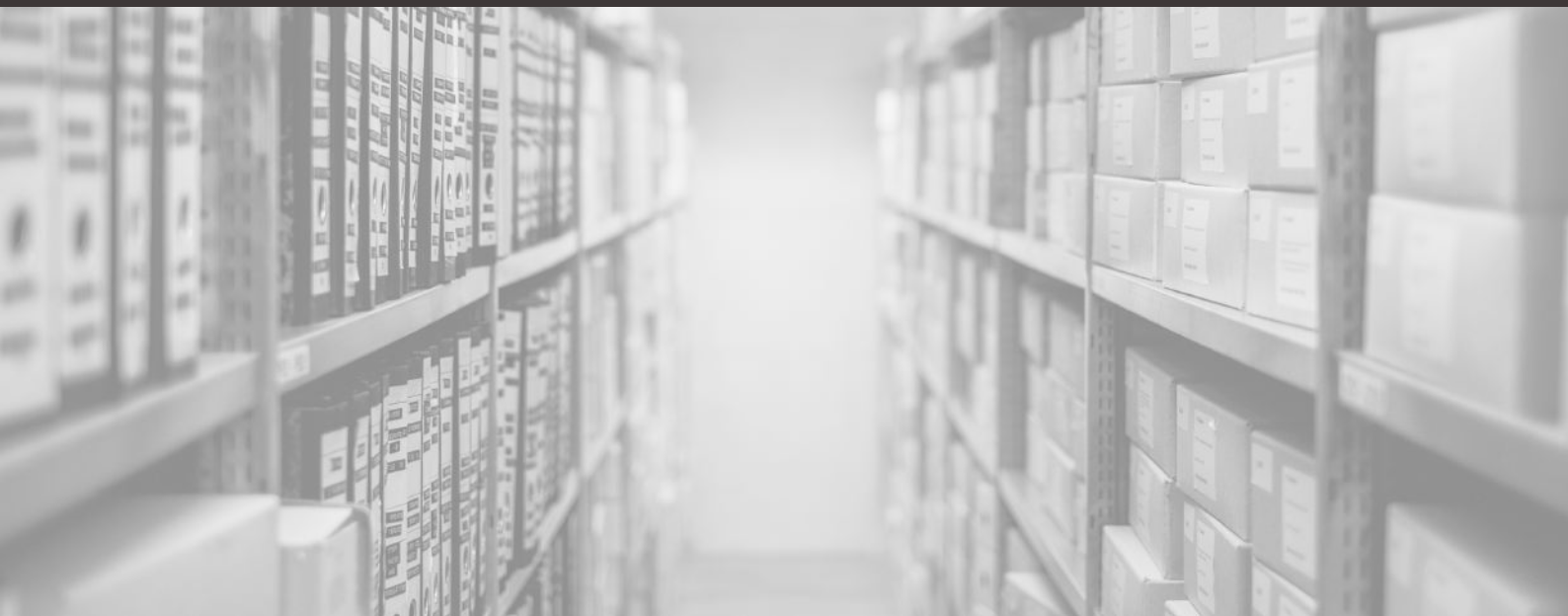


MATERIALITIES

HISTORY, HERITAGE AND ARCHIVES



NEW THINKING #3

2019/20

BCMCR

Birmingham Centre
for Media and
Cultural Research

MATERIALITIES AT BCMCR

Over the course of the 2019/20 academic year, researchers in the BCMCR have been producing work in response to the research theme of 'Materialities'. With this theme, we were interested in exploring the ways in which our theoretical work and practice interact with and exist within the material world.

Led by Dr Iain Taylor, the theme has produced a breadth and depth of exciting work across each of our research clusters. This pamphlet has been produced as part of a series, which aims to capture a snapshot of the ideas and discussions which have emerged from the theme over the course of the year, and to provide a resource for colleagues and students who are keen to consider notions of materiality from a range of interdisciplinary perspectives.

For more information on Materialities at BCMCR, or on the work of the Centre generally, please visit our website:

www.BCMCR.org

Birmingham Centre
for Media and
Cultural Research

BCMCR



CONTENTS

Introduction	4
Materialities - the stuff that helps us remember - Vanessa Jackson	8
When the BBC made a Blue Movie - Oliver Carter	12
Materialities of Television History - Charlotte Stevens	16
Tickets please! - Nicolas Pillai	20
Exploring Jazz on Television - Pedro Caravinho	24
Materiality and memory work - Hazel Collie	28

INTRODUCTION

NICK WEBBER

This issue of New Thinking brings together ideas around a major subject of our work in the History, Heritage and Archives (HHA) cluster: that of television. Although cluster members approach the problems of the past and of posterity from a variety of directions, work in HHA often relates to television as a central point, be that as the source of media experiences, the focus of media fandom, or the destination for the output of cultures of production.

