BOUSQUET DAVID (Université de Bourgogne)

Reggae Revival: the many rebirths of Jamaican popular music

Modern Jamaican popular music emerged in the early 1960s after a period of formation starting at the end of WWII. Originating as a hybrid between revived local forms and foreign influences, ska became the first “truly” Jamaican musical idiom. It later evolved into rocksteady, early reggae and roots reggae, which became the epitome of Jamaican popular music at the end of the 1970s. When roots reggae became less popular after Bob Marley’s death, dancehall reggae appeared before the music change dramatically with the introduction of the digital technology in recording studios. From 1962 to the present day, at least ten distinctively Jamaican musical genres have been (re)born. Once gone out of fashion, “old” genres of Jamaican music are revived in Jamaica itself, in the Afro-Jamaican diaspora and/or elsewhere. Ska for instance is still played today and has seen at least two revivals. Similarly, roots reggae was revived as “new roots” in the mid-1990s, and again as the “reggae revival” in the 2010s.

In Jamaica and elsewhere, new musical genres are not born from a vacuum but build up on and transform previous genres, contrary to (largely mythicised) narratives about reggae found, for instance, in music journalism, state propaganda or marketing campaigns. The music’s originality, albeit a selling point in terms of commercial returns or cultural significance, cannot be dissociated from its ability to recycle stylistic and technological features from earlier periods. Reggae is a “changing same”, as Paul Gilroy puts it, and entails a dialectic process connecting an ancestral African past with a hyper-modern, futuristic present that constantly re/creates itself. This paper will thus explore the many rebirths of Jamaican popular music.

KHALIFA JEAN-CHARLES (Université de Poitiers)

Peut-on parler de revival de la musique folk ?

Dans cette communication, nous nous interrogerons sur la notion de « renaissance » ou de « renouveau » de la musique folk, en particulier aux États-Unis. On se demandera tout d’abord si les termes même de revival, de « renaissance » et/ou de « renouveau » sont bien superposables, ce qui nous servira de point d’entrée pour une réflexion sur les deux revivals aux USA que l’on distingue traditionnellement, celui des années 20-30 du XXe siècle, et celui, bien plus documenté, des années 60 de ce même siècle, avec leurs présupposés sociologiques, politiques et esthétiques.
MICHOT JULIE (Université du Littoral-Côte d’Opale)

« Isn’t It Romantic? »: un morceau de cinéma en perpétuel renouvellement, entre nostalgie et second degré

Spécialement créée par Richard Rodgers et Lorenz Hart pour une séquence de Love Me Tonight (Rouben Mamoulian, 1932), la chanson « Isn’t It Romantic? » a dès le départ marqué les esprits par l’aspect novateur de sa mise en scène. Reprise par un nombre incalculable d’artistes, elle se distingue surtout par sa présence, des années 30 à nos jours, dans 40 longs-métrages américains de genres variés – de la comédie screwball à la science-fiction en passant par le film noir. La renaissance de la chanson se fait par le choix de son orchestration, bien sûr, mais aussi par ses paroles, dont il existe plusieurs versions à la teneur très différente, le texte d’origine étant chargé d’ironie ; il n’est donc pas étonnant que « Isn’t It Romantic? » soit le plus souvent diégétique et vienne contredire les images présentées, même lorsqu’il ne s’agit que d’une version instrumentale, comme si la douceur de la mélodie ne pouvait être que trompeuse. Cette communication, fondée sur les rapports entre musique et image, se propose de retracer le parcours de « Isn’t It Romantic? » au cinéma, et de faire apparaître son rôle culturel dans la société américaine. Comment ce morceau du Great American Songbook a-t-il pu connaître une telle longévité sans que le public se lasse ? Derrière ses paroles qui frisent le cliché, et la question a priori rhétorique que pose son titre, ce standard, que l’on peut classer dans la catégorie easy listening, est sans doute bien moins anodin ou transparent qu’on pourrait le croire.

PAPUC ALEXANDRA (Université de Bourgogne)

Le jazz et ses renaissances

Le jazz est-il de retour ? Entre-t-il dans un nouvel âge d’or ? Connait-il une révolution, un revival, une renaissance ? Ce sont les questions les plus récurrentes et débattues dans la presse anglophone contemporaine. Cependant, qu’est-ce qui fait l’existence de ce phénomène de renaissance du jazz ? Les medias semblent une source centrale qui génère, promue et crée cette résurgence. J’analyserai comment cette idée de renaissance du jazz est représentée dans la presse contemporaine d’un point de vue linguistique et quelles sont les intentions d’un point de vue socioculturel. La popularité du jazz aujourd’hui semble consister dans cette idée de renaissance. C’est l’aspect révolutionnaire et de renouveau qui le rend si attirant. Et finalement, pourrions-nous dire que la renaissance fait partie intrinsèque de sa définition ? Nous rappelons l’existence constante de nombreuses dichotomies tout au long de son évolution historique : swing/bebop, standard/ expérimental.

