Since its emergence at the dawn of the modern jazz era, the jazz festival has not only provided important sources of income and recognition for artists, but also has offered crowd-sourced, if industry-driven, operational definitions of jazz—both for the tradition as a whole and for its featured constituent sub-genres and styles individually. A transnational institution from its earliest instances in France, as well as in its widely exported forms under the Newport/Kool/JVC and Montreux brand names, the jazz festival expresses and occasionally manages to transcend, at least in part, the inherent tensions among the local, national, and global. Within this context, this chapter will examine the jazz festival as a site of semiotic collaboration and political-economic consensus-seeking among key stakeholders—including artists, audience members, journalists, and impresarios—over the representation and meaning of the music.

“There is No Jazz Without Festival; There Is No Festival Without Jazz” (George McKay 2016)

At the outset, it seems well worth noting how remarkable it should be that so few today would find the pivotal role festivals play in the contemporary jazz world at all remarkable. Indeed, for the first decades of this past century—roughly a third of the music’s entire history, corresponding to the period of its greatest commercial popularity—jazz resounded most characteristically within thoroughly quotidian socio-cultural contexts. So deeply interwoven into the texture of everyday life, improvisational syncopations came to structure the recreational and procreational rhythms of socialization from speakeasy to dance hall, throughout the Jazz Age and the swing era, themselves named after successive musical manifestations of this evolving African American tradition. Notwithstanding its subcultural origins, mainstream audience members consumed pre-war jazz primarily, albeit in successfully commodified forms, through participatory engagement in the practices it defined, notably including amateur musical performance as well as dance hall and nightclub socializing. In fact, extant historical documentation suggests that part of its “viral” appeal lay precisely in the widespread presumption that playing jazz, much like dancing a foxtrot, was something intrinsically enjoyable that most anyone could do, with or without formal training.

However, George McKay’s no jazz without festival/no festival without jazz formulation (2016) challenges jazz scholars to think through the re/doubled transformations of the music, in stages running the gamut, as we shall see, from liminal rite though leisure activity to liminoid pursuit. Not only did jazz, as McKay reminds us, emerge from the carnivalesque complex of such
African-diasporic festive forms as Mardi Gras, but some of its earliest recorded origin tales situate it firmly within the ritual sphere of funeral processions. Perhaps this legacy could help explain some of the music’s mildly subversive associations, whose symbolic retention could not but have contributed significantly to its residually countercultural allure, even after transformation into a commonplace leisure commodity. Nonetheless, as contemporaneous critics such as Theodor Adorno (1936/2002) could plausibly contend, culture–industrial relations of production and consumption would necessarily confine any transgressive experiences of transcendent freedom from normative social constraint to fleeting glimpses of liberation from totally administered society—just potent enough to motivate the expenditure of a last nickel for another jukebox play or a borrowed dime for one more taxi dance. In short, one might well argue that the music’s interbellum commercial success as quotidian commodity rendered its potentially subversive liminality latent, cleaving jazz from festival so neatly and completely as to make the very notion of a jazz festival somehow incongruous or unnecessary, if not entirely inconceivable. Unsurprisingly from this perspective, aside from the occasional jitterbug marathon or spirituals-to-swing concert, the music’s history in fact manifests no fully realized conceptions of jazz festivals as such during this period of its greatest mainstream popularity.

In short, amid the tumultuous transformations of the postwar jazz world—on both sides of the Atlantic (and Pacific)—the emergence and rise to definitive genre predominance of the jazz festival should represent not a taken-for-granted state of affairs, but rather a historical problem demanding further exploration and explication. In particular, the issues presenting themselves most acutely and immediately for analysis stem from the festivalization of jazz, that is, the manner in which the institution of the jazz festival has influenced “collective understandings and practices” of jazz with respect to three key orientations laid out in Roche’s influential formulation (2011, 127): space, as redefined by currents of transnationalism, cosmopolitanism, and globalization; time, via staged realizations and revisions of evolving historical narratives; and agency, through identity-affirming communal participation in the performative instantiation of deeply held, collectively shared ideals. Making sense of this phenomenon will entail exploration along three lines of analysis: anthropological, historical, and political-economic.

