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# Music Outside?

## Innovation and 'Britishness' in British Jazz 1960–1980

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In the postscript to the second edition of Ian Carr's book *Music Outside* (originally published in 1973), Roger Cotterrell writes: 'During the few years this book takes us back to [late 1960s/early 1970s] Britain really was a special place of jazz innovation.'[1] Alyn Shipton takes a similar position, stating that '[t]he 1960s was to become the golden decade of creativity in British jazz.'[2] Carr titled his book *Music Outside* to refer to way in which jazz was being sidelined—or even ignored—by the British cultural establishment, describing jazz as 'a perpetual Cinderella of the arts in Britain'.[3] Jazz (and its precursors) has been a part of British culture since the beginning of the twentieth century and even earlier,[4] and its dissemination via recordings and live performance has helped to build audiences that have at various times (and for a variety of styles) made it part of the popular mainstream, a form of art music and a more specialist or niche genre of popular music. Its lack of cultural status is a continuing issue for Cotterrell, however, who suggests that, even in 2008, '[j]azz in Britain still receives inadequate recognition as part of the national culture.'[5] 'Music outside' is also used by Carr to imply that certain musicians at the time were developing a type of jazz that was something 'other', something different from the music modelled on the American tradition. Cotterrell refers to this when he argues that: 'The "music outside" generation helped to build a collective self-confidence that made European jazz eventually no longer reliant on American developments; it came to have not just a distinctive flavour but a clear identity of its own.'[6]

The idea of European and, more specifically, British jazz developing its own identity—particularly evident in music produced between 1960 and 1980—as a result of where the music

1 Roger Cotterrell, 'Postscript: Thirty Years On', in *Music Outside: Contemporary Jazz in Britain*, by Ian Carr (London: Northway, 2008), 163–180, here 163.
2 Alyn Shipton, *A New History of Jazz* (2nd edn.) (London: Continuum, 2007), 704.
3 Ian Carr, *Music Outside: Contemporary Jazz in Britain* (London: Northway, 2008), vii.
4 For more on early jazz in Britain see Catherine Parsonage, *The Evolution of Jazz in Britain, 1880–1935* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005).
5 Cotterrell, 'Postscript: Thirty Years On', 180.
6 *Ibid.*, 180.

was created is part of a narrative shared by other historians such as John Wickes and Duncan Heining. Wickes, in the introduction to *Innovations in British Jazz: Volume One 1960–1980*, explains that '1960 was selected as a starting point […] because it was around that time that British jazz emerged from the cocoon of respectful emulation with which it had wrapped itself'.[7] Similarly, in his book about British jazz between 1960 and 1975, Heining suggests that there was among British musicians 'a desire to produce jazz that was authentic in its own right',[8] and when describing Stan Tracey's *Under Milk Wood* suite Shipton enthuses: 'What works best about this music is its Britishness.'[9] I am not suggesting that British jazz between 1960 and 1980 was *not* distinctive, innovative or influenced by British culture, since much of it was, as these writers argue.[10] I should also point out that the authors cited so far are, on the whole, careful to avoid the implication that the music of this period sounded the way it did due to innate cultural characteristics of the musicians. But what does 'Britishness' mean in relation to jazz? The origins of jazz clearly lie outside Britain, and there were various factors that contributed towards the directions in which British jazz evolved, often in complex and unexpected ways; as Gilbert Rodman reminds us, 'historical events appear to be inevitable only after they have happened.'[11] In this paper I will discuss some of these factors in relation to British jazz of 1960–1980 and examples of the work of the 'music outside' generation.

## Jazz and 'Britishness'

Shipton explains that '[i]n Britain, the most creative jazz of the half-century since World War II has had a distinctive local accent'[12] due in part to a lack of opportunities to hear live American jazz, and that, for example, 'pianist Michael Garrick was typical of those who sought local inspiration'.[13] In Garrick's case this came from, among other influences, the English literary and folk traditions, setting to jazz the work of Thomas Hardy, J. R. R. Tolkien and others. Using the words of English authors may well give jazz an English accent, but it is far more difficult to pinpoint what makes instrumental British jazz sound 'British'. While not referring to British jazz, Stuart Nicholson strongly suggests the presence of national characteristics in the sound of the

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7 John Wickes, *Innovations in British Jazz: Volume One 1960–1980* (Chelmsford: Soundworld, 1999), 1.

