**Social Constructions of ‘Authenticity’ and the Sounds of the Kid Thomas Valentine Band: The Case of ‘Basin Street Blues’ – An Approach from Sociological Musicology and Cultural Studies[[1]](#footnote-1)**

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**ABSTRACT**

The Kid Thomas Band (1926-1987) may lay legitimate claim to be the most significant of all the old-style New Orleans jazz bands, in terms of ‘authenticity’, longevity and contemporary significance. This article seeks to illuminate social constructions of authenticity in New Orleans revivalist jazz through an analysis of major aspects of the musical detail of selected recordings of ‘Basin Street Blues’ by the Kid Thomas Band. It compares and contrasts the Kid Thomas Band New Orleans ‘dance hall’ sound of 1957 with the ‘concert hall’ sound of 1971, with particular reference to social constructions of authenticity embedded within second wave New Orleans jazz revivalism of the 1960s and 1970s, as supplemented by the current views of selected New Orleans revivalist jazz enthusiasts, musicians, writers, promoters, and record producers with over half a century’s participation within world-wide New Orleans revivalist jazz social worlds.

**Keywords:** authenticity; Basin Street Blues; jazz identities and ideologies; Kid Thomas Band; Kid Thomas Valentine; New Orleans jazz revivalism, Preservation Hall; social worlds; Sociological Musicology

Nothing is more prized, or fetishized, in popular music than the idea of authenticity – the notion that honest, raw, pure self-expression is the thing that matters.

‘Cover blurb’, Hugh Barker and Yuval Taylor, *Faking It: The Quest for Authenticity in Popular Music*, London: Faber and Faber, 2007.

What is necessary is an analysis of jazz historiography that incorporates its international scope.

Mario Dunkel, ‘Writing Jazz History: The Emergence of a New Genre’, 2010, *Current Objectives of American Postgraduate American Studies*, 11, <<http://copas.uni-regensburg.de/article/viewArticle/125/149>>.

**Introduction**

With each re-writing of the history of early jazz and the New Orleans jazz revival, the Kid Thomas Band (1926-1987) gains in stature and prominence (Carter, 1991). Indeed, ‘in terms of “authenticity”, longevity and contemporary significance, the Kid Thomas Band may legitimately claim to be the most significant of all the old-style New Orleans jazz bands’ (Ekins 2006: 3; Charters, 1958, 1963).[[2]](#footnote-2)

The aim of this article is to illuminate social constructions of ‘authenticity’ in New Orleans revivalist jazz through an analysis of major aspects of the musical detail of selected recordings of ‘Basin Street Blues’ by the Kid Thomas Valentine Band. I focus, in particular, on a concert recording made of this song that was televised and broadcast by Danish radio on *Jazz Omkring Midnat* (*Jazz around Midnight*). The recording was made on 7 November 1971 live from the Tivoli Theatre, Copenhagen, Denmark. It was released on a vinyl LP in 1974 (*Rarities* 16) and has not been re-released since. It has, however, been posted on YouTube: <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z0bg6121ntE>>([**erwigfilms**](http://www.youtube.com/user/erwigfilms)), and is accessible at that URL as of 27 January 2016.[[3]](#footnote-3)

This Kid Thomas recording is selected from what was a unique event – a world concert tour from a musician that from the beginning of his playing career in the early 1920s right up to the early 1960s had never left New Orleans. Indeed, Thomas rarely left his home base of Algiers, the only portion of the Parish of Orleans on the West Bank of the Mississippi River (Dash 1971; DeVore 1974; Schafer 1998). From the 1920s onwards, through to the late 1950s, Kid Thomas led what is, perhaps, best described as a New Orleans neighbourhood dance band. He incorporated all the popular songs of the day into his repertoire, always adapting them to fit his own particular New Orleans style. He was happy to play any request but his music was dance music – the clientele wanted to dance all night and they wanted a dance floor and a dance band to enable them to do this as effortlessly and invigoratingly as possible. Only with the growing popularity of rock & roll and the juke box in the late 1950s did these years of dancing to a live neighbourhood jazz band begin to come to an end in New Orleans. Only then did regular dance hall work for the Kid Thomas Band start to dry up.[[4]](#footnote-4)

Ever the resourceful bandleader, Kid Thomas had to look elsewhere for work, and during the early years of that ‘elsewhere’, in the mid-late 1950s, he accepted the invitation to play ‘kitty’ sessions at the Art Gallery run by Larry Borenstein in the New Orleans French Quarter. As Borenstein explains, his evening work commitments at the Gallery meant he could not go and hear the Kid Thomas Band in the dance halls, so he persuaded the Kid Thomas Band to come to him (Borenstein 1968: 1). The first known recording of Kid Thomas playing ‘Basin Street Blues’ was made on 15 March 1957 by Borenstein at one of these private sessions (Smits and Bielderman 2010 10). This was at a time when the Kid Thomas Band was still frequently playing at New Orleans neighbourhood dances. It is, therefore, the nearest thing we have to what the band may have sounded like, when playing the number in a dance hall at the time. It is available on *504* CD41, entitled ‘Basin Street Blues (The Duck’s Yas Yas)’ < <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MfZ91JJlHOo>>.[[5]](#footnote-5) I will refer to other Kid Thomas recordings of the same song on occasion, as and when appropriate, to develop my argument further. I will also refer in some detail to a concert recording made of ‘Basin Street Blues’ by Louis Armstrong in 1959, in Stuttgart, Germany (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4YnP2jZQQS4>), to illustrate the very different ‘solo-celebrity’ style of the Louis Armstrong concert band of the 1950s. Finally, for comparative purposes, it is useful to note that the first recording ever made of ‘Basin Street Blues’ (Fox Trot) – an Okeh Chicago studio recording made on 4 December 1928 by Louis Armstrong’s Hot Five – is remarkable for the complexity of its arrangement compared to all the other versions of ‘Basin Street Blues’ that I consider.

In earlier work, I have detailed how constructions of ‘authenticity’ in New Orleans jazz variously highlight the authentic as ‘the original’; as ‘the real thing’; as ‘the non-commercial’; as ‘the sincere’; as ‘the emotionally direct’; and as ‘the pure’ (Ekins 2009). Notwithstanding post-modernist re-conceptualizations of ‘authenticity’ (Vannini 2008: 1625-1626), ‘modernist’ notions of the concept remain of abiding significance in the histories of New Orleans jazz, in the social worlds of New Orleans jazz, and in the identities and ideologies of revivalist New Orleans jazz musicians and enthusiasts (Ekins 2011, 2012, 2013b; Raeburn 2009; Hardie 2013).

In other writings I have set forth a conceptual framework that incorporates a trajectory of ‘authenticating’ early jazz and New Orleans jazz revivalism from its beginnings to the present day (Ekins 2010, 2011, 2012). The basic social process of ‘authenticating’ emerged from my grounded theory work (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Glaser 1978) within the social worlds of world-wide revivalist New Orleans jazz as the core variable that explained with maximum parsimony and scope how participants in the substantive area continually resolved their main concerns (Glaser 1996: xii). These articles argue that to pay the proper respect to authenticity and authenticating in this research arena entails detailed study of how social constructions of authenticity emerge, ebb and flow within a number of interrelated sub-processes identified as constructing, reconstructing, adopting, adapting, mainstreaming, and progressing authenticity, with particular reference to the major dimensions of each sub-process identified as style, repertoire, instrumentation and personnel. Moreover, I indicated how major relevant studies of authenticity in popular music studies, popular musicology and jazz studies (Frith 1987, 1988; Gardner 2005; Moore A. 2007; Moore H., 2007) and of jazz canon construction (DeVeaux 1991; Gabbard 1993; Kodat 2003; Hersch 2008) might be situated with reference to my own framework. This is not the place to repeat those arguments.

Rather, in this article, I wish to narrow the focus and explore the two selected Kid Thomas Band recordings in terms of a preliminary musicological analysis set within the social constructionist (interactionist) approach presupposed in my previous work, and set forth most recently and specifically in Ekins (2015). In this latter paper, the principal research methods drawn upon were sociological autoethnography (Ellis and Bochner 2000; Anderson 2006) and sociological ethnography (Spradley 1979; Atkinson and Hammersley 1994). I write as an enthusiast of the Kid Thomas Band, living in England in the 1960s and 1970s, and as a participant in the world-wide New Orleans jazz revivalism of those days, initially as fan and record collector, and subsequently as musician, band leader and record producer <<http://www.lacroixrecords.com/>>. More specifically, my analys of the two versions of ‘Basin Street Blues’ that follow draws principally on my own autoethnography of memory of that period and my own socialisation into what counted as ‘authentic’ New Orleans music at the time by that segment of the New Orleans jazz revivalist world particularly enthusiastic about the life and work of Kid Thomas and the musicians he played with.

My position is unusual in that from 1976 until 2000 I left the New Orleans jazz revivalist scene entirely and then returned to it from 2005 onwards as enthusiast, record producer and sociological and cultural studies researcher. See Ekins (2015: 14):

Quite soon, I was able to pick up where I had left off and [made] contact with virtually all of my old friends and acquaintances from the 1960s that were still participating in New Orleans jazz social worlds.

Armed with training in sociology, cultural studies, popular music studies, popular musicology, and jazz studies,[[6]](#footnote-6) I was now equipped to contrast and compare my autoethnography of memory with the views of participants in present-day revivalist jazz worlds, as well as with the views of contemporary scholars of popular music studies, musicology and jazz studies. I turn to these latter concerns in the end sections of this article when I conclude with selected critical comment from contemporary popular musicologists and scholars in academic popular music and jazz studies who have no particular knowledge of Kid Thomas, and also from present-day New Orleans-style jazz enthusiasts and musicians, world-wide, who have been enthusiasts of the Kid Thomas Band for over half a century.