Anthropologically speaking, the contrasting paradigms of jazz—as festive celebration on the one hand, and as mundane entertainment on the other—call to mind Victor Turner’s (above-referenced) theoretical distinction between liminal and liminoid (1974), and indeed suggest promising directions for further refinement of these concepts in application to the case of the jazz festival. Performance theorists such as Turner (1969, 1984), Alessandro Falassi (1987), and John MacAlloon (1982) have proposed and developed conceptions of festive celebrations in urban industrialized societies as fulfilling roles analogous, or otherwise akin, to those identified with the liminal stages of rites of passage found in small-scale indigenous societies. In the context of Western modernity, with its differentiated forms of religion and the arts, Turner contended, liminality became fragmented into liminal religious and fraternal rites on the one hand, and “liminoid” leisure practices of art, music, literature, dance, and theater—as well as sports, games, and other entertainment genres—on the other (1974, 86). Turner’s analyses suggested that liminoid phenomena shared the culturally creative potential of liminality—even increasing its complexity by encouraging freer play of symbolic bricolage—and enhanced ritual’s socially transformative capacity, by allowing “lavish scope” for creative individuals to critique and even subvert the status quo (1974, 71–73).

In all societies, at whatever level of scale or complexity, Turner asserted, each cyclical or seasonal transition in individual status or group condition entailed a moment of liminality. What he termed the “subjunctivity” of such moments contrasted sharply with what he considered the “indicative” mode of normative social structure (1984, 20–21), understood as a differentiated and often hierarchical system of typically ascribed roles, statuses, and relationships. Liminality, he contended, entailed a different dimension of social experience, defined by what he termed *communitas*:
“a direct, spontaneous, and egalitarian mode of social relationship” (Turner and Turner 1982, 202), engendered through the “direct, immediate, and total confrontations of human identities” (1974, 77) among participants in ritual contexts, an “essential and generic human bond, without which there could be no society” (Turner 1969, 97).

According to Frank Salamone, jazz performances establish rituals to ensure a state of communitas wherein “performers and audience enter into a fellowship of complicity in which their mutual construction of reality strengthens their solidarity” (1988, 101). “Communitas has something of a ‘flow’ quality,” for Turner, who proposed that flow might well represent “one of the ways in which ‘structure’ may be transformed or ‘liquefied’ . . . into communitas again” (1974, 89). In so doing, Turner explicitly linked his concept of communitas to Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi’s concept of “flow,” an autotelic “merging of action and awareness . . . made possible by a centering of attention” on a task at hand with such intensity and complete absorption as to result in “loss of ego” (Csikszentmihalyi 1975, 44–55)—a transcendent ideal to which, as Travis Jackson has documented (2000, 45–49), prominent jazz musicians aspire. Flow, however, is predominantly an individual experience arising predictably within rule-defined social-structural situations (for example, mainstream jazz improvisation), while communitas is a collective experience arising spontaneously outside of ordinary social structure (for example in festival contexts). Thus, for Salamone, jazz is “often in jeopardy of becoming routinized” with a prevalent “rather rigid state of relationships only now and then overcome in true communitas” (1988, 101). To the extent that festival contexts can help foster the collective effervescence of communitas, they can engender a virtuous circle, wherein performative flow liquefies social structure into communitas, which further facilitates the attainment of flow in a self-reinforcing cycle.

