

Eric Hobsbawm and the Importance of Jazz

When Eric Hobsbawm began writing his columns on jazz for the *New Statesman* in 1956, he took the pen name 'Francis Newton' appropriately after the communist trumpeter who played with Billie Holiday. He suggested that this was done with some idea of keeping his jazz life separate from his academic life.¹ The subsequent *The Jazz Scene* appeared in 1959, the same year as *Primitive Rebels*, and was similarly published under the pseudonym. Many soon knew that Newton was Hobsbawm, and he would talk openly about jazz soon after the book was published, with Richard Gott, for example, recalling hearing the latter speak at Oxford in 1960 when he 'talked as much about jazz as history.'² Hobsbawm would later suggest that jazz had become a 'recognised part of C20th culture', and was more widely accepted by the public and academics, and there would no longer be a need to try and keep his academic and jazz interests separate.³ He had been influential in making jazz more popular and a subject for serious study, and aside from *The Jazz Scene* and the articles in the *New Statesman*, which continued until 1963, he also wrote for various journals and his 1998 collection *Uncommon People* included eight pieces of jazz writing in a separate section.⁴ Hobsbawm also noted that his early interest in jazz had an impact on his wider historical research, giving him insights into the 'realities' of the US, given the fact that jazz originated in America's class divided and ethnically mixed cities. It also opened doors in 'Italy, Japan, post war Austria. And not least hitherto unknown parts of Britain.'⁵ In other words wherever the global reach of jazz led him.

Given Hobsbawm's longstanding interest in jazz, and the impact this had on his approach to history, little attention has been given to this relationship. The late Hobsbawm remains well known and always attracted a fair amount of attention, including a celebratory volume, and largely positive reviews. However his, and other Marxists, writings on labour history were questioned by revisionist historians from the 1980s and 90s, who saw society as less driven by class, more pluralistic and argued for the significance of non-socialist continuities in politics.⁶ He received warm obituaries, with conservative historian Niall Ferguson describing him as 'a truly great historian', although his left wing views attracted the disapprobation of others. This included Tory Michael Gove who in 2008 suggested in a characteristically hyperbolic manner that 'only when Hobsbawm weeps hot tears for a life spent serving an ideology of wickedness will he ever be worth listening to.'⁷ There is an irony that this line could have been drawn from one of the early blues songs that Hobsbawm loved, but its focus on politics was characteristic of the way many saw and still see Hobsbawm, although his writing, particularly on jazz, was less partisan than this suggested.

Philip Bounds offered the first serious analysis of Hobsbawm's interest in jazz seeing *The Jazz Scene* as 'a transitional text', which 'was easily the most distinguished piece of Marxist writing on the popular arts in the period'. Bounds argued that Hobsbawm used jazz as a way of rethinking communist cultural theory by taking a more nuanced view of popular culture, rather than dismissing it as a commercialized, undifferentiated mass. In doing so, Bounds argued Hobsbawm anticipated the left wing cultural studies writing of the 1970s onwards, although the book was not well enough known in academic circles to

have had much of an influence on this process.⁸ It is also open to question whether Hobsbawm necessarily saw the book in such far reaching terms.

Musician Tony Coe sang Hobsbawm's praises in a different manner, noting the importance of *The Jazz Scene*, and the 'quietly commanding presence' of the 'major historian.'⁹ Others have noted Hobsbawm's interest in jazz, including a brief mention in Gennari's path breaking work on jazz criticism, *Blowin' Hot and Cool* which was largely concerned with US critics.¹⁰ McKay's important *Circular Breathing*, on the cultural politics of British jazz, which explored the political, racial and gender dimensions of a music which spread with the mass society but was at times a countercultural force within this, was influenced by and made several mentions of Hobsbawm.¹¹ More recently there has been a comparison of Philip Larkin, Kingsley Amis and Hobsbawm and their role in establishing post war British jazz criticism, whilst remaining fans as much as critics.¹²

This paper will explore Hobsbawm's interest in jazz and assess its continued relevance to jazz studies, and to cultural historians more generally. It will argue that Hobsbawm's approach to jazz, with its awareness of social and cultural history, attention to a variety of sources, and willingness to work within a flexible theoretical framework not only revealed a great deal about Jazz history, but also offers a model for jazz scholars who want to place jazz in a historical context rather than drift into over-theoretical analysis. In order to explore these questions it will draw on, among other sources, his recently catalogued private papers which are held by the Modern Records Centre (MRC), at the University of

Warwick, allowing this article to provide a full understanding of Hobsbawm's relationship with Jazz.

It is important to bear in mind that Hobsbawm was one of a number of practicing academics writing about jazz,¹³ and that he was consequently aware of how the meaning of jazz was shaped by the small number of critics who wrote about it. This issue has been at the heart of Jazz writing over the last 30 years. As Gennari has pointed out jazz writers were 'crucial to the history of jazz, to the lives and careers of jazz musicians, and to the shaping of ideas about jazz's significance in American culture. As proselytizers, intermediaries, gatekeepers, translators, rhetoricians, conceptualisers, producers and analysts of jazz, jazz critics have been undeniably powerful voices – some would say too powerful- in the music's public discourse.'¹⁴ And Jazz writing has become more academic in recent years and it has problematized established tenets of jazz history, including neat patterns of musical development and the focus on the biography of genius.¹⁵ Although he was writing about jazz from the 1950s, Hobsbawm's close historical reading of both the history and criticism of jazz showed that he was sensitive to the complexity of jazz which gives his work continued relevance. This included an interest in audiences, politics, musician's working lives, and the music industry, all of which would later become more prominent in the New Jazz Studies.

The 16 year-old Hobsbawm became a jazz fan shortly after arriving in Britain with his family in 1933. His cousin, Dennis Preston, was important in this

regard.¹⁶ Crucially the latter had a record collection, read *Melody Maker* and was a part of the small but enthusiastic group of mostly male jazz fans, and Hobsbawm's interest was sealed after the cousins saw Duke Ellington play the Streatham Astoria the same year. Hobsbawm recalled how they 'sat from midnight till dawn, nursing the glass of beer which was all we could afford, the image of the band burning itself in our brains forever.'¹⁷ The significance of the concert, which would be mentioned several times in Hobsbawm's writings, was clear as he remembered 'We walked home four miles in the dawn-the money had run out-and I was hooked for good.'¹⁸ In his autobiography *Interesting Times* he underlined the importance this discovery of jazz, comparing it to first love. He explained how he was concerned about his looks, and consequently downplayed sex. In contrast the 'musical revelation' 'brought the dimension of wordless, unquestioning physical emotion into a life otherwise monopolised by words and the exercises of intellect.'¹⁹ This is significant as it reveals an important facet of Hobsbawm's engagement with jazz. Unlike some critics who came to jazz as amateur or professional musicians, Hobsbawm was a fan, and this had a different dynamic as an observer participating on the periphery rather than at the centre. Moreover his emotional engagement with his music is interesting, given that his historical writing is considered and carefully argued. Hobsbawm's writings on jazz are similarly well argued, but sometimes the jazz fan of the 1930s also comes to the fore, and this makes his jazz writing more intriguing.