8 Duncan Heining, *Trad Dads, Dirty Boppers and Free Fusioneers: British Jazz, 1960–1975* (Sheffield: Equinox, 2012), 91.

9 Shipton, *A New History of Jazz*, 704.

10 As well as Stan Tracey, musicians such as Mike Westbrook, Evan Parker, Graham Collier, John Taylor, Norma Winstone, Keith Tippett, and John Surman are widely acknowledged to be innovative and distinctive, drawing on British cultural influences. Wickes draws particular attention to Michael Garrick: 'Nowhere was the lopsided character of British jazz in this period more fascinatingly reflected than in the stylistic development of pianist and composer Michael Garrick.' Wickes, *Innovations in British Jazz*, 15.

11 Gilbert B. Rodman, 'Histories', in *Key Terms in Popular Music and Culture*, ed. Bruce Horner and Thomas Swiss (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 40.

12 Shipton, *A New History of Jazz*, 701.

13 *Ibid.*, 702.

music of Lars Gullin, Terje Rypdal and Jan Garbarek when he claims: 'The Nordic tone can be heard in the playing of musicians from all the Scandinavian countries.'[14] He is, though, slightly more careful in a later publication: 'The Nordic Tone might be said to be the sound of some Scandinavian musicians (by no means all) defining their identity with an approach to jazz that has become associated with specific geographical location.'[15] This more considered approach does not remove the implied essentialism with which the term 'Nordic tone' is imbued, and to which 'Britishness' is similarly prone.

The approach to British jazz historiography adopted by authors such as Wickes, Heining and Shipton suggests that the 1960s and 1970s marked a period when the music was particularly innovative and developed, perhaps for the first time, a distinctly British character to its sound. This is problematic in the sense that it is difficult to define precisely what characteristics of this music make it sound 'British' (as those making this claim generally struggle to do) and in any case, British jazz covered a wide range of styles, as becomes abundantly clear from reading Wickes' book. Perhaps this historiographical path has been pursued by some commentators because, as Tim Wall and Paul Long suggest, 'in Britain there is no consensus narrative of British jazz's history'.[16] Nevertheless, those authors who do focus on the period 1960–1980 tend to ascribe to the 'innovation' thesis and to a greater or lesser extent to the idea of a 'British' sound characterising the music of at least some musicians working in contemporary jazz.

Histories of jazz during this period in Britain are few, and Carr's *Music Outside* is not really a unified historical account—it is more a set of biographical case studies.[17] The second volume of Jim Godbolt's *A History of Jazz in Britain* covers 1950–1970 and is a continuation of the first volume covering 1919–1950; he suggests that 'the most significant development in the period 1950 to 1970 […] was the immense improvement in the standard of British jazz',[18] and that as well as British musicians' ability to copy American jazz, '[i]n recent years there has been less emphasis on comparisons with Americans.'[19] Although Wickes' book is subtitled 'volume one' and covers 1960–1980 in some detail, volume two appears not to have been published. Heining's text is the most recent and, along with Wickes, frames the period from 1960 as being particularly significant for *British jazz*, whereas Godbolt seems more concerned with *jazz in Britain*, which includes visiting American artists as well as British musicians. This distinction is important, and Parsonage argues that, even by 1935, 'not only "jazz in Britain" but also "British

14 Stuart Nicholson, *Is Jazz Dead? (Or Has it Moved to a New Address)* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 208.
15 Stuart Nicholson, *Jazz and Culture in a Global Age* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2014), 130.
16 Tim Wall and Paul Long, '*Jazz Britannia*: Mediating the Story of British Jazz on Television', *Jazz Research Journal* 3, no. 2 (2009), 145–170, here 166.
17 The advocacy organisation Jazz Services published two articles on its website giving historical overviews of jazz in Britain, one of which was written by Stuart Nicholson (the other by John Fordham); see Tom Sykes, '"British Jazz History" – from The Jazz Site', *Jazz Perspectives* 5, no. 3 (December 2011), 245–248 for a review and comparison of these.
18 Jim Godbolt, *A History of Jazz in Britain 1950–70* (London: Quartet Books, 1989), 297–298.
19 *Ibid.*, 299.

