

getintojazz.com

An investment in audience
development infrastructure

Project report
March 2004

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I Context

In July 2000, Morris Hargreaves McIntyre and the Jazz Development Trust presented Arts Council England with the report of a major New Audiences Fund study into the development of audiences for jazz.

Based on the largest piece of research ever carried out on the jazz sector, the report:

- profiled the characteristics of the existing audience for Jazz
- identified the motivations for and benefits derived from attending Jazz events
- concluded that there is a potentially larger audience for Jazz
- explored what the obstacles to attendance are for potential attenders
- assessed the approaches taken to promoting and marketing Jazz

Jazz audiences are small, fragmented and static. However, research has proven that there is enormous potential to attract new audiences. The failure to address this potential audience is mainly due to the poor marketing and audience development infrastructure within the industry. Lack of training, few staff and low budgets combine with sporadic patterns of programming to produce confusion and a product-focused, un-strategic approach to audiences.

In particular, it highlighted the apparent inability of the aficionados promoting jazz to communicate with potential audiences. It suggested that would-be new attenders needed an accessible, authoritative source of basic information about jazz and jazz events that didn't involve taking risks with cost, time or self-image.

The website

The getintojazz.com website is designed to fulfil this recommendation.

A wide coalition of organisations, practitioners, venues and promoters has collaborated to develop the **getintojazz.com** proposal. Manchester Jazz Festival has played a co-ordinating role, calling open meetings and forums to discuss and refine the idea and a steering group to guide and manage the project. They have won the backing of the Musicians Union, the Jazz Development Trust, Jazz Services, the , Cultural Industries Development Service, Manchester City Music Network and Arts Council England North West together with key jazz venues and promoters. The audience development strategy behind getintojazz.com has been devised by consultants Morris Hargreaves McIntyre, authors of the July 2000 report

The project divided into two main parts:

- development of the website itself
- testing the efficacy of the site in developing new audiences for jazz

A number of bodies funded the development of the website, including Arts Council England North West and the Cultural Industries Development Service. The principal funding for the audience development testing was from Arts Council England's New Audiences Fund.

The timetable

Feb 2002	Project planning, website specification, audience development techniques
Apr 2002	Funding secured
Mar 2003	Basic technical website development completed
Nov 2003	Basic website content completed
Jan 2004	Website technology upgraded
Feb 2004	Audience development testing
Mar 2004	Report

Although the grant from the New Audiences Fund was secured in April 2002, these monies could not be spent until the development of the website was completed.

The development of the database driven website engine was co-ordinated by another funder, the Cultural Industries Development Service. It undertook the work, on behalf of several of its clients and so the process was not in our direct control. Instead of the original three month development period they

estimated, web developers took a whole year to deliver a working site. This delayed the project's original timetable by nine months.

In our original plan, jazz promoters were to enter information directly onto the site to produce a critical mass of content for website visitors. Despite initial enthusiasm and continued moral support, it proved almost impossible to get enough content of sufficient quality to make the site attractive. We employed a freelance jazz journalist to provide content and later took on the work ourselves. This further delayed the project by six months.

Finally, once we had sufficient content, we encountered technical problems with the streaming of audio that had been overlooked by the website developers. The Cultural Industries Development Service kindly paid for the website to be upgraded and relocated to a suitable commercial server. This delayed the project by an additional two months.

In total, these technical and content development delays caused a cumulative over-run of 17 months before we could even begin the New Audiences Funded phase of the project.

Arts Council England had already shown a great deal of commitment to the project by allowing us to carry monies forward into 2003-2004 whilst we waited for the website to be delivered. The requirement that the project be completed by March 2004 meant that the timescale for the testing phase of the project had to be telescoped into two months.

The short timescale and January/February timing meant that there was a lack of available, accessible events to test on new audiences.

We overcame this by partnering with The Lowry to stage an additional jazz event on Sunday 15 February in the Quays Theatre. Although this was not our original intention, it did give us a very controlled environment in which to observe and meet the first time attenders involved in the project. This proved to be very useful in our analysis.