The work showcased here draws out questions about how we as researchers engage with materiality in all its various forms. The very nature of television situates much of this consideration in terms of domesticity, and of the everyday. What are the relationships between people, television and the 'stuff' in their lives? As you will see, 'people' here can include the researchers just as much as the researched.

The contributions demonstrate that the materialities of television history are not only enacted in objects – the 'stuff', both physical and digital, which acts as a vessel of memory. They are also manifest in the material *conditions* of consumption, of the space of viewing and of domesticity; and in the material *significance* attached to all of these things. In each case, television exercises a gravity, drawing mnemonic material to it, shaping space and people around it. This occurs not only in the past but, through attention to that past, in the present – as historical materials fill researchers' homes and hard drives, and television studios are set to work re-enacting the practices of former years, creating new memories and artefacts in turn.

Archives lie at the heart of these discussions and activities, as repositories of these materials of memory. In archives, understudied and overlooked pasts are rediscovered; and archival materials can prompt memories – of times of life, say, or periods of work. Yet if archives represent a vital route of access to television’s past, they also constitute sites of concern. Our authors note the at-risk nature of a range of archival material, and the sense of custodianship that is felt by even the accidental archivist. Thus the inherently affective nature of so much of these archives – concerned as they are with experiences of life, with viewing pleasures (or displeasures) – is extended to new audiences through new curators, their own affective connection perhaps not with the original text but with the past that these objects represent.

In aggregate, then, although the pieces here reflect on a range of different materialities, they also invite us to ask some pertinent questions about value – what of the past is valued, how and by whom? It is of course different attitudes to value which prompt the sense that important pasts have been overlooked. The contributions here remind us that, through accessing archives of objects, and engaging with people’s memories, we not only access the materialities of television histories but we *give* those histories materiality. We value them and make them matter, revealing their significance through our analysis and reflection.



History, Heritage and Archives

Materialities



July 2020



MATERIALITIES - THE STUFF THAT HELPS US REMEMBER



VANESSA JACKSON

Vanessa Jackson is a former BBC series producer and now an associate professor in the Institute of Media and English at Birmingham City University. She teaches television production to undergraduates as well as working on employability and enterprise activities. She completed her PhD in television historiography at Royal Holloway, University of London in 2018. Her research interests include the history of television, women roles in the television industry, as well as the uses of social media in community history projects. She has also published on the use of social media in enhancing student employability and engagement.

Running an idiosyncratic archive, pebblemill.org and its associated Facebook page, I've unwittingly become the repository for a lot of stuff, both physical and digital. As we learn from Daniel Miller, 'the best way to understand, convey and appreciate our humanity is through attention to our fundamental materiality' (2010), so that 'stuff' has great significance.

Former BBC staff clear out their lofts and find boxes of BBC Pebble Mill related items, photographs, scripts, caption cards, all manner of stuff which they are often happy to share or give to me. These items have affective importance for the people who have kept them safe for many years, as we learn from Dr Nicolas Pillai's entry in this pamphlet. They are the ephemera of a career in broadcasting, material documents: a letter of disgust from Mary Whitehouse, the title captions of *Nuts in May*, several scripts of *All Creatures Great and Small*, which now occupy quite a lot of my cupboard space, and so despite a passion for the physical objects, I, (and my husband) have developed a preference for digitised versions of the analogue artefacts.

The digitised artefacts (immaterial materials) are key to how my community archive works. In order to engage the online community that has grown up around the Pebble Mill project, each website or Facebook post must have a focus, specifically a visual focus, as my research has shown that a photograph or video, elicits a far better response in terms of comments and 'likes' than a purely written one. The indexicality of photographs seems to make them a stimulus for remembrance. John Berger describes the 'thrill' of seeing a photograph that brings an 'onrush of memory', and that is what I have observed in a communal context on social media. It is the same phenomenon that Dr Hazel Collie explores in her entry in this pamphlet.



Paula Uimonen draws cultural similarities in terms of visual identity between traditional, hard-copy photograph albums and social media profile pictures (2013, p. 134), I argue that this analogy extends beyond profile pictures to the operation of whole Facebook Community pages, like the Pebble Mill one, which act like an online collective photograph album. In her work on 19th Century, and early 20th Century photograph albums, Anna Dahlgren asserts that the older Victorian photograph albums acted as conversation pieces and worked better without text, in contrast to the Edwardian and later ones, which tend to be annotated and are akin to a personal diary (2010). Social media profiles, particularly on sites like Facebook, are the contemporary equivalent of those later annotated albums, and it is significant that Facebook even uses the same language of 'photo albums', and encourages annotation with the message to 'say something about this photo'.

