

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

From Columbia Studio B to Carnegie Hall:
The Studio-to-Stage Creative Trajectory
in the Fusion Jazz of Miles Davis

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Music
in
Musicology

at the New Zealand School of Music
Massey University, Wellington
New Zealand

Timothy Douglas Booth

2015

© Copyright by
Timothy Douglas Booth
All rights reserved
September 2015

Abstract

This thesis proposes an interrelationship between the creative processes of the recording studio and the concert stage in the fusion jazz of Miles Davis. Recent scholarship highlights the importance of the recording studio to fusion jazz musicians as they developed unique approaches to composition and improvisation. While providing valuable insight into the studio-derived creative processes distinctive of fusion jazz, this scholarship inadvertently obscures some of the live performance practices of fusion jazz musicians. Turning attention towards live performance, yet without neglecting the insights of this recent scholarship, I consider how the creative processes forged by Davis in the recording studio manifested in his activities as a concert artist. Combining commentary on Davis's formative fusion jazz studio recordings (produced between 1969 and 1972) with analyses of the live album *Dark Magus* (exemplary of his mid-1970s concert performances), this thesis suggests a reorientation in Davis's conceptions of improvisation and composition during this period by highlight some of the creative processes he engaged in, both in the recording studio and on the concert stage.

Drawing on the accounts of several musicians who worked with Davis in the recording studio during the late-1960s and early 1970s, I consider how post-production tape editing allowed Davis and his band a new means for composing and improvising in the studio. Then, to demonstrate what I have termed a studio-to-stage creative trajectory, I analyse two creative processes common to Davis's mid-1970s concerts as evidenced in *Dark Magus*: Davis's on-stage direction of sudden, rhythm section cuts in the midst of lead instrumentalists' improvisations; and the featured use of two accompanimental instruments unusual to jazz performance—a YC45 electric organ (played by Davis himself) and a drum machine (played by percussionist James Mtume). Finally, framing this studio-to-stage creative trajectory in terms of performance theorist Philip Auslander's concept of liveness, I claim that Davis's fusion jazz stands as an example of mediatization rich in agency. I then suggest that the work of other fusion jazz musicians and musicians associated with other jazz styles could be usefully reappraised using a similar methodology that explores the role of record production in creative process.

Acknowledgements

Very special thanks are owed to the following people:

- My supervisors: Elizabeth Hudson and David Cospers
- My colleagues: Ailsa Lipscombe and David Laidler
- My family: Kevin, Chris, Jessica and Connie Booth, and Irene Back
- My partner: Michelle Peterson

The completion of this thesis would have been impossible without the support you have each shown me.

Thank you.

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Introduction..... | 1 |
| Chapter One: Fusion Jazz in the Studio and on the Stage..... | 9 |
| Chapter Two: The Creative Process in Davis’s Fusion Jazz Studio Albums..... | 23 |
| Chapter Three: The Rhythm Section Cut..... | 36 |
| Chapter Four: Disorientating Sound as Interactive Accompaniment..... | 53 |
| Conclusion..... | 63 |
| Appendix..... | 68 |
| Sources..... | 72 |

List of Figures

| | |
|---------------|----|
| Figure 1..... | 40 |
| Figure 2..... | 41 |
| Figure 3..... | 42 |