PEIRANO PIERRE-FRANÇOIS (Université de Toulon)

The American Civil War songs: remembering or reviving the conflict?
This paper will revolve around a study of the composition and the use of the most famous popular songs from the American Civil War — for instance, “The Battle Hymn of the Republic” or “When Johnny Comes Marching Home” for the Union, “Dixie” or “The Bonnie Blue Flag” for the Confederates — and the way an image of the conflict is thus forged, between historical and mythical approaches. Particular attention will be paid to the various orchestrations or cover versions, as well as their use at the occasion of historical events or in films.

SZLAMOWICZ JEAN (Université de Bourgogne)

Diggin’ up African etymologies in the jazz vocabulary

The confusion between people and language, between the origin of deported slaves and the origin of American linguistic and musical practice has led many cultural studies authors to claim that jazz and the jazz vocabulary owed to Africa. The symbolic bias interpreting linguistic transfers as gifts that should be credited was also compounded by etymological mistakes imagining that African words could be ‘reborn’ into the English language.

Those imaginary etymologies focused on the idea origins as a sacred concept and neglected standard linguistic explanations. Semantic shifts, metaphors, antiphrasis, semantic profiling and various sociolinguistic phenomena are common enough to explain lexical facts without resorting to vague phonic resemblance devoid of actual sources.

The postulate claiming that African words resurfaced within the English vocabulary is fraught with many methodological problems which an actual semantic study can solve. Such a study actually enables to understand the deep cultural empowerment established by the jazz culture and the jazz vocabulary in the context of segregation and deculturation (and not by cultural transfer).

Using the method of discourse analysis, sociolinguistics and historical semantics, we shall study how the claims of African etymologies work and how they substitute symbolic acknowledgment to proper analysis. This will enable to give a thorough vision of the original emergence of jazz concepts within the English language.

TABUTEAU ERIC (Université d’Orléans)

Renaissance or Maturity? Marcus Miller: Talented Musician, Savvy Businessman

In 2012, American bass player Marcus Miller released a studio album called Renaissance. As the musician explained it in interviews, the title was meant to reflect a change: “over the last couple of years, I’ve wanted to get to a more natural sound and not involve the studio as much.” The titles of some tracks – “Redemption”, “Revelation”, “Mr Clean” – certainly suggested the will to move on to a new concept, and Miller’s endeavour proved to be fairly successful: the album peaked at number 1 and spent 44 weeks on Billboard’s contemporary jazz albums charts, his best score ever. But, above all, Renaissance signalled the coming of age of an undoubtedly gifted businessman.
The proposed paper will aim at showing that the album heralded a series of business accomplishments that, when it comes to the jazz scene, are rarely witnessed in the music industry. It will first focus on Miller’s ability to branch out into a musical market segment mostly made up of young adults that, usually, would not be attracted by the cool sounds. It will then seek to analyse his full mastery of the subtleties of brand endorsement, a business savvy that enabled him to launch a successful, middle of the range line of electric bass guitars bearing his name even if produced by a relatively unknown Korean musical instrument manufacturer: a real tour de force for Marcus Miller who hardly plays these axes on stage, preferring his good old 1977 Fender Jazz Bass.

WINSWORTH BEN (Université d'Orléans)

England Swings Again: Modern Life is Rubbish and the Rise of Britpop.

Modern Life is Rubbish released by Blur in May 1993 is regarded as being a seminal album in the rise of so-called Britpop that dominated the UK music scene in and around the middle of the decade. With a working title Britain versus America and a thematic approach heavily influenced by Damon Albarn’s discovery of the Kinks, Modern Life is Rubbish attempted to forge an anglocentric identity partly as a means of resistance against the Americanisation of popular culture in everything from advertising, media control, lifestyle choices, mass consumption; and partly as a reaction against the dominance of transatlantic musical genres like grunge. A sentiment best summed up the previous April on the celebrated front cover of Select magazine that featured a photograph of Suede’s Brett Anderson posing in front of a Union Jack with the headline ‘Yanks go home’ emblazoned on his chest. It’s possible to see a self-conscious English aesthetic resurfacing in pop/rock as far back as the late 80s/early 90s in bands like the Stone Roses, the La’s, and the Charlatans in terms of both sound and style, but it was Blur who gave this indie take on 60s garage and psychedelia a deeper musical and lyrical register that also distanced itself from the solipsistic angst of American grunge. Rather than a world of emotional pain and trauma primally screamed through the Seattle sound, Modern Life is Rubbish offered an ironic and sometimes nostalgic view of English life that had more in common with The Kinks Are the Village Green Preservation Society released in 1968. Like Ray Davies, Damon Albarn is involved in the process of ‘preserving the old ways’, but also ‘protecting the new’ in the sense that preservation involves celebration in a contemporary context that while it maintains close links with the past - with cultural and musical tradition - is a means of caring for and understanding what matters in an evolving present and future. Modern life may appear to be rubbish, but it doesn’t need to be as the album cover artwork of the Mallard steam train suggests. It may represent the past and the golden age of steam, but in its own time the Mallard was a state-of-the-art engine speeding into the future: a symbol of modernity and progress. Similarly ambivalent, Blur may well be deliberately aligning themselves with a musical past and its socio-historical concerns, seemingly turning their backs on modern life, but they are revisiting the past on their way to the future, travelling - like the Mallard - beyond the terminus of revival for its own sake and towards the creation of something new.