

The Masthead

Reports of the internet's completeness have been greatly exaggerated. While large swathes of obscure, experimental and underground music are just a click away on YouTube, Spotify and elsewhere, those monumental archives now overshadow crucial areas of musical activity.

Sometimes it's in the places you least expect. Jazz might seem to be well represented now that the catalogues of Blue Note, ECM and others are instantly available on Spotify. But the way it and other big internet operators parse and organise information conceals a bias towards the Baby Boomer generation, and to its cherished cultural artefacts: albums, stars and rock. So on Spotify, details of the instrumentalists and composers so important to jazz are missing, while the platform's inbuilt Behind The Lyrics Genius (to use its official title) offers glib comments upon recording sessions and lyrics.

The astonishing ease of access and information regarding music of the late 1960s, 70s and 80s sometimes overshadows what came immediately before it (and perhaps after). Preparing for a radio show a few years back on Charles Mingus – hardly a quiet voice from the distant past – I was looking into his use of overdubs on albums like 1963's *The Black Saint And The Sinner Lady*, as well as similar techniques that Sun Ra fooled around with in many recording sessions lost to time. Google searches won't give you much to penetrate these junctures in the history of American creative music, and what you do find is as likely to mislead as to inform. Narratives around white music have come to dominate the discourse; to join the great men of history idea, we can now add the great albums of history theory.

I felt this sense of overshadowing when researching the work of Victor Schonfield and Music Now, the London organisation he helped to bring together at the tail end of the 1960s, for Phil England's Once Upon A Time In London piece in this issue. Schonfield was (literally) in the background while several major musicians of the era tentatively made their way in UK and Europe – Sun Ra, Ornette

Coleman, Cornelius Cardew, AMM, John Stevens. He hustled as hard and as creatively as anyone to bring new music to those who needed to hear it, including most notably Paul McCartney ("It was alright, but it went on a bit long," was apparently his opinion of an early AMM performance).

Schonfield is still an enthusiastic presence on the London gig circuit today, but accounts of his adventures with musicians, including anarchic happenings at hushed concert halls, camper van road trips to Eastern Europe, and ad hoc gigs wherever they could get them, are hard to find outside gig gossip, participants' memories and the occasional academic journal. Albums and recordings of the era are no more than a faint, deceptive echo of the activities of Music Improvisation Company and The Scratch Orchestra. The motherlode of documentation for this gamechanging episode is still locked up in filing cabinets, papers, programmes, press cuttings and photos beyond the reach of the internet. Which is all the more reason for these stories to be told now.

Part of Schonfield's story is the late Charles Fox, the longterm host of jazz shows on BBC Radio 3, past contributor to *The Wire*, and a significant supporter of Music Now's mission. One of his programmes broadcast the Derek Bailey performance reviewed by Andy Hamilton in this month's Soundcheck, but his *Jazz Today* run is merely a catalogue entry in the BBC archives today.

As postmodern music guru James Ferraro argues to Maya Kaley in this month's cover feature, "Humanity is kind of under a hold of the internet." But hey, it's not all bad news. In the Unofficial Channels column, Michael A Gonzales revisits the Armed Forces Radio Service show *Jubilee*, which spread jazz far and wide during the Second World War, and has recently appeared online almost in its entirety. And to take a philosophical angle, Buh Records' Luis Alvarado, from his perspective in Peru, welcomes data overload as a necessary way to shake up music history: "If I like something about the post-internet revolution, it is that it has complicated things for historians."

Derek Walmsley

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Subscriptions

Print Subscription

12 issues
UK £49
Europe €69/€77
USA/Canada €69/US\$88
Rest of World (Afr) £79

Digital Subscription

12 months
Worldwide £30/US\$41/€34

See page 104 for details, or go to
thewire.co.uk/subscribe

The Wire is published 12 times a year by
The Wire Magazine Ltd. Printed in the UK
by Wyndeham Group.

The Wire was founded in 1982 by
Anthony Wood. Between 1984–2000
it was part of Naim Attallah's Namara
Group. In December 2000 it was
purchased in a management buy-out by
the magazine's then current staff. It
continues to publish as a 100 per cent
independent operation.

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Issue 416 October 2018

£4.95 ISSN 0952-0686

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