Given what I know of the two players, Miller appears to be alluding to how French’s sound and vocabulary are more reminiscent of Rollins, Coltrane, and similar “tenor titans” of the 1950s and 60s – the most pervasive influences on mainstream jazz saxophone performance. West, to me, has more idiosyncratic influences that probably include timbrally “cool” mainstream players like Lee Konitz in addition to numerous avant-garde musicians. It should be stressed that this compare/contrast of these two players is a simplification – both are aware of and utilize some mainstream and avant-garde techniques.
is abstract a lot of the time” (ibid.). Nonetheless, capturing that sense of having a groove suddenly hit at a particular point is something I will return to as a seminal interest in French’s writing for the band.

As mentioned, French was also interested in particular Western classical composers for their proclivities in counterpoint, finding it a useful technique for grounding his compositions: “[counterpoint] provides me a rationality, an order and a sense of integrity and gravity” (personal interview, April 1, 2012). In particular, he drew on Dmitri Shostakovich’s approach in certain movements of his string quartets and, especially, his Preludes and Fugues for keyboard. French notes that “Shostakovich uses contemporary harmony… even in the first prelude in C. While it is pretty straightforward, there are places where the voices combine in a way that aren’t easily labeled as chords. I don’t even know if they’re chords—in the jazz sort of way—but more like voicings” (ibid.).

Given French’s penchant for avoiding chord symbols in his more recent compositions for the group, and instead using counterpoint or written voicings that are not as easily represented by chord symbols, the connection is clear. Also French appreciates that there is significantly greater rhythmic activity and surprise in Shostakovich’s music than many other WAM composers working with counterpoint: “His stuff is very, very rhythmic – even the stuff that is half notes and quarter notes. There is a lot of forward motion as compared to Palestrina, where the motion is less interested in rhythm” (ibid.). Counterpoint and groove, informed by these musical inspirations, interact on the jazz terrain of this repertoire as arranged specifically for this band.

10.3 << Bloomsday’s Overall Approach to Interacting with Jazz Tradition(s) >>

One overt way in which the band maintains an overt relationship with jazz tradition(s) is in playing actual jazz standards. Indeed, the group played compositions by

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233 Here, French almost certainly uses “straightforward” to mean typical tonal structures or chords.
Ellington, Billy Strayhorn or Monk almost every night I heard them. Jazz tradition(s) informs the band’s overall approach in other ways as well. Every musician who has played for the band has attended a university or college for jazz and has been very involved in the freelance jazz scene in Toronto as well.

The fluid sense of improvisation—both in “solos” but also in ensemble performance—makes the group “jazz” more than anything else in French’s view: “Although there are some hybrid influences, it is a jazz band…maybe we’re not improvising on traditional song forms but…there is the idea of direct and consistent improvisation, of continuous harmonic and rhythmic interaction” (personal interview, April 1, 2012). Within that, he also stresses the importance of risk and surprise, despite some measure of orchestrated arrangements with an emphasis on counterpoint: “We’ve gotten familiar with some of the arrangements, but I think we’re going to keep adapting things because I like being surprised, and I hired guys who are pretty good at that. So in that way, there is risk involved too and that is something that I think we take from the jazz tradition” (ibid.). In other words, he specifically chose personnel not only because of social compatibility, but also because the ways in which these musicians were prepared to take risks—especially with regard to rhythm—were a good fit for his project’s practices.

In hearing the band, it is the musicians’ commitment to an interactive, fluidly improvisational approach to their own repertoire that feels closest to a jazz aesthetic even when French’s compositions are at their most “orchestrated.” This is particularly evident in how the two drummers perform the material since their parts are rarely prescribed in the score or through verbal instruction. Thus, I found their interpretative practices to be the most divergent from night to night.

On March 31, 2013 at The Rex French seemed visibly surprised as the band played his composition, “Propeller.” I noted this when the drummers together implied a second-line feel through the initial statements of composed material before the trumpet enters. I spoke to him later about this specific choice from the drummers, and he expressed his discomfort. He also said that he had misgivings about the composition, in part because he found that various tempi at which the drummers played it caused it to
“sit” in the wrong place in terms of feel and style. Nevertheless, this kind of license in performance, particularly when coupled with “conventional” individual solos in compositions such as “Propeller” that are infused with jazz references as well as dance rhythms and melodic ideas from folklore and popular music makes this band inherently jazz-like.

10.4  << “Kool Keith” >>

In French’s humorous description of Bloomsday’s he refers not only to jazz and Western art music (“classical music”), but also hip-hop. These traditions are alluded to through both the details of his compositions and his group’s interactive performance practices. French’s “Kool Keith” illustrates this well. ²³⁴

10.4.1  << Compositional Voice in “Kool Keith” >>

The title of this composition is a reference to Bronx, New York rapper Kool Keith, a founding member of influential late 1980s/early 90s rap group the Ultramagnetic MCs. ²³⁵ French indicated that the original inspiration for the composition came from Kool Keith’s solo track “Black Elvis” – both its musical details and to an even greater

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²³⁴ Not everyone in the group listens to hip-hop with the same regularity, but it is clear that all have some appreciation for it. In speaking with him, drummer Fabio Ragnelli appeared to have some of the most detailed knowledge in the group. Perhaps not surprisingly, he figures prominently in the analyzed performance.

²³⁵ This group’s producer, Ced Gee, was known for taking an approach to production that combined fragmented samples and electronic sounds into a richer sonic tapestry: “[the] epochal production by Ced Gee…was the best kind of minimalism, one that managed to fill the entire sound field…hyper and choppy” (Wang 2003: 160-161). But it was Kool Keith’s surrealist rapping above all that, from the beginning, stood out from the group. He added to what Oliver Wang calls the group’s “uniqueness factor” with “utterly deranged rhymes” that were “abstract…with cadences [that are] so bizarre” (160-161). As a result, Wang opines that “…it would be Kool Keith that would emerge…as the star. Keith would invent underground hip-hop in one fell swoop” (161).
degree Kool Keith’s rhythmic choices and cadence or “flow.” Consistent with his assertions about indirect influence, French indicated that he originally planned to transcribe part vocal line and later graft a melody to this.

Eventually, French came to realize that this approach would be impractical. It would require a lot of rehearsal time devoted to aural teaching—the rhythms are very complex and even groups with stable personnel have time limitations on their time which constrain possible creative choices. However, he found that just starting this transcription led him in other fruitful directions:

I started doing a transcription of maybe the first line of text, and in so doing I came up with a couple of cells. I’m going to mine these melodic/rhythmic cells; and I’m adapting them, I’m not actually using the literal pitches of his voice. It really functions as really base source material… (personal interview, April 1, 2012)

Admittedly, I found the relationship between the opening material from “Black Elvis” and French’s composition nebulous. This, despite the groove’s more obvious similarity to its source material. French concurred, again citing “indirect influence”: “the direct relation [of the composition] to [the actual] Kool Keith is slight, but it’s also the only reason I wrote the piece in the first place” (ibid.) Yet, as I will analyze later, there is at least one overt allusion to “Black Elvis” in the details of the composition. Furthermore, the influence of hip-hop is more clearly evident in the interpretive choices made at a

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236 The concept of a “Black Elvis” is obviously provocative and speaks to Kool Keith’s own self-aware and, at the time, radical attempts to play with racial and cultural signifiers through his lyrics and his multiple personas. By the time of his solo career, Kool Keith’s Amos Barshad goes so far as to refer to him as “rap’s leading eccentric” (Barshad 2012). As examples, Barshad refers, in part, to Kool Keith’s conscious molding of his identity based, in part, in an ever-changing visual aesthetic: “[in] Egyptian headdresses, in sparkly spaceman scarves, in circuit-board shin-guards…[or in] a baseball cap, reading glasses – and what appears to be a cape made out of a velvet stage curtain and the fin of a shark” (Barshad 2012). “Black Elvis” was, then, one such alternate identity that Kool Keith assumed for (part of) the 1999 album Black Elvis/Lost in Space. The persona (one which involved donning a gigantic black plastic pompadour) was an overt way of caricaturing and Signifying upon Elvis Presley’s controversial role in the culture as an appropriator of black culture. As J. Griffith Rollefson points out: “…his [Black Elvis] character is of course a black man acting like a white man acting like a black man” (Rollefson 2008: 101). However, in speaking with members of Bloomsday, none of this hip-hop lore was at the forefront of playing the composition. It is clear that only French had a detailed knowledge of Kool Keith to begin with and no mention was made of this in familiarizing themselves with the composition. There is, though, a larger sense in which the band is musically interacting with hip hop culture (and perhaps even alternative hip hop), which is made clear in the analysis.
performance I recorded at The Rex in March 2013—a point French confirmed himself. Apart from hip-hop, French mentioned that Shostakovich also influenced “Kool Keith. Once again, he was determined to draw inspiration from the composer without necessarily aping his specific materials and methods.

So how do these associations or inspirations interact in Bloomsday’s music while maintaining an aesthetic that is still in a jazz “tradition”? How does French avoid what, for him, is a “pastiche” approach? French re-traced his steps in composing this piece:

[Kool Keith] is essentially two melodies: there’s a melody doubled in the bass and bass clarinet that is 9 bars long and I wrote that one night; I just started quasi-improvising a line and then after I had something basic I shaped it for awhile… then it was an experiment to see if I can write a countermelody that’s not using the same rhythm, and uses a couple of intervallic things that I like. Quite by chance, it worked out. (personal interview, February 4, 2013)

Appendix E shows French’s own score. One can see the initial nine-bar melodic statement or theme (T1) for bass clarinet and bass, which is repeated twice. After this, the trumpet and vibraphone join in playing a countermelody (the second theme – T2) while the other melody (T1) continues. Then, at the end of the composition there is a coda with new melodic material presented in a strict three-part canon. These contrapuntal practices, as I will illustrate below, are not a literal adoption of Shostakovich’s approach to counterpoint; rather, they serve as “indirect association” or a reflection of inspiration.

Meanwhile, French’s approach to compositional form plays with jazz traditions. In a sense, the large-scale form is a nod to jazz convention. As in many jazz compositions, the composed themes bookend an open section for featured improvisation. Within these broad outlines there are interesting deviations in form at the macro level that both link with and depart from jazz tradition(s). French’s use of repeated thematic and motivic material help provide a sense of unity. However, throughout most of the composition, two distinct themes are sounded simultaneously.
**Figure 27 – Form in “Kool Keith”**

Nomenclature:

* Instruments: BC = Bass Clarinet, Bs = Bass, Vb = Vibraphone, Tp = Trumpet, Dr = Drums

* Theme: roughly equivalent to the “classical” notion of a “period” with one antecedent phrase and one consequent phrase

* Theme construction: e.g. T1 (9: 4+5[2+3]) = the first theme sounded; in this case, a 9-bar theme that is most readily heard as a 4 and 5 bar phrase; the latter phrase can further be distinguished as being comprised of a 2-bar and 3-bar motive.

* Motives: a shorter idea (less than 4 bars); the “Mo” label is used to delineate the use of an isolated motivic idea, as opposed to a motive that is combined with additional immediately subsequent motives or phrases in creating a longer melody or theme

  - Mo1a + Mo1b: two rhythmically aligned, but melodically distinct motives

* The “+” sign indicates that the themes are occurring simultaneously.