jazz" can be identified';[20] compare this with David Boulton's statement, written in 1958: 'I have written of jazz in Britain. There is a lot of difference between that and British jazz. There was, before the '40s, nothing in the jazz line that was distinctively British. (It is arguable, of course, whether there has been any since.)'[21]

Here I am concerned with British jazz, though not all musicians on the wider British jazz scene, making what is generally considered British jazz, were born in the UK. Of the historical accounts cited above, Heining's is the only one that takes account of social, political, economic and cultural factors to any extent, though two scholarly authors interrogate these without restricting themselves to one specific historical period, George McKay and Hilary Moore.[22] In addition, there is a BBC television documentary series, *Jazz Britannia*,[23] of which the second episode in particular, *Strange Brew*, contributes to the narrative of innovation and distinctiveness of British jazz in the late 1960s and early 1970s,[24] as well as a number of biographies of musicians on the British scene at the time including Ronnie Scott, Joe Harriott and Chris McGregor.[25]

## Some factors affecting the British jazz scene

Space does not permit me to provide a detailed picture of the British jazz scene between 1960 and 1980,[26] so I will summarise three of its significant features, particularly as they appertain to the historiographical approach that emphasises innovation and distinctiveness in the music. Leading up to this period, there had for more than twenty years been a Ministry of Labour ban on visiting American jazz musicians (colourfully described by Godbolt as 'a monumentally stupid prohibition'[27]), and Shipton emphasises the *British* aspect of this: 'Compared to France, Italy, or Germany, where large numbers of Americans played and settled for some periods of time, relatively few of the musicians whom British fans knew from recordings were able to perform in the United Kingdom until the late 1950s, and the majority of live jazz was locally produced.'[28] By the time the ban was relaxed in 1956, musicians such as saxophonists Ronnie Scott and John Dankworth had begun to perform original material in contemporary styles, but Scott's style was

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20 Parsonage, *The Evolution of Jazz in Britain, 1880–1935*, xiv.

21 David Boulton, *Jazz in Britain* (London: W. H. Allen, 1958), ix.

22 George McKay, *Circular Breathing: The Cultural Politics of Jazz in Britain* (London: Duke University Press, 2005) and Hilary Moore, *Inside British Jazz: Crossing Borders of Race, Nation and Class*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

23 Mike Connelly (director), *Jazz Britannia: Strange Brew* [television documentary] (BBC, 2005).

24 The programme 'can be understood as a combination of Carr's thesis of jazz as an outsider music and Wickes's emphasis on innovation.' Wall and Long, '*Jazz Britannia*', 166.

25 See, for example: John Fordham, *Let's Join Hands and Contact the Living: Ronnie Scott and his Club* (London: Elm Tree Books, 1986); Alan Robertson, *Joe Harriott: Fire in his Soul* (2nd ed.) (London: Northway, 2011); and Maxine McGregor, *Chris McGregor and the Brotherhood of Breath* (Flint: Bamberger Books, 1995).

26 Between them, Wickes, *Innovations in British Jazz* and Heining, *Trad Dads, Dirty Boppers and Free Fusioneers* provide a fairly comprehensive survey.

27 Godbolt, *A History of Jazz in Britain 1950–70*, 166.

28 Shipton, *A New History of Jazz*, 701–702.

more American-influenced than that of Dankworth, whose music, Shipton suggests, 'increasingly incorporated English or European ideas and thematic material.'[29] The reciprocal arrangement that allowed US bands to visit the UK was extended to individual soloists in 1961, one of the outcomes being that local rhythm section players were engaged to back the visiting Americans. One such player was Stan Tracey, who was resident pianist at Ronnie Scott's club and who recalled that '[i]t was a very valuable experience, and I learned more in those seven years than I would have done had I not been there'.[30] Tracey came to be held in high regard by Sonny Rollins, who reportedly asked '[d]oes anybody here know how good he really is?'[31]