Hobsbawm's interest in jazz was now established and he managed to make use of this during the war, including remaining part of the jazz community. He described the war as 'the least satisfying years in my life', and he suggested he

was a less than ideal recruit, eventually being transferred from the Royal Engineers into the Army Education Corp (AEC), where he drifted, becoming 'semi-detached from the army'. He managed in his AEC role to arrange to teach 'jazz record' classes to a young soldier's unit in Dorset. Many of the records and some of the notes were supplied by another serviceman, Charles Fox, a friend of Hobsbawm's, who would become a significant figure in his own right within the jazz community. Indeed Hobsbawm would later acknowledge Fox's help, along with Preston's, in the *The Jazz Scene*, thanking the former for his contribution to his knowledge of jazz, as well as for reading drafts of parts of the book.²⁰ Subjects for the AEC sessions included 'Blues Singers'; 'Chicago'; 'White Clarinetists'. The notes for the first of these listed various artists including Bessie Jackson who Fox suggested had 'power to move' rather than emotion, which 'puts her high up'. Other artists included Red Nelson, Tampa Red and Pinetop Smith. 'I agree with Panassie' Fox wrote, noting that Smith had 'an acrid, offhand, extremely pleasing delivery'. However, not all of the recitals were successful, and it appears that the soldiers didn't always share Hobsbawm's enthusiasm for Jazz. Fox wrote in 1944 to tell him, 'Sorry the recital wasn't received too well, but anyways, you enjoyed the discs no doubt!'²¹

Hobsbawm's move to writing, rather than talking about and listening to jazz, began in the mid 1950s after the end of his Cambridge Fellowship and return to London. Having got to know many in the London jazz community, and standing out somewhat as an intellectual and academic, Hobsbawm recalled how many in the jazz community found this 'freaky' but 'editors and publishers enjoyed the idea of a professor reporting in those days (pseudonymously) on such un-

academic music.’²² Hobsbawm approached the *New Statesman* in part because he noted that Kingsley Amis was writing for the *Observer*, and he knew ‘at least’ as much about jazz as him. He also suggested that it would allow him to earn some extra money to supplement his academic salary.²³ He later recalled it was ‘a good time to write about jazz’, with the growing interest in it among the serious papers, in part linked to John Osborne’s *Look Back in Anger* ‘which made the British cultural establishment of the mid-1950s take notice of music so evidently dear to the new and talented Angry Young Men.’ Jazz critics now included in their ranks non-specialists, including Amis, who were ‘provincial, suburban’, not musicians, and significantly ‘were loving and propagandist critics rather than practitioners’. As a result he no longer felt intimidated about joining in the debates about, and writing on jazz²⁴ Other factors were also important. The restrictions on touring by overseas musicians, particularly Americans, were being relaxed, meaning critics could see important artists first hand rather than relying only on recordings. There was also another dimension; with Hobsbawm suggesting it gave him some respite from the ‘political and personal convulsions of 1956, that year of Communist crisis.’²⁵ All of which suggests that Hobsbawm didn’t see his jazz writings solely in political terms.

Hobsbawm’s *New Statesman* articles allowed him to become better known and more involved in the jazz scene, including meeting agents and musicians. He also experienced parts of Soho, beyond the usual academic’s territory, which he called the ‘avant-garde cultural Boheme in Britain’. This intersected with the jazz scene and in 2010 he noted that he still retained the membership card for Muriel’s Colony Club in Dean Street, which he presumed Colin MacInnes had

given him; although he added that jazz was more his thing, than theirs. He also became a tour guide for various international academics and other visitors, and became 'a member of the global network of international jazz lovers'. This opened the door to see jazz abroad including Japan, Czechoslovakia and the US where in the case of the latter he was able to experience the 'glory of the jazz scene based on clubs'.²⁶

Hobsbawm suggested that Preston was most likely the person who put him in contact with the 'small but culturally hip [publishing] house of McGibbon and Kee' and he agreed to write *The Jazz Scene*. This was an important move for him as it allowed him 'to explore the scene more systematically' than he was able to do in the *New Statesman* articles. Hobsbawm used his contacts, some of whom were now working in the music business, including Preston who had become a music producer in the early 1950s.²⁷ The book was a contribution to current jazz debates rather than historical scholarship, and he also began it with the proviso that he was 'not an expert as experts go in the world of jazz'.²⁸ The sections were divided between History, Music, Business and People, plus appendices on the *British Jazz Fan*, 1958 and 'Jazz Language', and dealt with the jazz world in the late 1950s. However, it was also clear that Francis Newton saw Jazz through the lens of history, and this comes through at times in the book, even beyond the first section dealing with history. He also noted the way historians and others involved in the industry saw certain issues, noting that 'jazz-influenced pop music must belong to the world of jazz as the historian sees it', but 'it is not jazz as either the musician, the sociologist or the businessman sees it'.²⁹

One of the most significant aspects of the book was the assertion of the importance of jazz, including Hobsbawm's belief that jazz represented an unprecedented force in popular culture. Jazz is 'the cultural phenomenon of our century' he wrote, adding 'the fact that British working-class boys in Newcastle play it is at least as interesting as and rather more surprising than the fact that it progressed through the frontier saloons of the Mississippi valley.' The global reach of jazz is noted throughout the book, including the fact that as he was writing 'in the spring of 1958' that 'there is probably no major city in the world in which someone is not playing' jazz or blues.³⁰ This linked to an awareness of jazz's relationship to other 'folk' musics and the hybridity that emerges, and this extended around the globe with Hobsbawm suggesting that 'Probably South Africa is today the most flourishing centre of creative jazz outside America.'³¹ – a relatively rare mention at this time of Jazz in Africa.

Hobsbawm argued that the fact 'that Jazz had become a world idiom' was remarkable, not least because it had developed so quickly 'and changed with startling rapidity' but that from its folk music origins it had survived and flourished amidst mass commercialised culture as both popular and art music.³² Indeed, Hobsbawm argued, as the music of the poor and working class of the cities, and especially black America, it had only recently attracted middle class attention, and as it emerged it had 'never been swamped by the cultural standards of the upper classes.'³³ This argument was significant as Hobsbawm argued that this meant contemporary popular culture was not a monolithic force,

and that subcultural forms, most notably jazz, could survive, influence, remain creative and sometimes help renew mainstream culture. It also meant that the audience could have agency – Hobsbawm pointed out that whilst mass culture had a passive side, the audience also wanted to participate whether in a football crowd, or watching, playing and talking about jazz. Jazz offered something participatory and more interesting than much popular culture, including choice, with Hobsbawm noting that ‘the appeal of jazz has always been due to its capacity to supply the things commercial pop music ironed out of its product’.³⁴