The 1960s and 1970s were the heady days of a re-visiting of the ‘authenticity wars’ that had taken place between devotees of the ‘classic jazz’ (King Oliver, Jelly Roll Morton, Louis Armstrong Hot 5s and 7s) and ‘traditional jazz’ (Bunk Johnson, George Lewis) in the 1940s and 1950s (Melly 1984), then being revisited in the 1960s in terms of the alternative positions of ‘classic (vintage) jazz’ and what came to be known as ‘contemporary New Orleans music’. Contemporary New Orleans music was the term used in the 1960s and 1970s to embrace the music of the Kitty Halls in New Orleans (Hardie 2002: 282) – most notably, Preservation Hall (Carter 1991), together with a spate of new recordings made in New Orleans. These were kick-started in the early 1960s by the new Riverside, Icon and Mono releases issued in parallel with the developments at Preservation Hall (Goodey 1968; Shipton 2012).

As Shipton (2012: 265) summarizes with reference to the English trumpet player and band leader Dan Pawson:

From the 1960s, Dan Pawson led his Artesian Hall Stompers in Birmingham in the English midlands, recreating a more fundamental type of music, namely the kind of New Orleans dance hall session that had been recorded in the years following [Ken] Colyer’s visit by enthusiasts such as Leonard Brackett, Lord Richard Ekins, and Grayson Mills in places such as the Dew Drop Inn, Kohlman’s Tavern, Luthjen’s, the Moulin Rouge, and the Paddock Lounge. These sessions appeared on such specialist labels as Arhoolie, Center, Icon, Jazzology, LaCroix, Mono, 504, and 77.

Apart from the above, this stream of ‘resuming authenticity’[[7]](#footnote-7) has been almost totally ignored in the academic literature of popular music studies, popular musicology and jazz studies. Only the rarely cited Goodey (1968), published in *The* *Journal of Popular Culture*, pays it proper respect. Nevertheless, it is within these developments that Kid Thomas and the Kid Thomas Band featured most prominently, especially within what is best termed as the second wave revivalism of the early 1960s to the mid-1970s.[[8]](#footnote-8)

**New Orleans Jazz Revivalism, the ‘Authenticity Wars’ and the Case of Kid Thomas Valentine**

New Orleans jazz revivalism emerged in the early 1940s as a worldwide movement with bands of young white ‘revivalists’ in San Francisco (Goggin and Klute 1994), London (Bryce 2001), and Australia (Bell 1988). They initially based their style on what were originally issued as ‘race’ records (Potter 1999: 74) for a black audience, in the early-mid 1920s in Chicago. These Chicago recordings were of migrant jazz musicians from New Orleans. Most influential for revivalism were the recordings of King Oliver’s Creole Jazz Band – a two trumpet band featuring Joe ‘King’ Oliver and a young Louis Armstrong on first and second trumpets, respectively. Also especially important were Louis Armstrong’s Hot 5 and Hot 7 (1925-1928) recordings and the recordings of Jelly Roll Morton – notably of Jelly Roll Morton’s Red Hot Peppers (1926).

These recordings laid down what was deemed by the ‘revivalists’ to be the authentic instrumentation for a New Orleans jazz band, namely, trumpet (or two trumpets), clarinet and slide trombone in the ‘front line’, over a rhythm section of drums, string bass (or brass bass: tuba), and piano or banjo. By the time Louis Armstrong made the Hot 5 and Hot 7 recordings he was developing as the first jazz soloist (a jazz development shared with the clarinet and soprano saxophone player Sidney Bechet). In particular, these recordings featured a series of stop choruses that were to change the direction of jazz forever. They were to signal the end of a sole focus on front line polyphonic New Orleans ensemble style where every instrument ‘played for the benefit of the band’,[[9]](#footnote-9) to the development of a style where soloists demonstrated their musical prowess, with the rest of the band either backing them or silent for the duration of the solo. The young white revivalists of the early 1940s attempted to play what they decreed as the earlier more authentic polyphonic style, with only the simplest of occasional stop choruses in some songs.

Hadlock (2000: 322-315) gets to the essence of the musical sound of these early bands and their young revivalist followers by terming it ‘formalist’. After noting that ‘formalists’ were ‘as concerned with repertoire as with maintaining spontaneity and agreeable counterpoint’, Hadlock (2000: 311) notes that the young white ‘formalist’ revivalists ‘found pleasure in multiple-strain pieces by Oliver, Morton, and other sophisticated early composers’ (Hadlock, 2000: 311-312).

All this was to change, however, as the 1940s progressed, following the recording in the early-mid 1940s of New Orleans jazzmen in New Orleans. It dawned on the writers of *Jazzmen* (Ramsay and Smith 1939) that as it was then only some forty years since jazz was thought to have begun – according to the foundation myth, first played by the Buddy Bolden Band in New Orleans in 1895 (Marquis 1993; Hardie 2007) – then some of the originators of jazz who had never been recorded must still be alive in New Orleans. These men, it was hypothesised had never been recorded because they were never part of the migration to Chicago that led to the first jazz recordings. With the re-discovery and recording of Bunk Johnson, who claimed to have played with Buddy Bolden and taught Louis Armstrong, a new movement emerged in early jazz and revivalism that in a few years led to a split in the revivalist movement (Carr and Priestley 1987; Ekins 2011). The sound of these 1940s recordings had an archaic, ramshackle quality, quite different from the more sophisticated sounds of the New Orleans jazz men recorded in Chicago (Hardie 2002; Hardie 2007).[[10]](#footnote-10)

Amateur enthusiasts initially made these recordings on amateur equipment, often in New Orleans dance halls hired specifically for the occasion. One microphone was placed some distance some distance from the band and often captured the echo of a large dance hall.[[11]](#footnote-11) In terms of musical style, they were, in Hadlock’s terms, ‘naturalist’, that is to say, ‘they leaned toward simple songs upon which they could build a rolling polyphonic ensemble, often reaching peaks of excitement without any solos at all’ (Hadlock, 2000: 311).

The major corpus of ‘naturalist’ recordings that were made in the 1940s and which provided the basis for the ‘naturalist’/’formalist’ split in worldwide New Orleans jazz revivalism, were recorded by Bill Russell for his American Music label (Hazeldine, 1993). Russell’s recordings were focused on Bunk Johnson and the particular New Orleans band that he and Bunk selected to record, most notably the band with George Lewis on clarinet on clarinet. Nevertheless, he did issue one 10” LP of the Kid Thomas Band, which was the first record that introduced Kid Thomas to world-wide New Orleans jazz revivalism. This first Kid Thomas recording was made on 3 September 1951 (American Music AMCD-10). Bill Russell – like Bunk Johnson – deplored the use of the saxophone in New Orleans jazz, which he alleged ‘muddied’ the sounds of the front line polyphony (Blesh 1943: 26, 1949: 190). Out of deference for Russell, the young producers of the Kid Thomas session (Alden Ashforth and David Wyckoff) felt unable to record Kid Thomas’s regular band, which had for years used a saxophone instead of a clarinet, the instrument favoured by those who contributed to the construction of revivalist ‘authenticity’ and ‘purism’. The producers also felt uncomfortable about asking Kid Thomas to drop his regular saxophone player and substitute a clarinet player, so they solved their problem by forming a new pick up band around Kid Thomas and the New Orleans clarinettist Emile Barnes (Booklet notes, American Music AMCD-10). Indeed, it was not to be until 24May 1959 that the Kid Thomas Band was officially recorded in semi-documentary mode with (mostly) his regular band, with saxophone and no clarinet (American Music AMCD-49). This remained a one off event until well into the 1960s.

The jettisoning of the saxophone by record producers and entrepreneurs of New Orleans jazz, in the interest of supposed ‘authenticity’ and ‘purism’, remains an issue to this day amongst revivalists. The debate is of crucial importance in any consideration of the sounds of the Kid Thomas Band. As the 1960s progressed, the Kid Thomas Band came to play more and more for tourists and concertgoers and what might be termed an ‘authenticity solution’ was found: namely, the addition of an ‘authentic’ clarinettist to the Kid Thomas Band line up which for decades had favoured a saxophonist. Thus the 1971 Tivoli Gardens concert – a major focus of this article – has both a tenor saxophone and clarinet in the band (the clarinet was the promoter’s choice); whereas the 1957 dance hall session has an alto saxophone and no clarinet, giving a quite different front line sound (Thomas’s own choice).

**Kid Thomas Valentine, Second Wave Revivalism and Preservation Hall, New Orleans**

Second wave New Orleans jazz revivalism was sparked off in the early 1960s by two major events: firstly, the Riverside recording sessions of old style New Orleans jazzmen, and secondly, the opening of Preservation Hall (Carter 1991). Two LPs of two different recording sessions of the Kid Thomas Band were issued on Riversid*e*, with no saxophone, at the behest of the record producers who thought the saxophone inappropriate for ‘authentic’ New Orleans jazz (Riverside RLP-365; Riverside RLP-386). Quite soon, the Kid Thomas Band became a major attraction at Preservation Hall – his own band with the addition of a clarinet player. By 1964, the band was embarking on tours of College circuits in the US. It was marketed as one of the Preservation Hall bands (Carter 1991). Gradually, as the 60s progressed, US tours became more frequent.