Applying this Turnerian interpretive framework to jazz thus yields a conception of festivals as liminoid phenomena—with all the ludic, subversive capacities that may involve— aspiring to the condition of liminality, toward the end of drawing artists and audience members together in a spirit of communitas. Improvisational performances represent the primary modality by which jazz festivals achieve these ends, by allowing audiences the opportunity to observe firsthand the flow of creativity in process instead of in product, and offering them a glimpse of the communal aesthetic engagement shared among interacting performers. Listeners’ apperceptions of sharing the same eyewitness experience of liminality with other audience members engender a feeling of jazz community, uniting them directly with one another and indirectly, but profoundly, with the performers. To the extent that festivals manifest such liminal tendencies toward communitas, they may serve to advance subcultural agendas semiotically by imbuing music with affective meanings generated in and through its performative evocation of “alternative models for living, from utopias to programs, which are capable of influencing the behavior of those in mainstream social and political roles (whether authoritative or dependent, in control or rebelling against it) in the direction of radical change” (1974, 65). In general, the sensory overload festivals create through the intensity of immersive experience tends to overdetermine preferred meanings, making them key sites of what Richard Middleton might characterize as “articulation,” all the more potent inasmuch as they implicitly but indelibly define their object (for example, jazz) by curatorial selection, while simultaneously establishing cross-connotative evocative links between the music and other “constituents of the cultural repertory,” “combining existing elements into new patterns,” and “attaching new connotations to them” (1990, 8–9).

“Jazz Doesn’t Belong to [Critics]; It Belongs to the World” (George Wein)4

The first jazz festival of enduring international significance took place in Nice in 1948, followed soon after by two festivals in Paris in 1948 and 1949. In considering the many significant historical precedents these festivals established for those following in their wake, several key aspects of
performative conceptualization stand out as particularly salient: jazz as a transnational art form, developing from traditional roots in African American culture, through various stylistic forms in popular culture, to contemporary manifestations in cosmopolitan contexts. Inasmuch as impresarios typically need to find a way to deal with the notoriously vexed problem of defining jazz as expediently as possible, in order to move onto the pressing organizational issues always at hand, the allure of a simply grasped and readily staged programmatic narrative can hardly be overstated. Indeed, Paris festival organizer Charles Delaunay (1985, 210) clearly recognized how aptly the emergent paradigm of an evolving jazz tradition, embracing an unbroken succession of kindred forms from blues and ragtime through New Orleans and Chicago jazz to swing and (perhaps) beyond, catalyzed the development of a postwar jazz festival industry.

Even Delaunay’s bitterest critical rival, Nice festival organizer Hugues Panassié, booked a progressive swing band (Jean Leclère’s) with modernistic leanings of the sort he otherwise denounced in the starkest polemical terms, thus demonstrating the almost inexorable power of a structurally embedded modernist narrative to impose itself upon the most traditionalist of contexts.

While much text-centered jazz scholarship has tended to consider jazz history as discursively constructed by critics, a focus on festivals might well offer a persuasive counter-argument for its concomitant performative construction. With comprehensive jazz histories few and far between in the immediate postwar era, and jazz journals often catering to partisans in the traditionalist (“moldy figs’”) vs. modernist (“sour grapes’”) camps, jazz festivals like Panassié’s, Delaunay’s, and, ultimately, George Wein’s may well have helped establish the consensus notion of a jazz tradition more widely and more compellingly, at least among their audiences, than too often polarized and polarizing critical discourse alone. Indeed, the pragmatic bottom-line imperative such impresarios faced of appealing to the broadest possible audience, by presenting something for everyone, gave them every motivation to help musicians, critics, and audience members alike find the common ground that eventually gave rise to a jazz mainstream by the late fifties. If a picture is worth a thousand words, a festival easily could write a book: presenting Sidney Bechet with Kenny Clarke on drums, as Delaunay did in Paris, no doubt made at least as eloquent an argument for jazz ecumenism as any of his published columns.

Furthermore, the historically premised broad-mindedness implicitly but ineluctably cultivated by festival programming found striking analogs in the geographically expansive cosmopolitanism it fostered. While both Pannasié and Delaunay clearly featured renowned African American artists—from Louis Armstrong and Sidney Bechet through Coleman Hawkins and Rex Stewart to Charlie Parker and Miles Davis—at the heart of their programming, they contextualized this marquee placement within a much broader international frame by booking artists not only from France but also from across a wide range of its Western European friends and neighbors, including England, Belgium, Switzerland, Germany, Denmark, and Sweden. By thus providing European artists and audiences from otherwise far-flung local scenes with shared opportunities for firsthand exposure to the “latest developments” from across the Atlantic, this transnational orientation fostered the development of durable professional networks among European artists as well as between them and their American counterparts, many of whom appreciated the warmth of this welcome to the extent of prolonging mutually beneficial engagements abroad and even relocating in some cases to Europe as expatriates. The widely circulating accounts of the respectful, dedicated, budding talents that African American artists had encountered abroad effectively set the stage for a series of Cold War era musical “diplomatic mission[s]” that sought both to “foster a sense of cross-cultural unity,” and to “increase the international exposure” of a new jazz festival (Wein and Chinen 2003, 183), which had just sprung up on the opposite side of the Atlantic from the final edition of Delaunay’s Paris Jazz Fair concept, right in the nick of time to seize the torch. 6