* The “*” sign indicates how many times this section is played (e.g. * 2 = repeated once).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Length</th>
<th>Composed Melodic Material: Themes (T) and Motives (Mo)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>9 * 2 = 18</td>
<td>T1 (9: 4 + 5[2+3]) – BC &amp; Bs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| A1      | 9 * 2 = 18 | T1 (9: 4 + 5[2+3]) – BC & Bs  
+ T2 (9: 4 + 5[1+3+1]) – Tp & Vb |
| B       | 6 * 2 = 12 | T3 (3) * 2 – BC & Bs  
+ T4 (6) – Tp & Vb |
| B1      | 6 * 2 = 12 | T3 (3) * 2 – BC & Bs  
+ Mo1a (3) * 2 – Tp  
+ Mo1b (3) * 2 - Vb |
| A1¹     | 9       | T1 (9: 4 + 5[2+3]) – BC & Bs  
+ T2 (9: 4 + 5[1+3+1]) – Tp & Vb |
In the first part of the composition that is akin to the initial “head,” French employs a variation of AABA form. In French’s composition, however, B and B1 together combine to form the B section (see Figure 27).

**Figure 28: Comparison of Overall Form of “Kool Keith” to AABA Song Form**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kool Keith</th>
<th>Traditional Song Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1¹</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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237 AABA is, of course, among the most common forms for the chorus of many early 20th century American popular songs and thousands of related jazz compositions.
More dramatically, the sections feature either six or nine-bar (rather than the typical four or eight-bar) phrases. While this is hardly unprecedented in contemporary jazz, it does deviate markedly from “traditional” song forms. After completing an open “solo” section, further, the band returns immediately to B1. This marks an even greater departure from jazz convention. In fact, following the open section, the composition never returns to the top of the form. Rather, new material (C) — a coda—follows the B1 after the solos.  

The coda also features a significant departure from jazz norms. There is new thematic material written in a three-voice canon, and one based on an unconventional three-bar motive at that. While improvised counterpoint was a feature in much of early New Orleans jazz, and composed counterpoint has been featured in the work of some modern and contemporary jazz composers, a strict canon is very rare.

Throughout, French has also indicated no harmonic progression to anchor any part of the form (see Appendix E). Again, while not a complete departure from convention (eliminating harmonic framework goes back to Ornette Coleman’s group at least), it is atypical to not have some harmonic framework suggested with chord symbols or, in rare cases, written voicings. In general, the overall form does nod toward jazz convention in the overall arc of themes-improvisation-themes and, to a limited degree, the repetition of the sections within, but many of these conventions are stretched and altered so much that as a performer or listener I do not experience the composition as an archetypal “jazz tune” – at least by the standard of a “jam session” or informal engagement at a mainstream venue.

The composed melodic material has a tonal and rhythmic character influenced by both jazz and hip-hop traditions. The common denominator to the tonal character is the blues, or what William Tallmadge (1984) refers to as a “blue tonality.” Tallmadge points out that many of the scales and devices that are often associated with the blues are to be found in various other musical traditions around the world. For Tallmadge, that African

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238 There are famous small group hard bop-oriented composers melding back to the 1950s and 60s who used a similar strategy in certain compositions – using a somewhat truncated head after the solos with a longer coda. Examples include Horace Silver (e.g. “Pyramid”) and Cedar Walton (e.g. “Ojos De Rojo”).
American-derived blues tonality is less a matter of the devices themselves, and more related to how these devices and materials are used in confrontation with Western European musical conventions:

Though it may seem rather paradoxical, the fact is that blue tonality is generated when the tones of the blues scale are employed by bluesmen, black folk musicians, and jazz performers; but no such tonality arises when the very same pitches are employed by Africans, Indo-Pakistanis, or by Anglo-American folk singers in Appalachia. The reason for this apparent paradox is that blue tonality can only arise when the inflected pitches are used in certain ways within the European harmonic system. (1984: 161)

In other words, tonality is contextual. By using “inflected pitches” in particular ways against European-derived harmony, musicians in African-American derived musical traditions create this “blues character.”

This is what happens in “Kool Keith.” Without chordal accompaniment (either fully written or implied with chord changes) or even a key signature, the melodic material alone establishes a tonal character that strongly suggests a blues in F. Moreover, to my ear, hearing this melodic material without any chordal accompaniment suggests a “minor blues” character rather than the traditional blues with the so-called “unstable third.”

The first theme (T1 – see figure 29) is written for the bass clarinet and bass in octaves. From bar 1 to 3, this theme is almost entirely made up of the f minor pentatonic scale. The only pitch outside this scale is the E-natural on bar one, and of beat three. Though not written as accented, there is an implied accent by virtue of its rhythmic

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239 Tallmadge focuses a great deal on how such melodic material suggests blues by having prominent pitches creating effects that are in “conflict” with European harmonic convention. He frames this as an effect that suggests “polychords.” He suggests that idiomatic melodic devices must be sounded against a Western-influenced harmonic progression to hear blue tonality: “in essence…blue notes exist only in conjunction with a harmonic substructure, and the total sonority (blue tonality) is created by means of an Afro-American polychordal practice initiated in North America” (1984: 163). By this, Tallmadge appears to suggest that blues practice can only occur through the collision of melody and “clashing” chord. Specifically, this could mean melodic practices such as using the “lowered third” in the melody against a tonic chord (e.g. Eb, or a micro-tonally lowered E, against C7 in a C blues) or the “lowered seventh” of the key against the subdominant chord (e.g. B-flat against F7 in a C blues).
placement in the bar. While outside of the key, E can be analyzed as part of typical blues tonality. Indeed, it functions as a passing chromatic seventh between the “blues seventh” (Eb) and the tonic. To this point of T1, this minor-blues archetype, with idiomatic rhythmic inflections, could fit many blues-influenced genres from hard-bop, through to classic soul and funk, and permeating many kinds of hip-hop and contemporary R&B.

At first, the next gesture in the phrase also suggests blue tonality with motives from the f minor pentatonic scale. Unlike the first two bars, though, once the major-seventh (E) arrives it is not treated as a chromatic passing note. Instead, this low E natural is immediately followed by an ascending melodic shape starting on the ‘and of 3’ in bar three that I hear as a broken E7 arpeggio. This particular gesture, while not radically “outside,” manages to subtly diverge from the conventions of blue tonality.

Despite the fact that Bb is not present, the melodic gesture in bars 5 and 6 can be analyzed as Bb7, the “Dorian subdominant” (IV7) chord in f-Dorian. I contend this melody is likely to be heard/felt as suggesting harmonic movement to IV since the expectation of a subdominant in bar five of blues forms is so firmly established by the preceding material in the tune and the fact that the IV& chord is a common device in much soul and R&B since the late 1960s and even some hip-hop.
In the last three bars, the last three gestures are three-note motives that are too short to be harmonically analyzed productively. All of them are, though, intervallically identical, targeting the root (bar seven, beat three), degree four (bar eight, beat two) and degree five (bar nine, beat one) respectively. Abstracted from this groove, these three-note motives are practically jazz clichés. However, the three of them in succession take up roughly nine beats only to arrive strongly on beat one of the final bar of the phrase. This creates a three-bar structure that undercuts the convention of four-bar phrasing. In this first theme alone then, with its melodic materials and the sense of form they create, plays with blues tonality and convention while slyly subverting it at the same time.

The second theme (T2) that eventually overlaps with this one has shorter motivic material throughout and contains a smaller set of pitches. It also uses the idiomatic passing tone formula of chromatically moving down from degree four to b3. Notably,

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240 I hear the sequencing of the melodic target from degree one, to four, to five creates as a kind of forward tonal movement. Ending on the fifth degree creates a sense of a dominant leading back to the beginning of the phrase, particularly given the low register of the instruments.
though, the “blues seventh,” the Eb in the key of F major or f minor, is never articulated in this theme – instead, the major seventh (E-natural) is prominently accented in bar two, three, five, and nine of the phrase, making it feel more “unresolved” or “ambiguous” in comparison to T1.

The juxtaposition of T1 in counterpoint with T2 reframes the “meaning” of the initial statement. The melody of T1 in bar five and six, may have felt like a nod to the convention of “dorian IV7” in its proper “blues place” (that is, bar five and six) when this theme was heard alone. T2, however, with its prominent B-naturals and E-naturals overlapping in these bars, does not fit this IV7 paradigm. Rather, it loosely creates a diminished seventh chord—most likely Fdim7 given that F, Ab, B (enharmonically Cb), D, and E (the major seventh of Fdim7, a common added tension) are all present, and F is articulated twice by T1 in the low register. On the other hand, there is no clear vertical structure given that these tonally ambiguous and angular melodies also never rhythmically line up—this melodic/rhythmic bobbing and weaving is itself at the very core of the character of this composition.

While all of this melodic dialogue is unconventional in small group jazz composition, the fundamental motivic material in the themes follow the rhythmic conventions of funk and funk’s immediate descendant, hip hop. The first four bars and the last two motives of T1 are almost rhythmic clichés in this idiom, in which syncopations occur in the beginning-to-middle of a one-bar (or two-bar in the case of cut-time notation) motive only to be resolved by ending on the beat. The opening line (Figure 30) to a mid-1970s instrumental by popular American funk group Tower of Power is characteristic of this archetype:

Figure 30

![Opening Horn Line, “Ebony Jam” - Tower of Power](image-url)
While this is a much faster tune with the rhythm section performing a markedly different kind of funk groove, the melodic material in this line has a virtually identical rhythmic contour to the motive in bar one beat one to bar two of “Kool Keith” (the only difference being the presence of one more pitch and a slightly longer note on the “and of 3” in “KK”). I also found several other comparable references to funk and hip hop in T1 and other themes in “Kool Keith.”

The central concept underlying much of the music is what is colloquially referred to across funk and funk-related music from James Brown forward as “the one.” David Brackett describes this concept as the rhythm section “accenting strongly the first beat of every or every other 4/4 bar, freeing the instruments to play any number of syncopated patterns in which the beats are implied rather than stated” (Brackett 2015). Often, to achieve a sense of “the one,” the bassline will resolve to the downbeat. However, since a conventional ostinato bassline is largely absent in “KK,” the drummers consistently provide this downbeat on the downbeat every two bars (which is the real downbeat given that this is felt as cut-time). Having this stability from the drummers provides the foundation for these highly syncopated and irregular phrases to work.

One of the central characteristics of both of the first two themes that is not in keeping with funk conventions is that they develop over the course of a long phrase (i.e. longer than four bars). Specifically, French’s first two themes involve antecedent phrases of four bars followed by complex consequent phrases with surprising rhythmic developments occurring in two and three bar motivic chunks. Even for funk-oriented groups or more harmonically adventurous hip-hop acts, it is very rare to hear this kind of development. The themes, then, are clearly both inspired by rhythmic convention of funk and post-funk idiom while clearly departing from it – this is a way of “signifying” on traditions.

Even more unconventional, though, is the melodic dialogue I alluded to earlier – the rhythmic juxtaposition of the two themes which first occurs at A1. In particular, note how T1 and T2 have accent patterns that line up only intermittently. While correlations occur on the “and of two” and “and of three” of bar one, the next one does not occur until bar three. In bar five, the start of the next part of both T1 and T2, two important accentual
correlations occur on beat three and the “and of four,” helping to establish, as in bar one, a base for the contrapuntal conversation. From here, however, the two themes diverge entirely – there are no accentual coincidences again as the two themes weave in rhythmic conversation. Certainly, funk-based music is known for having divergent rhythmic activity and emphasized accented syncopation. However, implying this funk-oriented character while utilizing two-voice contrapuntal dialogue reflects French’s preference for “indirect association” with his musical inspirations. The melodic material does not evoke hip hop or classical counterpoint in any direct fashion. Such playing with conventions of form and melody across these traditions in a jazz terrain is part of French’s compositional voice, which in turn is central to Bloomsday’s musical persona.  