As well as the American visitors, immigrant musicians from the post-colonial Caribbean such as bassist Coleridge Goode, trumpeter Ellsworth 'Shake' Keane and saxophonist Joe Harriott had settled in the UK and were already active in the British jazz scene during the 1950s.[32] Harriott is considered to have been particularly significant during the 1960s because of his experiments in free improvisation, though he was better known in the 1950s for his Charlie Parker-influenced bebop playing. There is some conjecture as to whether Harriott came up with his idea for what he called 'abstract music' entirely on his own. Moore is certain that Harriott's approach to free improvisation developed independently from Ornette Coleman's in the US and suggests 'the quintet were outsiders, paradoxically pushing the boundaries of what was already a peripheral scene in an effort to form some sense of centralized identity within the jazz world.'[33] Moreover, Moore asserts that '[t]he birth of European free jazz, in fact, starts with [Harriott's 1960 recording] *Free Form*: an album that represents the performance of an innovative musical and cultural aesthetic, influenced only minimally by the American model.'[34] Shipton, however, tells Heining: 'My view is that Harriott would have been aware of what Coleman was doing. […] at one level, you're probably right about independent "development" but I think it was not something that happened in complete isolation.'[35]

The London[36] arrival of a group of exiled South African musicians in 1965, Chris McGregor and the Blue Notes (which included saxophonist Dudu Pukwana and drummer Louis

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29 *Ibid.*, 703.

30 Quoted in Shipton, *A New History of Jazz*, 703.

31 Quoted in Fordham, *Let's Join Hands and Contact the Living*, 129.

32 After former British colonies became independent in the late 1940s, many people from these nations came to Britain to seek work.

33 Moore, *Inside British Jazz*, 81. The other regular members of Harriott's group were fellow Caribbeans trumpeter Ellsworth 'Shake' Keane and bassist Coleridge Goode, along with two Scottish musicians, pianist Pat Smythe and drummer Bobby Orr, though Orr was replaced by Phil Seamen in 1960.

34 *Ibid.*, 70.

35 Quoted in Heining, *Trad Dads, Dirty Boppers and Free Fusioneers*, 70.

36 There is another historiographical bias by many authors, which is towards London as being the centre of jazz activity and innovation at this time. To some extent this is true, as professional jazz musicians gravitated towards the city to find work, and while touring Americans played in other cities, in places like Manchester the scene was affected by local changes in licensing laws (restricting night club opening hours). This aspect of jazz in Britain is somewhat under-researched, though see Bill Birch, *Keeper of the Flame: Modern Jazz in Manchester 1946–1972* (self-published, 2010).

Moholo), is widely cited as being a significant event for jazz in Britain. As Carr recalls: 'Their music had its own strongly individual flavour even then, but it seemed to come out of the Horace Silver/Art Blakey sort of school, though the McGregor band gave the impression of being much wilder and more abandoned than the Jazz Messengers.'[37] Shipton describes some of the Blue Notes' music as being played 'very freely',[38] and Moholo claimed that '[m]e and John Stevens were actually the first drummers to play free music in Britain',[39] notwithstanding Bobby Orr's work with Harriott five years previously. Despite an initial enthusiasm for the Blue Notes, McGregor found it increasingly difficult to find work, and his biographer (and widow) Maxine McGregor feels that '[t]he jazz world in Britain during the '60s and early '70s was particularly conservative'.[40] This statement goes counter to the narrative of innovation, but it is tinged with bitterness, and (Maxine) McGregor goes on to imply that once the novelty of the African musicians wore off there was a certain degree of resentment towards them from British musicians.[41]

Another significant element of the British jazz scene during the late 1960s and early 1970s was jazz-rock, whose genesis was (like free improvisation) at least concurrent with, if not earlier than, American developments. It can be argued that the success of blues and R&B bands offered jazz in Britain a range of styles that led to the integration of jazz and rock in influential groups such as Cream, which was created by musicians with some jazz pedigree (particularly drummer Ginger Baker and bassist Jack Bruce). Andrew Blake, more specifically in relation to a national sound of jazz-rock, writes about 'a specific set of sonic relations in a music which was trying to adapt Anglo-American and other forms in order to find a more authentic British voice.'[42] The progressive rock that emerged from British jazz-rock is exemplified by drummer Jon Hiseman, according to Blake, in which Hiseman was looking for 'a new language: the blues and jazz were seen as too American and too limited in appeal, and "prog rock" was one way to create a new and indigenous music which straddled the worlds of composition and improvisation.'[43] The extent to which this approach defined a 'British sound' in a new language for future musicians is debatable, but it is true to say that jazz-rock was embraced as a creative medium by groups such as Soft Machine, Ian Carr's Nucleus and Mike Westbrook's Solid Gold Cadillac.