If the pioneering endeavors of Panassié and Delaunay established both the example that subsequent jazz festivals would largely follow, and the standard to which most would aspire, Wein
hit upon the formula capable of providing the longterm sustainability to institutionalize jazz festivals as a cornerstone of the industry. Whereas his French predecessors were critical writers and passionate listeners first and foremost, Wein's background as a professional musician from his late teens, who had owned and operated a pair of nightclubs and a record label (as well as providing artist-management services) by his late twenties, placed him in a uniquely advantageous position to create a successful business model based on his substantial experience in so many key music industry roles. Starting out with a two-day festival supported by a $20,000 donation, he had doubled the length and increased the budget more than tenfold within five years (Gennari 2006, 212; Goldblatt 1977, 61–65). In that time, he had also managed to arrange for overseas festival broadcasts through Voice of America; to scout, recruit, and showcase all-star youth bands both at home and abroad; and to organize one of the first festival–artist tours of Europe (Wein and Chinen 2003, 146, 183, 193–194). In addition, he provided just the right set of propitious circumstances for Miles Davis and Duke Ellington to revitalize their careers with widely acclaimed “comeback” performances, legendary not only for the inspirational outpouring of communitas generated through virtuosic improvisational flow amid transformative festive liminality, but also for the successful mediation and commodification of this experience via radio broadcasts, commercial recordings, and ticket sales.

The need, so clearly manifest here, for festivals to pay the piper points toward the bellwether role they played in mid-century transformations of the political economy of jazz, as well as a significant lacuna in Turnerian theory. Even though Turner readily acknowledged that “the liminoid is more like a commodity—indeed, often is a commodity, which one selects and pays for—than the liminal” (1974, 86), his disinclination to pursue the implications of this insight leaves his main distinction between them drawn in terms of a notion of the liminoid as somehow “freer than the liminal, a matter of choice not obligation” (1974, 86), without considering how economic factors can limit or even eliminate that choice, by predicking participation upon the possession of sufficient disposal income. In view of the thoroughgoing commodification of leisure in late capitalism, liminoid events like festivals essentially serve to package and sell ritual transcendence—or, more accurately, the mere possibility or hope thereof—at a premium, thus potentially placing it out of reach for many or most, and thereby resignifying it as a mark of distinction. Compared to an earlier era’s thirty-cent admission to the Savoy Ballroom, a five-dollar ticket to the 1957 Newport Jazz Festival—corresponding to a contemporary purchasing power of roughly $40–45 over sixty years later—clearly represented more of a luxury expenditure, likely imposing exclusionary class barriers even before accounting for the much more onerous costs of travel and lodging at an elite seaside resort like Newport (or Nice). In a manner analogous to the roughly contemporaneous transition from single recordings to long-playing albums, that substantial increase in the total price of admission doubtless played a role in helping to transform jazz from a “people’s music” (Finkelstein 1948/75), enjoyed by everyone every day, to a lifestyle brand indexing progressive taste and distinction—at the very moment when an emergent global leisure class was reconstituting itself through new technological modes of cosmopolitan mobility as a “jet-set.”

