

<p><b>Institution: Manchester Metropolitan University</b></p>
<p><b>Unit of Assessment: D35 Music, Drama, Dance and the Performing Arts</b></p>
<p><b>Title of case study: Practice-as-Research and its Impact on the Professional Practitioner: changing models of creative practice.</b></p>
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p>
<p>This case study brings together theory-informed practitioners across different art forms to develop and disseminate new artistic practices. The research referenced here demonstrates specific ways in which Practice-as-Research (PaR) has been developed and supported, and the impact such projects have had on beneficiaries nationally and internationally. Impact, beyond enriching the lives of the general public who encounter PaR events, is threefold: the PaR methodology has become pervasive in the creative sector; it informs and influences society's engagement with arts practice; research has been adopted as a methodology for researchers to reach out beyond academia and thus has had a direct impact on professional practice.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p>
<p>The work of the PaR group is a sustained initiative that was instigated in the Department of Contemporary Arts at MMU with PaR submissions to RAE2001 and 2008. This case study focuses on the work of Dr Adam Fairhall (MMU: 2007 – present), Senior Lecturer and jazz improviser/pianist whose PaR projects typify the dynamic model produced by Professor Robin Nelson (MMU: 1987 – 2010) that formalised an articulation of the PaR process (see Nelson, 2006 [1]). Nelson's research articulates strategies for evidencing the research inquiry where practice remains a substantial element of the research outcome. Fairhall's jazz projects constitute a further praxical exemplification of Nelson's model and have been supported by Curating Knowledge (CK), part of Axis Arts Centre (AAC), curated by Dr Jane Linden (MMU: 1996 – present) and Neil Mackenzie (MMU: 1993 – present), both Senior Lecturers and curators. [2,3] CK creates a space that actively supports the development of PaR work and engages with a wide range of creative practitioners beyond, as well as in, the HEI sector. CK initially ran from 2008 – 2010 as a research project developed by Linden and borrowed from Gadamar's notion of the 'dialogical encounter' (<i>Truth and Method</i>, [1960] 2004). CK continues to offer creative practitioners a research and development residency in the Open Space at MMU's AAC where they are exposed to a range of different critical perspectives on their work. Practitioners are presented with a multiplicity of opportunities to explore their research process: performance, exhibition, documentation, seminar, as well as with ad hoc encounters with people moving through the site.</p>
<p>Along with other colleagues in the PaR group, Fairhall has presented his research as part of CK at AAC (2010 and 2012). Fairhall's portfolio of research comprises two albums that offer both significant research and impact; namely <i>Second-Handed Blues</i> (Fairhall: pianist and composer; Paul Rogers: co-arranger) [4] and <i>Imaginary Delta</i> (Fairhall: commissioned composer and pianist). [5] Both albums develop methods of code-mixing, a term defined by Fairhall after George E Lewis's use of the term 'code-switching' to describe the style-jumping of the New York downtown musicians (in Fischlin and Heble, 2004). Fairhall allows for more subtle forms of mixing than sequential hopping between styles and employs the device within the emerging format of solo piano and sampling/production elements. The notion of code-mixing draws on the way in which groupings of signs are culturally and historically located and, through exploring the diachronic placing and re-placing in a synchronic context, can be re-interpreted in a different post-structural and intertextual manner.</p>
<p>Two approaches are examined in the research: firstly, differently coded 'blocks' are set against each other, either sequentially or simultaneously; secondly, two or more individual musical parameters within a block are coded differently, producing a more subtle integration of idioms. [4] <i>Imaginary Delta</i> further develops the investigation and establishes an aesthetic of representation that acknowledges the constructedness of all representations of the past, while largely avoiding the kind of parody, irony and sense of kitsch that characterizes some appropriations of early jazz. [5,6]</p>

**3. References to the research**

[1] Nelson, Robin (2006), 'Practice-as-research and the Problem of Knowledge' from *Performance Research* 11 (4) pp105 – 116. DOI:10.1080/13528160701363556 *Nelson's article is listed as 2nd most read receiving 34 citations and having over 1000 downloads in Performance Research (accessed 23.9.13).*

[2] Linden, Jane (2008 - 2010) *Curating Knowledge Project*: [www.curatingknowledge.com](http://www.curatingknowledge.com)

[3] Linden, Jane and Mackenzie, Neil (2010 – present) *Curating Knowledge at the Axis Arts Centre*: [www.curatingknowledge.com](http://www.curatingknowledge.com)