2 Description of the project

Summary

getintojazz.com is a web-site that brings artists, promoters, venues and educators into direct contact with each other and, most importantly, with audiences.

It is inspired by and implements the recommendations of a major New Audiences project funded by Arts Council England. It is based on a robust and thorough understanding of the market. It is designed to be a powerful and effective audience development tool for the jazz industry in Greater Manchester.

The project is collaborative and is both industry and audience-led. What we have learned from **getintojazz.com** can have regional and national impact, not only for the jazz industry, but also for other specialist forms of music and for other contemporary art forms. It represents a strategic, rather than a tactical investment of funds.

Who is it for?

Whilst anyone interested in jazz would find the site useful and interesting, it is primarily aimed at the group recent research identified as 'Cautious Gamblers'. **These are the time-poor**. They do not have the time or inclination to pro-actively forage and search out information about jazz and jazz events. They do not attend the arts frequently and so the time they do allocate is very precious to them. This makes the decision of what to attend absolutely critical: they do not want to waste their precious time attending an event that does not meet their needs. They are therefore cautious when taking the gamble of attending something new or different. Recent research shows that the jazz industry is very poor at persuading the time-poor that it can meet their needs. Consequently jazz is frequently seen as a high-risk option. **getintojazz.com** addresses the time-poor by offering a reliable, convenient one-stop shop that understands their needs and persuasively reduces the level of perceived risk.

What are the key features of the site?

Using proven models of web-based marketing, the site empowers users to find out more about jazz (anonymously and without revealing their lack of knowledge or confidence to 'aficionados'). It gives them the option to find out detailed, explanatory background information on forthcoming live events and hear sound-clips of the bands performing. This takes much of the 'guesswork' out of selecting a 'low-risk' event. Visitors can also take up formal and informal education opportunities, including receiving expert jazz instrument tuition. It gives artists access to a wide market and present themselves in a persuasive way. It gives practitioners offering tuition access to a wide new market, helping to sustain them as professionals within the industry. As the site develops, it is hoped that visitors will be able to read reviews from other audience members and submit their own responses to an online community.

The site is not just a static, reactive library of information. It is designed to be interactive and pro-active. Visitors can register their details online giving promoters the ability to engage them with outbound electronic communications and encouraging them to try new things. As a growing list of those interested in jazz, it will be an invaluable resource to the industry.

Whilst much of the content on the site is unique, especially the way in which information on live events is presented, the site will not duplicate existing resources. Instead, it acts as a portal, directing visitors to a wide range of other jazz sites in the UK, USA and elsewhere. Reciprocal arrangements are being discussed.

How can the site be used to develop audiences?

The principle behind the site is a simple one: that providing clear, persuasive information in a reliable channel allows potential audiences to browse and select jazz events with increased confidence and decreased risk.

The site has the potential to develop audiences in two ways:

- passively, through generating inbound traffic (eg via links from other sites) – visitors are self-driven

- actively, by generating outbound electronic communications including incentivised offers, talks and events aimed at extending their 'risk-taking' propensity.

What did we do?

We tested the basic proposition that visiting the site makes potential attenders more likely to visit in six distinct stages:

STAGE ONE: We tested our plans on potential users:

- **Formative panel** – a range of potential users, both from within the sector and from the potential audience gave us invaluable feedback on our plans and our prototype site map.

STAGE TWO: We identified potential attenders in the following ways:

- **Telephone screening** – using anonymous telephone numbers generated by Random Digit Dial software, we called households located in postcodes that ACORN and TGI profiling data suggested would have the greatest propensity to attend. We asked those who answered about their interest in and experience of jazz. Those who were interested but had not attended were asked if they would be willing to test the getintojazz.com website.
- **Face-to-face screening** – in the same target postcodes, shoppers were asked about their interest in and experience of jazz. Those who were interested but had not attended were asked if they would be willing to test the getintojazz.com website.
- **Outbound e-mail** – working with The Lowry, we targeted past bookers for other artforms who had not booked for jazz. We invited those who were interested in jazz to test the getintojazz.com website.