10.4.2 << Performance Practice in “Kool Keith” >>

10.4.2.1 << Melodic Interpretation >>

None of the parts French provided to Bloomsday musicians have any articulations to provide guidance in interpreting "Kool Keith’s” melodic material. Yet, in performance the group plays with remarkable cohesion. Much of this may be due to the band playing their parts according to funk/hip-hop conventions. Yet conventions do not explain everything. For example, as my markings on Figure 24 demonstrate, the quarter notes in bar two, three and five of T1 are consistently played long with a slight accent whereas the quarter notes in the last three bars are played with shorter durations and “marcato” style accents. Isolated off-beat eighth notes and any off-beat eighth note that is at the end of a series is played accented and short; all long notes starting on an off-beat are accented; all eighth notes not in one of the above positions are played legato and not accented; and all

241 Meanwhile, in section B, themes T3 and T4 may be heard as being closer to the traditional relationship of melody and bass-line in most jazz compositions. Still, there are many unconventional characteristics of the individual lines and especially how they combine that continues this blues character.
notes written with a tie are played for full value (e.g. the E-natural in bar 1 or the A-flat over the bar-line from bar 2 to 3). Though some of this might be implied by the style indication on the chart, the degree of cohesion the group achieved demanded personnel that intuitively grasped the articulation of the style and will rehearse or carefully take note of material that occasionally does not conform. Based on my experience working with top tier players, even three highly competent jazz musicians sightreading this chart would not result in a cohesive ensemble.242

10.4.2.2 << Navigating the Two-Drummer Ensemble and Ensemble Groove >>

Bloomsday’s drummers learned and performed “Kool Keith” without written parts of their own. Instead both have reduced scores of the parts to this composition that gave them a sense of the overall form. In the performance of “Kool Keith” I attended, they did not often look at their charts because they had absorbed the composition after two years of performing and rehearsing it. Given the lack of explicit instruction, their performances of “Kool Keith” varied the most – and, indeed, this was true of their role in other compositions. One of the key factors affecting their performance choices was French’s choice of tempo – an issue French himself was very aware of.

On an early live performance from 2011 that I did not attend but for which I have a recording (Audio Example #2), French chose a much faster tempo than what I had been used to hearing. This appeared to be the impetus for the drummers employing busier “breakbeat” rhythms of the kind often present in electronic music sub-genres such as drum-and-bass or jungle. However, drummers Ragnelli and Ardelli made these grooves significantly softer and lighter by shifting much of the chattering syncopations typical of the style from the more typical “open” snare drum sound to the rim of their snare drums (i.e. “rim-clicks”). In their performance, the drummers rarely settled into a pattern as is

242 I make this claim even though the performance I analyzed features Dan Fortin, a musician who is technically a substitute. However, at the time of the performance, Fortin had played with Bloomsday many times before and was a frequent collaborator with the members on similar projects.
the norm in electronica subgenres. Rather, the breakbeat patterns they used were performed in a more fluid, variable manner, as one might expect of jazz drummers playing in a jazz setting. Notably, when I spoke with French about this performance, he confided that he found it less successful than the one I discuss above because the band did not find a balance between a more settled groove and fluid improvisation.

In yet another 2012 recording (Audio Example #3), the performance is somewhat slower than the 2011 performance mentioned above but still not as slow as the performance that I analyzed most in-depth. The slightly moderated tempo appears to nudge the drummers to feel the composition as half-time: one or both of them play a stronger backbeats on beat three of the (written) bar. This immediately creates a more loping feel than before. Nevertheless, the tempo and the still evolving practices of this composition by the band engendered some of the busier playing indicative of breakbeats from time to time.

By early 2013, during a time when Bloomsday was playing at The Rex approximately once a month, French settled on a significantly slower tempo than what is heard on the prior recordings. This would serve to definitively shift the “feel” to half-time throughout the song. Furthermore, by this time, I observed that Ragnelli tended to take the lead playing full kit (especially in the early part of the composition) while Ardelli tended to play more of an auxiliary role – usually by playing only part of the drum kit and/or using other percussion instruments. In fact, he played sixteenth notes on the shaker and interjects with cowbell throughout most of the first three sections of the February 2013 performance analyzed above (Audio Example #4). By playing less in this composition, Ardelli arguably allowed room for the groove to “settle” and “breathe” (which was certainly French’s preference).

The drumming on the February 2013 performance reveals how having “lived” in this composition for this long as a working band, in addition to having a long-standing social and musical partnership (here between Ragnelli and Ardelli), allows for an interpretation that makes “Kool Keith” “work.” Ragnelli’s choices, in particular, appear from the very beginning of the performance to respond to his better sense of the tune and the slower, and eventually preferred tempo/feel. He begins playing little on the snare
drum other than a heavy backbeat on beat three and a few syncopations from time to time on the bass drum. He slowly adds hi-hat settling on a driving eighth note pattern with the cymbals open, followed by two-sixteenth-notes with the cymbal pair closed (the open hi-hat timbrally pushes the music forward). As soon as T1 hits, however, Ragnelli pulls the sixteenth notes out. This reasserts the laid-back feeling of half-time. At this performance I noticed how this feel, in tandem with the blues-oriented low-register theme, engendered a visible reaction from many audience members: I noted heads bobbing, feet tapping, and many listeners looking at each other with recognition (and, furthermore, an audible “woo-hoo” from an audience member on my recording). On the repeat of T1 the sixteenths returned to the pattern, helping to shift the groove back into a more propulsive mode. This feel largely continued, with a few interjections and fills, through section B.

In section C and D on the 2013 recording, Ragnelli played a very heavy half-time feel with nothing but eighth notes on the open high-hat. In these sections, however, he played lighter syncopations in-between the heavy backbeats, a practice indicative of many funk and R&B drummers since at least the late 1960s (e.g., John “Jabo” Starks on James Brown’s “Sex Machine”). This textural shift is very effective for denoting the change in the form and the character of the new themes. Importantly, it was not present in earlier performances. While all of Ragnelli and Ardelli’s creative choices with Bloomsday require a wide-ranging familiarity and absorption of various genre-practices, their successful approach to interpreting “Kool Keith” depends to a great degree on their deepening relationship with the tune over a long period of time. This is, of course, only possible because of the long-term nature of the group.

10.4.2.3 << Bloomsday’s Approach to Improvisation in “Kool Keith” >>

Section E of “Kool Keith” is marked on the score as a vibraphone solo. It is clearly a variation on Section A/A1 – it is a nine-bar phrase and the bass-line (played by bass alone) references part of T1 (I refer to this bassline as T1a). T1a, though, is
significantly different from T1, diverging after the first five beats. Rather than including
the next motive from T1 in its original place (on beat three of bar two), this motive is
delayed to beat three of bar four. Not only does this provide an unexpected variation, but
delaying the motive creates more space for the drummers and vibraphone to interact. In
bar six, a new melodic figure that outlines the Fm7 chord in a kind of quarter note
arpeggio using quarter notes begins, continuing through bar seven. This motive serves as
a kind of rhythmic and tonal anchor. In this way, T1a serves as an effective ground bass
for improvisation—another difference from T1. This line and the stability it provides,
ends with a dotted quarter-eighth note rhythm on a low E-natural. This pitch, which was
prominent in the A sections, provides tonal contrast for the last two bars of this nine-bar
phrase. While improvised solos over only a bass ostinato are common in hip-hop or funk
oriented compositions, rhythmic variation such as this is rare as are phrase lengths as
long or irregular as nine bars. An emphasis on the major 7th (E), is also a marked
development from the conventions of the non-jazz practices that underpin the solo sections.

In most of the performances, and particularly in the earlier recordings I have of
“Kool Keith,” the band seemed to interpret the score’s directives somewhat loosely, as is
often customary with small group jazz. In keeping with these customs, even the written
bass part was typically interpreted in this fluid manner by bassist Jon Maharaj – he would
often vary T1a after the first couple of passes.

By contrast, in the February 2013 performance, I hear the convention of a “solo
section” as being destabilized – rather than the roles of “lead melodic soloist” with
rhythm section interacting, these roles shift and evolve. Though Davidson was intended
as the “featured soloist,” Ragnelli’s daring choices on drums in the early stages of this
section made him stand out instead. For just under two minutes and seven choruses of
nine bars each, Ragnelli continues to make daring improvisational choices outside of a
simple groove, often with surprising over-the-barline rhythmic groupings. At the same
time, vibraphonist Davidson, the designated “soloist” only reinforces some of the bass
part’s accents in his block-chord playing; to that end, bassist Dan Fortin tends play his
part relatively as written—as an ostinato—only adding rare double-stops to create fifths.
In fact, it appears to be Fortin’s choice to play his part literally that anchors things and allows for the rhythmically adventurous choices Ragnelli makes.

It is only in chorus eight that vibraphonist Davidson begins to play overt melodies. From this point until the end of the open section he and Ragnelli appear to be in more overt rhythmic conversation. As the primary melodic soloist in chorus eight, Davidson tends to play much more “gesturally.” That is, he does not often play long phrases, but instead plays either fragments of melodic ideas, sequenced motivic material, or chords or harmonic intervals played in rhythmic groupings similar to those played by Ragnelli (but never strictly concurrently). At other instances he plays longer textures created by figures played out-of-time and very fast with the sustain pedal down. Without getting into a protracted analysis of every musical choice, Davidson remains anchored in F minor but allows some of the gestures, and particularly the motivic material, to take him outside of the mode of F dorian and back.

Davidson and Ragnelli continue to be the primary musicians interacting through the final choruses of this open section until the activity between them becomes increasingly louder, denser and eventually somewhat less tethered rhythmically. As this climax took place during the performance, section B1 was cued in by French, who signaled the new section with his body.

10.5  << Conclusion >>

French’s composition as well as the group’s approach to interacting and improvising within it do not resemble bebop, the jazz that would have been considered the “mainstream” to most audiences in Toronto during its 1980s and 90s hey-day. Nor, on the other hand, does it sound like a group that is closely adhering to the conventions of instrumental funk/hip-hop or, for that matter, a classical music. It is the work of improvisers—and a composer-bandleader—who are interacting with musical traditions, including jazz, on their own terms in their own way. The nature of the genre associations
may be more or less apparent for each member of the group depending on what they hear—and that variability is no doubt even wider for a listening audience—but however consciously, the practices I have described clearly point to a way of engage with various kinds of popular music through jazz performance practices in a way unique to this band. This band was only beginning to develop its voice and identity when it unfortunately met its demise.
Chapter 11

Harley Card Quintet

11.1 << Introduction >>

As previously noted, guitarist Harley Card’s group’s name immediately suggests a more traditionally organized jazz group. The group’s persona has been grounded in Card’s practical and artistic direction as well as his compositional voice. Further, many of Card’s compositions are arguably closer to mainstream jazz conventions than those of the other primary groups in my study.