I see my role as guardian of the community's (online) photo album, sharing the photos and other digitised artefacts with the people they have meaning for, responsible for keeping the stuff that evokes those collective memories – both physical and digitised, of BBC Pebble Mill safe.

References

- Berger, J. (1967) *Understanding a Photograph*, London: Penguin Books Ltd
- Dahlgren, A. (2010) *Dated Photographs: The Personal Photo Album as Visual and Textual Medium*, *Photography and Culture*, 3:2, 175-194. Oxon: Routledge
- Miller, D. (2010) *Stuff*. Cambridge: Polity Press
- Uimonen, P. (2013) *Visual identity in Facebook*, *Visual Studies*, 28:2, 122-135, Oxon: Routledge

About

The stories from Pebble Mill, the BBC studios in the West Midlands.



This site is to celebrate and document programme making at BBC Pebble Mill from the building opening in 1971 to being demolished in 2005.

There are video interviews, photographs and text about the programmes and the building. More material will be added in the future. Unfortunately it is not possible to post any BBC footage on the site, due to rights issues.

Venessa Jackson is running this website. Venessa started work at Pebble Mill in 1987, working in the Film Unit, Drama Department, and then in Factual programming, eventually becoming a series producer. She moved to the Mailbox in 2004, and left the BBC in 2008. Venessa is now Degree Leader in Television at Birmingham City University.

This site is part of a research project to document programme making in the region, being undertaken by Venessa, and has been funded by Screen West Midlands.

If you have photos, memories or other material that might be useful, please contact us.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to the site so far!

BBC FILMS 'BLUE
MOVIE' MAKING FOR
OPEN UNIVERSITY

BBC FILMS 'BLUE
MOVIE' MAKING FOR
OPEN UNIVERSITY

WHEN THE BBC MADE A BLUE MOVIE

By SEAN DAY-LEWIS, TV and Radio Correspondent

A television camera crew has made a record of hard pornography film makers for use in a projected Open University

programme "Blue Movie" at Work." Some of the programmes will be shown on B B C 2 next year.

The programme was made for the B B C by Mr John Lindsay last year, who was cleared at Birmingham Crown Court of conspiring to publish obscene films.

Also interviewed for the programme were a number of "blue movie" players, including Cathy Schrieber and Roger Nelson.

"The programme has not yet been completed, much less edited, and no final decision has yet been made about whether to include it in the series," said a B B C spokesman yesterday. "In any case it is out of the question that anything pornographic will be allowed on the screen.

"The idea is to interview people in their own working atmosphere, so the pornographers were asked to simulate the making of a 'blue movie' and the B B C crew simply recorded the process of shooting such a film, as a preliminary to the interviews."

The B B C refused to discuss fees, but it is believed that Mr Lindsay received £100 for setting up the session and the five players interviewed - received £10 each. The money came from the Open University broadcasting budget, paid as a direct grant from the Department of Education and Science.

OLIVER CARTER

Dr. Oliver Carter is a Reader in Creative Economies at Birmingham City University. His research focuses on alternative economies of cultural production; informal forms of industry that are often removed from a formal cultural industries discourse. He is the author of the monograph *Making European Cult Cinema: Fan Enterprise in an Alternative Economy*, and is currently writing his second monograph, which explores the cultural and economic development of the British adult film industry. This research has informed the award winning documentary series *Sexposed* and the feature *Hardcore Guaranteed*. In 2018 he was awarded a British Academy Small Grant to explore the transnational trade in hardcore pornography between Britain, Scandinavia and the Netherlands/

Last year, the Open University celebrated their 50th anniversary. Like many who grew up in the 1980s, I can recall the late-night BBC broadcasts of Open University programmes featuring hairy middle-aged men usually wearing tweed jackets adorned with leather elbow patches that were often shown at school when teachers needed a break. The intention of this programming was to widen participation in education, following the public service remit of the BBC, but to also support those who were studying at the Open University. In 1975, a series of programmes were planned around the subject of People and Work, a module delivered by Geoff Esland at the Open University. As part of this series, an episode titled 'Dirty and Deviant' was planned, which explored those who were involved in the production of pornographic films, or, as they were more colloquially referred to, blue movies.

A BBC producer named Pritchard, was tasked with making the programme, and had arranged for a producer of blue films, John Jesnor Lindsay, to be filmed while he was making a simulated pornographic film. It was anticipated that all of those involved in the production would be interviewed, offering a window into this clandestine aspect of cultural work. Around this time, Lindsay had been heavily featured in the tabloid press, due to his involvement in a relatively high-profile obscenity trial for conspiring with others to produce obscene films, for which he was acquitted in 1973. He had also made a documentary titled *The Pornbrokers* (1973), which investigated the business of blue movies in the context of the Longford Report, which called for greater control of the pornography trade in the United Kingdom, but had little impact on policy. Instead, its impact was making pornography a subject of public debate; a business that was once hidden was now revealed.