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37 Carr, *Music Outside*, 105.
38 Shipton, *A New History of Jazz*, 697.
39 Quoted in McGregor, *Chris McGregor and the Brotherhood of Breath*, 116.
40 *Ibid.*, 173.
41 McGregor's later band had a mixed reception outside London as well; when his *Brotherhood of Breath* performed in Manchester's Club 43 in 1968 its 'aggressive style was not to everyone's taste'; Birch, *Keeper of the Flame*, 305.
42 Andrew Blake, *The Land Without Music: Music, Culture and Society in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 125.
43 *Ibid.*, 160.

## 'Defining moments'

I will briefly consider two examples of British jazz, one from 1965 and the other from 1975, both considered iconic recordings of the period; coincidentally, the bandleaders in both cases have quite recently passed away. The first is the Stan Tracey Quartet's *Jazz Suite inspired by Dylan Thomas's 'Under Milk Wood'*.[44] The theme in the track 'Starless and Bible Black' was used as a leitmotif in parts of the *Jazz Britannia* documentary series, and as Wall and Long suggest, 'it signals the importance of the mid-1960s in this narrative of British jazz.'[45] More specifically, in the documentary it operates both 'as a defining moment in jazz Britannia'[46] that 'opens up a great period for experimental and distinctly British jazz',[47] and also

> 'as a metonym for the whole of what is British about British jazz: a synthesis of absorbed American influences and elements of British culture in English pianist Tracy's [sic] composition; inspired by a BBC radio play written by "the nation's best known poet", Welshman Dylan Thomas; and executed by the established partnership of Tracy and saxophonist Bobby Wellins, who draws on the romantic influences of his Scottish music heritage, to produce "one of the best British jazz improvisations ever recorded".'[48]

Wall and Long emphasise that in the documentary the album 'is signalled as a landmark recording, and the moment at which jazz in Britain became distinctively British.'[49]

Apparently in contrast to the romanticised narrative of *Jazz Britannia*, Shipton writes: 'Because, in Tracey's view "you end up with the music [and] you make your own pictures," he [Tracey] is skeptical about the degree to which Thomas's lyrical, romantic prose and poetry actually affected his writing.'[50] Shipton, however, is not convinced by Tracey's comment, suggesting that 'the sinister undertones of […] *Starless and Bible Black*, have captured the imaginations of many listeners, seeming to reflect the richness and variety of Thomas's language with uncanny brilliance.'[51] Shipton is quoted in Heining's book explaining that 'Cockle Row' from *Under Milk Wood* is based on the standard 'On the Sunny Side of the Street', and that as a result 'the piece takes on a new and individual life. I think this demonstrates the confidence with which the quartet was building on and departing from the American model. It had the sureness of touch to poke gentle fun at the standards tradition.'[52] Heining asks:

> 'So, how is it "British"? First of all, there is its choice of subject matter. Second, there is its deliberate evocation of a world and terrain that is self-consciously Welsh, but would apply equally

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44 Stan Tracey Quartet, *Jazz Suite inspired by Dylan Thomas's 'Under Milk Wood'* (Columbia 33SX 1774, 1965)
45 Wall and Long, '*Jazz Britannia*', 151.
46 *Ibid.*, 150.
47 *Ibid.*, 151.
48 *Ibid.*
49 *Ibid.*, 150.
50 Shipton, *A New History of Jazz*, 704.
51 *Ibid.*
52 Quoted in Heining, *Trad Dads, Dirty Boppers and Free Fusioneers*, 81.