Nor was the jazz ‘business’ marked by straightforward capitalist exploitation, with Hobsbawm offering an analysis which explained how fans could influence record companies, and some, like Preston, had become involved in the music business. At the heart of this was the understanding that jazz was a commercial, unsubsidised music where the workers needed to make money. ‘The folk-artists who made jazz had no romantic nonsense about the virtues of amateurism in them’, he wrote. Hobsbawm argued that business was made more amenable by the fact that many fans drifted into key positions ‘because the established businessmen in the entertainment world lacked at first the interest and later the know-how to tap the jazz market.’³⁵ These enthusiasts turned businessmen often had ‘a hostility to the colour bar’ and ‘a marked tendency to sympathise with left-wing politics’ and were sometimes ‘willing to subsidize wholly non-commercial music, if it is “good jazz.”’³⁶ He cited Norman Granz as an example of a fan who became a jazz impresario. The precariousness of making a living in jazz with low record sales, and unreliable tour income, meant that musicians had to be flexible and take paying opportunities where they could find them, and it

was easier dealing with the likes of Granz and John Hammond than some of the mob connected figures who were involved in the earlier phase of jazz. Of course not all was goodness and light, and Hobsbawm pointed out strong unions helped get musicians a better deal, however he believed that in the 1950s jazz was 'one of the last frontiers of private enterprise' in which, 'smart young men' could with little money and some luck, make a living. He added, 'The organisation man, the tame psychologist, the economic adviser, are still far away.'³⁷

This ran against much left wing thinking at the time. The criticism of commercialised popular culture was apparent on much of the left, including the Frankfurt School, and most notably Adorno. The latter's criticisms of jazz have been much discussed, but it is clear that Hobsbawm had little respect for them, later suggesting in the *New York review of Books* that 'Adorno wrote some of the most stupid pages ever written about jazz.'³⁸ As Bounds has pointed out, many British communists were dismissive of Americanised popular culture, and saw the second English folk revival as 'purer', unsullied and even socialistic. He cites the example of the CPGB Conference at the Holborn Hall in London in April 1951 entitled 'The USA threat to British culture' which became the basis for the party's policy on American mass culture which they argued was 'drugging the minds of the people while US big business goes about its plans.' It was in this context that Hobsbawm's views on jazz and popular culture were so significant, even if they didn't get the attention they deserved. Although it should be pointed out that *The Jazz Scene* doesn't specifically enter into these debates, and just presents a set of arguments related to the facts as Hobsbawm saw them.³⁹

The Jazz Scene contained a wealth of information. The section on history was detailed and historically knowledgeable, and discussed alongside the growing global appeal of jazz, details on race, class, urbanism and various movements including the New Deal. Hobsbawm also pointed out where he believed the left were influential in jazz including in the US in the 1930s (whilst pointing out Soviet opposition to jazz), and he also saw jazz as in some ways proto political.⁴⁰ It was democratic and populist, the music of the outsider, and drew on its roots from the poor and often black working class, but welcomed in other groups. In this sense it could be 'a music of protest' but this was often vague, and politics was sometimes accidental.⁴¹

The divisions that emerged in the 1930s and 40s between initially swing and revivalists, and then modern jazz and traditionalists, as Gendron has suggested, created a discursive jazz aesthetic around a 'unified set of binary oppositions'.⁴² However critics of the 1950s, including Hobsbawm, were often less drawn into this debate, often stressing a more intellectual, historical, political, and sometimes musical, approach.⁴³ Hobsbawm said relatively little about the debate in *The Jazz Scene* and where he argued that Bebop emerged for musical, social and political reasons, but that it was the first jazz form 'to turn its face away from the public' and was now more for musicians and specialists, particularly for white intellectuals and bohemians.⁴⁴ Hobsbawm argued this was a contrast to earlier jazz which was 'a product of unselfconscious popular musicians, playing as such musicians have always played, for an unselfconscious public who wanted to be entertained', compared with post 1941 where jazz was the 'product of self-conscious musicians playing for a self-conscious public. i.e. it

had far greater affinities with modern minority culture', than being about 'fun' or 'money'. This, he suggested, was more a 'Manifesto' against commercialism, black inequality or capitalism.⁴⁵ This had been tempered in recent years by the fact that as the music progressed Modern Jazz had become 'less wild' and had met the public 'halfway' with a gradual softening of its radical edges, although he was distinctly ambivalent about the recent emergence of mainly white 'cooler' performers.⁴⁶ Miles Davis is singled out as the 'finest player' of this group whose playing whilst having emotion 'tends to be eerie, sleepwalking, dreamlike stuff' that had its roots in previous styles and even nodded to the blues, and had 'brought jazz to the very verge of its possibilities as jazz.'⁴⁷ We will see how in later writings Hobsbawm remained more careful about dealing with sub genres in jazz, and the issue of modern jazz in particular.

The Jazz Scene's coverage of the jazz world included the sociological analysis of the jazz fan of 1958, as an appendix added at the end of book. The research was based on the *National Jazz Federation* based in London and the Home Counties, who kept a record of member's occupations. The picture was a fan base that was overwhelmingly male and many young fans who were students, in apprenticeships or in the armed services. Hobsbawm discovered that the 'bulk' of fans were in skilled often technical and vocational professions with relatively few from unskilled backgrounds. However he also found relatively few were 'arts' people or bohemians, and wondered whether they were no longer as active in the jazz community, or weren't joiners of organisations like the NJF.⁴⁸ This analysis plus the following appendix on jazz language underlined what a wide

ranging book *The Jazz Scene* was, and the author's detailed knowledge of various facets of jazz.

The Jazz Scene was generally well reviewed although Hobsbawm felt the book could have received more attention. The left wing *Daily Worker* suggested accurately that 'I get the feeling that Mr. Newton is less at home when writing about modern trends', but that 'all in all this is a book to read very carefully, and it should prove beneficial to beginners and also the old lags who (like myself) are often lulled into thinking we know it all', and *Tribune* praised the original scope of the book which offered more than the conventional collection of articles on musicians.⁴⁹ Benny Green in *The Observer* was similarly impressed suggesting that 'Newton is a rarity among British critics, because instead of drawing his conclusions from a pile of gramophone records he has taken the trouble to learn the mechanics of a musician's life before passing any opinions.' This was, he suggested, 'one of the most lucid and informative books ever written on jazz.'⁵⁰ Fellow fan turned critic, Philip Larkin was also mostly impressed when reviewing the book in both *The Observer* and *The Guardian* noting what he saw as the 'sociological' elements of the book, but that it wasn't all 'free-hand theorising', and 'kept coming back to his over-mastering passion, the blues.' 'Every jazz lover will want to read' the book he suggested even if 'some of his conventions start rather than settle arguments.'⁵¹ International papers also noted the book including praise from the *San Francisco Chronicle*, whilst Toronto's *Daily Star* wrote that 'Newton is a social critic in the tradition of George Orwell, and his ideas are both sound and helpful.'⁵²

The Jazz Scene helped establish Hobsbawm's reputation within the jazz community, and he continued to write for the *New Statesman* until the mid 1960s when he withdrew to some extent recalling 'by this time my life was changing. Marriage and babies inevitably put an end to Francis Newton's freewheeling.'⁵³ There remained a remarkable continuity in his jazz writings from the *New Statesman* articles to the collected articles in *Uncommon People*, and certain themes remain constant, although there was the occasional change of emphasis and interpretation. Hobsbawm's later jazz writings were also on the whole more historical.