STAGE THREE: We asked them to test the getintojazz.com website in a structured way:

- **E-mail links** – All those potential attenders who were interested in jazz and were willing to test the website were sent an email containing instructions on how to test the website. This contained links to the site and an online feedback form. It asked them to search for information about a specific event and the site's beginners' guide to jazz.
- **Mystery surfing** – They followed the links and navigated the site searching for the information required. As 'mystery surfers' they tested the site from a user's point of view.
- **Online feedback** – They then followed a second link to an online feedback form where they were asked questions about the site's impact and ease of use.

STAGE FOUR: We got them to attend a jazz event:

- **Tickets** – Once they had submitted their online feedback form, we sent each respondent a pair of tickets to the jazz event staged at The Lowry.
- **Presentation** – The event was specifically conceived to be 'entry level' for new jazz audiences, featuring two accessible bands and a compere.
- **Attendance** – Respondents attended the event and we observed their response.

STAGE FIVE: We asked them to give us feedback on the experience and the role of the website:

- **E-mail follow up** – All those who attended the event were e-mailed and thanked for their attendance. They were asked to complete another feedback form and the e-mail provided a link to it. Those that were unable to attend were asked if they would like to attend another event.
- **E-survey** – The link took them to the post-event survey form which gathered specific responses to the experience of attending the event as first timers and asked them to assess the role and impact of the website in the experience.

STAGE SIX: respondents give in-depth feedback on how the site can be improved:

Focus groups – Focusing on the issues identified in Stage Three and Stage Five, respondents give detailed design, navigation and content feedback during accompanied web visits in a focus group setting.

We recruited 402 first time attenders in 170 parties. Each of those 170 parties gave us feedback. We have analysed the feedback about the website and the event to inform our conclusions and recommendations.

The budget

The testing phase of the project cost £15,000. It was necessary to restructure the final allocation of the budget to meet the revised workplan in the telescoped timescale but we are confident that we have met the original key objectives.

Project planning	1,235
Formative panel	685
Recruitment of new audiences	3,175
Online feedback	1,880
402 tickets (costs of event)	3,525
E-survey	585
Focus groups	1,890
Analysis and reporting	2,025
TOTAL	15,000

3 Objectives and measures of success

Summary

Unlike many New Audiences projects, our main objective was not to reach new audiences but to test the efficacy of the getintojazz.com website as a *means* to develop new audiences.

The key output, therefore was not the number of new attenders reached but an assessment of the website's impact and a specification for its improvement.

The key *outcome* of the project was that, if the website's efficacy was proven, it would offer funders and development agencies a proven method to invest in the audience development infrastructure for niche artforms.

The only appropriate measure of success is that we got the feedback from new attenders that we needed.

Whilst we changed both the timing and some of the methods employed to bring new audiences into contact with the website, the strategic objective, output and outcome remained unchanged.

Evaluation

In a project that was itself principally about evaluation, most of our time, effort and budget were devoted to a range of evaluation methodologies.

Because this was an evaluation project, the details of our evaluation tools have already been covered in Section 2 Description of the project on page 6. We used five methodologies:

- Formative Panel
- Mystery Surfers
- Online Feedback
- E-Survey
- Focus groups

4 Findings

The need for a website

Respondents reported a significant lack of knowledge, awareness and information about jazz:

- 75% of respondents were not aware of most jazz events in the area
- 70% reported that they didn't have a lot of knowledge about jazz
- 73% said that current jazz publicity doesn't give them the information they need
- 71% welcome information aimed at people without much knowledge
- 74% felt that hearing a sound clip would help them decide whether to attend

Ease of use

Respondents found the website easy to use:

- 93% of respondents found it easy to find their way around the website (47% very easy). However, they suggested a number of navigational improvements:
 - "Add a Back facility from the band information."*
 - "Couldn't find back button. Had to use other open window or start go in again."*
 - "The scroll lists are rather long - perhaps further subdivision?"*
 - "A less cramped menu at the side"*
 - "Could be improved by search function - by date or venue for example"*
 - "I'd have a prominent 'search for Jazz near you' box"*
- 95% found it easy to find the information about the event (56% very easy).
- Only 10% were dissatisfied with the speed the website downloaded information
 - "It took a long time for pages to load and work properly."*