Education and Science.
grant from the Department of
ing budget, paid as a direct
the Open University broadcast-
£10 each. The money came from
players interviewed - received
ting up the session and the five
Lindsay received £100 for set-
fees, but it is believed that Mr
The BBC refused to discuss
the interviews."
such a film, as a preliminary to
corded the process of shooting
and the BBC crew simply re-
the making of a 'blue movie',
graphers were asked to simulate
atmosphere, so the porno-
people in their own working
"The idea is to interview
be allowed on the screen.
that anything pornographic will
any case it is out of the question
BBC spokesman yesterday. "In
include it in the series," said a
yet been made about whether to
edited, and no final decision has
been completed, much less
"The programme has not yet
Roger Nelson.
including Cathy Schreiber and
of "blue movie" players,
programme were a number
Also interviewed for the
obscene films.
out of conspiring to publish

'Extreme Jobs'

Altogether the BBC has a
staff of some 250, including 65
directly involved with television
and radio production, working
the Open University at Alex-
andra Palace. They make about
30 hours of television and 30
hours of radio for use during the
The producer is Gwynn Prit-
chard, at present working on a
different project in Canada,
having been seconded from the
Open University to BBC general
features.
The idea is to show "various
BBC staff.
facilities in collaboration with
sciences and educational studies
the Open University's social
being organised by academics of
and 16 radio programmes. It is
25-minute television programmes
is expected to consist of eight
The "People at Work" course
'Extreme jobs'

Lindsay revealed his involvement in the BBC programme to a News of the World journalist, stating that the BBC had “recorded the making of an orgy film”, suggesting that the BBC had in fact funded the making of a hardcore pornographic film, rather than the intended simulation. This triggered a police investigation into the matter, which is documented in case files that are available at the National Archives, and articles from the tabloid press who reported the case. Material traces such as these offer a unique insight into how Britain’s illicit trade in hardcore pornography was policed and regulated, albeit giving a limited perspective. The files contain interviews conducted with the major players, as well as documents from the investigation, such as receipts and contracts confirming Lindsay’s involvement. Lindsay’s interview with the police also highlights the transnational nature of the trade, indicating that the film he made was sold to a European distributor. However, they also call into nature the reliability of such materials as they show conflicting evidence, with police taking the side of the BBC rather than Lindsay, a criminal in the eyes of British law. What is evident is that the BBC did pay for the production of a blue movie that was likely made available for sale. The investigation determined that there was no case to prosecute, relegating this incident to the shadier annals of BBC history.



BBC FILMS 'BLUE MOVIE' MAKING FOR OPEN UNIVERSITY

By SEAN DAY-LEWIS, TV and Radio Correspondent

A BBC Television camera crew has made a record of hard pornography film makers in action, for use in a projected Open University course called "People at Work." Some of the material may be shown on BBC 2 next year.

The session was set up for the BBC by Mr John Lindsay who, after two trials last year, was cleared at Birmingham Crown Court of conspiring to publish obscene films.

Also interviewed for the programme were a number of "blue movie" players, including Cathy Schreiber and Roger Nelson.

"The programme has not yet been completed, much less edited, and no final decision has yet been made about whether to include it in the series," said a BBC spokesman yesterday. "In any case it is not of the nature that anything pornographic will be allowed on the screen."

"The idea is to interview people in their own working atmosphere, so the pornography were asked to simulate the making of a 'blue movie' and the BBC crew simply recorded the process of shooting such a film, as a preliminary to the interviews."

The BBC refused to discuss fees, but it is believed that Mr Lindsay received £800 for setting up the session and the five players interviewed received £10 each. The money came from the Open University broadcasting budget, paid as a direct grant from the Department of Education and Science.

'Extreme Jobs'

The "People at Work" course is expected to consist of eight 25-minute television programmes and 16 radio programmes. It is being organised by academics of the Open University's social sciences and educational studies faculty in collaboration with BBC staff.

The idea is to show "various job environments" including steel making, biscuit making, management, and medicine. In addition there will probably be two films concentrating on "extreme job circumstances" such as embalming, undertaking, sewage working and pornography.

The producer is Gwynn Pritchard, at present working on a different project in Canada, having been recruited from the Open University to BBC general features.

Altogether the BBC has a staff of some 500 including 60 directly involved with television and radio production, working for the Open University at Alexandra Palace. They make about 20 hours of television and 30 hours of radio for use during the

MATERIALITIES OF TELEVISION HISTORY



CHARLOTTE STEVENS

Charlotte is a Lecturer in Media and Communication at BCU. She earned her PhD in Film & Television Studies at the University of Warwick (2015). This work is now a monograph titled *Fanvids*, published by Amsterdam University Press (2020).