[4] Fairhall, Adam (2011) *The Second-handed Blues* CD published by ASC Records (*submitted in REF2*)

[5] Fairhall, Adam (2012) *Imaginary Delta* CD / Live performancenpublished by SLAM Productions (*submitted in REF2*)

[6] Fairhall, Adam (2013) *Imaginary Pasts: Representing Early Jazz in Contemporary Jazz Practice* presented at: Rhythm Changes II: Rethinking Jazz Cultures, Media City UK/University of Salford (available at <http://www.adamfairhall.co.uk/practice-as-research/> and upon request by the panel)

**External Funding to indicate research quality**

Adam Fairhall: 2009: Awarded Serious: Take Five (Jerwood Charitable Trust and Performing Rights Society for Music Foundation).

2011: Manchester Jazz Festival commission (Original's Scheme).

2013: The Forge (Music and Arts venue Camden London).

**4. Details of the impact**

Nelson's model of PaR knowledge has established impact as a model for creating and disseminating arts-based research to both the professional art's world and the wider general public. The impact on creative practice is profound. Nelson's article 'Practice-as-research and the Problem of Knowledge' has been accessed by 1095 readers. [1] PaR continues to be an MMU specialism supported by Linden and Mackenzie's innovative approach to curating knowledge, AAC enables PaR to be developed and disseminated. The CK methodology has had strong impact on the wider art's practitioner field: since 2008, 48 creative practitioners have benefited directly from residences at MMU's AAC. For example, Dogshelf Theatre company confirms that it is 'as a direct result of our time in the Open Space that has led to an upcoming installation at CARPA/TEAK in Helsinki'. [A] Another high-profile contemporary artist and founder of OU Performance, describes CK as 'a unique opportunity to develop my practice-led-research in a public yet supported context. I have had key outcomes that were made possible because of Curating Knowledge'. [B]

Fairhall's PaR projects typify Nelson's model and have been supported by the CK methodology. Fairhall's research articulates new insights within the jazz musical language through the use of code-mixing jazz structures and musical parameters, and enriches the experience of individuals and groups. The impact is evidenced through his collaborations with leading jazz musicians, through his engagement with key jazz platforms and through the albums he has released.

Fairhall has played piano under acclaimed saxophonist Nat Birchall's leadership on 4 studio albums and a session for BBC6 Music, Birchall, commenting on Fairhall's ability to code-mix, states that:

...importantly he is able to convincingly play in these various styles, often blending them seamlessly into a personal amalgam which never sounds artificial or affected in any way. This ability has meant that his contribution to my own music cannot be overstated. [K]

Fairhall's performances on these albums have received airplay on Radio 1, Radio 2 and Radio 3, and widespread acclaim in the music press and broadsheet newspapers. Fairhall's contribution has been particularly noted. He was described as 'a total star' in the *Independent on Sunday's* 5-star review of Birchall's album *World Without Form*. [I] *Second Handed Blues* was played on BBC Radio 3's Jazz Line-Up (2009) with listening figures approximating 70,000. [E]

In 2009 Fairhall was nominated by NW Jazzworks for the prestigious Jerwood Charitable 'Take Five' Edition VI artist development scheme, a professional development scheme designed to give some of the UK's most talented young jazz musicians the unique opportunity to develop their craft; he won the award. [E] As a consequence of winning the award, his work was selected for a performance at the London Jazz Festival in 2010. Fairhall's work has thus reached the specialist jazz community and it has had significant impact on them in terms of their perceptions of the current condition of jazz. [C] Dave Sumner of eMusic selected *The Imaginary Delta* as pick of the month and says 'Fairhall ... is vivid evidence of the strength represented by a new generation of UK jazz musicians'. [C] Daniel Spicer writing in *Jazzwise* magazine gave *The Imaginary Delta* 4 stars

...Fairhall's piano is a questing, quixotic voice with a comprehensive "inside and out" vocabulary that recalls some of Sun Ra's solo passage. [C]

The album was named Album of the Year by American website Birdistheworm.com, whose critic stated: 'If I had to point to one album that exemplified the thriving state of Jazz and its undeniable hope for the future, it would be *The Imaginary Delta*. [D] These critical opinions corroborate Fairhall's success in mixing early jazz and contemporary elements in a way that problematizes simple readings of pastiche or parody; the Birdistheworm.com critic wrote that 'Fairhall is simultaneously forward-thinking while still tending to the roots of Jazz' past'. [D] To date SLAM Productions report that *The Imaginary Delta* has had more than 10,000 sales and downloads. [L]