> to small town or village life anywhere in mainland Britain during the fifties or sixties […] Third, and more than both the above, is the sense that Tracey is building upon all his previous experiences, which include non-American, British light entertainment and dance music as well as jazz, and that these have been distilled into this moment.'[53]

My second example is trumpeter Kenny Wheeler's ECM album *Gnu High*.[54] Despite the fact that Wheeler was Canadian, and two of the musicians, Keith Jarrett and Jack DeJohnette, American (the other band member being British bassist Dave Holland) and that the recording took place in New York, Wickes points to 'the extraordinary empathy and creative acumen with which musicians inured in American jazz (and by now one had to include Holland in this description) engaged [with] this very English music'.[55] To this author, this music does not sound particularly 'English'; while its quality is beyond doubt the aspects of 'Englishness' of this album are difficult to identify. Jazz 'Britishness' is therefore not particularly apparent here, though Wheeler's compositional and playing styles *are* distinctive—his work is described by Wickes as characterised by 'a modally-inflected, basically diatonic harmonic language that blends Gil Evans with such quintessentially British composers as Howells and Walton […] and a singular facility for spinning melodic structures that make wonderful vehicles for the improviser.'[56] Wheeler said of his own compositions: 'I've been accused of using too many chord changes … I'm very much into harmony, melody … I let the rhythm take care of itself.'[57] Of the significance of this recording and Wheeler's approach to jazz, Wickes writes:

> 'On its own, this combination, for the breakthrough it represented in terms of combining top British and American artists, and the fact that a British musician had been embraced by a label whose furthering of European jazz had been exemplary [ECM], represented a tremendous boost for Kenny and the domestic scene. But "Gnu High" transpired to be one of the truly great albums of the decade, in global terms […] On flugelhorn throughout, Kenny evinced a novel and highly subtle flexibility with time in a relatively straight-ahead context, thus demonstrating a new possible way to push boundaries further out while keeping within structures.'[58]

It is telling that Wickes considers Wheeler to be a 'British musician', and, along with Mike Gibbs (from what is now Zimbabwe), his music is accepted as being as British as that of Stan Tracey and other native jazz composers of the 'music outside' generation such as Michael Garrick, Keith Tippett, Mike Westbrook and John Surman, some of whom were consciously drawing on British folk music for inspiration. What is significant is that Wheeler (who studied music at Toronto University) had been interested in the London free scene and played with John Stevens,

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53 *Ibid.*, 80–81.
54 Kenny Wheeler, *Gnu High* (ECM 1069 ST, 1976)
55 Wickes, *Innovations in British Jazz*, 142.
56 *Ibid.*, 71.
57 Quoted in Wickes, *Innovations in British Jazz*, 140.
58 *Ibid.*, 142.


**Figure 1**: *Gnu High* cover.[59]

who had played with Louis Moholo. Tracey, by contrast, had started out playing in dance bands and served his main jazz apprenticeship at Ronnie Scott's club with American stars, and his playing was influenced initially by Powell and then Monk and Ellington, but he was also inspired by British literature. That musicians with two such different experiences and musical approaches should produce two of the most critically acclaimed and supposedly 'British' jazz albums of 1960–1980 illustrates that, first, there are many diverse factors that shape innovation in music; and, second, that it is very difficult—perhaps impossible—to define 'Britishness' in British jazz.

It is not my intention here to provide a detailed musical analysis of these examples, and in any case the sonic qualities that make music sound 'British' (or not) are difficult to represent using only traditional staff notation.[60] Indeed, as the transcription (below) of the introductory theme of 'Starless and Bible Black' indicates, there is nothing in particular that would indicate a British influence, other than, perhaps, the implied modal aspect of the melody in relation to the chord sequence; I have written a B minor key signature to indicate the tonic of B and the use of the minor third but the precise tonality is ambiguous. The G# ($9^{th}$) in the chord F#m9 may imply the use of the Dorian mode (frequently used in traditional music of the British Isles),

[59] By kind permission of ECM Records.

[60] Perhaps Philip Tagg's method of analysis using 'musemes' may provide a possible approach; see 'Philip Tagg', accessed 7 November 2017, www.tagg.org.

