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# Digital Spaces in Jazz Music : Are Our Bedrooms the New Jazz Place ?

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The article provides an overview of digital spaces intersecting with the jazz culture.

First, it outlines how digital spaces bring together different jazz traditions and practices in contexts not related to territorial demarcation. The aim is to focus on how these musical styles are evolving into genuine melting pots, rather than being confined to specific and localized physical spaces.

Secondly, we will outline the effects of the standardization of home studio and "bedroom" settings. Homemade productions often originate from similar initial conditions. From the digital space, home studio and "bedroom" jazz seem to recover household intimate aesthetic values and common characteristics that lead jazz towards new shared horizons.

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*L'article propose une analyse approfondie des interactions entre la culture du jazz et les espaces numériques. Il offre une perspective d'ensemble sur les dynamiques et les convergences qui se dessinent entre ces deux domaines d'expression.*

*Dans un premier temps, l'auteur expose la manière dont les espaces numériques rassemblent différentes traditions et pratiques du jazz dans des contextes dépourvus de toute démarcation territoriale. L'objectif de cette étude est de comprendre comment ces genres musicaux se transforment en véritables creusets culturels, dépassant les limites des espaces physiques qui leur sont traditionnellement assignés.*

*Dans un second temps, nous aborderons les effets de la standardisation des home studios et des « chambres à coucher ». Les productions maison partent souvent de conditions initiales similaires. Dans l'espace numérique, le home studio et le jazz « de chambre » semblent retrouver des valeurs esthétiques intimes et des caractéristiques communes qui conduisent le jazz vers de nouveaux horizons partagés.*

The music world is rapidly moving into new digital spaces, and jazz is no exception. Although this musical genre is firmly rooted in live music performance, the digital dimension is profoundly changing the aesthetic approach and related practices in jazz.

The advent of new technologies aims to establish and define the digital space as a pivotal and formative space for jazz musicians - the digital dimension influences the development of musical notions, artistic projection, and the creation of music itself.

This perspective is particularly evident after the COVID-19 pandemic phase, in which jazz musicians played and disseminated their songs from home thanks to digital devices. These new technologies allowed us to immerse ourselves in the intimacy of great musicians' homes and turn them into real musical environments.

Today, this kind of "bedroom" jazz has become a musical setting. The practices have led to the emergence of new stylistic modes and frameworks that are translated to physical space. Phenomena such as home recording and self-publishing have become aesthetic content and conditions appreciated by renowned jazz musicians worldwide, including, for example, John Scofield [1], Enrico Pieranunzi [2], and Julian Lage [3].

The digital musical perspective of jazz, situated within a broader musical framework, is as never before transcending traditional territorial boundaries. Jazz is evolving into authentic melting pots of cultural fusions. Rather than being limited into physical space, the musical genre now exists within a larger, more diverse musical context that exceeds usual borders. This new landscape enables a more authentic blending of cultural traditions from around the world.

The jazz genre has historically been associated with specific cultural centres of reference. This is evidenced by the emergence of distinctive musical scenes in locations such as New Orleans, New York, Paris, Cape Town, and beyond. These scenes have developed their own unique approaches to music, influencing both the form and aesthetic of jazz. The advent of the Internet has brought about a significant shift in this landscape. This globalising process appears to concentrate the spaces of music in a shared container, with musical practices collectively gathered in a single space : the digital one.

A multitude of studies and reflections have been conducted to observe the digital environment, with a particular focus on its *multi-layered* and *pervasive* nature. In the context of the philosophy of information, the term "infosphere" [4] has been reworked to emphasize the ways in which virtual reality is redefining the complex of data, communication, and human knowledge, in various *multi-layered* informational entities. Concurrently, the term "onlife" [5] was coined to represent the *pervasive* experience, produced by digital spaces, that human beings make when they no longer distinguish between online and offline.

In the digital space, music is no exception. Digital technology represents a genuine common and multifunctional source, offering a multitude of possibilities for listening, gathering feedback and discussion (through social media and specific forums), training (with online schools, digital music lessons and video tutorials), shared practice (with particular reference to new sites and applications that allow musicians from the other side of the world to play almost in real time), and the publication of artistic works by musicians. Its pervasiveness can also be seen, for example, in how this space represents a significant nexus for music education. The abundance of online video courses, lessons and musical tricks is transforming the "infosphere" of music learning and musical practice itself. In general, this implies transcultural transformations that affect the developments of instrumental technique and the way of thinking about music, including jazz, both in terms of pragmatic musical analysis through which some pieces are studied, and in the approach to the repertoire.