As we have seen jazz writers and critics were important in shaping the public understanding of what jazz was, and its history. Hobsbawm was very clear about this, including suggesting that British and European fans were more influential than their counterparts in the US. In one of his most perceptive historical writings on jazz, 'Jazz comes to Europe', he argued that although small, 'the European jazz public has long played a significant role in jazz, since it formed a much more stable body of support than the very volatile American public.'⁵⁴ This was particularly true in Britain and Hobsbawm described a small but enthusiastic jazz community where fans and critics overlapped, with musicians sometimes joining their ranks. Critics became gatekeepers and 'taste makers' and were particularly influential in the period when there were restrictions on foreign touring musicians. As a consequence Hobsbawm argued white teenagers in Britain were more likely to have heard Muddy Waters than their US counterparts, as 'the formation of the new public's taste by a minority of impassioned and often esoteric jazz scholars allowed Europe to become familiar

with elements in the black tradition which a purely commercial revolution in taste would simply not have brought to their attention.’ This paved the way, he suggested, for the appeal of the blues in Europe (which had a ‘negligible’ audience in the US), and the later Europeanised version of rock and roll which, quoting the example of the blues based Rolling Stones, was exported back to help create a mass audience for the form in America.⁵⁵ Hobsbawm made these points several times, linking it to the fact that jazz was not seen as a high art form in the US in the way its American and modernist aspects allowed it to appeal as both popular and high art in Europe as illustrated by Hugue Pannassie’s 1934 classic text *Le Hot Jazz*; to the jazz musicians who moved to live and work in Europe, to the making of *Round Midnight* which Hobsbawm argued was the first jazz film to take ‘a black musician seriously as a creative artist.’ Moreover he suggested, ‘the fact that jazz was thus taken seriously in Europe earlier than in the US has always rankled in its native country.’⁵⁶ Something which he soon encountered first hand, with an immediate response from the well known jazz critic and writer, James Lincoln Collier who wrote bluntly that ‘European intellectuals have always cherished their ignorance of the United States, and it is therefore not surprising to see one of them once again trumpeting forth the ancient nonsense that they discovered jazz before the less sensitive and intellectually unsophisticated Americans did.’ He went on to suggest that the Europeans lagged behind Americans in the discovery and writing about jazz.⁵⁷

Hobsbawm responded calmly quoting Lincoln Collier’s own writing: ‘James Lincoln Collier has written the best history of jazz I know. I do not think I wrote anything that differs in substance from his own opinion that there is some

substance in the view' quoting directly from the latter's *The Making of Jazz* "that Europeans have generally been more receptive to jazz than Americans.... Europeans wrote about jazz earlier than Americans did, and they have often written about it better since." He continued, 'I did not say or imply that Americans were uninterested in jazz or actively hostile to it, but that the idiom was so much part of their lives that it was difficult for them to treat it "as an art form" (*The Making of Jazz*), and that it did not fit into American ideas about high culture in the early period.' He added 'If it did, I have not heard of it', before adding that it 'does not mean that it was not extensively written about in the American press, or extensively reviewed. There was immeasurably more of it in New York than in Europe, and still is' mentioning the example of his old friend John Hammond.⁵⁸ This didn't seem to cut much ice with the well known US critic Martin Williams who accused Hobsbawm of a 'certain ignorance', before suggesting that 'Is it possible to put it, that your Marxism gives you, not a means of interpretation but a bias? About a music that for its creation respects and depends on the individual, and on a truly democratic atmosphere more than any other music?'⁵⁹

Hobsbawm received support from Bradford Robinson who had recently edited the jazz section of the *New Grove Dictionary of American Music* and suggested that Lincoln Collier had changed his views on this issue, and was now downplaying the European role in jazz. He wondered whether this was 'part of a larger effort, in no way confined to Collier himself, to situate jazz within the American national heritage and defend it against outsiders' something he suggested was related to the resurgence of American nationalism during the

Reagan years.⁶⁰ It is difficult to unravel exactly what was behind this difference of opinion, and politics may have been a factor, although this doesn't necessarily seem of particular relevance to Hobsbawm's approach on this issue. Indeed the debate was more over history including chronology and which events were significant including the visit to the US by the British *Melody Maker* in 1929, which Lincoln Collier suggested was important, yet Robinson argued had been preceded by numerous visits by European jazz fans, 'beginning with Milhaud in 1920.'⁶¹ Hobsbawm's original article and reply was carefully argued and based on a deep historical understanding of the period, including a perceptive analysis of Sinatra and his role in popular music.⁶² Robinson indeed suggested that his decision to write to Hobsbawm was in large part because Lincoln Collier 'questioned your abilities as an historian, which are far superior to his.'⁶³ Issues concerning the ownership of jazz were important here, yet Hobsbawm's original article and reply made it clear the significance of New York and America in the jazz world.

Hobsbawm also argued the importance of the jazz community in Europe affected the reception of modern jazz, with the British and French 'taken aback by bebop and to be honest, most of them disliked it intensely', with the first to appreciate modern jazz being amongst the young professional big-band musicians. The opposition of Panassie who saw "'modernists" as agents of Satan', combined with the US recording ban which held back the recording and distribution of bebop, left the period as one of 'growth' rather than 'revolution'. Bebop only broke, especially in France and Scandinavia where a 'new generation of intellectual champions of the avant-garde soon appeared.'⁶⁴ In Britain, the fissure between

traditional and modern jazz was much more serious, not least because the former was popular, democratic and close to a youth music. Indeed Hobsbawm argued that it 'prepared for the triumph of rock.' This meant that modern jazz took longer to break through, only finally having an impact in the late 1950s, and that Miles Davis was important in this regard.⁶⁵

As we have seen *The Jazz Scene* had paid only passing attention to bebop, and when it did it was dispassionately observant about what it saw as its move away from the popular. In his later writings Hobsbawm usually situated himself outside this debate over modern jazz, illustrating the academic distance that shows in much of his writing. In the 1993 Introduction to *The Jazz Scene*, he argued that by the mid 1950s the jazz community was 'abandoning the pointless battles' over this subject. Hobsbawm recalled that although he had grown up with earlier jazz, he tried 'to understand and come to terms with Bebop',⁶⁶ and indeed this is one of the ways he saw himself as differentiated from fellow critics Kingsley Amis and Philip Larkin 'who continued to see bebop as treason.'⁶⁷

Although Larkin had given a positive review to *The Jazz Scene*, Hobsbawm was no fan of Larkin and even had a dig at the latter's famous jazz themed poem 'For Sidney Bechet' which he wrote was 'full of French Quarter cliches'.⁶⁸ He was also flexible in the use of genre and sub-genre in post war jazz, and tending to avoid the convention at the time of the chronology of bebop/cool/hard bop/free. Indeed he frequently used the term avant-garde whilst writing for the *New Statesman* to classify musicians like Charles Mingus and Sonny Rollins, and in the process showed at times his attempts at understanding contemporary jazz. In 1965 for example, he was rather confused by Sonny Rollins, who he felt

characterised the avant-garde at that point, suggesting 'he continues to experiment, and what he is up to, nobody quite knows.'⁶⁹