She has published articles in *Feminist Media Studies*, *CineAction*, and on the *Critical Studies in Television* blog, as well as chapters about Doctor Who, vidding, video game fans, and historical precedents of binge-watching (forthcoming from Edinburgh University Press).

In 2018 and 2019, I was lucky enough to access fanzine collections in Ontario and Texas. In both, I focused on a subset of zines that published 'letters of comment' (LOCs), known as letterzines, focusing on a sample from the late 1970s and early 1980s. The LOCs are about the programmes that the letter-writers are watching, but also about how, where and when this watching happens. In terms of materiality, these letterzines account for historical relationships with television in at least three directions:

1. Reflecting on working with paper documents, and with their digital copies
2. In one case, the complementary collections overlapped, and the handwritten annotations on archived pieces differ
3. Material conditions of watching television are part of fans' accounts of being an audience

This piece expands and reflects on these directions.

As material objects, I encountered these documents as physical artefacts and in their digitised versions. In Ontario I worked through uncatalogued paper zines, pausing to note the texture, colour, and form as I took thousands of photos for future study. The material in Texas was supplied as pdf and tiff files, without getting hands on. I'm mindful of my different approach to working with zines in both forms: the practice of reading and reviewing documents by flipping through physical pages (having sat on a plane to get there), differs from reading text in an image file at my leisure on a laptop, which differs again from being able to search through OCR'd pages in a pdf.



Each zine is a unique object, and this is emphasised with handwritten notes on zines that individualise these 'mass' printed objects. For example, in the two collections there are a pair of copies of the same zine issue, one postmarked June 1976, the other postmarked July 1976, with handwritten notes on the final page. One is evidently a personal reply to a previous query; the other apologises to the recipient for the delay in mailing the zine. These each give the individual object an anchoring in someone's life, making them more than just printed matter. They are periodicals, but they are also used as notepaper.

The zines are a forum for television talk, with the letters themselves capturing historical accounts of television viewing. This is not merely what fans thought about storyworlds, but includes the practice and experience of being a television audience. Offhand comments around the shows themselves show how media consumption is integrated into daily life, and the material conditions thereof. For example, one LOC-writer in 1975 describes keeping a Nielsen diary, but points out its design doesn't capture that their schedule was atypical, or any qualitative response to what they watched, and that they had to fight with their antenna to get a decent colour picture of a syndicated *Star Trek* episode. However, in these comments and peripheral details in between plot and character chat we get something of the texture, colour, and form of the material realities of pre-digital television.





PLEASE DO NOT
REMOVE ANYTHING
FROM THIS AREA
UNTIL YOU ARE
TOLD TO DO SO

MEMBER
MOSAIC

MOVIC 49



TICKETS PLEASE



NICOLAS PILLAI

Dr Nicolas Pillai is a research fellow specialising in jazz and visual culture. His first monograph, *Jazz as Visual Language: Film, Television and the Dissonant Image*, rethinks the technological and institutional processes that mediate jazz onscreen. He has been a frequent guest speaker at the National Jazz Archive, has curated a season of screenings at the Vortex Jazz Club and was the keynote speaker at the 2013 Jazz & Cinema conference. He has contributed to numerous chapters and articles in journals in jazz studies and is the co-editor of *New Jazz Conceptions: History, Theory, Practice* and the special issue 'Brilliant Corners: Approaches to Jazz & Comics'.

In 1965, John Weston wrote to the BBC. He was requesting tickets for the recording of the Victor Feldman Trio as part of the music series *Jazz 625*. BBC policy was to release these free of charge on request, processed by the producer's secretary. After the gig, John kept the two tickets along with his scrapbooks of press cuttings and gig programmes. In 2018, when I visited him to record an interview, he gifted me one of the tickets. I was taken aback and a little cautious about the ethics of accepting it. Embarrassment and his insistence made me do so in the end. When I got it home, I put the ticket in a frame and hung it in my hallway. I look at it every day. John had never thought to frame it.



Studio audience ticket for recording of Jazz 625 (1965). Kept for 54 years in collection of John Weston. Now in a frame in my house.

In 2019, BBC Four was broadcasting a live re-enactment of *Jazz 625*. I'd worked on the programme pitch, then as a research consultant and now I was sitting in the front row of the audience. I was wearing a boiler suit and a neckerchief because I had thought that would be cool but now I was regretting that decision every time the camera swivelled to me and my wife, sitting awkwardly between Jay Rayner and Gilles Peterson. The presenter of the show Andi Oliver was holding a script card. One side visible to the camera recreated the 1960s *Jazz 625* logo. The other side was her script, worked up from my notes to the producer. When the shoot ended, I knew that card was going in the bin. I stole it.