Yet it is the alterations to convention that are key to the identity of this group and the challenge that still demands a stable lineup. In some compositions, this challenge is due to an accumulation of unconventional details that subvert what might otherwise seem like a “typical contemporary jazz tune.” In others, the challenges are the result of substantial structural differences. Nonetheless, Card indicated to me that many of his compositions have been written for the particular ways in which his bandmates relate to jazz tradition(s) and have then been reshaped as a result of this feedback (see Chapter 5).

Finally, as grounded as this group is in jazz tradition(s), Card’s compositions and his band’s way of interacting with them do not adhere to any strict mainstream bebop sensibility. This band also interacts with popular music in idiosyncratic ways that are true to the compositional voice of its leader and the performing identity of the group.

11.2 << The Group’s Relationship to Jazz Tradition(s) Enacted Through Playing Standards >>

The band has a core repertoire of Card’s compositions but, in addition, they have consistently played standard jazz vehicles. These have included classic popular songs and compositions written before 1970 by famous jazz musicians. Card indicated that he chose
this repertoire based on his own personal familiarity and aesthetic preference (personal interview, August 7, 2013). However, in some cases, he chose standards specifically to feature members of the group. For example, the Arthur Altman song “All or Nothing At All” was a tune that David French specifically wanted to play because, in the key they played it in, it would end on a C#, a pitch typically difficult to stabilize and speak on the baritone saxophone. At the time they added this tune to their repertoire, French had only begun performing with the baritone saxophone and it thus presented a new challenge that promised to build his flexibility on the instrument. Card indicated that he picked other standards written by canonical jazz musicians that he enjoyed, but that were infrequently played/heard in Toronto (e.g. “Nefertiti” by Wayne Shorter). Card explicitly stated that he hoped such selections would be “more interesting for an audience” than the most-played standards (ibid.).

An example of an infrequently performed standard that Card’s Quintet has played regularly is “Pannonica” by Thelonious Monk. At the Tranzac, there has been a regular Sunday afternoon series called Monk’s Music run by a collective of younger musicians – a collective that has included many of the members of Bloomsday and Card’s group. Indeed, I have noted the presence numerous members of prominent groups in the TSGJ subscene. As a composer that was known for taking a very personal approach that was grounded in jazz tradition(s) and popular music, Monk appears to serve as a model for many of these musicians, including Card.

11.3 << Harley Card’s Compositional Voice for his Stable Group >>

Card’s compositions, like David French’s (and Monk’s for that matter), are often inspired indirectly by many musical sources. Card talked about drawing from all of his musical background:

If you play music, you're influenced by all kinds of music, rather than just music tied to the jazz tradition. I like to think when I write music, through process of osmosis that I’m influenced by all kinds of music including the jazz records I've listened to and jazz performances I've heard and pop music I grew up with. (personal interview, August 7, 2013)
Card, thus, has allowed his compositional voice to be influenced not only by bebop-related jazz, but also by all jazz-related music he has heard and other music as well, especially “pop music.” At the same time, when reflecting on more specific influences, Card points to alto saxophonist David Binney:

A really important record around the time I wrote the music for our first record was David Binney’s [2004] album Welcome to Life… In particular, the way he was structuring the tunes…[pianist] Craig Taborn would play on the changes of the song, and then [saxophonist Chris] Potter would play a free improvised solo with the whole band, and then Binney would play over another vamp…Right away I started writing tunes like that where someone would be featured on the form of the song, and someone else would be featured on a coda…That was a direct influence on the early writing for the group. (ibid.)

Card speculated that one of the influences on Binney’s writing may have been the more harmonically adventurous rock music of artists like Sting and Steely Dan. He pointed out that in many of Binney’s compositions there is a separate coda with a long improvisation on a vamp that, to Card, is reminiscent of a “tag on a Sting tune” (ibid.). This is a device that Card adopted more than once. A broader influence on Card, though, is how Binney’s compositions tend to be episodic. New events or sections—sometimes featuring soloists, other times featuring contrasting written materials (i.e. melodies, grooves, etc.)—unfold over the course of the composition, a contrast to the typical jazz performance practice of a cyclical form based on the original tune.

The ways Card has gone about composing music for his group, and how the group members have contributed to these compositions, have changed over the band’s tenure. Initially, the group, which is now a quintet, was a quartet without French on saxophones and bass clarinet. The foursome recorded an album called Fruition in 2008. Card remembers that in the year leading up to this recording, he wrote compositions that went through some measure of collective creative process: “we work-shopped for quite awhile; [this repertoire] was then arranged for quartet. And of course, there were little things that we tweaked and just became part of what we did over time with playing a lot” (personal interview, August 7, 2013). Still, while members of the group did make a lot of singular contributions to some of these earlier compositions, other pieces for this recording allowed for less input: “with some of the things I wrote for quartet [at that time] –
there’s…very little room for improvisation. They’re really just through-composed things” (ibid.). These particular compositions, however, were quite idiosyncratic and therefore required rehearsal.

In the lead-up to the group’s most recent record Hedgerow (2013), however, Card moved in the opposite direction. He emphasized compositions with more “conventional” jazz notation and structure: “when we got together…I had a few new tunes that were more just leadsheets because I went through a period I wanted to write a bunch of stuff that wasn’t specific to any time, and any jazz musician could access as a ‘good tune’” (personal interview, August 7, 2013). He defined leadsheet tunes in a way familiar to jazz musicians: “more or less one-to-two pages and not as specific to any instrumentation or any ensemble” (ibid.). Card pointed out that this repertoire began to allow for a more in-depth collective creative process that in turn has allowed for a musical persona as a group to develop:

…we work-shopped [the new repertoire] together and kind of arrived at those arrangements through the quintet. So that was a really exciting thing to do with those guys – I felt like it had been awhile since we had a real collective approach to coming up with arrangements and work-shopping the tunes together. I feel like we’re still sort of doing that…I’ve been taking notes after every show and talking to the guys and certainly the performance and rehearsals have informed that. Also, I’m a lot more open-minded than a few years ago when I started the group. I’m not that married to any of my ideas anymore. I think that just comes from having done more collaborations [sic] with other groups where it is more open like that. You’ve got these brilliant musicians in the room – you might as well use their expertise. If they’ve got a strong opinion—or even a mild one—it’s probably worth considering or checking it out. (ibid.)

Because Card was no longer as threatened by “opening the floor” to suggestions, he thus found that the group proved to be, from his point of view, much more musically successful. He indicated that at the time of preparing and recording Hedgerow that all of the band’s repertoire—prior tunes as well as the music for this recording—“opened up.” That is, he and the group sought out and found new ways of performing each time, a practice he felt was in keeping for a jazz group:

…with the current book and newer book, we’re still ironing out things and we’re more or less collectively arriving at how we’re going to play it. Hopefully, there’s
still a lot of room for spontaneity. [The compositions] are vehicles for improvising. We don’t ever want it to be written in stone. We want to let it live in the moment and breathe. (ibid.)

On the one hand, then, some of Card’s compositions, while adhering to some large-scale conventions of contemporary jazz, still had musical challenges that required considerable rehearsal and/or private practice. On the other hand, some compositions for the group are more “composed” but have elements that are more unconventional and therefore demand both attention to execution and creative contribution from band members to develop how to perform them.

In the rest of the chapter I examine how the band found a way to perform, and indeed find their collective musical persona in two compositions using more “conventional” frameworks. I then make a more detailed examination of how another composition, in its more “unconventional” make-up, necessitated a band approach to performance practice.

11.4  << Compositions that Build on Jazz Conventions >>

Relative to groups like Bloomsday or Drumheller, a greater proportion of Card’s original compositions demonstrate typical conventions of contemporary jazz, which are, in turn, reflected in group performance practice.

Often, when executed in Card’s band, originals presented as leadsheets were interpreted according to familiar norms – during the “head” the melody was played relatively literally (with respect to pitches and rhythms, at least) while the rhythm section was expected to more or less improvise their parts in idiomatic ways. In some cases, style or feel indications were present, but little else in terms of expressive indications were indicated.243 If repeats or other elements of form were required that were outside of a basic cyclical form, these were indicated using typical markings. Also in accordance with

243 This includes, for example, articulation markings, as the understanding was to play these more or less idiomatically.
such norms, after a statement of the melody, the band usually improvised solos on the underlying form of the melody, or in some cases a slightly revised version of it written separately. In sum, “big picture” aspects of many of Card’s compositions including his approaches to large-scale forms (usually melody-solos-melody), idiomatic phrasing in sub-styles of jazz, and roles for jazz rhythm section would be familiar to any jazz musician reading or hearing the music as well as familiar to a jazz audience hearing the composition.

11.4.1   << “Fruition” >>

Even Card’s most seemingly conventional compositions, including “Fruition,” incorporate elements in their details that make his group’s approach distinct. This puts the band’s familiarity with Card’s specific repertoire and very specific and challenging contemporary jazz performance practices at a premium.

“Fruition” is written as a leadsheet with two staves during the melody (see Appendix F – the composer’s original score – throughout). The first significant challenge is the odd meter of 7/4, a framework which, while more commonplace in contemporary jazz, is still not as easy to navigate as duple or triple meter. In addition, the composition includes challenging chromatic movement in the melody and underlying harmony. To take only one example, the tune begins with a jump from an F# minor chord to a harmonically distant Cmaj7 halfway through bar one; and the angular melody reflects this shift (see Appendix F, bar one). This kind of abrupt harmonic movement continues through much of the form. While not without precedent, such tonal/modal

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244 This kind of chart was prevalent with Worst Pop Band Ever and was also a significant part of Bloomsday’s repertoire. Drumheller, a band with significant avant-garde leanings, often avoided chord symbol notation and strict forms, but did have a significant amount of repertoire with leadsheets in the sense of only having a single melodic line.

245 The upper stave is the melody and the lower one is a keyboard part which usually either doubles the melody or has chord symbols. Therefore, this composition, though written as a two-stave part, largely fits publisher convention for jazz music. When the part does depart from these norms, however, it makes important demands of the keyboardist that demand specific attention. I note that I have heard the piano part partially doubled by saxophone on some live performances but it was played as quartet on the original recording.
shifts, especially in tandem with an odd meter such as 7/4, would not typically be expected or easily realized by musicians reading on a straight-ahead gig. These challenges could become especially acute during the solos over these parts of the form.

Another challenging aspect of “Fruition” is its four-bar introduction for guitar and keyboard in tandem. Each part enters three beats apart with an ascending eighth-note arpeggio (the guitar starting on beat one and the keyboard on beat four) while in 7/4. Both arpeggio figures are greater than an octave in range and are comprised of combined major triads with an added major second (see Appendix F – bar 1-4).246 The patterns are repeated four times over the course of the four bars.247

The head also contains highly specific instructions for the rhythm section throughout. They do not enter until bar five. In bar fifteen, and at the send-off to the open solo section at bar twenty-five, there are arpeggiated keyboard lines that overlap with the guitar part in a manner similar the introduction. There are also a couple of spots in the keyboard part in which specific rhythms are indicated – these are clearly meant to be played in tandem with the bass and drums. None of these aspects described are especially challenging on their own, but collectively so many specific details make executing even the introduction and “head” of the composition difficult without prior preparation through rehearsal and individual practice

The challenges continue into the improvisation section, which begins with an open vamp on E7susb9 leading to a cued section over chord changes similar to the form of the head. While the latter part of this solo section is somewhat harmonically challenging, it is consistent with jazz conventions. After the first solo, however, there is a cue to a “D.S.” in which the last 5 bars of the melody are played again before the second solo begins on the vamp. “Roadmaps” which include interludes between solos involving recapitulating only part of the form has many precedents in modern jazz going back decades (see the Horace Silver compositions discussed in Chapter 3), but such
unconventional form hardly meets the most straightforward convention for a player or listener. Again, this all occurs in a brisk 7/4, making it all the more challenging for musicians to perform without at least some advance preparation.