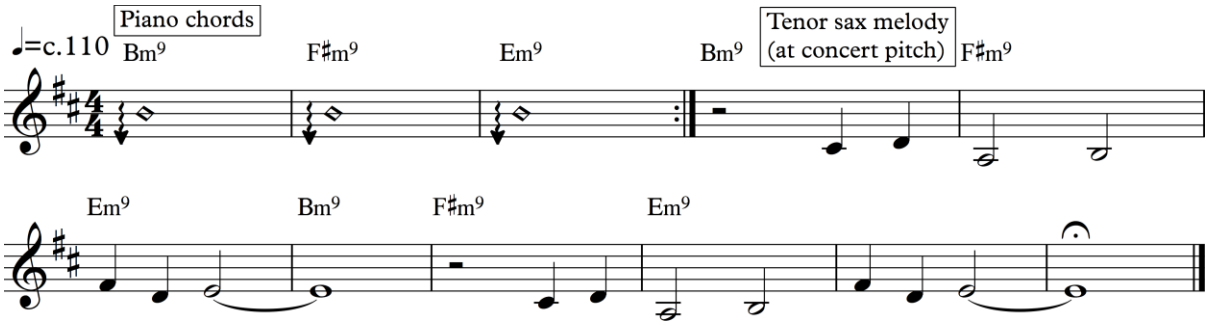


**Figure 2**: 'Starless and Bible Black' introduction and initial theme.[61]

though the G natural (3rd) in Em9 points toward the Aeolian (also found in British folk music).[62] Some twentieth century British composers, notably Ralph Vaughan-Williams,[63] made use of modal folk melodies, but the modal flavour of the 'Starless and Bible Black' theme does not in itself prove that Tracey was consciously drawing on British folk (or art) music tradition in his composition.[64] This is comparable to what Blake found when listening to Colosseum's (Jon Hiseman's ensemble) *Valentyne Suite* (1969): 'The Suite is characterised throughout by a hesitant, ambiguous attitude to tonality […] Although the modality of the English musical Renaissance is sometimes suggested, the suggestions are never confirmed'.[65] Moreover, modality in American jazz was well established by the 1960s and the use of modes in British jazz cannot therefore make a strong case for the influence of modal music of a specific origin.

## Conclusion

Pianist Howard Riley suggests, in an interview in *Jazz Britannia*, that his was the first generation of British jazz musicians that acknowledged a debt to American jazz but wanted to find its own voice.[66] Shipton also writes of Graham Collier's 'move away from American models',[67] realising that jazz musicians were free to pursue their own interests. In another interview in *Jazz Britannia* Mike Westbrook states that he and others 'questioned the orthodoxy of the day'[68] and they

61 Transcription by the author.

62 An example such as 'Drowsy Maggie' (an Irish reel) is very much in the dorian mode, whereas 'King of the Fairies' (an English hornpipe) is aeolian in the first part and dorian in the second part. The Scottish air 'Mary, Young and Fair' is in aeolian mode throughout. Taken from Edward Huws Jones, *Jigs, Reels & Hornpipes: Traditional Fiddle Tunes from England, Ireland & Scotland* (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1992).

63 For his views on British folk music see, for example, Ralph Vaughan Williams, *National Music and Other Essays* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963).

64 The American modal jazz of Miles Davis' *Kind of Blue* (Columbia, 1959) was of course highly influential.

65 Blake, *The Land Without Music*, 156.

66 Connelly, *Jazz Britannia*, Howard Riley interview starting at 22:00.

67 Shipton, *A New History of Jazz*, 704.

68 Connelly, *Jazz Britannia*, Mike Westbrook quoted at 23:30.

certainly sounded different from players such as saxophonists Peter King and Ronnie Scott, who continued to play American bebop-influenced jazz. Shipton suggests that musicians such as Garrick and Tracey had, from the 1960s, produced a form of jazz that deviated from American models, during a period that lasted into the 1970s.[69] Is this what could be described as 'Britishness'? As Wall and Long argue in their critique of the way in which *Jazz Britannia* tells the story of British jazz, the idea of an identifiable Britishness in the recordings such as *Under Milk Wood* is questionable at best, and Tippett's statement about young musicians trying to find their own voice 'does not entail the conclusion that an essentially British "sound" was born.'[70] Moreover, Wall and Long make a point that may be applied to other proponents of the notion of a distinctly British jazz sound, in that *Jazz Britannia* 'does not look to evaluate the available evidence about the distinctiveness of the musical practices taken up by British people around jazz, but offers a nationalist, essentialist, and idealized set of connotations about such an idea.'[71]