Furthermore, the standardisation of home studios and "bedroom" settings, as well as home-made publications that often originate from similar initial conditions, result in the production of globally common effects. From the digital space, home studios and "bedroom jazz" appear to recover the intimate aesthetic values of the home and the common characteristics that lead jazz to new shared horizons.

As previously stated, digitalization in the field of music is an ongoing phenomenon that affects all musical processes in general. Here, we elaborate on this issue by identifying four main trend lines produced by digital technologies that interface specifically with the jazz music genre.

## Less interplay, more intimacy

The shift from a physical space to virtual space has a significant impact on the interaction between musicians during performance. Traditionally, jazz has been characterized by strong *interplay* [6] between musicians. This concept includes mutual listening, instantaneous response, and collective improvisation, which has characterized live jazz performances and contributed to the formative development of many musicians from this musical background. The advent of digital technologies and their mass dissemination has led to the identification of the digital space as a place of musical education and production. However, within this same space, the physical interplay between musicians and the processes of real-time musical interchange are complicated. Studio recordings can be made separately, without the need to play together in the same physical space. Artists can create complete tracks alone or in groups, exploiting virtual instruments, samplers and production software that do not necessarily require real-time interaction. Furthermore, the ability to interact with someone from the other side of the world is now possible. However, these technologies are not yet ready for the complex interplay processes of jazz in presence.

In his research, Caporaletti has identified a specific temporal window of 15 to 20 milliseconds during which microstructural processes in music are activated [7]. Given that 5G network technologies have a latency time of only 1 millisecond [8], it seems reasonable to suggest that we are not too far from being able to interact online in almost perfect synchrony. As claimed by Peroni : « in perspective, we can be confident that, with the help of increasingly high-performance technologies, latency time will decrease to the point where it will no longer be a perceptual problem in the coming years » [9]. However, as recent musicological projections related to the paradigm of audiotactile music theory [10] have shown, the aspects related to the instantaneous response of the interplay are not constituted as simple stimuli and responses of an auditory process. Rather, they are complex relational interactions that also involve the other senses in order to be represented in complete and shared formulas. In this logic, the concept of interplay, understood as an instantaneous response and musical exchange between musicians, does not manifest itself simply as auditory stimuli and responses. Rather, it involves a variety of complex relational processes that, as we know them, take place in the real spatial context.

Digital interplay will be always something different between live

From this perspective, it can be observed that the musical environment is undergoing a significant transformation.

The new digital dimension of the musical space seems to set aside the dynamicity of the stimulus-response process related to the relationship with other musicians in favour of a more self-centred maturation of the artistic product. That is to say : it is one thing to be able to record in one's home studio, being able to take, for instance, endless takes of a solo, it is quite another to have to depend (for better or worse) on the interaction with other musicians (or with sound engineers and/or other interconnected figures) to record the work.

This shift - as much technical as practical - suggests to the "digital" musician a comfort zone derived precisely from the physical space of his or her "bedroom" that is in dialogue exclusively with the vastness of virtual space. The interplay therefore no longer takes place between musician and musician, or at least not directly, but rather between the real dimension of one's own home and the digitally enhanced musical production. In this case, moreover, judgement by other people can be postponed until the musician himself expressly requests it by sharing the content. The dilation of the concept of time, due to not having to compare oneself with other musicians and a possible audience present, the comfort zone in which one records, the self-referentiality of one's self as the main subject involved, induce formulas that suggest and refer to a sense of intimacy. The artistic centre of gravity thus shifts, influencing the very content of the musical production : what transpires is the aesthetics of the "bedroom", the domestic feeling. We note here a trend, beyond any generalisation. This is the case, in our opinion, in the 2022 solo guitar disc of the prominent jazz-rock guitarist John Schofield. When interviewed about this, he stated :

I think that a lot of us played solo guitar for two years, you know the pandemic... and what got me going in this direction. I never had a recording thing at home, so I bought some stuff and was able to record my electric guitar [...]. I started to record [...]. I think basically solo jazz guitar is limited [...] to get a groove [...] is hard and I like to play in time and the loop thing has really helped with that. [...] That really developed during covid because I was home alone like everybody with my wife [...]. So, I got into it. [...] The record is just that, it's just me. I've been kind of a lead player, and yeah, I learned some chords [smiling] [11].