In 1963 and 1964, the George Lewis Band toured Japan. For their return trip in 1965, their regular trumpet player was too sick to tour, so Kid Thomas and a number of other people from his band combined under George Lewis’s leadership. George Lewis chose ‘Basin Street Blues’ as the opening number to introduce the band members to their Japanese audience at every concert during the tour (Smits and Bielderman, 2010: 25-28). It is unlikely that Kid Thomas ever played the number as much as he did on this tour. What is noticeable, with hindsight, is that it was probably on this tour that Kid Thomas started playing ‘Basin Street Blues’ in the form the sheet music of 1926 suggests it should be played, that is to say, with an introductory repeated 8 bar section which includes a 4 bar repeated ‘call’ and ‘response’ section, followed by a variation on an 8 bar blues repeated <<http://www.free-scores.com/download-sheet-music.php?pdf=19504>>.

It is noteworthy that in the 1957 dance hall version, the Kid Thomas Band omits the introduction and goes straight into the 8 bar blues main chorus sections. However, in the 1971 world tour version, he reinstates the opening section highlighting the ‘call’ and ‘response’ sections as in the published version. In particular, he has the trumpet and trombone ‘call’ (with trumpet predominant) and the tenor saxophone and clarinet lead the ‘response’ with variations in texture on the repeated ‘call’ and ‘response’ in the second 8.

In terms of Hadlock’s distinction between ‘formalism’ and ‘naturalism’ what I have illustrated here is the more overtly ‘naturalist’ bent of the 1957 dance hall recording leading to the dropping of the introductory section, with its reinstatement for the concert hall recordings, following the influence Kid Thomas’s time with the George Lewis band touring Japan in 1965. Nevertheless, despite this addition of the opening 8 bar section, the Kid Thomas Band remains resolutely ‘naturalist’ throughout all its recordings of ‘Basin Street Blues’, as is clearly illustrated by a comparison of all Thomas recordings of ‘Basin Street Blues’ with the complex multi-strain arrangement of the resolutely ‘formalist’ Louis Armstrong Hot 5 version of 1928.

Significantly, by 1959, when Louis Armstrong was touring Europe with his six piece band, he was able to adapt the revivalist emphasis upon small band ‘naturalism’ for his own purposes, in order to feature himself as a celebrity soloist. The ‘playing for the benefit of the band’ emphasis in New Orleans polyphony had now been replaced by the rest of the band playing for the benefit of Louis Armstrong. This tone was set right from the start of the 1959 Armstrong tour version of ‘Basin Street Blues’. The piano introduction leads into an emphasis upon Armstrong’s fiery lead trumpet ‘call’. Instead of the equally strong ‘response’ by the rest of the front line, as in the 1971 Kid Thomas version, we get a muted background ‘response’ that is barely a ‘response’ at all. It sets the tone for a performance where the rest of the band is there essentially to ‘back’ Louis Armstrong and to highlight his lead trumpet work; similarly, with Armstrong’s vocal.

In the Kid Thomas 1971 concert version, the band’s Creole clarinettist Albert Burbank sings two choruses of vocal – the first in English; the second in Creole Patois (adding a Creole ‘authenticity’) – after the initial ensemble chorus and trombone chorus, followed by two banjo choruses and two ensemble out- choruses. All choruses closely follow the melody; all, we might say, have equal weight, except the out chorus climax which is presaged by the drummer’s accentuated cymbal and culminates in Kid Thomas’s loud slightly extended growl climax – at 5.32-5.33. How different from the celebrity Louis Armstrong performance. The initial choruses lead into Armstrong’s flamboyant vocal style and then a series of sidemen’s solos function to introduce various shifts in the development of the tune – either of shifts of tempo, as at 3.55, or to Armstrong’s more flamboyant high register and extended elaborate note work, especially in the song’s climax chorus. Here we are witnessing the kind of entertaining performance that led to Louis Armstrong’s crossing over from jazz to popular music. That would lead eventually to his smash hit ‘Hello Dolly’ of 1964, and the even less jazz orientated ‘What a Wonderful World’ of 1968. There was little chance of this ever happening with Kid Thomas whose minimalist trumpet style is there primarily to act as rhythmic agitator. It is a strong, elemental, often abrasive lead, and totally opposite to Louis Armstrong’s in its lack of flamboyance and its avoidance of high register playing. Little wonder that Thomas came to be worshipped for his minimalist playing for ‘the benefit of the band’ ‘authenticity’ by second wave New Orleans jazz revivalists, long after New Orleans jazz ‘purists’ had condemned Louis Armstrong for his ‘commercialism’ – and this notwithstanding Kid Thomas’s preference for a saxophone in his band, an instrument choice not adopted by Louis Armstrong who stuck with the allegedly more ‘authentic’ clarinet.

**Authorship and the Song: Basin Street Blues**

‘Basin Street Blues’, according to the sheet music, was first published in 1926. It was written by New Orleans born Spencer Williams (1889-1965), a jazz and popular music composer who wrote such jazz and popular music classics as ‘Everybody Loves My Baby’, ‘I Ain’t Got Nobody’, and ‘Royal Garden Blues’. As one commentator puts it (<<http://www.basinstreet.com/articles/clarence.htm>>, 2011):

[Spencer Williams’] work is a reflection of his character; it does not show aggressiveness nor seek to impress but it is simple and flows melodiously in unobtrusive beauty with restrain yet control with profoundness in arrangement and an inner coherence, the music of a highly talented musician.

In particular, contra to the brash Dixieland jazz compositions and playing styles of the ‘roaring twenties’, Spencer Williams’ work is typical of the older New Orleans style:

solid yet mild (almost soft), with a light and supple rhythm – the emphasis upon melodious (but never exuberant) variations on the main theme. His music was said to be ‘never sweet, coy or weak. It had a sturdy solid strength, a deep emotionality, an inner calmness that provided freedom for inspired beauty and true art’ (<http://www.basinstreet.com/articles/clarence.htm> , 2011).

The structure of ‘Basin Street Blues’ is simple. As published, it has a repeated 8 bar introduction, followed by a variation of a repeated 8 bar blues – as the sheet music puts it ‘Ad lib solos from here’. The tempo is ‘slow swing’ <<http://www.free-scores.com/download-sheet-music.php?pdf=19504>>.

Simple as the composition is, the Kid Thomas dance hall version omits the introduction and goes straight into the main strain. But what is most notable about the 1957 dance hall version is its entirely different lyric. The 1971 concert hall version broadly follows the ‘Basin Street Blues’ published lyric, as below (but going straight to the chorus):

|  |
| --- |
| Won't cha come a-long with me, to the Mis-sis-sipp-i? We'll take the boat to the lan’ of dreams, Steam down the riv-er, down to New Orleans;  The band's there to meet us, Old friends there to greet us, Where all the black and the white folks meet, Heaven on earth, they call it Basin Street  Ba-sin Street is the street where dark e-lite Al-ways meet, in New Orleans, Lan’of dreams,  You'll nev-er know how nice it seems or just how much it real-ly means;  Glad to be, Yes, sir-ee where welcome's free, Dear to me, Where I can lose, My Bas-in Street Blues. |

However, the 1957 Kid Thomas dance hall version adopts the lyric of a tune known prior to Spencer Williams’s publication of ‘Basin Street Blues’ as ‘The Duck’s Yas Yas Yas’.[[12]](#footnote-12) The variation of the lyric that the Thomas band use, as sung by Edmund Washington, adopts four choruses, variously embellished around the song’s most well-known first verse:

Mama bought a chicken, she thought it was a duck,  
She brought him to the table with his legs straight up,  
Up comes the children with a cup and a glass,  
To try to catch the gravy from the yas-yas-yas.

The song was first recorded in late 1928/early 1929 – shortly after the first recording of ‘Basin Street Blues’ by Louis Armstrong – but versions of the Duck’s Yas Yas were well known in whorehouses well before that. The sexual innuendo was variously developed in different verses – with ‘gravy’ (or in some versions ‘liquor’) a euphemism for sweat or semen and ‘yas’ being a well-known term for arse. Significantly, Basin Street marked the boundary of the Storyville red light district, famous for its whorehouses prior to its closure in 1917.

The Duck’s Yas Yas lyric maintains and develops in its variations the visceral nature of the whorehouses. The lyric of ‘Basin Street Blues’, on the other hand, sanitises and romanticises the district’s history (Vesey and Dimanche 2003; Long 2007). Indeed, in the Kid Thomas 1971 concert version, the older lyric ‘where all the black and white folks meet’, is given a non-race reference ‘where all the young and old folk meet’. Similarly, the reference to ‘dark e-lite’ is expunged. The same shift in visceral emphasis serves well as a more general theme in contrasting and comparing the 1957 and 1971 Kid Thomas versions of ‘Basin Street Blues’. Whereas the 1957 version suits the ‘bump and grind’ of a New Orleans dance hall, the 1971 version illustrates what happens to the New Orleans style when it is taken out of the New Orleans 1920s-50s dance hall context into the concert hall context of the 1960s and beyond.

Charles DeVore, one of the most authoritative writers on Kid Thomas, gives a flavour of what it must have been like to hear the band live in a 1950s New Orleans dance hall:

It was the loudest trumpet playing, and here I was standing at the back and that trumpet was cutting through everything . . . Then we sat down and I listened all night, and it was like nothing I’d ever heard before in my life. I mean, I thought New Orleans jazz was ‘Dippermouth Blues’ and ‘High Society’. . . But, by golly, here’s a band that made a career out of playing ‘Green Eyes’. That wasn’t even a jazz beat. I really didn’t know what to make of it. Here was a trombonist getting up there and playing the melody more than the trumpet, the trumpet going blat, blat blat behind the trombone beat, and, off in the background, a kind of wistful sound of a saxophone and piano player . . . They had the wildest drummer I ever heard in my life. The bass player was very, very strong (Schafer 1998: 5).