Perhaps a more realistic approach would be to acknowledge and celebrate the innovative approach of many musicians of this period working in Britain, some of whom may have consciously been searching for something different from an American bebop/postbop (or even free jazz) sound, while being cautious about claiming the existence of definable Britishness in their music. A few may have been deliberately using British musical influences to shape their jazz, as Michael Garrick claimed:

> 'I was convinced at the time that jazz was able to enrich any culture […] Hence the impressionistic folk element in our repertoire. Of course, I was more than a little off-beam, but it seemed to me […] that if you were born and bred in Finchley or Enfield, as [vibraphone and flute player] Pete Shade and I were, instead of legendary Chicago or New York, you might as well accept the plain fact and make the British best of it.'[72]

Garrick admitted, however, that his early aversion to copying American jazz was rather strong: 'In retrospect, perhaps I was a bit too fierce about it. But I had the impression that if you wanted to do something of your own, you should draw on your own background […] I saw in the English folksong tradition a great richness'.[73] Clearly, some of the innovatory aspects of the music of composer/performers such as Garrick and Tracey contained 'Britishness' in a cultural sense, being directly influenced by British culture; their jazz, though, was *musically* more of a syncretism and cannot be completely separated from its American ancestry.

In a recent obituary to pianist John Taylor (who died in July 2015) Martin Speake emphasises the influence of American jazz on British musicians in the 1960s, even though 'it

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69 Shipton, *A New History of Jazz*, 704.

70 Wall and Long, *'Jazz Britannia'*, 157. They also quote the critic Richard Williams, who argues that 'the very best of British jazz seldom shows any sign of overt "Britishness"'; quoted in Wall and Long, *'Jazz Britannia'*, 150, and originally published in *The Guardian, G2: Arts*, 24 January 2005, 14.

71 *Ibid.*, 159.

72 Quoted in Wickes, *Innovations in British Jazz*, 16.

73 *Ibid.*

didn't take long for [John] Surman or Taylor to develop their own European voices beginning in the 1970's and look for other inspiration beyond the American model (*which they both loved though*).'[74] Taylor is quoted as having chosen a particular musical path as opposed to rejecting American jazz: 'Rather than the other road, the more American kind of jazz model, which I love […] I get more involved in the other side of both harmonic and melodic and how people react to one another so that there is not always the same pattern.'[75] What some commentators may perceive as 'Britishness' in the jazz of the innovative members of the 'music outside' generation is as likely to be the result of diverse cultural and musical influences (not all British) as any conscious attempt to make their music sound 'British', as pianist Pete Saberton explained to Wickes:

> 'I always loved Stravinsky, Bartok, Prokofiev … If you're not copying the status quo from America, you're a bit of an outcast; but the reason is that you're interested in other things […] Your style, the thing that you've got, is self-taught because you just pick things out. You listen to things and you think: Ooh, I like that. What can I do with that? So you mess around with it. You're aware of some other composer or the way someone's playing, and you do it like this, turn it upside down.'[76]

The musicians discussed by Carr in *Music Outside* have come to be regarded by some historians as creating a quintessentially 'British' form of jazz during 1960–1980. While they and others produced a significant body of original music, much of which evolved differently from (but did not necessarily reject) American jazz tradition, determining whether—and how—it may *sound* 'British' is yet to be resolved; and if it does sound British, it is not simply because of the nationality of its practitioners.

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[74] Martin Speake, 'In Memoriam John Taylor', accessed 7 November 2017, www.ethaniverson.com/in-memoriam-john-taylor-by-martin-speake, emphasis added.

[75] Quoted in Speake, 'In Memoriam John Taylor'. In an intriguing connection with Kenny Wheeler, with whom Taylor often worked, Speake recalls that 'Kenny wanted John to be on *Gnu High* but Manfred [Eicher of ECM] said, "I think it will be better if Keith [Jarrett] is on it." Which was probably right for Kenny's career'; *ibid.*

[76] Quoted in Wickes, *Innovations in British Jazz*, 305.

**Figure captions**

- *Gnu High* cover. By kind permission of ECM Records (Fig. 1); 'Starless and Bible Black' introduction and initial theme, transcribed by the author (Fig. 2).