The pandemic has undoubtedly contributed to the growth in dwelling this virtual musical space. As Schofield notes, the context is one of intimacy and family, with the reference to one's affections, in this case to his wife, being repeatedly recalled throughout the interview. Such a context has even modified the way of playing of an artist who, for more than 40 years, has always considered himself a lead player (thus implying a dimension of live relationality in direct interaction with other musicians). He candidly states that he has learned a few chords to play alone. This is also the case with the album, which is sustained on overdubs that hardly proceed on medium up tempos, but rather approach slow tempos. The album is not a ballad album, that does not really seem to be the intention. Rather, it is an album that, being a "child" of the virtual environment of solo sound recordings, proceeds on criteria that contribute to presenting a particular intimacy. The musical approach to jazz thus seems to take on different nuances. The virtual

space changes the aspects and importance of interplay, and leads to new formulas and new practices of musical creation.

### More "writing", what happens to extemporisation and improvisation ?

The redefinition of the notion of interplay allows us to reflect on how new technologies are changing the practices and processes of musical creation. The extemporising and improvisational practices that are fundamental to the creation of jazz music are subject to mutation and transformation in the context of digital production. In the framework of the theory of audiotactile music, these practices are in fact defined as real-time music creation practices [\[12\]](#). However, in this new context and with these new technologies, the question arises as to the veracity of this time. The ability to overdub a track as many times as one desires, in multiple sessions and without any particular time limit, potentially alters the improvisational process, thereby distancing the new "household" jazz formulas from these processes.

In fact, the creative act of the process remains audiotactile, as the psycho-body factor of the audiotactile principle involved is maintained as the *formative* mediological energy plexus of the recording [\[13\]](#). However, the particular performative gesture of household jazz can be repeated over and over again in order to achieve the desired result. In general, the act of recording an audio track implies a synchronization with the process of inscribing this same track in a context. This context may be represented by other and further tracks on which the audio track is overdubbed. Nevertheless, thanks to the recording technology, the audio track can be recorded for extended periods, even years, until the desired result is achieved. This implies that for each take there is a *synchrony* between the performative act and the recording. However, from the perspective of the final result, namely the complete piece, there may be an *asynchrony*, as this is the outcome of a complex of different recordings. This process, which was already evident in the context of multitrack recording prior to the digital era, becomes even more evident with the advent of new technologies that facilitate the accumulation of recordings and thus the availability of different takes, which the musician can easily select.

Clearly, even in pre-digital recordings, this selection process was of particular importance but was reserved to the few musicians who had the possibility ; digital technologies, on the other hand, has offered the opportunity to experiment with recording practice to a much larger and more heterogeneous set of musicians than in the past.

Indeed, digital technologies, and in particular recent ones, make it possible to edit and mix recordings easily and independently, even reaching professional levels with a considerable reduction in production and management costs.

This diffusion concretely redefines the real space dedicated to the processes of extemporisation and improvisation. The possibility of recording repeatedly reduces improvisational spontaneity in jazz, nullifying the risk of error.

The consequence of this consideration leads us to affirm how these recording formulas bring the processes typical of jazz closer to those of the written compositional tradition. In other words, recordings assume some of the characteristics of notational writing. The capacity to technologically retouch one's own work is analogous to the correction that can be made to a score. This enables the artist to revisit the same section repeatedly, at different times and over an extended period, as is the case in written tradition.

With regard to the theoretical paradigm of audiotactile music, it is not possible to speak of "composition" in the strict sense, as the medium of the notational formula remains effectively *subsumed* [\[14\]](#). The term "composition", according to the theory of audiotactile music, is configured as such precisely because it introjects the notational system as a formative medium of experience that determines its productive and cognitive outcomes. However, the

phenomenon of household jazz provides insight into what we may term "audiotactile compositional musical practices". These are practices, whose formative medium is that of the audiotactile principle, yet whose compositional logic approaches that of notational writing. In audiotactile compositional music practices, the sequential logic inherent to the improvisational process is diminished due to the reliance on digital recordings.