All the evidence suggests that Kid Thomas’s basic trumpet style never changed. It was certainly the same on the 1957 and 1971 recordings. Throughout his career his playing was searing and elemental and acted as the perfect foil for the frontline instruments. Specifically, as I have suggested, it functioned as rhythmic agitator for the whole band.

DeVore (1974: 1) identifies the essence of Kid Thomas’s playing when he contrasts the classic approach to New Orleans ensemble trumpet playing – brought to fruition by Louis Armstrong – with Kid Thomas’s style. In the classic approach

The melody is stated as **fluid** flow of musical ideas usually altered rhythmically by playing notes within a phrase that offer rhythmic contrast. Each phrase, in turn, varies in length and dynamics and is placed in contrasting metric position to that of the preceding phrase. Kid Thomas, however, kicks the ensemble along with a host of tricks that do not stem from this ‘classic’ method at all. The sparcity of notes is evident in his playing, much like Bunk Johnson, but where Bunk had a lazy, legato, behind-the-beat feeling, Kid Thomas uses his notes as white-hot jabs into the ensemble – almost a ferocious sound. He, of course, can play very softly, but he never loses his **intensity**, no easy task.

In the 1971 concert recording of ‘Basin Street Blues’, Thomas does play quietly on occasions, as is fitting for an attentive concert audience. In the dance halls, however, this would not be appropriate. His trumpet playing would not be heard. Rhythmically, what distinguishes the 1957 recording from the 1971 recording is the extent to which the Kid Thomas band builds up a rolling momentum, after the initial ensemble chorus, with drummer Sammy Penn, who was with Thomas from 1936 until his death in 1969, playing a particularly prominent role.[[13]](#footnote-13) Indeed, it is the Thomas-Penn combination that provides much of what is distinctive about the Kid Thomas Band until Penn’s death. Alonzo Stewart, who then joined the band and is playing with Thomas on the 1971 recording of Basin Street Blues, was previously a New Orleans rhythm and blues player. Although he adapted his style when he joined Thomas – he is playing a New Orleans ‘second line’ beat favoured by all the old style New Orleans drummers, with frequent press rolls, and so on – his abilities and his rapport with the rest of the band never match that of Penn’s.

Once again it is DeVore (1974: 1) who makes the essential points:

The typical opening chorus of any tune he (Thomas) tackles [as with both versions of Basin Street Blues] is characterized by a strong, straight lead, with little melodic variation, played abruptly without the notes being sustained. It is very difficult to anticipate his phrases, as they occur in little rhythmic clusters generated by a wide vibrato and a hot, searing tone.[[14]](#footnote-14) These phrases literally explode, driving the band along like a freight train. In years, gone by, Kid Thomas teamed up with that superb drummer Sammy Penn to produce just this effect. The two of them, it seemed, coordinated their efforts to achieve a rolling momentum to any song, blues, or stomp, climaxing in ‘out’ choruses that created tremendous tension just prior to the final release of the last two bars.

Thomas’s ‘rough house’ groove way of leading his band, which started in the mid-1920s, remained broadly similar whenever and wherever he played. Nevertheless, the band did adopt a more polished sound when they left the neighbourhood dance halls and began concert hall touring, as is evident when comparing the 1957 and 1971 versions of Basin Street Blues.

The 1971 version lacks the spirit and spontaneity of the 1957 version. The melody ‘soloing’ is routinised, some might say ritualised,[[15]](#footnote-15) in the 1971 version. In particular, the substitution of the relatively sophisticated banjo of Emanuel Sayles for the rollicking rough-house piano playing of Joe James makes for a very different overall band sound. This is especially evident in Emanuel Sayles’ two chorus ‘solo’ (fifth and sixth choruses). The transition to a more polished concert performance is well illustrated, too, by comparing the sounds of trombonist Louis Nelson in the two versions.

Louis Nelson joined the band as trombonist in 1944 and remained with Thomas until Thomas’s death. As well as being versed in the old ‘gut bucket’ style, Nelson was a good reader of music and had played with the Sidney Desvigne’s Big Band Orchestra from 1930-1944 before he joined Thomas. He was able, therefore, to adopt a very smooth legato style when he thought the occasion demanded it. The comparison of what Nelson does in the 1957 dance hall session with his work in the 1971 concert performance is particularly revealing. In both cases he sticks to the melody when appropriate, but in the concert version he has perfected a whole ‘velvety’ legato melody chorus to function as his ‘solo’. Specifically, in the 1957 version, after an opening ensemble chorus (with the sheet music’s introduction omitted) in which the rest of the front line pick up on Thomas staccato stabs, the lead shifts to Nelson in the second chorus. Nelson variates[[16]](#footnote-16) on the melody in the brusque way favoured by old-style New Orleans trombonists. He then plays one of his favourite licks to lead into the third chorus, in which the saxophone takes up the lead. However, in the 1971 concert version, the lead switches to Nelson in the second chorus. Here Nelson’s legato chorus which sticks almost entirely to the melody line is played ‘straight’, again, a perfect foil to the rough house Kid Thomas sounds on trumpet.

It is noticeable, too, that the rough house saxophone of Ed Washington features prominently throughout the 1957 recording – it takes up the lead in the third chorus, and is prominent throughout, apart from in choruses four and five when Washington sings. However, in the 1971 version the mellifluous tenor saxophone of Emanuel Paul remains in a subsidiary role throughout. This has, in all probability, to do with following the supposed tastes of an audience of white traditional jazz fans, who following the jazz critics from the late 1930s onwards, decreed the clarinet as the ‘authentic’ reed instrument in a traditional jazz frontline. In consequence, it is Albert Burbank on clarinet that is given a more overtly prominent role.

Interestingly, the popularity of the Kid Thomas Band with a sub-group of New Orleans jazz enthusiasts from the early-mid 1960s onwards led to a re-defining of ‘authenticity’. These enthusiasts favoured the ‘authentic’ rough house New Orleans dance hall sounds of the 1950s to the more overt ‘authentic’ polyphony of the Bunk Johnson and George Lewis recordings of the 1940s, and, indeed, to the Kid Thomas ‘concert’ sounds of 1971. Dan Pawson in the UK led the way in these developments in the mid-1960s (Ekins, 2013a). Most recently, the contemporary worldwide traditional jazz scene includes a number of bands that advertise themselves specifically as being based upon the Kid Thomas ‘authentic’ dance hall sound (e.g., Brian Carrick’s Algiers Stompers, from the UK, and Patrick Tevlin’s Happy Pals, from Canada).

**Kid Thomas and ‘The Grain of the Voice’**

It is interesting to consider the visceral nature of the Kid Thomas band sound in terms of Roland Barthes paper on ‘The Grain of the Voice’ (Barthes 1977).

The artist Noel Rockmore, who made a specialty of painting the old style Preservation Hall New Orleans jazz musicians, used to remark that their instruments were a part of their bodies, in some unique way that he could not define (Borenstein 1968: **PAGE NO**.). Similarly, those who knew Kid Thomas (including myself) were struck by the fact that he moved and spoke like he played. It provoked a sensation that was intuitive, difficult to explain but one felt it ‘in one’s guts’.

Kid Thomas and DeDe Pierce are arguably the most visceral trumpet players of second wave New Orleans revivalism. In a review of my Billie and DeDe Pierce CD (504/La Croix CD94), Brian Harvey wrote <<http://www.radiojazz.co.uk/pdf/aplr08.pdf>> 2011):[[17]](#footnote-17)

De De and Billie [Pierce] are untainted throwbacks to the 1920s and 30s era of Decatur Street’s roughest salons and dance halls. Their jazz is some of the most true, most authentic ever to come out of the city. It’s wonderful throbbing visceral stuff – the lifeblood of the real music. If you love traditional jazz you owe it to yourself to have an infusion of this remarkable music.

Much the same sentiment can be seen in Ken Grayson Mills’s comment on the sounds of Kid Thomas:

Thomas has always been a kindling agent. He is one of the few trumpet players in all of jazz history who never blew a phony note. There is no embroidery in the creative process of Valentine’s mind. His playing is the raw ore and basic formula of which his art is made. When he passes, it is doubtful that the New Orleans idiom will continue as a physical fact. Its heart, respiratory, reproductive and nervous system will be gone (Mills 1962b).

In similar vein, Ken Grayson Mills entitled his series of New Orleans recordings for his Icon label ‘Root, Bone and Marrow, Flower’ (Mills 1962a, 1962b). The Kid Thomas Band and similarly visceral music is featured on all of them. ‘This is heady stuff, raw, rough round the edges. But when your ear becomes acclimated to this, the usual commercial stuff sounds just too slick to suit you,’ as Richard ‘Dick’ Allen of the Tulane University Jazz Archive put it (Carter 1991: 155).

Arguably, what these commentators purport to be hearing is, in Barthes’ terms, ‘“the grain” – the materiality of the body speaking its mother tongue; perhaps, the letter, almost certainly *significance*’ (Barthes 1977: 182). Although Barthes focuses on the voice, he points out on numerous occasions that his argument is equally applicable to musical instruments.[[18]](#footnote-18) He writes, for instance, ‘I can hear with certainty – the certainty of the body, of thrill – that the harpsichord playing of Wanda Landowska comes from inner body and not from the petty digital scramble of so many harpsichordists (so much so that it is a different instrument)’ (Barthes 1977: 189).

As many critics have pointed out, this is tantalising and suggestive opinion, difficult to pinpoint with accuracy and certainty in a musician or in a performance (Walser 1991; Dunsby 2009). Nevertheless, it resonates in the language of commentators on the Kid Thomas Band, who attempt to identify what they perceive as ‘the heart and bowels of N.O. Jazz’ (Mills 1962a) as compared to slick commercial/tourist Dixieland jazz variants.