There is a rare sign of inconsistency in Hobsbawm's writings on jazz when he considered the 1950s. The relatively downbeat tone of the limited writing on the post war years in *The Jazz Scene*, was repeated the following year in an article 'Too Cool' in the *New Statesman*, in which Hobsbawm looked back at the previous decade and suggested it was uninspiring. 'Lets make no bones about it', he wrote, 'Artistically, the 1950s, though producing a far greater quantity of jazz in a far greater number of countries....were disappointing.' This was in part because it had 'remained parasitic on the achievements of earlier years', and 'the only innovations that retained their power were those of Parker, Gillespie, Monk and the men of the 1940s.' Part of this he suggested was due to the lack of musicians of 'stature', and he singled out Miles Davis as 'the most important player of the decade' but who 'is an altogether lesser man than those who dominated earlier', like Armstrong or Parker. The music, he argued, had become too academic and intellectual: 'most of this sterility was due to a wholly disastrous desire to intellectualise jazz', and the only good news was a sense that now some jazz was re-embracing the blues, including Ray Charles and John Coltrane.⁷⁰

Hobsbawm shifted his position after this, showing a more positive view of the jazz of post bebop as well as a willingness to illustrate where he differed with other critics. So when some of the latter claimed that Modern Jazz Quartet were 'Not Jazz', Hobsbawm wrote in the *New Statesman* in May 1964 that he thought

they were 'technically the best jazz combination now performing', and John Lewis the 'most gifted composer after Ellington' (high praise indeed given Hobsbawm's admiration for Ellington).⁷¹ He also presented a more positive view of 1950s jazz in general in the introduction to later editions of *The Jazz Scene*, and indeed he tried to back-date these views. In 1993 he argued that the late 1950s 'was a golden age for jazz, and we knew it'. What is more that, 'the years between 1955 and 61 were one of the rare periods when the old and the new coexisted in jazz and both prospered.'⁷² He also suggested that the vibrancy of 1950s jazz meant that 'In fact most of the developments of the 1960s and 70s were already being anticipated in 1960.'⁷³ This made it he argued, a golden age alongside the swing of the 1930s, but that 'Shortly after *The Jazz Scene* appeared, the golden age of the 1950s came to a sudden end' finished in part by the strength of rock music.⁷⁴ He was as we have already seen, later more positive about Davis, noting both his importance as an artist (including breaking modern jazz in Britain) although this was 'based on his records, not any live performances.'⁷⁵

Hobsbawm's eventual celebration of jazz in the 1950s was in part encouraged by what he saw as the deleterious emergence of rock and roll and its later incarnation as rock. As we have seen, Hobsbawm saw that the jazz revival in some ways paved the way for this explosion, as did the related popularity of the blues. Hobsbawm believed that pop music had always been parasitical on more authentic jazz forms starting with Tin Pan Alley commercialising ragtime. As he put it in *The Jazz Scene*, 'Thus the perennial pattern of an original jazz style almost immediately absorbed and vulgarised by pop music, was established

from the start.⁷⁶ But the popular music of the 1950s not only absorbed but overwhelmed jazz. 'Sometime in the 1950s American popular music committed patricide' he wrote in 1986, 'Rock killed jazz'. He illustrated this by quoting from Count Basie's autobiography which described how the great bandleader recalled playing on a bill where the crowd listened to the first rock and roll act, then left when his band came on, before returning for the final rock and roll act. "'To them we were just an intermission act. That's what that was. It didn't mean anything else but just that. You had to face it'".⁷⁷

In a similar vein, writing in the *New Statesman* in January 1964, Hobsbawm looked back on the previous 'wonderful year for pop', which hadn't been so good for jazz fans. After reviewing pop and blues releases he argued that the 'Beat vogue' overwhelmed other popular music, and in doing so 'it marks a major breakthrough of mass culture'. He believed this increasing commercialisation was illustrated by the trivial pop merchandise that had recently become popular, including Beatles wigs (no one had produced these for Elvis, he suggested), whilst he also pointed out the conquest of the 'the squares' by pop, and that it even managed to change the music of the Salvation Army. As for jazz, it 'remains where it has long been, scouring the bottom of the Parker barrel, or semi-quarantined in the avantest of avant-gardes.'⁷⁸

The timing of the emergence of rock also rankled with Hobsbawm, coinciding as it did with the triumph of the Beatles, so shortly after what he came to see as moment at which 'the golden age' of jazz 'was at its peak'. He argued that 'A crucial distinction between jazz and rock was that rock was never a minority

music'⁷⁹ He placed this in its historical context, of emerging affluence among teenagers who transformed popular music and allowed rock to dominate. It became, he suggested, the voice of youth and like blue jeans crossed geographic and social boundaries. Significantly he argued, rock offered much of what jazz offered, suggesting young people found in it 'a simplified and perhaps coarsened version, much, if not everything, that had attracted their elders to jazz'. It also attracted young fans, particularly in the US and UK, where the biggest sales of rock music took place, but which were also the older jazz strongholds. This led to a loss of sales and club closures, although this was compensated to some extent by the fact that newer regions had developed an interest in jazz.⁸⁰

Part of Hobsbawm's misgiving about pop and rock was that he saw the commercial and mass appeal of rock music as linked to the vagueness of its message, even when it was trying to be political. He noted, 'as in the lives of its age-groups, in rock music the public and private, feeling and conviction, love, rebellion and art, acting as doing and as stage behaviour, were not distinguishable from each other.'⁸¹ Woodstock was a good example of this, which 'whilst a marvellous experience' did not have any obvious political significance.⁸²

For Hobsbawm the issue was linked to notions of authenticity and substance, In this regard he used a very interesting metaphor of weight in a 1969 introduction to the Czech edition of *The Jazz Scene*, saying 'The truth is that by far the greater part of the new pop music is light music – though the best of it is extremely good light music', whereas 'Jazz is "heavy" music on a small scale: to quote a phrase in this book "small, but made of uranium"'.⁸³ There was also an issue of quality for

Hobsbawm, as he argued that rock musicians were not as talented as Holiday, Bessie Smith or Gershwin. 'The mass of rock and roll groups are bad', he argued, singling out The Rolling Stones as an example.⁸⁴ Hobsbawm also had little time for some of the later incarnations of black music including Hip Hop. In 1993, he admitted that it was more popular with the black community than jazz, but he saw it as 'A form of art which, in my opinion, is musically uninteresting and literary doggerel. In fact, it is the opposite of the great and profound art of the blues.'⁸⁵ By this time Miles Davis had experimented with hip hop, culminating in the posthumous *Doo Bop* (1992), but this music was unpopular with many in the jazz community (and wider society) although it showed continued popularity with a growing audience. Hobsbawm had found it difficult to connect with rock and it is not particularly surprising that hip hop went under his radar. However it was a music that in many ways reflected the balance between commercial and art music, and a vibrant engagement with working class life, which he ascribed to jazz.⁸⁶