Section by section

Respondents found most sections useful but there is some room for improvement:

- 97% of those that heard the sound clips found them useful (62% very useful, 30% the most useful element of the site), however, 17% of respondents didn't find the soundclips as they were located at the bottom of a scrolling window. Others had technical difficulties playing the sound files.
 - "Download of music clip took ages. Very frustrating. Not sure where the bottleneck was though."*
 - "The clips to hear the music - unable to access - very disappointing"*
- 97% also found the information about the gig useful (56% very useful, 25% the most useful element of the site). Some wanted to get a hard copy of the information:
 - "It would be handy to be able to print direct from the gig info area."*
- 89% found the information about the individual bands useful (52% very useful, 20% the most useful element of the site).
- 82% found the beginners guide to jazz useful (39% very useful, 22% the most useful). However, although popular, respondents would like to see this section expanded to include a timeline and narrative from the origins of jazz, through its' great movements to the present day.
 - "The beginners guide needs to be made more interesting - not as much text in one go and perhaps some visual support. Needs breaking up in to sections."*
 - "I think it would be interesting if they linked glossary 'jazz' terms to the descriptions of the bands"*
 - "I'd like printability from the Beginner's Guide"*
 - "Beginners guide shouldn't just be words, it possibly needs an interactive element."*
- 82% also found the venue information useful (again 39% very useful, but only 3% the most useful).

Persuasiveness

Respondents were influenced but not necessarily converted by the website:

- Only 5% of respondents felt that the website had not influenced their attitudes or perceptions
- However, only 14% said the information on the website would definitely persuade them to buy a ticket.
- The remaining 81% say they would 'possibly' buy a ticket and make a number of suggestions to make the website more persuasive:
 - "Interviews with musicians would be quite interesting"*
 - "Perhaps some kind of alert or advert style box on the what's on page of any particularly interesting concerts that are coming up in the next few months."*
 - "More photos of venues/bands"*
 - "An email service alerting about upcoming gigs"*

Accuracy and appropriateness

Respondents generally felt that the information on the site prepared them for the event they attended:

- 88% of respondents felt that the website had told them everything they needed to know about the event. The other 12% had some suggestions:
 - "An irritation of the website is that when you look up a band/venue etc from the list and open a particular entry, the original list then resets itself to the beginning. Consequently, we didn't look up the information on both bands. It would be better if you returned to the position you left the list at."*
 - "It should have told us how long the concert would be on for."*
- 76% of respondents felt that the website information had accurately represented what the concert would be like. The other 24% felt that the experience was different to that described:
 - "The first act was even more 'contemporary' than I expected."*
 - 'Audio clips of the bands suggested music style of the sextet was a little more subdued than that presented."*
- 24% of respondents felt that the information about the gig could be improved. These mainly focused on the sound clips:
 - "Just that one of the sound samples was a little short (not much content in it) and could have chosen a middle bit of the tune."*
 - "Possibly linked to more samples of different songs from each performer. Getting a better taste for each performer or band would give more ideas regarding whether that band would be to the audience's liking."*

Response to the event itself

Compared to their positive and constructive response to the website, respondents reactions to the event itself were very mixed.