Certainly, none of the challenges or distinctive elements of “Fruition” would be a completely foreign to musicians or jazz audiences familiar with contemporary jazz. It would, however, be hard to imagine an ensemble executing all of these challenges and the ambiguities effectively without rehearsal, private practice, and/or several performances. Indeed, it was apparent in a quintet performance I witnessed and recorded in 2013 that French, an exceptional musician with formidable reading skills, struggled with his part somewhat, given that he had only played with the group a few times – as opposed to the rest of the ensemble who had been playing it for years at that point. Playing repertoire of this nature at this level clearly demanded a “real band.”

11.4.2 “Get There”

A frequent set-closer for the group, “Get There,” is another example of how Card personalized conventional “mainstream” jazz writing. The more unconventional details, in turn, make the composition a challenge without rehearsal and familiarity. (See Appendix G, which has the full concert score, largely as written, but edited for legibility and annotated so as to clarify analysis below.)

This is yet another composition in a challenging meter, 11/4, which is written as alternating bars of 6/4 and 5/4. The head of the composition is a rather conventional ‘ABA’ form, albeit one in which the last A is slightly truncated so that the end of its phrase overlaps with the first bar of the solo section. For the head and four-bar introduction, which establishes the groove, the sheet music is a variation on a typical leadsheet. In different sections, for example, Card uses different staving conventions.\(^{248}\)

\(^{248}\) Some of it is written with a grand staff with the tenor saxophone/guitar part on top in treble clef (though it is actually performed with the saxophone playing one octave below) and a piano/bass part on the bottom.
Card has not provided chord symbols for the pianist and bassist, but instead has written a repeated figure with specified voicings for the pianist; these chords are, effectively, orchestrations of Ebmi7 (implying a dorian mode) and Emaj7(#11) (implying a lydian mode). Though not stated directly in the part, during the ‘A’ sections the pianist is to play the parts as written on both staves while the bassist doubles the open fifths that are notated in bass clef with double stops. The ‘A’ section melody for guitar and sax which utilize Eb dorian and E lydian contain somewhat unexpected repeated notes at the end of the first motive in bar six. All of this makes this composition a sightreading challenge.

The ‘B’ section starts with the piano and bass parts carrying the melody in octaves though, again, this orchestration is not stated explicitly. Rather, there is just the melody written in treble clef with chord changes above, which suggests that the pianist is to fill in the harmony while playing the melody. After the first part of this section (eight bars), the guitar and tenor saxophone join in to play a sustained harmonized background part (Card has explicit instruction here for the sax to take top voice). This answering phrase is only six bars, however – another departure from convention.

The one member of the group that has been completely absent in my analysis of this composition so far is the drummer. Ardelli faces, by far, the greatest challenge in terms of finding a method of interpreting this music since the other parts are comparatively more prescribed. As is customary for most jazz leadsheets, the chart for “Get There” contains very little explicit information for the drummer (apart from an indication of “straight 8’s” at the top of page one). Given that this composition is in a specifically phrased 11/4 meter underlined by a specific piano-and-bass groove, trying to find “a way in” can be challenging, even for a highly skilled, versatile jazz drummer like Ardelli.

On the studio recording of “Get There,” the most dominant part of the kit for the intro and ‘A’ sections is a resonant, “wet” ride cymbal as the main time-keeper. This is typical for many jazz contexts. However, Ardelli avoids straight-forward patterned playing, particularly those built on “busier” straight-eighth eighth note and sixteenth note

The rest of it is written with as well as a three-stave split staff, with the tenor guitar part in treble clef above the piano and bass part in a braced grand staff.
patterns. Throughout the first part of the tune Ardelli subtly anchors his non-patterned ride cymbal time-feel by playing every quarter note on the hi-hat with his left foot. Furthermore, there are other essential parts for Ardelli’s “timeline” in creating his “straight-eighth eleven feel” on this tune. One is playing a heavy snare accent on beat three of the five “side” of the eleven in the intro. Another is consistently playing the downbeat of each bar in addition to beat three of the “six side” with the bass drum.

These consistencies in the timeline—the hi-hat, the snare drum accent, and the bass drum marking fundamental groupings—allow Ardelli to be flexible with his ride and snare the rest of the time; in other words, he takes a more jazz-oriented, fluid approach within a fixed framework. This fluid approach making frequent use of variations of a hemiola while using particular anchors for the feel is hardly unprecedented, but it is not the type of feel any jazz drummer would play in an average jam session or “club date.” It demands a versatile and elite musicianship in addition to a familiarity with the composition.

At the same time, Ardelli articulates the fundamental phrasing and momentum of the composition. He does so by demarcating the four-bar phrase and, at times, the two-bar segment. In general, the fluidity with which Ardelli plays here (and in the very different bridge) is built on phrasing and grooves that, while not totally unfamiliar to highly competent jazz musicians, are atypical. This makes it all the more critical for Card to have a drummer who is invested in his repertoire and willing to work it out over the long term. There are few drummers in Toronto (a city arguably reputed for having a deep roster of elite rhythm section players) that could walk on to the bandstand or studio and hope to play as convincing an interpretation of this music, sight unseen.

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249 Within this fluidity, though, he often uses quarter notes on the ride cymbal and a sparser approach to snare and bass drum accents on the “five side” of the two bar phrase. Then he switches to more dynamic figures built on the hemiola of a dotted quarter note on the six side. One can clearly see and hear this in bar three, five, and seven of the intro (see Appendix G).

250 Frequently, he plays a modest fill or set-up one to two beats before beginning of each four bar phrase (and often at two bar segments as well); these are followed by a cymbal crash on the downbeat of that segment or phrase.
The solo section for the group, which comes later in the composition, is written in 11/4 with chord symbols and “slashes” for ease of reading.\textsuperscript{251} The form is built on the chord changes and phrase structure of the head. While it is certainly demanding to improvise in 11/4, the harmonic materials and progression are not out of the ordinary for any performer versed in mainstream contemporary jazz practices.

After solos, the form returns to the top of the chart and then goes to a coda, which is like an open version of the introduction. On some occasions, the drummer (Ardelli usually) solos over this vamp before fading out – another very typical arranging strategy. Again, much of the overall sound of the harmonic-melodic-rhythmic vocabulary and the arc of this composition would be familiar to a typical contemporary jazz fan. Card himself admitted to me that “‘Get There’ is lower on the spectrum of reliance on a specific group. The song is intended to be very direct. It doesn’t deviate from the form and arrangement of a typical contemporary jazz blowing tune” (personal interview, August 7, 2013). Yet, as I have illustrated, there are details throughout that do make the composition distinctly his own and that make demands above and beyond what is typically encountered by jazz musicians sightreading charts “on the gig.”

11.5  \textit{<< Breaking Mainstream Jazz Conventions, Building a Group Approach >>}

11.5.1  \textit{<< “Crossing the Berg” >>}

This composition, relative to “Get There” or “Fruition,” is more overt in its move away from jazz conventions and, as a result, required an approach to interpretive or improvised practices that were especially particular to Card’s group. Indeed, Card explicitly indicated to me that unlike the two compositions above, he did not have in mind as fixed an approach to the composition before bringing it to the members. Rather,

\textsuperscript{251} Here, the alternating bars of 6/4 and 5/4 are no longer notated.
he sought their advice about how to adapt “Crossing the Berg,” which had initially been written for another group, to their format:

“Crossing the Berg” was originally written for [an earlier, now-defunct TSGJ group] God’s Gift To Yoda. I later adapted it for my quintet, and was then envisioned further for its current studio version on [the album] Hedgerow. Over the series of a couple rehearsals and live shows, Jon [Maharaj], Fab [Ragnelli] (a frequent substitute drummer), David [French], Matt [Newton], and Ethan [Ardelli] all contributed to the shape of this song to the degree that I feel it cannot be recreated effectively by anyone else. (personal interview, August 7, 2013)

Card, thus, not only found the contributions of the band invaluable to the rearrangement/recomposition of the piece, but that, as a result of their approach, only they could realize it in performance to his satisfaction. Though the composition and this interpretation present more of a departure from “jazz norms,” both also have associations with, and arguably Signify upon, both jazz traditions and popular music. As a result, “Crossing the Berg,” in particular, gives Card’s quintet an opportunity to assert their group persona through adapting practices.

This composition has an episodic form – it includes more than one dramatic shift in tone (throughout, see Appendix H shown in concert key). The style indication for the first section is “slow, hymn-like.” From listening to the group perform it, this appears to imply a soft and legato realization of all written parts. Meanwhile, there is no written indication for the drummer – though “hymn-like” suggests something other than a typical groove-based approach on the kit. Accordingly, at public performances I attended, Ardelli tended to play in a sparse and muted fashion in this section – playing a light single stroke or a quiet roll on the cymbals and playing shorter figures or rolls on the turned off snare drum or rack tom. In the studio version, he includes additional textures – the track begins with Ardelli using a caixixi, a shaker made from a closed basket with a flat-bottom filled with small particles.252 He does not play any kind of typical shaker patterns or rhythmic figures; rather, he indicated to me that he slowly rotated it with his right hand in a counter clockwise circle to achieve an ever-changing textural effect (personal interview, August 6, 2013). Adding to this textural, non-patterned approach, he

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252 This is an instrument with probable African roots but that originated in Brazil (it was popularized in jazz-related recordings by Brazilian musicians Airto Moreira and Naná Vasconcelos).
used a homemade instrument which has sleigh bells attached to a long rope – to play it he
gently shook it near the microphone with his left hand. On the studio recording he also
plays cymbals with mallets for colour – an approach similar to what he does live. For
added effect, one of his cymbals had a beaded metal chain draped over it to create a
longer, simmering sustain. Given that he could not play all of this at the same time,
Ardelli overdubbed the cymbal parts for the ‘A’ sections in the studio. He indicated to me
that drummer Paul Motian’s textural playing on the title track from *Psalm* (ECM 1982)
was an inspiration – another direct tie to canonical jazz performance practices (albeit not
bebop-oriented practices). Based on accounts from Card and Ardelli, this textural
approach to the “drum part” in this section, evolved in rehearsal, performance and the
studio as the band’s involvement with the piece grew.

Throughout these first two phrases of the A section, the guitar and piano parts do
not have conventional chord symbols nor do they suggest conventional chords. Rather,
each part has a different half-note harmonic structure that is made up entirely of perfect
fifths (albeit with different pitches in each part). The guitar part is always lower overall
but the two parts overlap in the middle register. When the parts are combined into larger
shapes, they could perhaps be considered a chord progression. Though not notated on the
chart as chords, these composite structures could be analyzed as Asus(add9)-Dmaj9#11-
F#mi11. Yet, perhaps the ‘A’ section would better be termed a modal “vamp” rather than
a “progression,” given its lack of conventional tonal tension-and-release – it all stays in
the scale of A major, but there is nothing that suggests a dominant function. Moreover,
there is no third (C#) in the A major present, which weakens its conventional “tonic
quality.” Card’s manner of writing these specifically notated structures leads to a very
different effect than if a pianist and guitarist were asked to create these sounds with
conventional chord symbols. By using a preponderance of sustained “stacked fifths” with
few pitches being doubled between the two parts, Card achieves much of the open,
ethereal “hymn-like” sound indicated in his style marking.