In this context it is interesting that in 1960, as a historian with an interest in jazz and popular culture, Hobsbawm was asked to contribute to a conference on youth culture organised by the National Union of Teachers, at Church House, Westminster. The conference sought to explore the role of popular culture, including music, on school children's lives given contemporary concerns about the corrupting effects of mass culture on the nation's youth. The conference sought to be less dismissive of popular culture and a wide range of speakers took part, alongside Hobsbawm, including Home Secretary Rab Butler, Arnold Wesker, Richard Hoggart, Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall. Hobsbawm's

testimony before the commission was critical of the impact of recent pop music, suggesting 'the mass media do debase the popular tradition', including overwhelming other more local music. Echoing the arguments in the previous year's *The Jazz scene* he argued that commercial music was not in itself bad, and cited jazz as an example that had flourished without patronage, but that since the 1950s popular music had become more commercial and there had been a corresponding decline in quality and creativity. He argued that one solution was to attack the 'financial and commercial structure of the business' and try and stop it making so much money, and he also pointed out that rather than schools teaching 'good elements' of popular culture, they should note the work done by jazz enthusiasts in encouraging an educated interest in their music.⁸⁷ The conference and report, published as Popular Culture and Personal Responsibility: Verbatim Report of a Conference held at Church House, Westminster, 26-28 October 1960, were influential on contemporary debates and led to further work by Hall and others.⁸⁸

Hobsbawm's criticism of post war pop music was problematic, not least because as a historian who offered a perceptive analysis of jazz, his generalised criticisms of these music forms in many ways echoed the dismissal of jazz by earlier critics. Furthermore rock and roll and rock were heavily reliant on the blues, which Hobsbawm included under the Jazz banner.⁸⁹ Indeed he did take a more nuanced view of pop and rock music than some of the above comments suggest, particularly as time went on, and he would later humorously recall how second wife Marlene claimed he proposed to her at a Bob Dylan concert.⁹⁰ He had mixed feelings about Dylan. In the *New Statesman* in 1964 he reviewed a Dylan gig,

where his songs had 'fairly numerous bad verses', and were sung 'in an unprofessional raw ramble'. He did not, Hobsbawm suggested, have the 'musicality, nor the fun, nor the anonymous oppression' which they recently heard on 'Blues and Gospel Caravan' tour including Sonny Terry and Rev. Gary Davis. However he suggested that Dylan did represent the voice of the outsider and his 'limited' songs had potential, although would probably be better performed by other artists.⁹¹ Later In *Interesting Times*, Hobsbawm recalled witnessing the counterculture first hand when he was in Berkeley and San Francisco in 1967, and suggested that it represented a generational gap which couldn't be bridged by people of his age, and a musical form which jazz people didn't understand. He cited the Rolling Stones who he 'never had any time for', although pointed out that he 'rather admired the Beatles' and saw 'fragments of genius' in Bob Dylan.⁹²

Hobsbawm had (in) famously written about the Beatles in the *New Statesman* in 1963 when he suggested they were more about a 'sound' than music. He suggested they were peaking, and that the short shelf life of a pop act meant they were 'probably just about to begin their slow descent'. He added 'In 29 years time nothing of them will survive.'⁹³ Hobsbawm later recalled his 'spectacular failure to recognise the potential of the Beatles....stand as the last memory of Francis Newton's years covering the scene for the readers of the *New Statesman*.'⁹⁴ However whilst he was wrong about the Beatles, he was right about the broader tendency in pop and rock acts to have a short shelf life (although there were a lot of other 1960s acts which bucked this trend). He also wrote more appreciatively about the Beatles in 1969, when he acknowledged the

hype associated with them, but that they were important not least for the 'professional expertise', including production. Hobsbawm found this particularly relevant with later recordings which were 'technically much more interesting', as well as being 'musically serious and popular.' This was making a similar point to Hobsbawm's view of jazz as commercial yet art music, but Hobsbawm rowed back slightly, adding 'Still, we must not exaggerate.'⁹⁵ He would later point out the influence of the Beatles, particularly the 'symphonic' elements of *Sergeant Pepper* on jazz musicians.⁹⁶

Hobsbawm saw the political dimension of jazz, including his critique of the vagueness of the political messages emanating from rock, and this was characteristic of his writing. As Bounds suggested *The Jazz Scene* presented a more flexible view of popular culture which was important within the context of British Marxist writing. However Hobsbawm's writing was historical but not overly political, or partisan. His argument that jazz emerged amongst the poor and working classes was convincing, and he also pointed out the role the left played in various ways in the emergence of jazz, including during the New Deal era where he saw it linking to left wing culture, and he of course wrote warmly of John Hammond and other leftists.⁹⁷ Similarly he saw communists and other leftists as important in creating a 'people's music' in the post war years; jazz bands leading the Aldermaston marches were one example of this.⁹⁸ All of which is pretty uncontroversial and has been shared by historians and jazz writers of various political hues. Indeed Philip Larkin's reviews of *The Jazz Scene* saw no

problem with Francis Newton's approach, and indeed it could be argued that it influences some of his historical writing.⁹⁹

Conclusion

Eric Hobsbawm was a perceptive voice in British jazz writing, and this deserves more attention. He helped popularise jazz, and to give it intellectual credibility, and in particular added a historian's understanding of the music, including its relationship with wider popular culture. As he pointed out, his interest in jazz also influenced his more widely known writings. His work, across his career, can be seen in the writing of later jazz scholars, and as this paper has argued, is still of relevance to jazz writers and historians. He was also consistent in his views on the importance of jazz in both his private and published work. He used genre and sub genre but was flexible within this, and he was aware of the way the meaning of jazz was shaped by critics and writers, as well as performers. *The Jazz Scene*, as Bounds pointed out, can be seen as a contribution to British Marxist thought, but the breadth of the book also meant it was much more than this. And his later work, including the revised introductions to *The Jazz Scene* of 1969, 1989 and 1993, and the collected essays in Uncommon People are major works of historically informed jazz writing. Sometimes he could overstate the case, and McKibbin has pointed out this led him arguably to overestimate the importance of jazz, and to downplay the role of Tin Pan Alley.¹⁰⁰ It could also be suggested that Hobsbawm valorised the music he grew up with, but was less academic in

his approach to later popular music, including some which had the countercultural tendencies he had consistently noted in jazz.

However as well as a critic and historian Hobsbawm was also a fan, and the warmth of his writing, especially on Billie Holiday and Ellington, illustrates this. For example in 'Goodbye to the Duke', he wrote of the passing of the 'last and the greatest of jazz musicians' and that it was 'doubtful whether jazz as we have known it will survive his death.'¹⁰¹ Ellington had of course been the musician who had sparked Hobsbawm's interest, and encouraged him to join the jazz community, and his enthusiasm for jazz, especially the jazz of his youth, complemented and helped fire his academic and critical writing. However Hobsbawm's writings on jazz matter because they illustrate the significance of jazz and why historians should pay it proper attention. 'Jazz Comes to Europe' written in 1994 is a remarkable example of well researched, historically informed writing and a model for researching and writing jazz, and wider popular music history. It illustrates why Francis Newton remains a valuable guide for understanding both jazz and popular culture.

