

8. Coda

As I conclude this study in the summer of 2024, approximately two and a half years have elapsed since I began my academic investigation of jazz on TikTok. Not a long time in academia, one might think. In fact, for various reasons, large scientific projects sometimes take years to complete. The ideal academic paper is characterized by scholarly rigor, reflection, transparency, and diligent handling of sources. Additionally, academic work is a lengthy process due to the necessity of developing and modifying questions and research designs throughout the process and – when necessary – discarding and redesigning them. Typically, a significant amount of secondary literature must be sourced and read. In qualitative empirical research projects, it is for example necessary to identify and contact potential interview partners, who must then be convinced of the merits of participating in the research project. The data collected during the course of conducting scientific interviews must be evaluated and interpreted using rigorous procedures that meet scientific quality criteria. Only then can the findings be documented, which requires a significant investment of time, particularly in the case of academic monographs, which often span several hundred pages. These steps must be undertaken concurrently with the inherent responsibilities of academic work, which can be equally time-consuming. Such responsibilities include academic teaching and self-administration, committee work, supervising theses, holding lectures, participating in conferences, acting as a reviewer, and engaging in other research projects. The next step, the publication of one's research results may also be a protracted process, as publications are frequently subjected to a review process by individuals who are also active within the scientific community and may be constrained by competing demands on their time. In the case of book publications, securing funding is often a prerequisite for publishing with a specialist publisher, given the significant costs involved. Following the submission of a manuscript to a publisher, the publication of the book may

take several months or even years. In addition to these factors, the precarious working conditions in the academic world must be considered. Researchers – at least in the German-speaking countries where I work – typically only receive fixed-term employment contracts, which means that they have to constantly apply for jobs and are often forced to relocate or commute long distances. These circumstances are highly unfavorable for focused work on complex scientific topics. There is often a lack of tranquility and composure. And then there's this thing called private life...

It is possible that those outside the scientific community may be largely unaware of these processes. However, it is unlikely that any individual within the scientific community will be surprised by the above description. These are the rules of academia, you might object, and perhaps dismiss the above paragraph as self-indulgent griping. With a topic such as the present study, however, it is by no means insignificant that the production and publication of research results can sometimes take years. This is due to the fact that the topic of digital platforms, and in particular TikTok, is one that is undergoing rapid and significant changes. While the fundamental trends in the representation of jazz on TikTok are likely to endure in the longer term, the results of my corpus analysis, which was conducted at the beginning of 2022, no longer reflect the current state of affairs. Some of the musicians interviewed for this study still rank among the most popular jazz-related content creators on TikTok. However, the results of an analysis conducted at this juncture would likely differ, at least in part, from those presented in this study. For the reasons previously stated, the preparation and publication of a follow-up study would require a significant investment of time and necessitate the immediate initiation of yet another follow-up study. This cyclical process would continue indefinitely, rendering it impractical for scientists to keep pace with the evolving subject matter of their research. The rapidity of change in the field of TikTok, coupled with the inherent limitations of the scientific process, makes it challenging to stay abreast of new developments.

All of the musicians interviewed for this study still maintain an active presence on TikTok, although their activities have undergone some modification. In certain instances, the frequency of their posts has diminished in comparison to the levels observed at the time of the interviews. Moreover, the average number of views their videos receive is no longer on par with the figures they consistently attained two years ago. Some of the musicians now prioritize their presence on Instagram, while the content of their videos has also undergone a transformation. Sam Ambers, for instance, has shifted his focus to comedy

videos, which he produces in collaboration with other content creators. His latest videos rarely make any reference to jazz.

The reality that scientific discourse is unable to keep up with a rapidly evolving phenomenon such as TikTok, due to the presence of established and (at least in most cases) necessary processes in academia, represents a challenge that is likely to persist. This situation can, at times, lead to feelings of frustration, as evidenced in the context of academic teaching. I have previously taught courses on music streaming, with a particular focus on Spotify, and on music cultures on TikTok. In these courses, I was able to provide students with studies on Spotify and TikTok, the results of which were however based on data that was, in all cases, several years old. This was due to the circumstances previously described. A review of the existing literature revealed a dearth of information on the contemporary contexts of music production and reception.

All of this is sometimes very unpleasant. But does the comparatively long time that has elapsed between the start of the research work and the final written form diminish the fundamental significance of the results presented here? I do not think so. The findings presented in this study on the socio-technical interactions between musicians and the platform and on the logics of cultural hierarchization on TikTok can be applied to various (and certainly core) topics of music-related research (see chapter 7). Additionally, the study provides an empirical basis for further research into music cultures in the platform context. Although it requires constant updating, such empirical research is urgently needed to better understand the *actual* cultural influence of digital platforms. The implementation of such projects is time-consuming. It is therefore important for academic researchers to be able to take this time, even when there is intense pressure to publish and even if the object of research is subject to rapid change.

Nevertheless, such processes necessitate a considerable degree of patience, not merely from the researchers themselves. The musicians who participated in this study also demonstrated remarkable patience, as they were required to wait a considerable amount of time before they could access the research findings. I wish to express my gratitude to all the interviewees, listed in alphabetical order below: Sam Ambers, Rachel Chiu, Stella Cole, Caity Gyorgy, Kellin Hanas, Erny Nunez, Brooklyn Stafford, and Stacey Ryan. The atmosphere in all the interviews was pleasant, the musicians were forthcoming and willing to provide information, and the conversations were illuminating. The interviewees offered me insights into the sphere of successful content creators, which is usually not accessible to researchers. I also found their videos, musicality,

creativity, and humor appealing. Overall, I found working on this research project to be an enjoyable, educational, and stimulating experience.

It should be noted that my occasional critical assessments of TikTok should not be construed as a censure of the musicians who were interviewed or even of them personally. I am profoundly grateful to the people I interviewed for this study for their candidness and willingness to engage in discourse on challenging issues within the TikTok context. In this regard, the interviews proved to be particularly illuminating, and provided considerable insight into the logic of contemporary music and media cultures.