*The Imaginary Delta* was commissioned by the Manchester Jazz Festival (MJF) 'Original's Scheme' in 2011 and brought together musicians from both Manchester and London thus underlining the national profile and status of the Manchester jazz scene; subsequently the project was also performed at the London Jazz Festival 2012. MJF Artistic Director Steve Mead wrote:

Adam's project was a natural choice for this year's festival commission – his ambition to draw upon the early language of jazz and make it speak to us in the 21st century is something we've not explored fully before; Adam is proving to be a pianist and composer with ingenious talent, fascinating ideas and an un-rivalled knowledge of jazz history ... [C]

The album also received 4-star reviews in *Jazzwise* [C] and *The Jazzman*. [C,G]

Fairhall has been invited to speak about his research at events, namely the 'Jazz Roots + relevance Debate' at the MJF in 2011, the 'Thinking in Jazz' Symposium (Lancaster University, 2012) and the 'Thinking In Jazz' session at the Rhythm Changes International Jazz conference 2013 (Salford University). In 2011 he gave a solo performance at The Sage as part of the Gateshead International Jazz Festival. In 2012 he performed at the Royal Northern College of Music.

## 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

[A] Full testimonial on file available from Director, Dogshel Theatre Company corroborating the impact on creative practitioners of the Curating Knowledge research project

[B] Full testimonial on file available from York-based creative practitioner / performance artist and co-founder of OU Performance (*full details in the submission system*) corroborating the impact on creative practitioners of the Curating Knowledge research project

[C] Reviews of *The Imaginary Delta* <http://www.adamfairhall.co.uk/2012/06/reviews-of-the->

[imaginary-delta/](#) including a 4 star review in Jazz Wise Magazine, 5 star review in the Manchester Evening News. Corroborating the critical acclaim for Fairhall's practice.

**[D]** Review: <http://www.birdistheworm.com/bird-is-the-worm-2012-album-of-the-year-adam-fairhall-the-imaginary-delta/> Album of the Year 2012 on birdistheworm website corroborating the critical acclaim and international reach of Fairhall's work.

**[E]** [http://www.jerwoodcharitablefoundation.org/Search?sent=yes&pageSearch=Jerwood+Annual+Reports+2010&submitButton=Submit Annual Report 2010](http://www.jerwoodcharitablefoundation.org/Search?sent=yes&pageSearch=Jerwood+Annual+Reports+2010&submitButton=Submit+Annual+Report+2010)

Annual report of Jerwood Charitable Foundation (2010) p.26 includes corroboration of Fairhall's award in recognition and press release from the Serious organisation (pdf below) corroborating Fairhall's participation in the Jerwood "Take Five" initiative.

[http://www.serious.org.uk/images/uploads/files/Artists/Take\\_5/take-five-final-draft-chris-ackerley-as-at-jan-2011.pdf](http://www.serious.org.uk/images/uploads/files/Artists/Take_5/take-five-final-draft-chris-ackerley-as-at-jan-2011.pdf)

**[F]** *Second Handed Blues* performed on BBC Radio 3 Jazz Line-Up audience figures: (2009) Jazz Lineup: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b012r963>  
 Jazz on 3 listeners figures approximately 70,000 a week. (source BBC Marketing & Audiences presentation). [http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/commissioning/site./Jazz\\_on\\_3\\_Audience\\_research.ppt](http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/commissioning/site./Jazz_on_3_Audience_research.ppt)  
 Corroborating reach of Fairhall's 2009 performance on BBC Radio 3

**[G]** Review: <http://www.thejazzmann.com/reviews/review/adam-fairhall-the-imaginary-delta/>

**[H]** Review: <http://www.emusic.com/music-news/review/album/adam-fairhall-the-imaginary-delta/>

**[I]** Review <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/reviews/ios-album-review-nat-birchall-world-without-form-sound-soul-and-spirit-8348271.html>

Corroborating the impact of Fairhall's contribution to Birchall's "World Without Form" album.

**[J]** Axis Arts Centre (archive):  
[http://www.axisartscentre.org.uk/about\\_us/archive](http://www.axisartscentre.org.uk/about_us/archive)

**[K]** Full statement on file from internationally famous Jazz Musician (dated 26/6/13) corroborating the impact of Fairhall's unique playing style derived from his PaR expertise. (*full details uploaded into the submission system*)

**[L]** Available on file: email correspondence from SLAM Productions corroborating sales (reach) of "The Imaginary Delta" (dated 04.08.13)