For Kid Thomas himself the 1950s dance hall recordings documented his best times: ‘I loves to play for dancing. It puts good in you and you feel better. It was kicks, man.’ (Ekins, 2006: 8-9)

The ‘grain’ – or visceral nature of performance - is especially evident in the 1957 dance band recording of ‘Basin Street Blues’, with its saxophone playing, vocalising and the ‘hollers’ of Ed Washington. The 1971 version may be more polished but it retains the same quality in Thomas’s prominent ‘blatting’ style. Note, too, how everything can be seen as leading up to the final out chorus, featuring one of Kid Thomas’s slightly extended climax ‘growls’ (at 5.32-5.33), so beloved by his fans.

For those Kid Thomas enthusiasts who prefer the band’s dance hall sound, the ‘grain’ is perceived to have diminished in the concert hall recording. It is as though the visceral nature of the Kid Thomas style of performance has become inextricably linked with dancing and ‘authenticity’: the more dancing, the more ‘grain’; the more ‘grain’, the more ‘authenticity’.

**Contemporary New Orleans Music of the 1960s and 1970s and Contemporary Comment Today**

It will be recalled that the vast bulk of the Kid Thomas Band recordings were either recorded or first issued during the 1960s and 1970s (Smits and Bielderman 2010) and situated within second wave revivalism, during the ‘resuming authenticity’ phase of the music.[[19]](#footnote-19) My argument, so far, has been written from the standpoint of my socialisation into ‘authentic’ old-style New Orleans jazz during that period, being especially influenced by Charters (1958; 1963), a ‘bible’ of second wave revivalism. In particular, I was interested in detailing how enthusiasts of the Kid Thomas Band at this time preferred the early Kid Thomas recordings to the later ones and saw the influences of tourist and concert hall audiences as having a detrimental effect on the music (quite apart from the deaths of so many of the old-style musicians) that by the mid-1970s, they considered it ‘all over’ in New Orleans (Bethell, 2008: 10; Turner, 1994: 100). As Hadlock (2000: 314) put it, later, in regards to the Preservation Hall sessions: ‘The long admired polyphonic skills of hometown players . . . tended to become routinized into brittle, predictable artifacts for tourists.’ In important, if often unspecified ways, the earlier recordings in those days were mostly conceptualised, experienced and ‘felt’ as more ‘authentic’ than the later ones.

However, detailing such constructions of authenticity often sits uneasily with the concerns of many contemporary scholars of academic popular music studies, jazz studies and popular musicology. Such scholars either have no interest in the concept of authenticity, or if they do work in this area, they place the emphasis upon a critique of the presuppositions underlying such constructions.

When I framed a first version of this article in terms of an essay for a module on ‘Text and Context’ in an MA in Popular Music Studies programme it was assessed by post-modernist musicologists on the basis of there being too much ‘Context’ and not enough ‘Text (Music)’. When I framed a similar second version of the article in terms of ‘Popular Musicology’, without any reference to my previous work on ‘Authenticity as Authenticating’ or the present article’s autoethnographical components, it was suggested that further work needed to be done on a number of matters, principally: (i) the concepts of authenticity, grain, and revivalism and (ii) the assumptions about authenticity that popular musicology was designed to challenge. It was suggested, for instance, that given the socially constructed nature of authenticity one could equally well argue that the 1971 concert hall performance was as authentic in its own context as the 1957 dance hall performance. Moreover, my use of Barthes’ concept of ‘The Grain of the Voice’ was seen to be both superficial and problematic. Most fundamentally, I was told that it was not clear to what extent I was reporting on historical discourses and to what extent I was intending to subject these discourses to analysis and critique.

Rather than confront these criticisms head on within the particular conceptualizations of musicology that they may presuppose, I have preferred to deal with them thus far by making explicit my own ‘authenticity as authenticating’ position and my own personal autoethnography of memory of the 1960s and 70s. I regard this article as primarily a study in sociological musicology.[[20]](#footnote-20) In the remainder of the text, I add a more explicit and sustained Cultural Studies component, following Hesmondhaigh and Negus (2002: 145) who regard the ‘cultural studies’ component of popular music studies as being the study of ‘The consumption and reception of cultural forms’. In these sections, I demonstrate how my discussants and informants, writing from the standpoint of the present, evidence a much more nuanced set of responses to authenticity. Indeed, many have moved from a declension narrative which sees so-called ‘progress’ and ‘development’ in jazz (in their case in early jazz) as decline,[[21]](#footnote-21) to an evolutionary narrative which recognises the evolution of authenticity.

My aim was to obtain ethnographic interview-type material (Spradley, 1997) relating to the current views of world-wide New Orleans jazz revivalists. I wanted opinions of people who had participated in New Orleans revivalist social worlds since the emergence of these worlds in the early to mid-1940s, to date. As a result I posted a request for discussants on the Facebook group website ‘New Orleans Music – For All Genres From That City’. <<https://www.facebook.com/groups/223485004330907/?fref=ts>>.

The core participants who contribute most to this particular website are major figures within world-wide New Orleans revivalist jazz worlds, mostly as musicians, often as writers, and in some cases as promoters and record producers. Moreover, they have been participants within this world for upwards of sixty eight years. In other words their collective memory goes back to almost the beginnings of New Orleans jazz revivalism.

The Facebook site operates as a ‘Secret Group’, only open to its members, of which there are over 400. Its principal administrator is the Swedish drummer and writer Per Oldaeus who has been active within New Orleans jazz scenes since the 1960s and is the current editor of the acclaimed *Bunk Johnson Information: A Newsletter of the Swedish Bunk Johnson Society*. It is the accepted practice on this site to upload YouTube videos of New Orleans music and invite comment on them. I, therefore, drew the attention of the group to the two versions of the Kid Thomas Band playing ‘Basin Street Blues’ that I was using as the basis for my analysis. I invited them to comment on them in terms of:

Constructions of ‘authenticity’ in relation to the comparison between the two Kid Thomas versions of ‘Basin Street Blues’ – the 1957 Larry Borenstein, Ed Washington/Joe James, etc. one (dance-band-type session) and a 1971 ‘world tour’ KT Preservation Hall one – with Burbank, Sayles, Paul, etc. (concert hall session).

I added two specific questions, as follows:

Many/most of s, probably, used the concept of ‘authenticity’ a lot in those days, or words like it, such as ‘the real thing’. MY QUESTION IS/ARE: How do you see those two recordings in terms of ‘authenticity’ in NO [New Orleans]/NO revivalist jazz, if, indeed, you ever use such a concept. Do you view them differently now? Any and every comment would be gratefully received. Thank you.

A diverse picture emerged. A number of discussants did not find the continuing use of the term ‘authenticity’ helpful, although some of these did subscribe to notions of ‘the real thing’. One group found the concept of authenticity useful but preferred to consider authenticity in terms of its evolution and applied an evolutionary model of authenticity to the two Kid Thomas recordings, sometimes arguing that they did evidence an evolution and sometimes arguing that they did not. Another group endorsed the model of authenticity I have presented and broadly supported my analysis. While some contemporary commentators found Barthes’ formulation of ‘the grain of the voice’ too problematic to be useful to them; others did find that the concept resonated with their own experiences of listening to the Kid Thomas band, again supporting my own position.[[22]](#footnote-22)

I received 44 comments between 23 March and 19 April 2014. A selection follows, in the same chronological order that the comments were made, with (where appropriate) my interlinking remarks.

Daniel ‘Dan’ Vernettes (DV): *I don’t think I used this word [authenticity]. Speaking of Sam Morgan or Louis Dumaine’s bands or [Oscar] Celestin’s trumpet playing, I used to say: real New Orleans style.*

Per Oldaeus (PO): *I guess that the word ‘authenticity’ is quite hard to define, hence I try not to use it. But I have used ‘the real thing’ concept, which I believe is pretty similar. It was a Social Anthropologist friend of mine who made me aware of the word ‘authenticity’ and since then I never use the word.*

DV [Evolutionary narrative]: *It looks to me as though his [Kid Thomas’s] music should be examined in terms of evolution (evolution through his own career, and evolution in the New Orleans music in general). I suppose Kid Thomas played a bit differently in the 20s. His muted solos sometimes are reminiscent of King Oliver’s style. Authenticity has a connotation of uniqueness, like there would be a model to which the musician would stick. Authenticity is a juridic term. An historic event is authentic if it is proved that it really happened. A signature is authentic on a painting . . . or not. That’s binary. OK, but the word has also a second meaning that sends us back to the ‘quality’. And that’s where the trouble begins, because we jump from the juridical to the personal. Do the young musicians play N.O. music? So, I stick with evolution.*

Jasper van Pelt (JVP) [Evolutionary narrative]: *The guys nowadays in Preservation Hall are playing authentic but it evolves to another type of music that Kid Thomas has played. Of course, still the same songs and many similar things are going on but also many differences. We can only look back in the timetable and then say something about evolution. Bands create the authenticity themselves (social constructions) even the white guys who copy every lick from KT [Kid Thomas], Jim [Robinson] and [George] Lewis. These bands are also authentic, KT, Jim and Lewis are their influences/inspirations but imitators still shape their own band! And are thus authentic. In other words, KT with Ed Washington and the KT from 1971 are both authentic. To me they all play authentic, but music changes and not everybody plays on the same level. But those are two completely different issues than authentic playing.*

Richard Ekins (RE) [Declension narrative] *To pursue this idea of ‘evolution’, do you think that it could be that now we are old and ‘mature’, we see such developments as the difference between KT 1957 and KT 1971 as ‘evolution’? Whereas in 1971, many of us saw it as decline. We know, for example, that clarinets tended to be foisted on KT by [Allan] Jaffe [who managed Preservation Hall]. We know that Alonzo Stewart was foisted on the KT band because Alonzo was reliable, healthy, a singer, a bit of a crowd-pleaser, good organiser, and so on . . . Many of us, surely, in those days, did operate with some notion of what was more authentic and what was less authentic in our favourite music.*

