



INTERNATIONAL
INSTITUTE FOR
CRITICAL STUDIES IN
IMPROVISATION

GUELPH JAZZ
FESTIVAL

**The 2024 Guelph Jazz Festival Colloquium
Sheets of Sound: Jazz, Improvisation, and Liner Notes
University of Guelph, Guelph, Ontario, Canada
September 11-13, 2024**

The **International Institute for Critical Studies in Improvisation (IICSI)**, in partnership with the **Guelph Jazz Festival** and the **University of Guelph**, invites proposals for presentations at our annual interdisciplinary international conference. **The colloquium will take place September 11-13, 2024, as part of the 31st annual Guelph Jazz Festival.** Featuring panel discussions, debates, performances, workshops, keynote presentations, and critical conversations among researchers, artists, and audiences, the colloquium fosters a spirit of collaborative, boundary-defying inquiry and dialogue, and an international exchange of cultural forms and knowledges.

In his liner notes for John Coltrane's 1958 recording *Soultrane*, jazz critic Ira Gitler famously coined the phrase "sheets of sound" to describe Coltrane's unique style of improvisational playing. It's an apt phrase not only for attempting to capture in writing the spirit and energy of Coltrane's distinctive style, but also for acting as a metaphoric descriptor for the very genre of liner notes. As an important part of the history of jazz and creative improvised music, liner notes might themselves be considered as something akin to "sheets of sound" that have played a vital role in shaping our understanding of the music.

"Part publication relations blitz, part advertisement, part advance directive for hipsters, part forum for writers hoping to match chops with the musicians they adored, liner notes accomplished several tasks at once" writes Timothy Gray in his essay on "Jazz Criticism and Liner Notes" in the recently published volume *Jazz and American Culture*. This year's edition of The Guelph Jazz Festival Colloquium invites presentations, prompts, and creative responses that reflect on some of these tasks, and that take up the question of what it means to use the liner note genre to write about jazz and creative improvised music.

In what ways have liner notes shaped the way the music is received? To what extent do liner notes contribute to the ways in which we negotiate and construct meaning about the music, how we understand history, how and why we listen? In what ways have digital dissemination and streaming services disrupted our notions of liner notes? And how has this shifted listener/audience understanding about their favourite artists?

Citing the "far-out notes produced by Sun Ra, John Coltrane," and others, Daphne Brooks in her book *Liner Notes for the Revolution* explains that "liner notes hold out the possibility of operating as critical, fictional, or experimental works of writing in and of themselves. Conventional liner notes," she suggests, "often walk a fine line between pedagogy and

socialization, between sociohistorical and cultural reportage and heuristic conditioning (here's how and why to love the artist in question). The most ambitious notes strive toward the narrative realization, or the narrative reimagining, of a sonic collection of songs altogether." What, then, does it mean to engage in a narrative realization or reimagining of music? What are some of the critical, fictional, conceptual, or experimental forms and practices being advanced by writers of liner notes? What is it like to hear about the music from the artist's perspective, and how might this shape the listener's sonic experience? What is the future of liner notes in an age dominated by the digital delivery and dissemination of music? Does writing liner notes constitute a lost art or is the practice enjoying a resurgence? In what ways do archived/archival forms of liner notes play into thinking and writing about jazz and creative improvised music today? And what roles do artwork, design and layout play in the presentation and impact of liner notes and the reception of an album?

We invite presentations that address these (and other related) questions and concerns, as well as creative work that takes up the conference prompts. **We are particularly interested in interdisciplinary presentations that speak to both an academic audience and a general public.** We also invite presenters to submit completed versions of their papers and presentations to our peer-reviewed journal, *Critical Studies in Improvisation/Études critiques en improvisation* (www.criticalimprov.com) for consideration.

Please send (500 word) proposals (for 15-minute delivery—alternate formats may also be considered) and a short bio by May 31, 2024, to Dr. Ajay Heble at jazzcoll@uoguelph.ca



Social Sciences and Humanities
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en
sciences humaines du Canada

Canada

UNIVERSITY
of GUELPH