¹ 'To criticise the Future', *Guardian*, 23 Dec 2000.

<http://www.theguardian.com/books/2000/dec/23/historybooks> (visited 6 June 2015); 'Introduction to the 1989 Edition', *The Jazz Scene (Faber Finds)* (London: Faber and Faber, 2014) [E-Edition], loc 240.

² Richard Gott, 'Living Through Extremes', *New Statesman*, 23, 2002, pp.48-50.

³ Hobsbawm, 'Introduction to the 1989 Edition', loc 452-66.

⁴ Hobsbawm, *Uncommon People: Resistance, Rebellion and Jazz* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1998), pp.236-94. Although his autobiography had fewer

mentions of jazz: Hobsbawm, Interesting Times: A Twentieth Century Life (Allen Lane, 2002. This edn. p/back, London: Abacus, 2003)

⁵ *ibid.*, pp.80-1.

⁶ See E.F. Biagini and Alastair Reid (eds), Currents of Radicalism: Popular Radicalism, Organised Labour and Party Politics in Britain, 1850-1914 (Cambridge, CUP, 1991); Patrick Joyce, Work, Society and Politics: The Culture of the Factory in Later Victorian England (London, Methuen, 1982); Alastair Reid, Social Classes and Social Relations in Britain, 1850-1914 (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1992)

⁷ See Raphael Samuel and Gareth Stedman Jones (eds), Culture, Ideology and Politics: Essays for Eric Hobsbawm (London, Routledge, Kegan and Paul, 1982). For various historian's responses to Hobsbawm's death on 1 October 2012, including Ferguson, see <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/oct/01/eric-hobsbawm-historian> (visited 9 Nov 2015) Michael Gove Conservative MP. "Our greatest living apologist." *Times* [London, England] 27 Oct. 2008: 22. *The Times Digital Archive*.(visited 8 March 2016)

⁸ Philip Bounds, 'From Folk to Jazz: Eric Hobsbawm, British Communism and Cultural Studies', Critique: Journal of Socialist Theory 40,4, pp.575-93.

⁹ Tony Coe, 'Hobsbawm and Jazz' in Samuel and Stedman Jones, Culture, Ideology and Politics, pp.149-57.

¹⁰ John Gennari, Blowin' Hot and Cool: Jazz and Its Critics (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2006),pp. 62-6 and 94-5.

¹¹George McKay, Circular Breathing; The Cultural Politics of Jazz in Britain (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), p.309 fn.1; Indeed McKay made contact with Hobsbawm whilst researching the book. George McKay to Hobsbawm, 19 Dec 2001; Hobsbawm to McKay email, 19 June 2002, Modern Records Centre (MRC), Hobsbawm Papers, 937, Box 22, Folder 2.

¹² Roger Fagge, 'One of the most remarkable cultural phenomena of the century': Larkin, Hobsbawm and Amis on Jazz', in Roger Fagge and Nicolas Pillai (eds), New Jazz Conceptions: History, Theory, Practice (New York: Routledge, 2017), pp. 140-64.

¹³ Gennari, Blowin' Hot and Cool, p.165-205.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.3.

¹⁵ See for example, Scott DeVeaux, 'Constructing the Jazz Tradition: Jazz Historiography', *Black American Literature Forum*, 25, 3 (1991), 525-560. Sherrie Tucker, 'Deconstructing the Jazz Tradition: The "Subjectless Subject" of the New Jazz Studies', in David Ake and Charles Hiroshi Garrett (eds) Jazz/Not Jazz: The Music and its Boundaries (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2012), 264-84.

¹⁶ Hobsbawm recalled that Preston converted him to jazz, although he added that he wasn't as successful in recruiting his cousin to communism. 'Introduction to the 1993 edition', The Jazz Scene, loc 92-102.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, loc 123.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, loc 128.

¹⁹ Hobsbawm, Interesting Times, pp.80-81.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.154; 169-70; Hobsbawm, The Jazz Scene, loc 40.

²¹ Fox to Hobsbawm, n.d (1943), List of Blues Singers, Nov 1943; Fox to Hobsbawm, 29 Dec 1943; Fox to Hobsbawm, n.d. (1944). MRC Hobsbawm Papers 937, Box 2, Folder 2 'Letters'.

²² Hobsbawm, The Jazz Scene, loc 165-75

²³ 'To Criticise the Future' *Guardian*

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- ²⁴ Eric Hobsbawm, 'Diary', *London Review of Books*, 27 May 2010, pp1-2.
<http://www.lrb.co.uk/v32/n10/eric-hobsbawm/diary> (visited 29 Apr 2015).
- ²⁵ Hobsbawm, 'Diary' *LRB*, p.1. 'To Criticise the Future', *Guardian*; 'Introduction to 1993 Edition', loc 172-77.
- ²⁶ Hobsbawm, 'Diary', *LRB*, 1-2; Hobsbawm, *Interesting Times*, 224-5.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, , 226.
- ²⁸ Hobsbawm, *The Jazz Scene*, loc 36
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, loc 4377
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, loc 528
- ³¹ *Ibis.*, loc 1501.
- ³² Francis Newton, *The Jazz Scene* (London: Penguin, 1961 edn.), pp.4-10
- ³³ *Ibid.*, p.33.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*, 10-12.
- ³⁵ Hobsbawm, *The Jazz Scene*, 3430; 3296-3651
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, 3443
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, 3570
- ³⁸ Eric Hobsbawm, 'Playing for Ourselves', *New York Review of Books*, 16 Jan 1986.
<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/1986/01/16/playing-for-ourselves/>
 (visited 24 May 2016.) For an interesting discussions of Adorno and Jazz, see J. Bradford Robinson, 'The Jazz Essays of Theodor Adorno: Some Thoughts on Jazz Reception in Weimar Germany', *Popular Music*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (Jan., 1994), pp. 1-25. See also William P. Nye (1988) 'Theodor Adorno on Jazz: A critique of critical theory', *Popular Music and Society*, 12:4 (1988), pp.69-73, and a reply by Carol V. Hamilton (1991) 'All that Jazz again: Adorno's sociology of music', *Popular Music and Society*, 15:3 (1991), pp. 31-40
- ³⁹ Bounds, 'From Folk to Jazz', p. 575-82.
- ⁴⁰ Newton, *The Jazz Scene*, 52-6.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp.252-269.
- ⁴² Bernard Grendon, "'Moldy Figs" and Modernists: Jazz at War, 1942-6', in Krin Gabbard (ed.), *Jazz Among the Discourses* (Durham, N.C., Duke University Press, 1995), pp.31-55.
- ⁴³ Gennari, *Blowin' Hot and Cool*, p.165-205.
- ⁴⁴ Newton, *The Jazz Scene*, pp.63-79.
- ⁴⁵ Hobsbawm, *The Jazz Scene*, loc1645.
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, loc 2269-2351.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 2351-2356.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 6738-6834.
- ⁴⁹ The review was titled 'Poetry of the Blues', *Daily Worker*, 12/6/59; *Tribune*, 16/6/57. MRC Hobsbawm papers.
- ⁵⁰ *The Observer*, 6 August 1961; MRC Hobsbawm papers
- ⁵¹ *The Observer*, 31 May 1959 and *Guardian* 31 July 1959. These are collected with his other writings on jazz in: Richard Palmer and John White (eds), *Jazz Writings: Essays and Reviews, 1940-84* (London: Continuum, 2004 edn.) This was originally published as *Reference Back: Philip Larkin's Uncollected Jazz Writings, 1940-84* (Hull: Hull University Press, 1999), pp.20-24.
- ⁵² *San Francisco Chronicle*, 14 August 1960; *Daily Star* (Toronto), 14 September 1959. MRC Hobsbawm papers.
- ⁵³ 'Diary', *LRB*, p.4.
- ⁵⁴ Hobsbawm, *Uncommon People*, p.273.
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 268-9.