Against this hymn-like harmonic backdrop, the bass and bass clarinet play a
unison melody. It is made up of two closely related motives, which are heard in bar three
and four of the four-bar phrase; bar one and two, meanwhile, have only the sustained
piano and guitar part (along with the implied percussion). Having so much space between melodic statements serves to underlie the contemplative, hushed mood.

After the repeat, bar five begins with the guitar and piano playing the first harmonic structure of the vamp (“Asus(add9)”). It is followed by a new ensemble harmony primarily made up of stacked fifths. With the bassist anchoring it on D, this figure sounds like Dmaj13.

From here, the second section begins. It uses the prior section’s main melodic motive, but in truncated form (in 2/2). This motive is repeated again, but this time with a modest rhythmic/melodic change. Finally, the section ‘A’ motive is realized exactly as in the previous section once (back in 3/2) to make a three-bar phrase. Section ‘B’ repeats this three bar phrase again, so there are no bars of rest for the bass clarinet and bass. The section ends with the last pitch in the melody held as a fermata. All of these devices, small melodic/rhythmic adjustments, metric changes, eliminating bars of rests in the melody, give a subtle feeling of forward development in the composition.

To enhance this sense of propulsion, Card rearranges the same structures from the piano and guitar parts to create a new two-bar 2/2 vamp of overlapping “chords.” Yet these structures resemble conventional chords even less than in the prior section. The first of them, which occurs in bar six, includes D-A-E in the guitar and A-E-B in the piano. There is considerably more overlap in the pitches than before. This creates a very ambiguous “D chord” with no third. The next two structures, meanwhile, have no overlap in the pitches and would be difficult to analyze.253 Chord symbols were not provided in the parts – the structures here and in the previous phrase, are arranged to achieve specific sounds rather than literal progressions. While there are nods to jazz convention, Card’s choices here represent a distinct compositional voice.

The hymn-like, modal, atmospheric mood ends abruptly after the fermata in bar eight. Here, the composition takes a sharp right turn and morphs into a heavy, loud rock feel at 92 beats per minute (slow-to-medium) for its ‘B’ section. Though Card, in his original manuscript, indicates “half-time rock” with a cut-time signature, it is actually

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253 The first could be considered F#mi9[addb13] or maybe Dmaj9#11/F#; The second could be AMaj13.
performed by the group in straight-up 4/4 “rock”. There is no doubt to this given that Ardelli always plays a heavy backbeat on the (written) beats “two and four” (literally interpreting this as “half-time” would mean the drummer playing the back-beat on “three” of the bar, creating a groove that feels twice as slow). This stylistic shift to ‘B’ is so abrupt and dramatic that it places even greater demands on the rhythm section to clearly articulate them. This is another likely “train-wreck” spot for a bassist and drummer reading this the first time.

Meanwhile, Card also exploited French’s skills on bass clarinet when adapting this preexisting composition for this group: he had the bass clarinet double the one-bar bass ostinato that is repeated throughout the B section. This ostinato is made up solely of eighth notes, which helps give a sense of propulsion to the section. Initially, the figure suggests a E9sus framework, given that it has all of the pitches of a B minor pentatonic scale but with the E. In this way, the ostinato provides modal continuity with the previous section by implying its harmonic structures (loosely the notes of A-major); in a sense, then, the ostinato is the dominant of the key. After this one-bar ostinato is played twice by the bass and bass clarinet alone (bar 9-10) as a kind of transition to set the new tempo and feel, midway through the second bar Ardelli typically improvised a fill to lead into the beginning of the ‘B’ section proper.254

In the ‘B’ section, the specifics of the bassline when played in tandem with a heavy backbeat rock groove merit particular consideration. Basslines are important markers for song identity, especially for rock and R&B-derived (sub)genres.255 This section’s repeated bass ostinato made up entirely (or almost entirely) of eighth-notes, in tandem with a 4/4 drum pattern with a strong backbeat, communicates in an immediate and frequently kinesthetic way to a contemporary audience, playing on genre associations with similar songs. One familiar reference is Michael Jackson’s “Billie Jean,” one of the most famous popular songs of the last forty years. This kind of bassline (usually 1-2 bars) played in tandem with a backbeat-driven drum groove is pervasive enough across so many R&B and rock songs as to create a specific kinaesthetic trope (see Figure 31). As

254 On the studio recording, Ardelli’s fill is merely four consecutive eighth notes on the snare. In live performances I attended, he often played a more complex fill.
255 This is arguably the result of the development of better micing and amplification for bass.
the wide variety of examples in Figure 29 suggests, depending on contextual factors, audiences may make differing associations with this type of groove – given that is obviously present in everything from classic soul of the 1960s, to 1980s pop, to heavy metal, to funk-rock. Yet the point is that this trope always engenders a quality that is built on a physical feeling. When adding this bass-and-drums groove to the idiomatic popular rhythms (dotted quarter hemiola particularly) in the guitar and piano parts, this section may suggest musical tropes in a variety of popular genres.
Notably, live performances of the “rock-oriented” part of the composition differ from the studio version. Unlike many typical mainstream jazz musicians who place a great deal of importance on recording all of their music strictly live as a group, Card has no issues with the use of overdubs or edits if it serves one of his compositions well. In
The recording of “Berg” is only one example of many on both of his albums in which the group has taken advantage of such studio techniques. Card indicated to me that bassist Jon Maharaj made the suggestion to play electric bass in the ostinato section—a contrast to his use of an upright bass when the band performs live. To accommodate the instrument changes for bass the group needed to record three separate chunks – the initial ‘A’ section with Maharaj on acoustic bass, the ‘B’ section (and the subsequent open improvisation section) on electric bass, and then the recapitulation of the ‘A’ section on acoustic bass.

Using an electric bass sets the music apart from mainstream bebop practice, but Maharaj also adds a fuzz-tone effect to the bass; doing so immediately connects the performance to a long tradition of rock genre practices. Though it has been employed by many artists from multiple rock subgenres, the edgy, cutting timbre of fuzz-tone bass is often heard in the studio recordings of many songs with lyrical themes that are in some way dark, menacing, and/or mysterious. Specific associations made by audience members will certainly vary depending on their familiarity with rock music. But upon hearing a bass with a fuzz effect in tandem with the insistent eighth-notes of the bassline...

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256 On his blog, scholar Yuval Taylor describes the broadly accepted aesthetic of rock and (mainstream) jazz recording: “rock is (or has become) a recorded art form; jazz is a live art form…The major appeal of rock music, at least after 1965, lies in the manipulation of electronic sound. And the major appeal of jazz will always lie in improvisation, which really has very little to do with the recording process. Improvisation is done on the spur of the moment, live… In rock recording, the aim certainly is to get the best final result. But in jazz, it’s to capture an ephemeral interaction between a group of players. That interaction gives the live jazz recording a spark of something that no overdubbed performance can capture” (2007). Consider that pianist Lennie Tristano’s use of overdubbing and other studio techniques on the album *Tristano* (1956) was controversial enough to put him on the cover of *Down Beat* (for an account of this controversy, see Jago 2013). To this day, many jazz musicians want to insist on the “authenticity” around live interaction in the studio. Influential contemporary jazz pianist Brad Mehldau has been a particularly vocal exponent of this aesthetic in interviews and liner note essays. For example, in the liner notes to *Largo* (2002) he proclaimed that despite the album being pop-influenced, that “all music was recorded live, on the floor. There were no overdubs.”

257 Prominent “classic rock” examples include “Under My Thumb” by The Rolling Stones (1966)—a song about aggressive sexual conquest—as well as some Cream songs with Jack Bruce on bass (1966-68) including their cover of “Spoonful” (1966)—a Willie Dixon penned blues song describing men’s apparent violent cravings for pleasure—or the more mysterious, psychedelic “Sunshine of Your Love” (1966). More recent artists using the effect include Ben Folds Five, whose bassist Robert Sledge uses the effect regularly on their more high-energy songs (and with a similar eighth-note driven bassline on the song “Jackson Cannery” [1995]), Radiohead, one of the most popular current rock bands, who uses fuzz bass on their enigmatically themed song, “The National Anthem” (2000), and influential contemporary indie-rock band TV On The Radio, who employs the effect on their evocative and also mysterious single “Staring at the Sun” (2004).
and a heavy 4/4 rock drum pattern, I would expect most listeners to feel the physical/aural sensory experience of rock music without necessarily pointing to a specific song.

Meanwhile, the guitar and piano parts in the ‘B’ section have melodic and harmonic elements—there are elements it is that are compositionally “Signifying” upon these rock tropes. Specifically, the chromaticism and use of modal parallelism. The guitar and piano parts begin in the ‘B’ section still playing harmonic structures still using stacked perfect fifths but now with identical rather than overlapping pitch content. Now, however, there is even more harmonic ambiguity given that there are only three pitches (doubled by the two instruments), and they do not reflect any conventional progression in relation to the ostinato underneath. Instead, they are “modal shapes” moving in exact parallel to suit the melody. And yet, hearing these parallel fifth-oriented chords ends up Signifying on a convention of rock music – specifically, the “power chord.” Power chords usually involve the root and fifth only, but hearing two fifths still ends up conjuring something very similar, particularly when heard in the context of a rock groove. These chords, because of chromatically moving in parallel, weave in and out of dissonance when heard against the very tonally grounded bass part. And yet, the melody—the top note of these chords—strongly suggests an E7 when read enharmonically. (That is, all of the top notes of these chords, from bar 11-14 are enharmonically part of this chord except the Bb, which is either a chromatic approach to B or suggests the raised eleventh of E7.)

There are aspects of the ‘B’ section that also Signify on typical rock rhythmic tropes. The latter half of Crossing the Berg’s of this section maintains a 4/4 rock beat and eighth-note bass-line, but it is re-contextualized due to the increasing tonal/modal clash, irregular phrase lengths, and other materials in the bass, piano and guitar parts. The part is essentially made of a five-bar phrase, which is repeated once. It begins with a very wide-interval eighth-note gesture in bar one (a shape that is idiomatic to the guitar – it

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258 “Produced by playing the musical interval of a perfect fourth or fifth on a heavily amplified and distorted electric guitar...the power chord can be percussive and rhythmic or indefinitely sustained; it is used both to articulate and to suspend time. It is a complex sound, made up of resultant tones and overtones, constantly renewed and energized by feedback” (Walser 2).
“lays well” on the fretboard). This leads to the dotted-quarter starting on beat four of that first bar and continuing through to bar three, “and of beat three,” The phrase ends as shown with a whole note. Card plays a phrase that expands on the rhythmic/harmonic structure of the repeated dotted-quarters, but the harmonic structures are now only two-pitches and are all either high register major on minor sevenths. This creates an even greater contrast to the first part of the section. What emerges is far more tense and brittle than anything heard up until this point. This is reinforced by the piano part, which during bar one to four of these five bar phrases, joins the bass ostinato up two octaves.