David Wyckoff (DW) [Declension narrative]: *I guess the definition of ‘authentic’ can be rather arbitrary, at least in ordinary, personal usage. When I was young in the early 1950s, I thought of ‘authentic’ – ‘the real thing’ – as music most similar (I thought) to what dance music played for ‘black’ dancers in the earlier decades of the century would have been. Thus clearly white ‘dixieland’ and later revivalist bands would have been excluded, and music such as the George Lewis band at Manny’s, the Kid Thomas band at Speck’s Moulin Rouge, etc. might have been more ‘authentic’, although the favored songs, empathetic communication between musicians and dancers undoubtedly differed depending on the ‘color’ and culture of the audience. Playing for non-dancing, although attentive audiences in clubs or concerts (Celestin on Bourbon St., etc.) also affects the nature of the music, as it becomes more performance and entertainment oriented (such as the difference noted in the two Kid Thomas examples presented). Thus the notion of ‘evolution’, as so well described above. The quality of the music can, of course, remain very high in either case, as is true of the 1971 example, for instance, although not qualifying as ‘authentic’ in my youthful definition.*

RE [Declension narrative]: *Generally speaking, I guess, ‘revivalists’ have always tended to a ‘declensionist’ theory rather than an ‘evolutionary’ theory – though what tends to happen, I think, is that certain ‘revivalists’ get stuck. They sort of ‘freeze frame’ a particular period, stick with it, seeing developments after a certain favoured time period as ‘decline’.*

DV [Neither decline nor evolution]: *It’s hard to compare the two recordings. The drumming is totally different. There is a piano . . . the keys are different (C and F). If you play a concert you play differently than in a club or dancing hall. I don’t see any decline nor any evolution. Kid T. plays his usual stuff. My own feeling is that both are authentic N.O. music. There is a peculiarity about this music that is hard to sum up in musical or intellectual terms. It’s like swing: you can recognize it at first hearing . . . When you compare the two Basin St. Blues you are talking about an eventual commercialisation. You are not talking about a stylistic evolution, I mean in the musical language. The grammar and vocabulary of both tunes is about the same. Only the elements differ, like the rhythmic treatment. From friends who played with Kid T. in France I recall that Kid T. did not bother at all for much. He just did his stuff like he knew how to do it and did not care to change it. Maybe Jaffe had them rehearse and structure the thing (?), but basically this was the same style.*

The material I received from my discussants was extremely valuable, especially in exploring the context of ‘evolution’ versus ‘declension’. My own position, into which I was socialised in the early 1960s to mid-1970s period, was summarised concisely by Richard Sid Bailey:

*Authenticity? The way I see it. Is a recording made at a dance more authentic than one made at a concert? (Yes) Is a studio recording more authentic than one made at a club or a musician’s get together? (No). Is a recording of an established regular band more authentic than one of a band with personnel chosen by a non-musician/fan? (Yes).*

My interest in the visceral nature of the Kid Thomas Band sound in terms of Roland Barthes paper on ‘The Grain of the Voice’ also provoked some useful comment.

DV: *With ‘grain’ Barthes names the body that is in the singing voice. Barthes writes about classical European music, about singing, not about instrumental music. But I think the grain can be applied to jazz. Why are we able to identify a musician when listening to his recordings? Mainly because of the phrasing, the clichés, but also because of the timbre, the sound, the vibrato, the explosions, etc. In this sense we do hear Kid Thomas’s body in his music . . . or Oliver, or Louis, Red Allen, or Joe Smith . . . This is all I can say, these structuralist writers were too much for me!*

DV: *I forgot to say that in French we more often use this expression: le grain de la peau. The grain of the skin. I guess Barthes derived le grain de la voix from this expression.*

Jim Lodge’s contribution to the discussion further clarified my position regarding the ‘grain of the voice’:

*Your words on identifying and ‘hearing’ musicians resonate with me, Dan [DV]. I find that an important factor in listening to a musician’s personal style is to take particular note of ‘attack’, the way a note is tongued, struck, or plucked. For this element can be likened to consonants in speech, where power, intensity, and subtle variations thereof make for levels of communicated meaning and emotion that are often overlooked in discussion. They can also, in conjunction with the other factors you mention, make a player instantly recognisable, and are an essential feature of the playing of any truly great jazz player*

**Conclusion**

The extent to which one can argue for the ‘authenticity’ of the 1957 dance hall recording of ‘Basin Street Blues’ versus the 1971 concert hall version will depend on a number of factors: the definition of ‘authenticity’; the prioritising and emphasis given to which particular dimension of ‘authenticity’; the emphasis given to Kid Thomas as an individual musician as opposed to his band; and the degree to which the ‘definitions of the situation’ by contemporary participants in the social worlds of New Orleans revivalist jazz are accepted as definitive.

For those who argued, as my principal mentors did in the 1960s, that the ‘real thing’ was functional music – functional that is in the context of dances, parades, funerals, fish fries, backyard parties, or whatever, in New Orleans – music for local people by local musicians; that it then had a rough, unpolished edge that would become increasingly polished as the context changed to entertaining tourists, and to the seated spectator audiences of concert hall auditoriums; and that band leaders and their sidemen had maximum control over who played (personnel), what they played (instrumentation and repertoire), and how they played (style and ‘voice’) then, the 1957 version of ‘Basin Street Blues’ is nearer ‘the real thing’ than is the 1971 version. Similarly, for those that use the concept of ‘the real thing’ as more or less synonymous with the ‘authentic’, the earlier version is more ‘authentic’. On the other hand, for those that focus on the trumpet playing and style of Kid Thomas, himself, his consistency and lack of any sort of evolution may be seen as evidencing a consistent ‘authenticity’ in and of itself.

As Fred Eatherton writes (email, 12 October 2015):

The only constants in these two recordings are KTV [Kid Thomas Valentine] and Mr Nelson. The 1957 recording features a totally uninhibited band, with EW [Edmund Washington] having a ball in his vocal and Sammy Penn playing some outrageous cowbells and woodblocks in the most unlikely places. Some of the sax's lower register intonation isn't exactly pitch perfect, but this doesn't matter. This, for me, is folk jazz at its best and can never be repeated. The 1971 recording is a totally different kettle of fish. It's on a concert platform, being recorded by Danish TV, has an R & B drummer in Alonzo Stewart and a scholarly Doctor Burbank treating the Danes to their first lesson in creole patois . . . I can hear improved musicianship from Louis Nelson here, and would have expected to after a further 15 years, but KTV, for my money, hasn't altered one iota. He is as uncompromising in 1971 as he was in 1957. If your question is 'Is KTV any less authentic in his later recording?' my answer would be a resounding 'no.' The band, however, minus the piano but with a banjo and two reeds, plus Stewart, is substantially different. Even when he was clowning around, as in Milk Cow Blues and Tiger Rag, for example, KTV was his own man and if you didn't appreciate it, that was too bad. In his interview with Alan Lomax (*Jazz Parades: Feet Don't Fail Me Now*, 1990) he defiantly states that he's never been thrown out of any band, and when he is almost interviewed on the French TV programme, playing with Les Haricots Rouges, he is disdainful of all attempts by the interviewer to cast him as an aged celebrity (Martin, 1982). He was what he was, and like the lady,[[23]](#footnote-23) was not for turning.

A final informant (Robert Greenwood) concludes (email, 20 October 2015):

I think I am of the evolutionary school of thought. A concert hall is not a dance hall and that affects the music. The mostly white audiences that Thomas (and others) played to & for by the 1970s were, I think, likely to be quite different from the mostly white clientele of the dance halls in the 1940s & 50s and that affected the music as well. The mens adapted according to whatever setting they found themselves in. Authenticity is complicated in that the very term carries with it normative assumptions, as in the dance hall is where they should have been playing, and the concert hall was not really the best place to hear them.

With regard to the classification of the Kid Thomas Band enthusiasts, these – as we have seen – hold variously ‘evolutionary’ or ‘declensionist’ positions. When comparing these enthusiasts in terms of how they were then (in the 1960s and 1970s) to how they are now, it should come as no surprise that many have ‘evolved’. Late adolescent fanaticisms of the 1960s and earlier have matured. The narcissism of minor differences (Freud, 1930: 114), often so significant in identity formation in youth, has given way to greater respect for diversity. In addition, there is a much more flexible approach to ‘authenticity’ in late modernist/post-modern times, than there was in the past. As a result, contemporary feedback is likely to be mellower and more nuanced. But the fact remains that early passions and identifications have sustained whole lifetimes of my discussants and informants and continue to do so. Their association with ‘the real thing’ and with ‘the authentic’ played a vital role in their attitude to the Kid Thomas Band, even if the ideologies that were associated with the music and its era have become more flexible and embracive with the passage of time.

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**Playlist of Versions of Basin Street Blues used for Comparative Purposes**

*Main comparison:*

Basin Street Blues by the Kid Thomas Band, 1971, Tivoli Gardens, Copenhagen Denmark [CONCERT VERSION] – See YouTube: <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z0bg6121ntE>> ([erwigfilms](http://www.youtube.com/user/erwigfilms)>.

Basin Street Blues (The Duck’s Yas Yas) by the Kid Thomas Band, 1957 [‘DANCE HALL’ VERSION] *504*, CD41 – See YouTube: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MfZ91JJlHOo>>.Soundcloud:   
<<https://soundcloud.com/creditonhughes/basin-street-blues-the-ducks-yas-yaslive>>.