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- ⁵⁶ *New York review of Books*, 12 Feb 1987, <http://0-www.nybooks.com.pugwash.lib.warwick.ac.uk/articles/1987/02/12/the-jazz-comeback/> (accessed 12 June 2016) add other references
- ⁵⁷ NYRB, 26 March 1987 <http://0-www.nybooks.com.pugwash.lib.warwick.ac.uk/articles/1987/03/26/all-that-jazz/> (visited 12 June 2016)
- ⁵⁸ Hobsbawm reply to Lincoln Collier, *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁹ Martin Williams to Hobsbawm, 30 April 1987. MRC Hobsbawm papers, Folder 2, Letters.
- ⁶⁰ Robinson to Hobsbawm, 17 June 1987. *Ibid.*
- ⁶¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁶² NYRB, 12 Feb 1987
- ⁶³ Robinson to Hobsbawm, 17 June 1987, MRC Hobsbawm papers.
- ⁶⁴ Hobsbawm, 'Introduction to the 1993 edition', loc 142-151.
- ⁶⁵ Hobsbawm, *Uncommon People*, pp.270-3.
- ⁶⁶ 'Diary', *LRB*, p.2.
- ⁶⁷ 'Introduction to the 1993 Edition', loc 166-76
- ⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, loc 172-6 Interestingly Hobsbawm later suggested that 'even the passionate jazz-conservative Philip Larkin eventually felt he had to make a gesture in this direction'. 'Diary', *LRB*, p. 2.
- ⁶⁹ 'Searcher', *New Statesman*, 22 Jan 1965, p.126
- ⁷⁰ 'Too Cool', 16 January 1960, reprinted in *New Statesman*, 9 July 2012, <http://www.newstatesman.com/culture/culture/2012/07/too-cool> (visited 12 June 2016)
- ⁷¹ 'Not Jazz', *New Statesman*, 67, 8 May 1964, pp.740-1.
- ⁷² Hobsbawm, *The Jazz Scene*, loc 244
- ⁷³ 'Introduction to the 1989 Edition'. *The Jazz Scene*, loc 249-54
- ⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, loc 274; Hobsbawm, *Uncommon People*, p.330; 'Introduction to the 1969 Czech edition' of *The Jazz Scene* MRC Hobsbawm Papers, folder 1 (Draft articles)
- ⁷⁵ 'Diary', *LRB*, p.3.
- ⁷⁶ Newton, *The Jazz Scene*, pp.34-6; 46-7.
- ⁷⁷ Basie was playing Alan Freed's 'CBS Rock'n'Roll Dance Party' which he suggested was 'not our thing', as they didn't play rock'n'roll. Hobsbawm noted the stoical response of Basie, and this incident fits into the account of the wider story of these years. It was Hobsbawm's emphasis on this extract and gave him the dramatic start to the article, and in fact the review article goes on to deal with other issues including Kansas City, and the chaotic brilliance of Basie's bands. Hobsbawm, *Uncommon People*, p.329, Count Basie, *Good Morning Blues* (Paladin, London, 1987 edn.), pp. 246-8.
- ⁷⁸ 'Pop year', *New Statesman*, 3 Jan 1964, pp.22-23.
- ⁷⁹ 'Introduction to the 1989 Edition', Loc 315; Hobsbawm, *Uncommon People*, pp.283.
- ⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 282-5; Hobsbawm, *Interesting Times*, pp.250-61; 'Introduction to the 1989 Edition', loc 330407
- ⁸¹ *Ibid.*, loc 340.
- ⁸² Hobsbawm, *Uncommon People*, p.285.
- ⁸³ 'Introduction to the 1969 Czech edition' MRC; The quote is from Hobsbawm, *The Jazz Scene*, loc 2810.
- ⁸⁴ 'Introduction to the 1969 Czech edition' MRC

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- ⁸⁵ 'Introduction to the 1993 edition', loc 219-24; Hobsbawm, Uncommon People, p.390.
- ⁸⁶ Hip hop was receiving more considered academic attention by this time, which helped establish its significance. A key text was Tricia Rose, Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America (Hanover, NH, University Press of New England, 1994). Other important books around this time included Mark Anthony Neal, What the Music said : Black Popular Music and Black Public Culture (New York, Routledge 1999) and Todd Boyd, Am I Black Enough for You?: Popular Culture from the 'Hood and beyond (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1997)
- ⁸⁷ MRC archives of the National Union of Teachers; reference: MSS.179/1/57/161-163], pp.123-5.
- ⁸⁸ Graeme Turner, British Cultural Studies: An Introduction (Routledge, 2005 edn.) p.37.
- ⁸⁹ Important works on 1950s music include Garofalo, Reebee, ' Crossing Over: From Black Rhythm and Blues to White Rock 'n' Roll', in N. Kelley (ed.) Rhythm & Business: The Political Economy of Black Music (New York, 2002) pp. 112 – 137; Marybeth Hamilton, 'Sexual Politics and African American Music: or placing Little Richard in History', *History Workshop Journal*, 46 (1998), pp.161-76; Richard A. Peterson, 'Why 1955? Explaining the Advent of Rock Music', *Popular Music*, 9, 1, (1990), pp.97-115.
- ⁹⁰ 'Diary', *LRB*, p.4.
- ⁹¹ Bob Dylan', *New Statesman*, 67, 22 May 1964, p.819
- ⁹² Hobsbawm, Interesting Times, p.251-2.
- ⁹³ *New Statesman*, 8 November 1963. This was republished in 2007 on the *New Statesman* website, singled out for Hobsbawm's dismissal of the Beatles. <http://www.newstatesman.com/society/2007/06/beatles-music-blues-1963> (visited 7 July 2016)
- ⁹⁴ 'Diary', *LRB*, p.4
- ⁹⁵ 'Introduction to the 1969 Czech edition', MRC
- ⁹⁶ Hobsbawm, Uncommon People, p.385
- ⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.324, 368.
- ⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.362-3.
- ⁹⁹ Fagge, 'One of the most remarkable cultural phenomena of the century', p. 153 (fn 98)
- ¹⁰⁰ Ross McKibbin, Classes and Cultures: England 1918-51 (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 417-18.
- ¹⁰¹ 'Goodbye to Duke', *The Observer*, 26 May 1974