In the last five bars of the last half of the B section, the guitar and piano repeat their prior four-bar phrase, but the ostinato changes to a more harmonically ambiguous contour. Perhaps the most conventional analysis of the ostinato might be the fourth mode of Eb melodic minor. In jazz parlance, this would make it “Ab lydian dominant.” It would be difficult, though, to square this interpretation with the guitar and piano parts. Instead, Card’s compositional choice revels in an increasing modal clash. This happens while the rock groove continues unabated, pushing the intensity that leads to the next improvisatory section.

The chart given to the band for “Crossing the Berg” indicates an “open jazz guitar solo” with no changes after bar 30. Eventually, though, the band cultivated a different way of performing this section that subverts the idea of a single soloist. In many performances, Card remained the most prominent “melodic” voice. But most of the rest of the group played so actively and in ways that were against typical jazz ensemble roles, that it became more of a group improvisation. Card, however, indicated to me that Maharaj was not as comfortable with having everyone in an “open” situation. As a result, Maharaj suggested in rehearsal, that he play the ostinato throughout the ensemble improvisation to create some continuity with the previous section and provide an anchor for the rest of the band’s more adventurous choices. As a result, given the “open” direction of the arrangement, many details around what the other performers would vary widely from performance to performance. Nonetheless, certain propensities emerged.

This is exemplified in Ardelli’s drumming. In every performance I heard, at some point he utilized a literal double-time swing feel against the pulse of the ostinato (184
beats per minute), intercutting it with the original half-time rock feel as in the previous
section. Sometimes, he waited to utilize the rock feel until near the end of the improvised
section. At other times he switched between feels more frenetically. In addition to such
groove-oriented playing, he sometimes played “gestures” on the kit which were grouped
in over-the-barline rhythms. At other times he played in a less patterned fashion, even at
times “out of time,” especially as the intensity increased. It was apparent that he could
utilize any of these possible strategies and did so intuitively in relation to choices others
were making and his own sense of the momentum of the section.

Card and keyboardist Newton also developed particular tendencies in live
performances of “Crossing the Berg.” Both players, but especially Newton, tended to
make use of motivic gestural choices. Sometimes they were only melodic. Other times
they involved harmonic structures. Newton consistently tended to use shorter, rhythmic,
percussive ideas. Card used them as well, but at some point in the section, he typically
developed longer melodic phrases (and, in that sense, was more often still, at times, in the
traditional mode of soloist). As may be expected of a “free” section, there was not a
perceptible pattern to the tonality of Card and Newton’s choices from performance to
performance. Instead, both frequently utilized sequences of melodic and harmonic
intervallic shapes that moved in various directions without this anchor.

Another tendency in live performance was the group’s collective approach to
time. As the intensity of the ‘B’ section increased with gradually less patterned rhythmic
ideas from all of the performers other than Maharaj, they all typically became unmoored
from the tempo. All the while the dynamic increased exponentially. As the volume
reached its apex, Card would normally cue bars 31-35—an additional statement of the
five-bar phrase that preceded this improvised section—to effectively cap the improvised
section. Upon arrival at the fermata in bar 35, they entered an episode of improvisatory
activity of indeterminate length (it is about one minute and ten seconds on the studio
recording). Though not notated, all of the musicians (except the bassist) typically
contributed various textural gestures and out-of-time sounds after the final chord had sounded for a few seconds. At this point, the recapitulation was cued (D.C. al Fine).²⁵⁹

This means of playing the improvised section literally became a particular approach to the composition developed only through the group’s engagement with it in rehearsal. It is what Card is most referring to when he indicated that he felt that the composition “cannot be recreated effectively by anyone else” – the composition’s particular arc would be impractical to notate or describe.

11.5 << Conclusion >>

It is obvious that Harley Card’s group was invested in his very challenging compositions, many of which placed very specific demands on its players. Like Bloomsday, this was a band grounded in the compositional voice of its leader. In addition, this group that has been similar to Bloomsday in that all of its musicians were literally schooled in “mainstream jazz.” Furthermore, all of them have been active on that part of the jazz scene. And yet, due to Card’s leadership and compositional voice in addition to the versatility the members of the group bring to performing his compositions, the group has grown its own musical persona distinct from mainstream practice.

²⁵⁹ On the studio recording, there was a savvy choice made in this transition by having Ardelli overdub playing the caxixi as this episode faded away, serving to texturally signal the recapitulation. This sound emerges even as Ardelli plays on the kit using multiple cymbals in such a way that would have made it difficult, or even impossible, for him to execute this in a single take in the studio.
Chapter 12
A Conclusion: Jazz in Toronto Ain’t What It Used to Be

There is no ‘Canadian jazz’ at present – there is only jazz in Canada. In Canada’s current state as the closest and most easily dominated outpost of the American empire, any thought of independent voices in jazz is premature when the country is unable to support any improvising artists solely by the product of their artistry. (Tepperman 1978: 49)

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[Ottawa Citizen journalist] Peter Hum:
What goals and ambitions do you have for [Worst Pop Band Ever] in 2014?

Tim Shia:
The same as every jazz musician – not to lose money. (Hum 2014).

It is a well-worn cliché to point out how jazz emerged out of the historical and cultural particulars of the American experience. Indeed, jazz has been among the most prominent cultural products to emerge from a larger tradition of African American adaptation and subversion of the dominant culture—the musical instruments, the repertoire, and other artifacts—of their oppressors. As jazz tradition(s) developed in the United States, the strategies of musical adaptation continued to interact with the country’s cultural change, often manifested in popular music.

Canada, meanwhile, has always been strongly influenced by American culture including music. While there have been prominent Canadian-based “stars” across various media, our music is still overwhelmed by not only American musicians, but also many of the musical innovations that have emerged in the United States. Accordingly, Canadian jazz artists have always lived in the shadow of the American jazz world, and particularly New York City - the epicenter for most of the world’s most influential jazz artists. As
evidence, many of the best-known Canadian musicians have eventually left for the United States to play in these circles for most of their careers.\textsuperscript{260}

As detailed in Chapter 3, for decades, Toronto’s bebop-oriented mainstream has been indebted to a particular strain of American jazz – bebop-oriented music rooted in practices from 1945-1965. Toronto’s mainstream jazz scene has typically focused on the individual improvising prowess of musicians who perform within standard repertoire or compositions written the idiomatic parameters of bop and post-bop styles. Many of these Toronto musicians have been quite rightly held in high esteem by the larger jazz world, as evidenced by their stints regularly performing or touring with the most famous musicians in this field.\textsuperscript{261}

While playing this music has never been enough for a lucrative living on its own, there was a time, in the 1980s and 1990s especially, in which it was a substantial part of earning a living for the best performers in the city. Moreover, many of these musicians were employed in other parts of the music industry that thrived at the time including commercial jingle writing, studio recording, and the earliest postings at jazz schools. Though there were many highly esteemed artists living in Toronto, most of the musicians best-known to the rest of the country were almost all known for composing or improvising in a highly polished form of bebop that was informed by the aesthetics of this music industry that supported it. I have come to understand Toronto’s jazz scene at the end of the twentieth century, not as part of a distinct “national” tradition, but rather as similar to that found in many American mid-size cities during the same period, albeit with a particularly stark division between its mainstream wing and avant-garde wing.

Since the demise of the mainstream jazz “boom” in Toronto, different venues have taken greater prominence and the younger generation of musicians has, without the

\textsuperscript{260} To take three obvious examples, Oscar Peterson, Paul Bley, and Maynard Ferguson did not emerge as widely influential jazz “stars” until they left for the United States.

\textsuperscript{261} Toronto jazz veterans who were very active have had several such credits, especially in the 1980s. To cite just two such examples from that period: bassist Neil Swainson toured and recorded with trumpeter Woody Shaw in the early 1980s; guitarist Ed Bickert performed with artists like Paul Desmond, Chet Baker, and Milt Jackson and recorded as sideman with Rosemary Clooney and Benny Carter. Other examples are provided in Chapter 3.
economic opportunities and incentives of, the past, been following somewhat different creative imperatives. As I have described, these younger Toronto musicians have put a premium on performing distinctive original compositions, sometimes inspired by popular music practices and sensibilities, in the context of long-term, stable groups. I have also tried to demonstrate how it was only possible to develop ways to improvise within these groups’ idiosyncratic repertoire through such long-term commitment. As I made clear in Chapter 4, several prominent contemporary American jazz groups with a similar ethos inspired these young Toronto musicians. However, it is also clear that the environment that has emerged in Toronto has fostered this kind of activity to a much greater degree.

Several groups in Toronto—including those in this study—managed to foster a more multi-layered, collective approach to interaction – not only in terms of how the musicians performed with each other, but in how the composers and performers interacted with musical traditions, including and especially jazz. In their performance practices with their unique repertoires, these groups have mediated, interacted, and even subversively de-familiarized *multiple jazz traditions* in ways specific to their line up of musicians.

I argue that these ways of interacting, in turn, led to fostering collective musical persona. On the one hand, I tried to demonstrate how this trend to the long-term group has been influenced by a tradition of this activity (one that has been much overlooked in jazz scholarship) that has seen a contemporary resurgence. On the other hand, it appears that the highly developed sense of collective musical persona in rock bands may also have been influential for these young Toronto musicians. Playing off of Philip Auslander’s notion of an individual “musical persona,” I have argued that each of these groups built its own “collective musical persona” in service of their creative aims.

A small circuit of venues—as well as the musicians, and the audiences who interacted socially and musically within them—formed a distinct part within the jazz scene – what I have called a subscene. Indeed, the booking practices of these venues and the audiences they attracted allowed for these kinds of groups to emerge and develop. Using four groups as primary examples, I described how these bands formed, socialized,
and promoted themselves in this subscene. I also analyzed how these musicians composed and improvised in ways that were reliant on a long-term, stable group and that, furthermore, helped to solidify this sense of collective musical persona. This practice is quite distinct from the “ad hoc” model of ensemble organization. Using a “pick-up band” for one-off gigs and jam sessions remains a substantial part of Toronto jazz scene as well.