Although tailor-made for this globe-trotting elite by the transnationalist ethos of trailblazing impresarios like Pannasié, Delaunay, and Wein, jazz still remained largely dependent on mass-consumption models of patronage, especially in festive presentations supported by admissions and public/private tourist-industry subsidies, engendering a structural conflict that would play out in the historical development of jazz festivals going forward. In this context, paying the piper also entailed audience development strategies aimed at attracting affluent potential consumers with mainstream popular tastes, toward the end of cultivating them as jazz fans, initiated through affect-laden ritual participation in celebratory performative manifestations of its evolutionary folk–popular–art master narrative. By the late 1950s, the purist connaisseurship that had characterized Pannasié’s and Delaunay’s influential but short-lived efforts had begun to give way
to Wein’s broader-based programming strategies, which featured popular talents including Ray Charles, Chuck Berry, the Four Freshman, and the Kingston Trio, booked on bills with such distinguished jazz artists as Mary Lou Williams, Gerry Mulligan, Count Basie, and Dave Brubeck. As successful as these cross-genre bookings appear to have been in building jazz audiences—if contemporaneous trade journal accounts offer any indication—they also provoked heated critical polemics. Even such initially supportive journalists as Nat Hentoff assailed Wein’s Newport Jazz Festival (on whose board of advisers Hentoff had once served) with charges of “insensitive, grasping commercialism” (Hentoff 1959, quoted in Wein and Chinen 2003, 194).

By 1960, only a handful of other festivals had established themselves in the United States (US)—notably including the New York (Randall’s Island) Jazz Festival and the Monterey Jazz Festival—while almost a dozen new festivals had sprung up across both Western and Eastern Europe, from England (Beaulieu), France (Antibes), and Italy (San Remo) to Estonia (Tallinn), Poland (Warsaw Jazz Jamboree), and Yugoslavia (Ljubljana). The early 1960s saw jazz festivals increase only modestly in number before the onset of a dramatic expansion starting in the latter half of the decade. Significantly, and probably not coincidentally, this festival boom occurred during a period of recession in the US nightclub economy, as the mainstream popularity of jazz declined sharply in the wake of the British Invasion, and psychedelic rock increasingly displaced jazz (and folk) on college campuses. In contradistinction to emergent rock festivals of the era, largely defined by a broadly shared hippie anti-establishment ethos, jazz festivals took the first steps toward corporate sponsorship at this time, beginning with the Schlitz Salute to Jazz presented by Wein’s Festival Productions Inc. in 1968 and followed shortly by his network of Kool Jazz Festivals.

Although relatively little in the way of hard quantitative data or reliable historical statistics exists to document the increasing expansion of jazz festivals in subsequent years, the extensive sample originally compiled by Paul Laird (Kernfeld and Laird 2003) would appear to provide a useful starting point. Taking a decennial census of his selective listing of several hundred significant festivals, featuring “professional musicians of international renown,” yields a reasonably broad-based overview of accelerating growth both in Europe and North America, from a few dozen festivals in 1970 to a couple hundred in 1990, with the rate of growth significantly tapering off between 1990 and 2000. One complicating factor in this regard concerns the definitional issues raised by “jazz” festivals increasingly presenting Rhythm and Blues (R&B), soul, and rock in the jazz fusion era. Moreover, amid this loosening of genre boundaries by predominantly large and especially corporate branded festivals—with mainstream pop acts far outnumbering recognized jazz artists in Wein’s Kool Jazz Festivals of the 1970s and 1980s—smaller festivals serving niche markets of purists, especially those favoring early and avant-garde jazz, also proliferated.

If the emergence of the festival was only conceivable in the postwar modern jazz context of a music that was no longer “popular” in the sense of mass participation in either production or consumption, the rapid expansion and ascent to predominance of the jazz festival in the 1970s and 1980s clearly helped fill the void left in the wake of shrinking local jazz nightclub scenes by fostering the development of transnational jazz touring networks circulating acclaimed artists through seasonal itineraries of festivals, especially those staged in succession all across Europe during the summer months. The concomitant proliferation of jazz education programs, inculcating evolutionary folk-pop-art historical narratives (with fusion often sidelined as a problematic anomaly), served to fuel the resurgence of the mainstream jazz styles prominently showcased at festivals by recruiting students to fill the ranks of aspiring young (semi) professionals and sophisticated audience connoisseurs. To the extent, though, that this renewed demand coincided with industry economics making it less and less feasible to bring major jazz acts to often struggling local nightclubs, jazz fans increasingly had to travel somewhere else to experience live jazz by internationally recognized artists, with festivals offering particularly compelling destinations for such pilgrims.
“Why Would You Come All the Way to Tampere to See Jazz When You Come From New York?” (Finnish Railroad Ticket Agent)

