

## Negotiation in a jazz ensemble: sound and speech in the making of a commercial record

Maya Gratier, Rebecca Evans, Ksenija Stevanovic

*Université Paris Ouest Nanterre La Défense*

*Laboratoire Psychologie de l'interaction et des Acquisitions en Contexte (PACO)*

### ABSTRACT

#### Background

Empirical research on the performance of improvised musical genres is only just beginning to provide a richer account of how music is made in real life contexts through the collaborative and coordinated actions of participants (Gratier, 2008; Moran, 2011). However, most studies to date focus either on the musical outcome of improvised performance or on the social and cultural practices involved in making music. Few studies have attempted to connect the communicative processes, verbal, nonverbal and musical, with the audible musical product they bring about. Traditional cognitive psychology theories are not sufficient to explain the speed and efficiency of musical communication through which participants co-produce and dynamically manage rhythmic, melodic and harmonic expression. The study presented is based on an embodied cognition approach and on theories of music as social engagement. The recording studio is an interesting context in which to study improvisational music making because the act of permanently fixing a sound that is performed with a degree of indeterminacy fosters tension between individual and collective expression. We will show that because so much is at stake in the making of a commercial jazz album, musical projects are shaped through both musical interaction and conversational exchange.

#### Aims

The principal aim of this study was to reveal the verbal and musical processes involved in selecting a take for inclusion on a commercial album of a professional jazz ensemble. A second aim of the study was to analyse the relation between musicians' representations of their jointly produced music and the actual musical product.

#### Method

A jazz quartet was filmed continuously during 3 days in the recording studio, using 2 cameras and a digital audio recorder. Thus musical performances as well as all other verbal and nonverbal communication between the musicians were recorded. Original Protocols sessions were obtained for all the takes of the 10 tracks performed for the recording of the album. For the study we present, we perform an acoustic analysis of 4 takes of one song and relate it to the verbal arguments that arose between the 2 rhythm section musicians of the ensemble.

#### Results

It appeared that the rhythm section musicians strongly disagreed about the value of the first 2 takes of the song, one expressing a strong preference for the first and the other a strong preference for the second. A third and fourth take were performed where the third was unanimously rejected and the 4th considered acceptable by each musician in the ensemble.

Acoustic analyses suggest that the 3rd version alone is misrepresentative of the compositional intention of the piece.

#### Conclusions

This study brings to light the complex multimodal and distributed levels of negotiation that lie behind the production of a commercial musical work.

#### Keywords

Interaction, embodiment, performance, negotiation, rhythm