*Subsidiary comparison:*

Basin Street Blues by Louis Armstrong Concert Band, 1959, Stuttgart, Germany – see YouTube: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4YnP2jZQQS4>>.

*Additional comparisons*:

Basin Street Blues by Louis Armstrong and His Hot Five, 1928 – see YouTube: <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zQBjD06a6l8>>.

Basin Street Blues by the Kid Thomas Valentine Band, 1971, Berlin, Germany – see YouTube: <[http://www www.youtube.com/watch?v=aSDVy\_m6zIU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aSDVy_m6zIU) ([klikonojazz](http://www.youtube.com/user/klikonojazz))>.

**Discography**

‘Kid Thomas’ Preservation Hall Band: Live at the Tivoli Theatre, Copenhagen’, Rarities, LP16.

‘George Lewis: Endless the Trek, Endless the Search’, Volume VIII, Root, Bone and Marrow Flower, 1962, Icon, LP9.

‘Kid Howard’s Olympia Band, The HEART and BOWELS of N.O. Jazz featuring Albert Burbank’, 1962, Volume VII, Root, Bone and Marrow Flower, Icon, LP8.

Kid Thomas, *The First Recordings: The Original 1951 Session*, American Music, AMCD-10.

Kid Thomas, *The Dance Hall Years, 1954 and 1964*, American Music AMCD-48.

*Dance Hall Days, Vol. 1: Isaiah Morgan at the Fleur-de-Lis Ballroom*, 1955, Kid Thomas at Moulin Rouge, 1954, American Music, AMCD-113.

*Kid Thomas Band at the Tip Top, 1957*, American Music, AMCD-97.

*Kid Thomas’ Dixieland Band 1957*, with Ed Washington, The Larry Borenstein Collection, Volume 12, 504 CD41.

Kid Thomas Band 1957, *Dancing Tonight, with Emanuel Paul*, American Music AMCD-115.

*Kid Thomas Valentine’s Creole Jazz Band, 1959*, American Music, AMCD-49.

Louis Armstrong’s Hot Five, ‘Basin Street Blues’*,* Okeh 78, 1928.

‘New Orleans: The Living Legends, Kid Thomas and his Algiers Stompers’, 1960, Riverside, OJCCD-1845-2 (RLP-386).

‘New Orleans: The Living Legends, Kid Thomas and his Algiers Stompers’, 1961, Riverside, OJCCD-1833-2 (RLP-365).

**Appendix: Key Discussants and Informants[[24]](#footnote-24)**

*Key Discussants* (In order of first contribution to discussion thread)

Daniel ‘Dan’ Vernhettes [France]: Born 20 May 1942 in Paris. Discovered jazz and spirituals in the late forties. Self-taught. At first influenced by King Oliver, this interest gradually expanded to include most of the New Orleans and swing style trumpets. Founded the Jazz O’ Maniacs in 1965; Six Cats in 1990; Vintage Jazzmen in 1990; Swing Feeling in 1992; Brother D. Blue Band in 1998; Swing Créole in 2013. Plays with different groups in France. Between 1965 and 2006 recorded several LPs and CDs, with artists as different as Albert Nicholas, Alfredo Espinoza, Tori Robinson, Screamin' Jay Hawkins, Reverend Lucien Garrett, Tommy Sancton, etc. Author and publisher ([www.jazzedit.org](http://www.jazzedit.org)) of *Traveling Blues* (Tommy Ladnier's biography) with Bo Lindström (2009); *Jazz Puzzles Volume 1* with Bo Lindström (2012); *Big Boy* with Christine Goudie and Tony Baldwin (2015); *Jazz Puzzles Volume 2* (end 2015).

Per Oldaeus [Sweden]: I was born in 1946 and live in Stockholm, Sweden. My interest in New Orleans music became serious in the early 60s. I also liked country blues music, inspired by Lars Edegran, and Lars Stenbeck’s record reviews in ORKESTER JOURNALEN. They wrote many articles on the early 60s music scene in New Orleans, including those on Punch Miller, Kid Thomas Valentine, and Emile Barnes which I read very carefully. Around the same time, I became the owner of my first Kid Thomas LP (Kid Thomas and His Algiers Stompers, Riverside RLP 365), an LP I treasured. I began to try learn the clarinet. I fell in love with Barnes’ archaic and very personal approach to clarinet playing. I spent hours in listening to recordings, trying to copy Barnes’ phrasing and tone. Sam Charters’ book: *Jazz New Orleans: 1885-1957*, became some kind of Bible for me. I also dug the rock & roll music of Fats Domino and Little Richard Penniman. In the fall of 1966 I made my first visit to New Orleans. After a couple of years as an alto sax player, I started to struggle with the drums, in the early 70s. I copied New Orleans drummers like Alex Bigard and Albert Jiles. Since then I have written many articles as well as published a scrapbook about Professor Longhair (2014). I have made numerous visits to New Orleans. Nowadays, my musical taste is very broad.

Jasper van Pelt [Holland] - trombonist: Born in 1964 in Holland, like a good New Orleans Jazz tradition I come from a musical family. I began music lessons at the age of four. My first teacher was the famous Dutch composer Tera de Marez Oyens. At the time, my father was playing in a New Orleans style jazz band, the New Orleans Wild Cats. It was by far the best New Orleans Jazz Band at the time in Holland. And their music was based on the earliest formation of the Bunk Johnson Band. When I was six I joined my father and brother Emile to rehearsals and gigs. Musicians came to our house in Hilversum to play the good old New Orleans music. I was right in the middle of it. Through my brother Emile, I met Adam Olivier, the leader of La Vida Jazz Band in Holland, who was a big influence on me. My first clear memory of those times in the early seventies is the moment when I heard Sammy Rimington and my father play ‘Hindustan’. I nearly fell from the chair, so deep the impact was on me. As a boy of ten years old I thought ‘this is what I want to play, this is serious business’! I’ve played with the finest jazzmen of New Orleans; such as Louis Nelson, Alton Purnell, etc. In 2003 I concluded a study about the Lewis/Ewell Quartet from 1966. It has become a reader of forty pages.

David Wyckoff [USA]: I was born in NYC on 23 January 1933. Alden Ashforth and I both began our love for the music in 1948, while at boarding school. We had had some exposure to white Chicago jazz in NYC (Wild Bill Davison, etc.), but it was the Kid Rena Circle records, followed by the Victor and Decca Bunk albums, then culminating in receiving Bill Russell’s AM records which really lit the fires, especially the contributions of George Lewis's band backing Bunk. I convinced my mother to go with me to NoLa on a vacation for a few days, and there met Dick Allen - who by the way was a great Barnes enthusiast. Alden and I determined that life's importance, for us at least, was in New Orleans, not boarding school or college, and we fled the school in the middle of the night, got ourselves to NoLa, and over the next few years immersed ourselves periodically in that glorious African-American music. The bands of George Lewis - at Manny's tavern - , Emile Barnes, and exposure to the almost weekly brass band functions were the primary foci of our interest and excitement, but we also appreciated Celestin's band, the Kid Thomas band across the river, and various other neighborhood groups. Dick Allen and Bill Russell were our mentors. In the early 1950s, and again in 1980, Alden Ashforth and I, with some help from Bill Russell, produced a number of recordings, including the first recordings of the Eureka Brass Band, the first recording of Kid Thomas, and essentially the first released recordings of the bands of Emile Barnes. I gradually expanded my taste to the whole spectrum of the local African-American music, especially rhythm and blues as well as gospel. I have made many visits to the city, most recently a few weeks ago. I continue to especially enjoy the street brass bands, both traditional and otherwise.

Richard Sid Bailey [Ireland and UK]: It was through listening to a school friend’s records that I first started to take an interest in this music. He owned all the Bunk HMV 78s along with the Kid Ory issues on Good Time Jazz and George Lewis on the Vogue label. Hearing these soon had me compiling my own collection, sending off for the lovely transparent pink Bunk Johnson American Music LP and then buying all the Lewis tracks on Esquire and Blue Note. Eventually I came across the 1959 Kid Thomas album, which to be honest, I did not take to at first, but after repeated listening I was soon charmed by that band’s very individual style. I bought a trombone and learned to play it by accompanying these records. Soon I was playing in bands in Ireland and then, from 1970, in the UK. As I got more involved I was reading about the music more – starting up my own library – buying Sam Charters’ *Jazz New Orleans 1885-1957*. In 1973 I was instrumental in getting Tom Stagg and Charlie Crump’s discography published by a friend’s firm Bashall Caves. As well as playing, I’ve written extensively on the music, including a book on Kid Ory (1996), and promoted the music in both Ireland and in England. I first visited New Orleans in 1970 and have been on four other holidays/pilgrimages to the Crescent City, where I combined playing with educational visits to the archives at Tulane University.

Jim Lodge [UK]: Born 27 March 1941 in Shipley Yorkshire but spent most of my life in Leeds. First musical passion Rock & Roll (1955-57). When the passion and heat went out of that I looked around for something similar to replace it with and found Oliver, Armstrong, Dodds, Noone, Bechet, Morton, etc. and have loved the style ever since. Bought a clarinet in 1958 and continue to play to (literally) this day. Bands played with: Jubilee Ragtime Band, several of Dennis Armstrong's bands, Al Potts, Ed O' Donnell, Malcolm Webb, Mondo Suave (not technically a jazz outfit, but everything I did with the band was improvised) and am currently playing clarinet, soprano sax, and tenor sax with The Devil's Jukebox, a somewhat scurrilous outfit doing a rowdy ribald take on the music of the 1920s/30s. I have a large collection of records and CDs (around 15,000) about 1,500 of which are jazz. I have contributed thoughts to several magazines, websites, and books.