The underlying theme of these statements is the concept of improvisation, which Max Roach describes I.E. as follows : "after you initiate the solo, one phrase determines what the next is going to be. From the first note that you hear, you are responding to what you've just played" [15]. In essence and according with the theory of audiotactile music, improvisation is defined [16] also by the fact that, during the course of a performance, we transition from an initial expression (A) to a subsequent expression (B), then to a third expression Â©, and so on. This process precludes the possibility of modifying the initial expression once it has been formulated. In contrast, in the case of digital productions, it is possible to go back as many times as required and select whether expression A is appropriate. This can be achieved by simply stopping the recording and continuing with edits and cut-and-paste. The new digital process thus becomes a process of audiotactile writing in which the notational system can be abandoned but whose formula of the compositional process is re-presented. To compose, in the etymological sense of "Com-Ponere" (com = with, ponere = to place), that is to affix a musical idea to a text. The text is no longer written but recorded.

## A consequence : jazz for licks

The use of licks or pre-programmed patterns is certainly nothing new in jazz. However, we can point out how, as a result of the ongoing redefinition of the concept of interplay and the new potential of 'audiotactile composition', the licks formula is being intensified. This is the case, for example, with the musical productions of Matteo Mancuso. The Sicilian guitarist, considered an emerging phenomenon in the jazz-rock scene worldwide by guitarists such as Al di Meola, Steve Vai, Eric Johnson and many music critics, makes extensive use of them. This aesthetic logic is corroborated by the musician himself : "you feel the need to fill up space if you don't have a clear idea in mind with some prepared phrases, and that's the same thing with the guitar". The formulaic pattern thus becomes the centre of a certain contemporary and internetophilic jazz aesthetic idea, confronting us with a contemporary paradox. Mancuso continues : "if you have a clear idea of how to play, you will not overplay. If your idea is somehow not so clear you will overplay a lot because you're searching. So, my advice would be if you're not one hundred percent sure of what you will play, just don't play" [17]. The question thus arises at this juncture : is jazz music that which does not involve the improvisational attitude of heuristics of error, and indeed does everything in its power to limit it ? Kenny Barron once posited that : "if you do not make mistakes, you do not play jazz" [18]. Furthermore, Miles Davis asserted that : "When they make records with all the mistakes in, as well as the rest, then they'll really make jazz records. If the mistakes aren't there, too, it ain't none of you" [19]. Adhering to a predefined pattern inherently constrains the potential for error. Playing by pattern actually means limiting the possibility of making mistakes. The legitimate doubt is which that without that complexity, without what Mancuso terms "overplay" and without the sense of risk that characterizes improvisational practice, how can one critically distinguish a valid improvisational idea from another perhaps less valid one ? Does this not run the risk of flattening the performance by providing, on the contrary, an overplay of pre-packaged information ? Thinking exclusively in terms of patterns and licks can make everything shine and sparkle in a constructed, yet preset process. This process, which seems to favour the logic of the pattern rather than that of improvisational interaction, puts us on the trail of a change on an aesthetic level. What we want to emphasize here is that we are de facto witnessing a reversal in the way we think about these musical forms. Mancuso's aesthetic, which in a way represents a new point of reference for millions of listeners and musicians (so says the internet !) goes in the opposite direction to what has been traced by many artists of the past. Of course, it is true that Mancuso himself does not define himself as a true jazz musician, perhaps trying to go beyond a boundary, a cage, that of the musical genre, which has always been tight on artists. However, in this case, the boundary - and our reason for interest - is not so much the fact that Mancuso has developed a certain poetic and that this is or is not jazz music, but rather that this musician is also followed and considered with interest, as a jazz musician, by the jazz music scene of virtual space. It is the scene itself that abandons the expressive poetics of error (proper to "analogic"

jazz and made of real spaces) in virtue of a sound and an aesthetic built for safe patterns, reasoned in advance, in a certain sense, little improvised.

## The new digital space : the content boom

Lastly, we highlight a trend line affecting music in general, the effects of which are also evident in the particular context of jazz. The dissemination of the musical product, today, also and above all passes through social channels. In order to capture attention, these require content of ever shorter duration. The jazz musician who wants to succeed in terms of visibility cannot circumvent this trend. The trend/need therefore seems to be to turn one's performative exposure towards content that involves the performance of short musical developments, "solo pills". This means that we are unlikely to find musical content specifically designed for social media that lasts 10 minutes or more. In contexts such as YouTube, it is possible to find recordings of jazz performances of considerable length, but these are often recordings of actual concert performances in real spaces such as theatres or clubs. In contrast, within the digital domain, the nature of jazz performance appears to exhibit a dualistic quality. On the one hand, the duration of the performance is reduced. On the other hand, there is an expansion of musical possibilities.

