

# V Cameras in Jazz Clubs: The Educational Potential

by Eugene Marlow, Ph.D.

**B**rian Gruber, founder and CEO of ShowGo.tv, is traveling the world putting remote controlled television cameras in jazz clubs. As of March 2013, his company had installed television and audio technology in 10 clubs in four countries – in New York City, San Francisco, Seattle, Los Angeles, Milan, London, and Sao Paulo (Brazil).

Says Gruber: "By the end of 2013 we want to be in 30 clubs. By 2015 we want to be in a 100 clubs. We think volume is important. This is about choice and the sharing of new music. You can hit your iPad, sit on the couch, and club hop between five and 10 clubs. You might only want to watch three minutes and share that with a friend, and then go from one club to another, city by city. Eventually, our vision is a 24/7 service to clubs all around the world anytime you want to watch live music instead of listening to recorded music.

"Right now the investors are paying it. Our vision is for a \$5/month, all-you-can-hear service. And a revenue share to the artist and the venue, with all of the costs falling to us. The artist and the club will each get 25 percent of revenue."

Gruber estimates his business needs 50,000 subscribers to break even: "We're looking for five million subscribers in five years worldwide which we think is very conservative. It's all about: Can we deliver great product or not? Great audio and

**"IT IS NO SECRET THAT THE CURRENT GENERATION HAS NO CLUE ABOUT AMERICA'S CULTURAL GIFT TO THE WORLD."**

video over a great network. A really smart selection of clubs. Great experience with interactivity and a great social experience."

There's a potential huge educational component to Gruber's technological vision up and down the demographic scale. People who have never stepped into a jazz club might experience a jazz performance, be engaged by it, and begin to experience it in the flesh, so to speak. Moreover, if Gruber is successful in installing his technology into hundreds of clubs, this will then become a global experience. As the Internet continues to penetrate countries all over the world (even in China, where Internet penetration is now 40 percent and growing leaps and bounds), this could well mean that populations for which jazz is a foreign experience (no pun intended) could become exposed to America's indigenous music with the resultant effect of perceiving America in a more favorable light, given the metaphorical and musicological connection between jazz and democracy.

Another educational aspect is the potential impact on students K-12 and at the college level. It is no secret that the current generation has no clue about America's cultural gift to the

world. They have little understanding that jazz (and its roots) is the foundation of much of contemporary music—hip-hop and rap did not come into existence by immaculate aural conception. Contemporary musical styles grew out of rock that, in turn, grew out of swing, and so on. Teachers from many academic disciplines will now be able to assign a streamed jazz performance for discussion the next day. A jazz performance could form the basis of a review of America's early history, of racism, of the Civil Rights Movement, of the relationship between jazz and Latin music, of the amalgamation of jazz and Latin music in the Bronx in the 1940s, and so on.

For college students, especially, having "streaming" access to a jazz performance would mean not having to deal with drinking age issues, travel issues, or, most importantly, financial issues. As jazz club audiences know only too well, the cost of attending a live performance at a club of any repute has become expensive, some might say exorbitant. This one factor alone is a major reason for the diminution of attendance at jazz clubs, resulting over the last few decades in the closure of clubs all over the country. This, in turn, has affected the reduction in the number of jazz radio stations and in some instances in jazz critics working in print media. Jazz musicians (as well as musicians in other genres) have all had to scuffle to find non-traditional venues to perform in. It has all resulted in paltry income for jazz musicians. Just ask the folks at the Future of Music Coalition. It is all part of the whole.

The teaching opportunity at the college level could be enormous. Not only could students experience a local jazz performance or one in another part of the country, they could also benefit from experiencing a jazz performance in another country. That alone would be an educational event!

There are other issues related to Gruber's vision, such as copyright ownership of the streamed performance and concomitant royalty rights, the impact of the technology on the clubs' physical environment, and the pecuniary behavior of club owners, among others. Only time will tell what the outcomes will be. But if the experience in the sports world over the last 50-60 years is any gauge, seeing a jazz performance in a virtual setting could create a strong demand for experiencing it in person.



*Eugene Marlow, Ph.D., is an award-winning composer/arranger, producer, presenter, performer, author, journalist, and educator. He has written over 200 classical and jazz compositions for solo instruments, jazz and classical chamber groups, and jazz big band. Under the MEI Enterprises label, he has produced six CDs of original compositions and arrangements. His big band chart, "El Aché de Sanabria (en Moderación)," appears on Bobby Sanabria's Grammy-nominated album Big Band Urban Folktales (2007 Jazzheads).*