JAZZ
625

Script card used by Andi Oliver during broadcast of *Jazz 625 Live* (2019). On the back is the link script written by producer Janie Valentine from my notes.

in 2020 I was invited to London for the Broadcast Awards 2020. In the post I received a ticket that instructed me on dress code and ceremony schedule. I was nervous – not about our programme being in competition – but about entering an arena where I didn't know the rules. I spent an afternoon in the shops trying on tuxedo jackets. In the end I found one in the sales and lodged the ticket in the inside pocket. It has stayed there forgotten since February until I recovered it to write this piece.

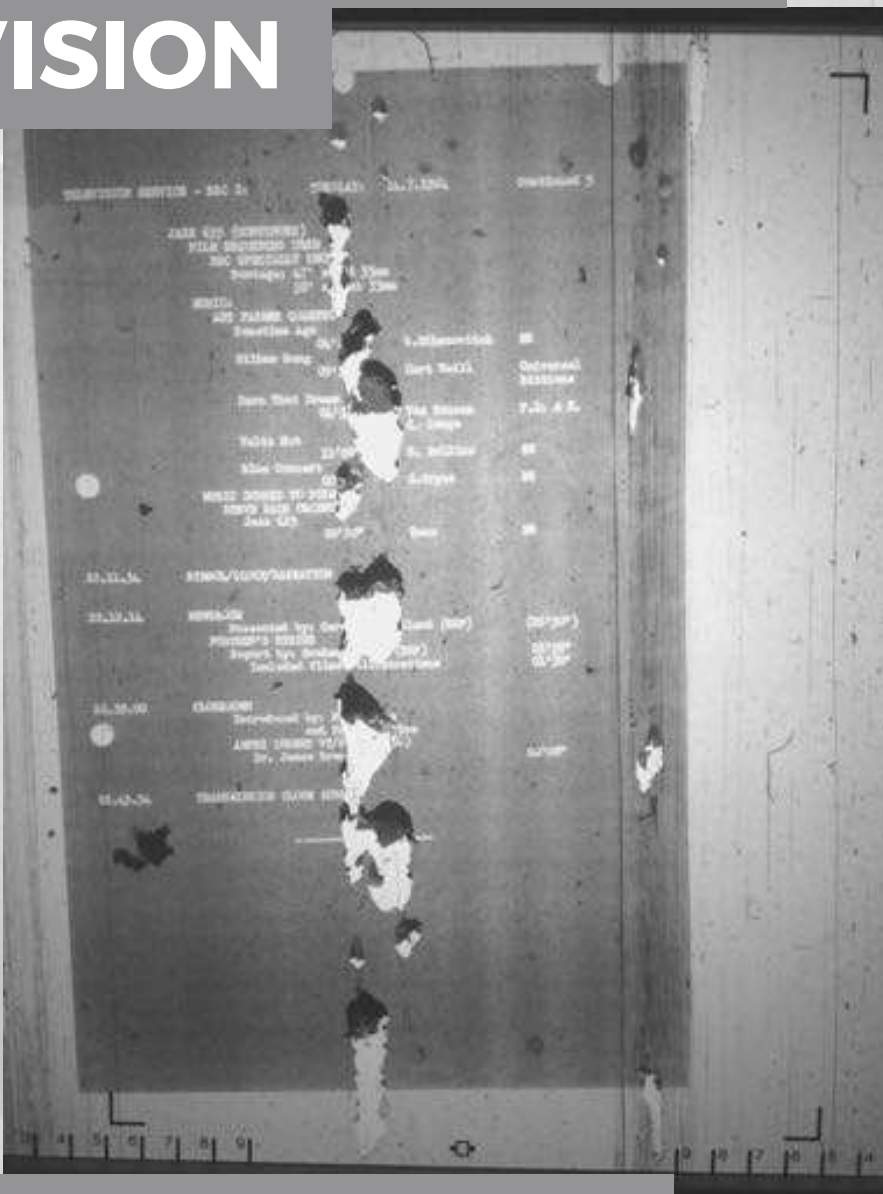
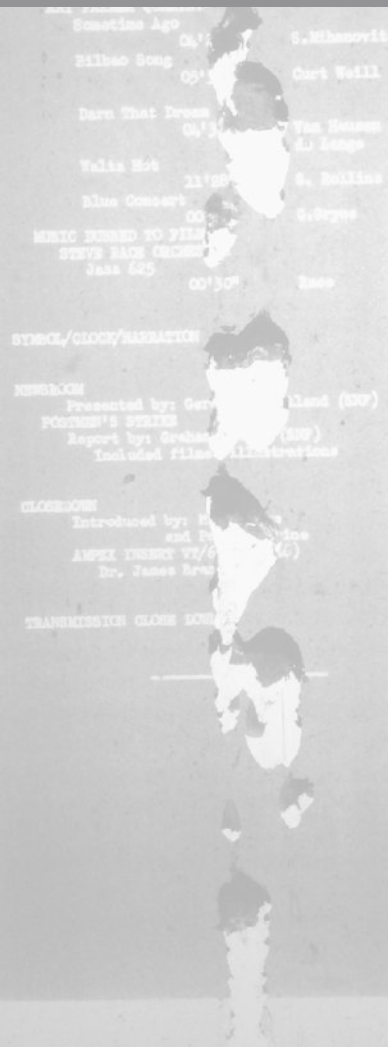