Yet, there remains a belief that, like rock musicians, there is value in emphasizing original music performed by a stable lineup. Toronto bandleader and bassist Ken McDonald was asked about the motivations behind forming his long-standing quartet: “I like playing with these three because we play as a cohesive unit and it never feels like a pick-up band. It’s not just the improvising, it’s the tune and the groove and we all value that greatly” (Hum 2015). While mainstream jazz aesthetics certainly value a kind of ensemble cohesion and groove, in the case of the TSGJ subscene it is in the context of specific compositions performed this “unit.” Indeed, McDonald revealed that “…any piece I bring to the Ken McDonald Quartet is written specifically for the members of the band” (ibid.). This ethos of composing for a band of specific musicians, while hardly universal among young Toronto jazz musicians, does inform the kind of music-making I heard at the venues central to the subscene. Matt Newton of the Harley Card Quintet tries to describe the musical result:

If I’m playing in a different context with different musicians, usually what happens is that it ends up defaulting to “there’s a soloist, and everyone comps for that soloist” versus a compositional improvisation. And I think that just takes time for whatever group it is to develop, even if it is a more traditional style of jazz, the compositional element is missing unless those musicians are playing together a lot. (personal interview, November 11, 2013)

For Newton, “compositional improvisation” involves improvising as a group with an engrained concept of the original music, and with a large-scale sense of the music. It is also particularly noteworthy that he contrasts the approaches possible with a long-term group to defaulting into typical idiomatic roles. Again, what emerges from these long-term groups are unique ways of deeply interacting with jazz tradition(s) themselves.
And yet, even with this creative excitement, something is still lost with Toronto’s situation since the demise of the jazz scene’s mainstream heyday. Nick Fraser, using the example of highly venerated Toronto bebop pianist Mark Eisenmann, pointed out to me how a certain kind of career in jazz has become endangered:

A guy like Mark Eisenmann wanted to play a $75 jazz gig every night and maybe the occasional $100 jazz gig. Now that’s impossible. That doesn’t exist anymore… That was how you made a living in jazz in the [19]80s. Now how you make a living in jazz in Canada is you have a band, you play original music, you get grants, you go on the road, and then you try to that with other people’s band when they go on the road playing their original music… and that’s what you have to do, or else you have no career… (personal interview, June 2, 2014)

Fraser harbors no illusions that most of these groups, including Drumheller, could make money by simply trying to get work at the few paying clubs in Toronto:

When Drumheller was more active we’d play every month at The Tranzac and make zero dollars. But if we were sitting around waiting for our Rex gig or a week at The Senator – number one, we’d be waiting forever and, number two, I wouldn’t have a band anymore. Doing those door gigs or whatever, is a way to have a band and then you can take it to the next thing. It’s the same in every city from what I can tell, minus the grants. It’s the same in Brooklyn, in Chicago. They’re trying to work on their band, try to get press, get tours. Only some of that comes from (and not very much from) freelance activity… it seems like learning to play standards is more about training than this is a viable activity by itself. (ibid.)

By Fraser’s calculation, Toronto is not in many respects that different from other North American cities in terms of a “jazz economy.” Still, due to the timeline of how its specific music industry shifted and the venues that began to take precedence, there are local contextual factors that made for a distinctive creative subscene – one that favors distinctive collective musical persona and an independent, “DIY” approach to career.

Beyond this, I still think there must be a unique quality to jazz in a Canadian city, however intangible. There is a sense in which jazz musicians are at a slight remove culturally from traditions that are not historically “ours” in quite the same way. Given that few musicians in this TSGJ subscene have African ancestry, there is a sense that this interaction with jazz tradition(s) is happening with a certain sense of remove. And yet,
that outside perspective is arguably one of the things that sets Toronto’s jazz scene apart. With a country that more directly values multiculturalism in social policy and in one of the most overtly multicultural cities in the country, the musicians in this subscene have the opportunity to interact with a vast array of cultural and musical influences. While earlier generations of musicians were often stringently allied to bebop idiom, young Toronto musicians may, when given creative freedom, decide to interact with cultural signifiers from across musical traditions including jazz. Doing so with creatively and socially allied friends in long-term groups has meant expressing this kind of identity collectively. For myself, this idea of musicians coming together and forming long-term relationships to interact with musical traditions in service of expressing a collective musical persona feels like an especially Canadian take on jazz tradition(s).
Appendix A

Details Regarding Non-Primary Groups
in the Toronto Stable Group Jazz Subscene

(As Referenced in Chapter 6)

1. Peripheral Vision

Band timeline: 2010-
Trevor Hogg – tenor saxophone
Don Scott – electric guitar / co-leader
Michael Herring – acoustic bass / co-leader
Nick Fraser – drums


Awards: Juno nomination [Jazz Album of the Year: Group] (2016), Galaxie Rising Star Award Winner - Montreal Jazz Festival (2012)

Charts: Earshot Top 10 College/Campus Radio Jazz Chart (Peripheral Vision), Earshot #1 Jazz Chart, #9 Earshot Jazz Chart for 2014 Overall (Sheer Tyranny of Will),

Common Toronto venues: Tranzac, The Rex

Major market international festival appearances: Toronto Jazz Festival, Montreal Jazz Festival, Edmonton Jazz Festival

Online portals: youtube.com/peripheralvisiontube; peripheralvision.bandcamp.com;
facebook.com/peripheralvisionmusic; cdbaby.com/Artist/PeripheralVision;
twitter.com/peripheralmusic;

Band website
www.peripheralvisionmusic.com

2. Myriad3

Band timeline: 2010-
Chris Donnelly – piano
Dan Fortin – bass
Ernesto Cervini – drums
Awards: Juno nomination [Jazz Album of the Year: Group] (2014)
Charts: EarShot Campus/Community Airplay for Jazz Albums of 2014 - #6 (*The Where*)
Common Toronto venues: The Rex, Emmet Ray, Jazz Bistro
Festival appearances: TD Toronto Jazz Festival, Montreal Jazz Festival, Vancouver Jazz Festival, Edmonton Jazz Festival, Ottawa Jazz Festival, Ronnie Scott’s International Jazz Piano Trio Festival in London, England (2015)
Record label affiliation: Alma Records
Online portals: facebook.com/Myriad3; music.cbc.ca/artists/MYRIAD3; www.almarecords.com/artists/myriad3; soundcloud.com/alma-records; twitter.com/myriadthree
Band website
www.myriad3.com/home

3. PRAM Trio

Band timeline: 2009-
Mark Godfrey – acoustic bass / leader
Jack Bodkin – piano
Eric West – drums (2012-)
Richard Piasetski – drums (original member 2009-2012)
Albums: Visitor Parking (2013), Saga Thirteen (2016)
Charts: N/A
Festival appearances: Toronto Jazz Festival, Montreal Jazz Festival, Calgary Jazz Festival
Online portals: facebook.com/pramtrio; pramtrio.bandcamp.com; soundcloud.com/pramtrio; cdbaby.com/Artist/PramTrio
Band website
www.pramtrio.com
Appendix C
“Nifac63Charlie” by Brodie West
Composer’s Leadsheet
Finally gedor strikes a C minor chord and
base mode to C minor.

"C minor"

"G minor"

"D7"
Appendix D

‘A’ Section of “Nifac63Charlie” by Brodie West as Performed by Drumheller

My Score (Concert Key) With Annotated Analysis

**Nifac63Charlie (2010 Studio Version)**

Frontline A Section - timecoded / concert score

![Musical notation]
Niragoshamelie

Bass and drums enter
Appendix E

“Kool Keith” by David French for Bloomsday

Original Sheet Music

kool keith

D. French

[Music notation image]
Appendix F
Harley Card – “Fruition” for Harley Card Quintet
Original Sheet Music

Fruition

Straight 8ths' 160 bpm

Harley Card

Guitar

Piano

Rhythm Section in

Cmaj7 Bmaj7sus A/B A/G D/E A/G D/E

Cmaj7 Bmaj7sus A/B A6 A/G  Fmaj7

Cmaj7 C#min7

Cmaj7 F#min7b6 (5) E7sus9
Solo's open on E7susb9, cue A

D.S. after Piano Solo, D.C. al Fine after guitar
Appendix G

“Get There” – Harley Card

My Score (Concert Key) With Annotated Analysis

*Any markings in ( ) are my analysis, not in original score.

11/4 Straight 8’s (q = 204) (* The intro is repeated once on studio recording)

(Earring: The intro - bass & pno double the open 5ths. Drums also play - none of this indicated explicitly)

E.Gtr / T.Sx

Pno / Bs

Pno / Bs

Pno / Bs

Pno / Bs

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Get There

E.Gtr./T.Sx.

Pno./Bs.

E.Gtr./T.Sx.

Pno./Bs.

E.Gtr./T.Sx.

Pno./Bs.
Get There

*Drums: very different, sparser feel here as bass
& Pno double melody - again, no explicit indications*

E.Gtr. / T.Sx.

*There is an implied cresc. in E Gry & Drsn fill here*
Get There

E.Gtr. / T.Sx.

Pno. / Bs.

(MELODY OVERLAPS...)
Get There

E.Gtr. / T.Sx.

SOLOS

E\textsubscript{b7} 4th

Eb7

E.Gtr. / T.Sx.

D\textsubscript{m7}  G\textsubscript{b7}  D\textsubscript{m7}  G\textsubscript{b7}

E.Gtr. / T.Sx.

Eb7  G\textsubscript{b7}  B\textsubscript{m7}

E.Gtr. / T.Sx.

AFTER SOLOS, D.C. AL CODA

E.Gtr. / T.Sx.

Eb7

Pno. / Bs.
Appendix H

“Crossing the Berg” – Harley Card
Score (Concert Key) With Annotated Analysis

Crossing the Berg
CONCERT SCORE

j = 60 slow, hymn-like

Gtr.
Pno.

Score (Concert Key)

Composition by Harley Card (ASCAP) – All Rights Reserved
Crossing the Berg

Originally written as “half-time rock” but in fact 4/4 rock

\[ \text{\( \text{Pno.} \)} \]

\[ \text{\( \text{Gtr.} \)} \]

\[ \text{\( \text{Bs & B.Cl.} \)} \]

Pno & B.Cl: Modal 5th structures, moving in strict chromatic parallel.

\[ \text{\( \text{Pno} \)} \]

\[ \text{\( \text{Gtr.} \)} \]

\[ \text{\( \text{Bs & B.Cl.} \)} \]

\[ \text{\( I_{5} \)} \]

Drum fill to set up B

\[ \text{\( \text{Pno} \)} \]

\[ \text{\( \text{Gtr.} \)} \]

\[ \text{\( \text{Bs & B.Cl.} \)} \]

Alternating harmonic maj 7ths & min 7ths
CROSSING THE BERG

Pno: bookends this phrase starting w/a figure similar to gtr in bar 19

Gtr.

Bs & B.Cl.

After this point, they are all here. This

Bs & B.Cl.

* In practice, the "gtr solo" is more collective than a typical feature, and there is a B.Cl. solo that follows, rather than sax as originally conceived / it fades out on the studio recording.

Open gtr solo. gtr cues 29. take DC for sax solo. cue fine
In practice, there is usually considerable free improvisation after this fermata. On the studio recording, this lasts over a minute before the d.c. There is a bass clarinet solo after this during the opening vamp until "Fine"
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Long-Form Personal Interviews

Tim Shia March 30, 2012
David French April 1, 2012
Nick Fraser (Interview #1) February 4, 2013
Ethan Ardelli August 6, 2013
Harley Card August 7, 2013
Andrew Downing August 7, 2013
Brodie West August 9, 2013
Dan Fortin August 23, 2013
Fabio Ragnelli and John Russon September 13, 2013
Mark Miller September 15, 2013
Adrean Farrugia September 21, 2013
Dan Fortin September 24, 2013
Bill Smith September 25, 2013
Neil Hendry October 2, 2013
Ben Dietschi October 23, 2013
Matt Newton November 11, 2013
Lina Allemano September 17, 2014
Nick Fraser (Interview #2) December 10, 2014
Nick Fraser (Interview #3) June 2, 2014
Chris Gale April 22, 2015
Rob Clutton August 2, 2015

Email correspondence
Pat Reid September 26, 2014
Tim Shia June 6, 2016
Michael Herring June 24, 2016
DISCOGRAPHY

Note: This is a selective discography focused on the artists referenced directly in the dissertation. It only includes official releases. Live field recordings used in the dissertation are listed in the front matter under “List of Online Audio Examples.”

Toronto Stable Jazz Group Subscene Artists / Groups


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Historical Toronto Mainstream Jazz Artists


Historical Long-term Stable Jazz Groups


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Contemporary (After 1990) Long-term Stable Jazz Groups