In the digital world, the quantity of information is considerable, both in terms of content and geographical scope. In terms of content, the digital realm of jazz is replete with a vast array of resources, accessible with a single click. These resources encompass a multitude of content, lessons, and discussion forums, each with a multifaceted scope. Geographically, the digital space eliminates the limitations of localism within the jazz tradition, extending the music's reach to a more transcultural level. In fact, the cultural centre of gravity seems to remain that of the African American jazz music tradition and the prominent artists belonging to this tradition. However, local cultural needs and stimuli are combined into a globally shared melting pot. The digital space is thus a true collector of musical information whose virtual dimension determines a lightening of the localist configuration of belonging. The musician may originate from Sweden, Egypt, India, or China, but ultimately, they are entering a digital context to receive and provide information or to produce their own art.

Finally, the digital space of jazz, or "worldwide jazz", can be described as an intriguing catalyst for the sharing of ideas and stimuli. In essence, we are witnessing the practical and technological realization of post-modernist thinking, which posits that there is no singular objective aesthetic truth, but rather, multiple subjective hermeneutic interpretations. This dismissed truth then passes into the hands of the artist, who must be able to make good use of it in order to recompose and reconstitute it in the creation of the work of art.

## Conclusions

In this article we have reviewed some of the transformations that have taken place and are taking place in the context of jazz music in relation to the ongoing technological revolution. The advent of new digital spaces is modifying today's musical practices and productions at various levels and from different perspectives, thereby also changing the formulas of music creation and aesthetic intentions.

This change, which is properly a mediological change, became particularly evident after the pandemic phase and, in general, induces effects on the musical environment. In this study, four perspectives of change have been identified.

The first change highlighted was related to the reformulation of the notion of interplay due to the emergence of digital technologies. These seem to set aside the dynamic stimulus-response process related to the relationship with other

musicians in favour of a more self-centred maturation of the artistic product. This shift suggests to the 'digital' musician a comfort zone derived precisely from the physical space of his or her 'bedroom', in dialogue only with the vastness of virtual space. The interplay is no longer between musician and musician, or at least not directly, but between the real dimension of one's own home and the digitally enhanced musical production. The bedroom is increasingly becoming not only a training space for the musician, but also a real and virtual place where the work of art can be codified into a finished product, a veritable 'operational control tower' where all the musical functions can be performed : from creation to practice, recording (including live performances) and dissemination of the product. The result, in our opinion, is also viable in an intimist tendency, in relation to the aesthetic sense favoured precisely by the original setting from which the music is conceived.

The second perspective of change is related to the practices of musical creation. Indeed, we have highlighted how the mediological 'filter' of digital technology places us on the trail of what we may call 'audiotactile compositional musical practices'. These are practices whose formative medium is that of the audiotactile principle, but whose compositional logic approaches that of notational writing. The audiotactile medium thus interfaces with the new computerised technologies that transform the processes of extemporisation and improvisation into immediately codifiable formulas that also refer back to practices of the compositional tradition.

The third perspective emphasizes how the redefinition of the approach to interplay and the technologized development of audiotactile musical practices has led to an increased use of pre-programmed licks or patterns in the musical making of many mainstream musicians. We have also highlighted how this change tends to redefine the notion of musical 'error' in the context of jazz.

The fourth shift highlighted relates the perspective of jazz to the context of social media, highlighting how the digital space of jazz moves on different horizons from traditional ones, both in terms of content and geographically.

In conclusion, we will attempt to respond to the thought-provoking question posed in the article's title : "Are Our Bedrooms the New Jazz Place ?" The musical genre of jazz is undergoing a significant ontological transformation, with fundamental characteristics such as interplay and musical mistakes being re-evaluated. Concurrently, musical practices, duration and places are also changing. The transformation that is taking place appears radical and resistant to simple absorption and labelling within the established conceptual framework of jazz. It seems also probable that our bedrooms will become the setting for the future of music. However, these new jazz-oriented digital musics, rather than belonging to jazz and its analogue space, perhaps deserve to be considered independently, with a new terminological label, and evaluated with new analytical criteria.

*Post-scriptum :*

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