CultureCase

Jazz music in England has a gender problem

This research was conducted by **Siobhan McAndrew** and **Paul Widdop** at the **University of Bristol** and **Leeds Beckett University**

Summary

Surveys of adults in England show that women are less likely than men to attend jazz concerts – there is a larger gender gap for jazz than for rock concerts. By contrast, classical music concerts are more popular among women than men. This paper describes a deep analysis of a dataset of 983 jazz musicians and their output. It shows that women have made up a small minority of the UK's jazz sector. Male musicians have tended to record and perform with other men. Women have been 'perceived as lacking legitimacy and credibility as musicians within a historically male genre'.

The gender gap in jazz differs from that in classical and rock music

The authors suggest that one reason why jazz concerts are popular for some men is because the events confer a certain status on the attendee. Originally, jazz was associated with a deviant subculture in dark and dingy basement bars. It has subsequently become thought of as an elite genre with high status attached to performers and audiences. Throughout its history jazz performance has been gendered: men play instruments and women sing (if they are involved at all).

A directory and a discography provide complementary data to concert attendance

The *Lord Discovery* and *Chilton's Who's Who* were used by the authors to show that female jazz musicians were on the periphery of key networks of

collaboration and did not enter the scene until after the heyday of the genre in the middle of the 20th century. The musical relationships of performers are key to their success: these come in the form of familial, educational, friendship and professional collaborations. Gender inequality in music can only be addressed by understanding how gender operates within genres as well as wider society. It is in the commercial interests of the jazz sector and our wider culture that the genre makes efforts to further gender equality in who records, performs, and listens.

Keywords

UK **survey** **music** **jazz** **gender**

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Author email	**siobhan.mcandrew@bristol.ac.uk**

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