Invitation to Broadcast Awards 2020. On the back are instructions as to dress code and ceremony schedule. Recovered from my tuxedo jacket this morning.

Each of these tickets had a simple function. Now they are defunct – but my personal relationship to them is highly charged. I fancy myself a custodian of John Weston's ticket but really it's a collector's pride that made me put it in a frame. The script card was on the telly, performing my research. The awards ticket was the least loved but also the most unique to me.

I keep circling these landmarks and the view is different every time I look.

EXPLORING JAZZ ON TELEVISION



PEDRO CRAVINHO

Dr Pedro Cravinho, researches and writes about Jazz, Media, and Archives. Currently, he is the Keeper of the Archives at the Faculty of Arts, Design & Media, and a Senior Research Fellow at Birmingham Centre for Media and Cultural Research. His research interests include the twentieth-century jazz diaspora social, political and musical history.

He is a member of the Editorial Board of Jazz-Hitz, a Trustee for the National Jazz Archive, a board member of the Duke Ellington Society UK, a member of Jazz Promotion Network, and co-founder and board member of Portugal Jazz (Portuguese Jazz Network).

Over the past decade, my research, which initially began with the Portuguese Public Television, and more recently expanded to other European countries, has been focused on cultural politics of jazz on television. It explores how television jazz programmes in post-WWII, and throughout the Cold War Era, became a space of representation of the 'jazz world'. However, an essential distinction must be made between music *on* television and music *in* television: in other words, between televised music performances ('diegetic') and those programmes in which performers of music are unseen ('non-diegetic'). My research is about jazz *on* television, focus on the televised jazz performances, its production, the professionals and musicians involved, and their repertoires. It does not include the presence of jazz in advertisements, talk shows, nor within the diverse settings of musical shows.

It examines the television jazz production that took place in a period described as the 'era of scarcity', still under strong influence from the US (Ellis 2002). It was characterised by one or two channels broadcasting for part of the day, a situation that lasted in some European countries until the 1970s. Eco called it the era of 'Paleo-TV', characterised by the television's intention to 'talk' about the external world (Eco 1990). A period when TV changed patterns of family life and evening routines, and 'moulded itself to the patterns of everyday life, and in doing so defined and standardised them' (Ellis 2002).

Gradually television broadcasts became entangled in the day-to-day lives of the viewers, as 'an unobtrusive temporal sequence of events that gave structure and substance to everyday life' (Scannell 1996). It is precisely those *events*, as Scannell refers to them - or, more accurately, the ones dedicated to jazz - that I began examining. Although the term 'event' can be used in many ways, I borrow Getz's definition as 'an occurrence at a given place and time; a special set of circumstances; a noteworthy occurrence' (Getz 2007).





In the 'era of scarcity', television jazz programmes can be perceived as televised *planned events*, using Getz's definition. Since those programmes had a specific start and end time, were essentially unrepeatable, were produced and publicised in advance, and were socially, culturally – and in some cases politically – constructed (Getz 2007). Moreover, those programmes, whether live transmissions or imported contents, not only influenced but profoundly transformed how viewers accessed jazz. Additionally, musicians themselves also took on the role of consumers when watching jazz *on* television. As televised *planned events*, those programmes introduced viewers to new transnational music experiences.

I argue that a historical review of the diversity of television jazz production affords us not only a better understanding of the development of jazz in Europe but also of the medium itself throughout the twentieth century. And this brings me to the image I have chosen (below) for the History, Heritage and Archives cluster – Materialities reflection. It is a microfilm of a television jazz production file, like many other thousands I have consulted and photographed in several European archives. The original file no longer exists after it was microfilmed. As we can observe, the latter is also at risk. With no access to original documentation and relying only on the microfilms ephemerality, there is the danger of losing this, often absent, or misunderstood, still unwritten story.