- 60% of the respondents felt that the event was aimed at them:
 - "The quality of the bands performing was superb."*
 - "Interesting to hear a type of music I don't normally listen to."*
 - "Entertaining band members."*
 - "I can see the skills of the musicians who perform live show. Seeing that they are also enjoying playing the music, I somehow share their passion."*
 - "Relaxed atmosphere, which I wouldn't have expected due to the venue; I particularly liked the banter between the band and the audience. The seats couldn't have been better, it was great to see the enthusiasm of the musicians and watch their facial expressions."*
 - "Although not an avid fan of jazz, being in the theatre and watching live I really appreciated the musicianship and talent of the performers."*
- In contrast, the other 40% of respondents felt that the event was not aimed at them as new attenders. Their concern centred on stagecraft, presentation and interpretation:
 - "Maybe a little more explanation about the type of jazz"*
 - "Perhaps as a concert for people who don't go to Jazz that often, could be more info on the music"*
 - "I would think if you are on the stage, then you are a performer. Apart from one person acting as a presenter, all other performers had their eyes close, or were looking down"*
 - "A longer introduction giving some insight into what we were about to hear."*
 - "I think jazz musicians hugely underestimate the impact that their choice of clothing has on the audience. I think during a gig where the audience is expected to sit quietly and listen attentively the musicians on stage should clean up a bit"*
 - "A little more explanation about the different styles of music being played."*
 - "More enthusiasm."*
 - "The last 20 minutes was one long medley. I felt left out – we weren't allowed to even clap."*
 - "I was enjoying it but the end got really self-indulgent – the musicians were enjoying playing to each other with their back turned to us, the audience."*
 - "The presenter seemed to think we knew him – I still don't know who he was. Kept talking about a festival. Was this part of a festival?"*
 - "The first band was too "specialist". To be honest they may have been great technically to anyone with a "jazz ear" and knowledge but to a newcomer it confirmed a lot of fears about jazz."*
 - "Endless guitar solo by second band – boring and clichéd"*
 - "The second half was almost a running accolade to the lead guitarist - what an ego-trip!"*
 - "There was no excitement. The announcer and the players all did not seem very enthusiastic about their music or being there. I am sure they were passionate about their music but it just did not come across."*
- 64% of respondents said the experience made them more likely to return, 21% said it made no difference and 15% said it actually made them less likely to return.

Future interest in the website

Most respondents intend to use the site in future:

- 75% of respondents will visit the website again (23% very likely)
- After visiting the website, 61% said they would join a monthly email service about jazz events (27% very likely)
- After attending the jazz event, this rose to 79% who would join an email service.

Have we achieved our objectives?

The findings reported here are a representative selection of the very detailed comments we have gathered about the website itself and its current and potential future role in encouraging people to try jazz. Together they validate the efficacy of the website and form a comprehensive specification for its refinement and development. The project has, therefore, achieved its objectives in full.

Unexpected outcomes

Whilst the website is already successful and can be developed further, the main unexpected finding is that a large proportion of the audience felt alienated by the presentation of the event and the stagecraft of the bands performing.

This is all the more surprising because these bands and the presenter were recommended and specifically chosen for their perceived accessibility.

5 Conclusions and recommendations

There are a number of clear conclusions:

- There is a clear demand for entry level information about jazz
- The getintojazz.com website fulfils this role well
- The website is generally accessible, contains valuable information and is popular
- The website influences new attenders' decisions
- There are a number of specific refinements and developments that will improve the website's impact
- Many of the events promoted via the website will not meet new audiences' needs

We would make the following six recommendations:

- 1 That revenue funding the operation of the getintojazz website would be a strategic way to build marketing and audience development capacity in the jazz sector.
- 2 That a small amount of capital funding may be required to undertake the one-off technical work required to provide the additional functionality demanded by users.
- 3 That this is a proven model that could be rolled out for jazz to all or parts of the North West region (eg Merseyside) – this would require some additional funding
- 4 That the model could easily be replicated in other regions (the website address is deliberately non-regional) – perhaps Arts Council England or specific regional officers could organise a series of meetings to explore this possibility – there are real economies of scale from the existing website and from the experience of running it.
- 5 That this model may well work for other niche musical genres (eg Folk) and even for other niche art forms (eg Contemporary Dance or Opera) – again the Arts Council England could explore and facilitate this.
- 6 That even with this effective website infrastructure, the sector is characterised by lack of marketing and copywriting skills and poor presentation and stagecraft. If the sector is to develop (and develop audiences) investment is needed in training and mentoring to bring the sector up to audience expectations. Whilst this may not be universally welcomed, bands, venues and promoters need to respond to the real and legitimate responses of new audiences. This will test the extent of their true commitment to widen the audience beyond jazz aficionados and connoisseurs. This commitment should form the basis of any funding they might receive.