In spite of frequent, common, and casual allusions to pilgrimage among fans, writers, and other participants at jazz festivals—or perhaps in part because of them—the widespread notion of festivals as sites of pilgrimage has received surprisingly little sustained attention to date from jazz scholars, whether in contrast to festival pilgrimage literature focused instead upon folk (Quinn and Wilks 2017) and electronic dance music (St. John 2008; Luckman 2016), or in comparison to the attention devoted to jazz festival tourism. While recent jazz festival scholarship (for example, Webster and McKay 2016; Whyton 2018) has significantly advanced the understanding of such issues as cultural and countercultural heritage mainly in the terms of jazz’s impact upon tourism, rather than pilgrimage per se, the distinction between the two has grown less and less salient, as contemporary theorizations of festivals (for example, Bowditch 2010) tend to challenge it with notions of secular pilgrimage (if not sacred tourism), harking back to Victor and Edith Turner’s adage that “a tourist is half a pilgrim, if a pilgrim is half a tourist” (Turner and Turner 1978, 20).

Indeed, anthropological studies of pilgrimage in contemporary, even pop culture contexts (for example, Porter 2004)—based on Alan Morinis’s expansive reconceptualization of pilgrimage as a “journey undertaken by a person in quest of a place or a state that he or she believes to embody a valued ideal” (Morinis 1992, 4)—offer a fruitful paradigm for thinking through the phenomenon of jazz festival pilgrimage. How exactly do valued ideals, above and beyond the simple desire for suitably edifying entertainment, become embodied by jazz festivals that make fans travel around the world to attend them, at any of the particular sites where they take place?

In the latter respect, cultural heritage probably contributes more to lifestyle branding (Bennett and Woodward 2016) than site sacralization, since most festivals cannot readily serve as sites of jazz pilgrimage in the same straightforward way as recognized cradles of jazz like New Orleans, Chicago, and New York, or for that matter Paris, Berlin, and London. Very few if any fans visit Nice or Newport—let alone Moers, Vienne, or Tampere—to commemorate some extraordinary jazz epiphany or to immerse themselves firsthand in the history of jazz in the place where that history was made, especially since not many surviving jazz institutions of any sort (whether in villages, resorts, or metropoles) have remained at the same location where they first gained renown.

Nicola MacLeod’s observations regarding the “placelessness” of festivals, in globalized contexts of postmodernity (2006, 226), certainly apply to the enterprise of bringing artists and audiences someplace far away from any of their homes to a traveling exhibition half the world away—for an ephemeral event in a place where, in all likelihood (with a very few prominent exceptions proving the rule), nothing notable in jazz history has ever happened, except of course for previous festival performances. Notwithstanding, though, quite reasonable concerns about the dangers of homogenization (McKay 2018) and routinization (Tackley and Martin 2013) inherent in this situation—echoing as they do Turner’s model of spontaneous (unpredictably transcendent) communitas devolving into normative (reliably institutionalized) communitas (1974, 79–80)—his notion of liminal spaces as interfaces for the generation of cultural meanings (1974, 72–73) suggests that festive communitas can allow and empower participants to endow their surroundings collectively with shared significance arising from the very cosmopolitan ideals whose performative realization has brought them all together.

