CultureCase

Live jazz: the importance of the audience-performer relationship

This research was carried out by **Gail Brand, John Sloboda, Ben Saul** and **Martin Hathaway** at the **Guildhall School of Music and Drama, UK**

Summary

The researchers conducted a pilot study to investigate how the audience-performer relationship contributes to the success of a jazz performance. They arrived at three major findings. First, the audience has ‘considerable power to impact on the musician during play, in both positive and negative ways’. Second, the size of the venue and subsequent intimacy between performer and audience has a ‘considerable impact on the quality of the experience for both groups’. Third, there is sometimes a divergence of understanding between audiences and performers as to what form of relationship is required for a good performance.

Negotiating the interaction between audience and performer

The researchers interviewed seven jazz musicians and ten audience members who were recruited at concerts in a small jazz venue in east London. The venue has an emphasis on post-1960s jazz. The research describes the ‘bittersweet struggle’ between performers and their audiences to ‘keep at bay the aspects of the relationship which are unhelpful whilst drawing on those that make live performance a worthwhile activity for them’. To be successful, the expectations of all involved must be balanced, for example in relation to the choice of repertoire or use of stylistic innovation.

From passive to active audiences: a new area of interest for research and practice

The researchers suggest that finding ways of educating audiences as to the significant role they play in successful performances might serve to empower and reinvigorate audiences for live music.

This summary is by **Richard Mason, King's Knowledge Exchange Associate**

Keywords

music **jazz** **UK** **audience** **live** **interview** **concerts** **performance**

Title	The reciprocal relationship between jazz musicians and audiences in live performances: A pilot qualitative study
Author(s)	Brand, G., Sloboda, J., Saul, B., & Hathaway, M.
Publication date	2012
Source	Psychology of Music, Vol 40, Iss 5, pp 634-651
Link	**http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0305735612448509**
Open Access Link	**http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0305735612448509**

By **Culture.Case** | 12 January 2017 | **Live and digital engagement in arts and culture** |

King's Culture
© Copyright 2026
Designed, developed and maintained by **King's Digital Lab**
Originally built by **weheartdigital Ltd**
Accessibility Statement