JACK EY (CONTINUED)
 FILE NUMBER 1000
 NO SPECIAL INFO
 Postage 17 1/2
 20 1/2

MAIL

ADJ PARRIS OFFICE

Executive Apt

01/11

V. Williams

20

Ellen King

01/11

Hart Tullis

Continental

10000000

John Paul Jones

01/11

Via Express

7.25 A.M.

L. Long

Yates St

01/11

S. Williams

20

Miss Gandy

01/11

L. Long

20

MAIL DOWN TO JOHN

10000000

Jack EY

01/11

See

20

11.11.11

RENO/COLO/ARIZONA

11.11.11

RENO/ARIZ

Presented by Carl

Case (100)

01/11

PHOTO'S TAKEN

Report by Gandy

(100)

01/11

Included files

11.11.11

(ARIZONA)

Delivered by

01/11

ADJ PARRIS OFFICE

(100)

01/11

Dr. James Jones

11.11.11

THUNDERBOLT CLARK HINDS



MATERIALITY AND MEMORY WORK

HAZEL COLLIE

Hazel Collie completed her PhD “Television for Women: Generation, Gender and the Everyday” at De Montfort University in 2014, undertaken as part of the AHRC funded project “A History of Television for Women in Britain, 1947-1989”. She is particularly interested in the historical audience and uses an oral history method to gain a sense of how media audiences use media to articulate their identity over time in relation to the media that they have used. Hazel is currently working on a project which maps migration narratives on to media use, to interrogate the shifting nature of identity and understanding of nation and family. Hazel teaches on research based modules across all three years of the BA Media and Communication degree and is the ethical review co-ordinator for BCMCR.

From the outset of this year's materialities theme, the most obvious connection between materiality and my own oral history research was a methodological one. Namely, the way that material objects might aid memory work and complement the use of television as a way to explore life narratives.



My own television
memory treasure trove.

Although there is a corpus of work which deals with the relationship between domestic spaces and materiality, in Television Studies the relationship is under-considered and over-looked. This is particularly surprising as so much of this work likes to think about television as an eminently domestic technology. While aspects of this relationship have been nibbled around the edges by, for example, Lynn Spigel's work on the placement of the television set in the home (Spigel, 1992) and Amy Holdsworth's fleeting observation on the way the television attracts objects of memory (Holdsworth, 2011). Perhaps these connections were not explored further because they acted as a means to launch into a textually driven conversation. In my own audience-based research, however, these connections take on an added significance. We might be reticent to admit the centrality of the television to domestic rhythms and life (because the television has traditionally been seen as lower down the cultural hierarchy than other media forms), but the way it becomes a magnet for material objects of value suggests otherwise.


What is remembered is often what is valued, and that value comes with emotions attached. Materiality offers a framework through which to explore and understand how certain items are imbued with emotional significance. These suggestive similarities between memory and materiality seem important here, and suggest that the two frameworks have much to say to each other. Annette Kuhn explores the value of the material (in the form of the family photo album) to memory work. My own experience suggests that the television surround might act as an extension of the family photo album. The material objects which cluster around the television (photos, knick-knacks, memorabilia...stuff) are constantly present and very visible. Around this 'stuff', the objects invested with emotional significance and displayed because they are valued and worthy of 'remembering', the day to day workings of a household are enacted.

The oral history narratives which I gathered in participants' homes were longer and were far richer when done in conversation with the material objects of the domestic space as prompts. I have a particular interest in approaches and the way that method might make data. This connection between memory work, oral history and materiality is something that I'm excited to explore further in future.

References

- Holdsworth, A. (2011). *Television, Memory and Nostalgia*. London: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Kuhn, A. (1995). *Family Secrets: Acts of Memory and Imagination*. London and New York: Verso.
- Spigel, L. (1992). *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.





The Birmingham Centre for Media and Cultural Research (BCMCR) was established in 2009 to develop excellent research as a core activity within the Birmingham School of Media. Currently, BCMCR has over 30 research-active staff and 30 research degree students. The Director of the centre is Nicholas Gebhardt, and the Associate Directors are Kirsten Fokert and Dima Saber.

The BCMCR aims to produce distinctive, collaborative work within the field of media and culture research. In the previous Research Excellence Framework process for assessing the UK HE sector, the majority of BCMCR research environment and activities were judged as of a quality that is internationally excellent in terms of originality, significance and rigour.

We welcome visiting researchers from across the world and hold regular research seminars which mix presentations from staff, students, and speakers from a range of our collaborative partnerships. Please feel free to contact us if you have a research enquiry.

www.BCMCR.org

**Birmingham Centre
for Media and
Cultural Research**

BCMCR



Over the course of the 2019/20 academic year, researchers from the Birmingham Centre for Media and Cultural Research (BCMCR) have been working in response to the research theme of **Materialities**.

Colleagues from each of the BCMCR's research clusters were asked to create short pieces of writing which capture some of the thoughts, ideas, and discussions which have emerged over the course of the year in relation to the **Materialities** theme.

This work forms the basis of a series of pamphlets which capture the ways in which the theme has shaped / changed thinking within each cluster.