Viewing jazz festivals in terms of such a quest for meaning and authenticity, common to both tourists and pilgrims, in light of Dean MacCannell’s wry revisionist twist on Walter Benjamin’s notion of aura (1936/78) makes at least as much sense—if not a good deal more—in this age of digital reproduction as it did in Benjamin’s age of mechanical reproduction. To the extent that MacCannell’s contentions apply to live jazz in the sense that it “becomes ‘authentic’ only after the first copy of it is produced,” that “the reproductions are the aura,” and that “the ritual, far from...
being a point of origin, derives from the relationship between the original object and its socially constructed importance” (1976/2013, 48), recordings and concerts emerge as mutually constitutive polar opposites: the former’s disembodied product reifying the latter’s embodied process, which is in turn “authenticated” by the former’s reproductions. From this perspective, one vital ideal motivating the jazz pilgrim’s quest reveals itself in the search for the immediacy of performative creativity as social process, reconciling tradition and innovation in the heat of the ritual moment. Jazz festivals’ focus on improvisation thus foregrounds a fundamental characteristic of all festivals: the creative remembering, recreation, and realization of past traditions to meet the present challenges of future contingencies. While all festive performances are “pre-formed” by prior rehearsals, recordings, and stagings, nonetheless no two are ever the exactly the same, and it is precisely this contingent singularity of socio-aesthetic experience that jazz festivals characteristically and perhaps even uniquely celebrate.10 Herein, perhaps, lies the potential contribution that jazz festival studies might make to scholarship on festivals more generally, in addressing the question McKay has posed: “Why jazz (and not, say, rock or folk) music for thinking about festival and cultural heritage?” (2016). Whereas folk festivals embrace the homegrown communitas of collective solidarity and Electric Dance Music (EDM) festivals enshrine the utopian ecstasy of individual transcendence, jazz festivals embody the vital flow that pulses between the two. Betwixt and between the comforts of the home left behind and the raptures of the shrine somewhere ahead, jazz festivals epitomize the liminal archetype of eternal pilgrim, forever on the road searching for the meaning of it all. Or, as Sidney Bechet once explained it:

That’s what the music is . . . a lost thing finding itself. It’s like a man with no place of his own. He wanders the world and he’s a stranger wherever he is; he’s a stranger right in the place where he was born.

(Bechet 1960/2002, 48)

Notes

1. Noteworthy pre-war precursors of the jazz festival include: the 1926 International Jazz Congress in Chicago, and the 1938 Carnival of Swing in New York City, as well as the 1938 and 1939 Spirituals to Swing concerts in New York City.
2. Paul Gonsalves’s famous “Diminuendo and Crescendo in Blue” solo from Duke Ellington’s fabled 1956 Newport Jazz Festival performance represents one obvious example of this feedback phenomenon.
3. While numerous scholars have engaged critically with Turner’s notion of communitas, to date no rival conceptualization has emerged with sufficient explanatory power to displace it from (ever-expanding) scholarly usage. Accordingly, my use of communitas hereinafter will take influential critiques into account by heeding John Eade’s call to “to place communitas into its proper perspective—as an ideological programme that is only partially and fleetingly realised in practice” (Eade and Sallnow 1991/2013, xiii).
4. Quoted by Gennari (2006, 246)—the particular critics Wein called out by name were Nat Hentoff and Whitney Balliett, who had quite vehemently contested the broadness of his industry-friendly operational definitions of jazz.
5. Although often cited as the “first fully fledged jazz festival” (for example Kernfeld and Laird 2003), the Australian Jazz Convention explicitly rejects that designation in its own publicity, which stakes its claim instead as the “longest running annual jazz event in the world . . . organised as a convention for the musicians rather than a festival for the general public” <www.australianjazzconvention.org/history.htm>.
7. Laird’s data show European festivals comprising the clear majority of all festivals, consistently outnumbering North American festivals by a factor of two to three. While Laird does not offer any comparable data updated for 2010, an impressionistic survey of online European Jazz Network listings suggests a modest increase with continued leveling of growth rates.
8. The New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival (see Souther 2003; Walton 2012) represents one notable exception (albeit one that helps establish the rule).
9. Dean MacCannell provided the foundation for rethinking tourist-pilgrim dualisms, with such insights as “the motive behind a pilgrimage is similar to that behind a tour: both are quests for authentic experiences” (MacCannell 1973, 593).

10. It is in this sense that the second half of McKay’s axiom—“no festival without jazz”—appears most apposite.

References


Delaunay’s Dilemma: De la Peinture au Jazz. Mâcon, France: Editions W.