*Additional Key Informants*

Fred Eatherton [UK]: As a teenager I learnt the rudiments of the banjo from my father. At this time I played with a number of local 'revivalist' bands including the Whytebridge and the George Perry Band, both of which were immersed in Bunk Johnson's and George Lewis's music. I was fascinated by the history of early jazz and swiftly obtained Rex Harris's *Jazz* and, when they became available, Blesh's *Shining Trumpets* and the Sam Charters book, *Jazz New Orleans - 1885-1957*.  At the beginning of the '60s traditional jazz in the UK had an enormous following and many semi-pro musicians turned professional. Fellow band members such as Mike Cotton took this route, but I chose not to and became a career policeman. I never lost my enthusiasm for the music however. I made a point of seeing New Orleans musicians on tour in England, and built up a very large library of books and recordings related to New Orleans music and Classic jazz. When I retired in 2001 I started playing again and continue to do so, playing in bands that play either classic jazz or in New Orleans styled groups. I’ve published a discography of Bunk Johnson, and have written numerous CD booklet notes on New Orleans musicians. Over the years my taste in music has broadened and, while remaining a mouldie fygge at heart, I now enjoy country blues, French Caribbean music and Argentinian tango recordings in equal measure.

Robert Greenwood [UK]: I was born in 1954 in Sunderland, Tyne & Wear. In 1971, aged 16, I heard an album by Ken Colyer and became converted from rock music to ‘traditional’ jazz. Read George Melly’s autobiographical *Owning Up* which offered some information on the origins of the music, including the fact that Ken based his style on Bunk Johnson. So I heard the Bunk Johnson Jazzman sessions, Kid Thomas & Jim Robinson on Riverside, Eureka Brass Band on *Folkways*, John Handy on *MONO*, Barnes-Bocage Big Five, as well as Morton, Oliver, Dodds, and Armstrong. Later I got to know some of the European New Orleans style musicians and learnt much from them, especially Dan Pawson & Mike Casimir. Read Sam Charters’ book on New Orleans and Tom Bethell’s biography of George Lewis. Subscribed to *Footnote* and read it voraciously. Over the years I have come to enjoy jazz of most periods & styles as well as blues.

1. I thank Anahid Kassabian and Freya Jarman for providing the impetus that led me to write this article; two anonymous referees for valuable comment on an earlier draft; and my key discussants Daniel ‘Dan’ Vernhettes (France), Per Oldaeus (Sweden), Jasper van Pelt (Holland), David Wyckoff (USA), Jim Lodge (UK), and Richard Bailey (Ireland and UK), for enabling me to bring the article to fruition. I thank Fred Eatherton (UK), and Robert Greenwood (UK) for adding their comment to the penultimate draft. My final thanks go to Debbie Radcliffe for considerably improving the structure and detail of this article. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Thomas Valentine (1896-1987) is commonly known as Kid Thomas or Kid Thomas Valentine. The latter name distinguishes him from Louis Thomas Watts (1934-1970), commonly known as Kid Thomas, the rock, rock & roll, and blues musician. I refer to the Kid Thomas Band to embrace the various names adopted by Kid Thomas Valentine, himself, his record producers, and his promoters. ‘Naming’ is hugely important, of course, in matters of the social construction of ‘authenticity’ and ‘the naming and identifying things’ is never over and done with (Strauss, 1977: 25). The last New Orleans dance hall residency that featured the Kid Thomas Band was at the Old Fireman’s Hall, Algiers, New Orleans, in early May 1966. Thomas had put up his old sign, which read ‘Kid Thomas Dixieland Band’. In the early years at Preservation Hall, New Orleans, the band was billed as ‘Kid Thomas and his Algiers Stompers’, a name provided by William ‘Bill’ Russell and adopted for the Riversidereleases. For Thomas, of course, it was ‘the same old soup bone’. Fittingly, when a ‘purist’ jazz fan told Thomas that the Kid Thomas Band did not play Dixieland jazz, Thomas obliged him by removing the offending word from his sign! (Ekins, 2006: 7, quoting Clive Wilson). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. All URLs cited in this article were accessible on 27 January 2016. See also the version of ‘Basin Street Blues’, by the same band, recorded live at a concert on 5 November 1971 in Berlin, Germany: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aSDVy_m6zIU>> ([**klikonojazz**](http://www.youtube.com/user/klikonojazz)). The musical performances are almost identical to the untrained ear, although the recording balance, volume, and camera work are noticeably different in the two versions. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The Kid Thomas Band’s role in the New Orleans dance hall years of the 1950s is documented in a series of *American Music* CDs with accompanying booklets. See *American Music*, AMCD-48 The Dance Hall Years: Kid Thomas; *American Music* AMCD-97 Kid Thomas Band at the Tip Top; *American Music* AMCD-113 Dance Hall Days Vol. 1; *American Music* AMCD-97 Kid Thomas Band at the Tip Top; *American Music* AMCD-115 Kid Thomas Band 1957. See also, Ekins (2016: 16-20). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Also, Soundcloud: <<https://soundcloud.com/creditonhughes/basin-street-blues-the-ducks-yas-yaslive>>. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. I completed a PhD in the Sociology of Knowledge, University of London, in 1978; an MA in Popular Music Studies, School of Music, University of Liverpool, in 2011; and two years of doctoral study in music (Musicology/Jazz Studies) in the Department of Music, Goldsmiths, University of London, in 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. For future denser theorisations of my trajectory of authenticating (Ekins 2012) I now prefer to separate out this major phase of ‘resuming authenticity’ from the ‘reconstructing authenticity’ phase (Kid Rena/Bunk Johnson/George Lewis) that preceded it. Many of the ‘resuming authenticity’ record producers, most notably, Ken Grayson Mills of Icon Records that produced records during this period specifically saw themselves as ‘resuming’ William ‘Bill’ Russell’s earlier pioneering work (Mills, 1960a). They framed what they were doing in terms of the authentic (Mills, 1960b) and construed Bill Russell’s American Music label of the 1940s and 1950s as definitive in this regard. Goodey (1968: 181-182) reviews, in the British revivalist context, how the ‘New’ N.O. style of the UK Barry Martyn Band (which participated in the ‘resuming authenticity’ stream) contrasted with the ‘Old’ N.O. style of Ken Colyer who in my terminology ‘adopted’ the music of the ‘reconstructing authenticity’ phase (Ekins 2013). Arguably, Bill Russell’s main concern was to document the neglected American music that he thought was so important and had no such preoccupations with authenticity (Smith and Pointon, forthcoming, 2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Brief biographies of the New Orleans musicians recorded during this period – often for the first time – had been detailed in Charters (1958, 1963) and their consolidation for later potential canonical status within second wave revivalism took place in Stagg and Crump’s (1973) discography. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. The phrase ‘playing for the benefit of the band’ is usually attributed to Warren ‘Baby’ Dodds, as in: ‘And that's the way I play.  I play for the benefit of the band.  And when I change like that, something else comin’—something different.  And it’s got to be different, ‘cause I’ve changed it.’ (Dodds 1953). The ‘playing for the benefit of the band’ is often particularly evident when polyphony becomes heterophony which features call and response between different members of the band. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. See Hardie (2007: 121): ‘There was immediate controversy about these performances. Some authorities thought they were tapping into a vein of authentic sound, others were appalled at the apparent discordance and limited musical technique displayed. Some could not believe that the hot jazz of the early 1920’s could have emerged from such roots.’ The point, in the present context, is that Kid Thomas, born in 1896, and leading a band in New Orleans from the 1920s onwards, is a part of this pre-Armstrong New Orleans tradition. He was never influenced in any way by Louis Armstrong – very rare for a New Orleans trumpet player. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. This ‘Hall sound’, as it became known, was often aped by second wave revivalist record producers who regarded the sound as more ‘authentic’ than the crisp and cleaner sound obtainable in a studio. Indeed, my own recording of the Kid Thomas Band for La Croix records in 1968 (with Clive Wilson) deliberately hired a hall venue – Kohlman’s Tavern – in Algiers, New Orleans, for this reason. Tom Bethell, of San Jacinto records, favoured San Jacinto Hall and Barry Martyn used a variety of old New Orleans dance halls for many of his recording sessions. For other aspects of ‘authenticity’ and recording technology in New Orleans revivalist jazz, see Ekins (2008) and Ekins and Saunderson (2014). On jazz, authenticity, and technology, more generally, see Rasula (1995), Katz (2010). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. The song is entitled ‘Basin Street Blues (The Duck’s Yas Yas)’ on the Kid Thomas 504 CD41, whereas discussion of the song usually uses the triple ‘Yas’, as in the lyric’s ‘Shake your shoulders, shake ’em fast, if you can’t shake your shoulders, shake your yas-yas-yas’, discussed by Rijn (1993): 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. New Orleans musicians sometimes say that there is not enough ‘roll’ in rock & roll. The basic New Orleans rhythm holding everything together is the parade or ‘second line’ beat. It is especially evident in drumming styles, but also in piano, tuba and trombone styles. A good example of this ‘rolling’ rhythm is Smiley Lewis’ ‘Down Yonder’ <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vxe5_QBOHeE>>. In rock music, a variant of it is known sometimes as the Bo Diddley rhythm. Dr John sees this as a New Orleans ‘second line’ rhythm (see Dr John’s spoken introduction to ‘Dr John and Iko Iko’ <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JESFMO1Hl4M>>). In particular, Thomas’s rhythmic ‘jabs’ and Penn’s drumming press rolls and ‘fill-ins’ work together to encourage the band’s ‘rolling’ momentum. Pianist Joe James and saxophonist Ed Washington, especially, contribute likewise in the 1957 dance hall recording. I thank Per Oldaeus and a number of contributors to my personal Facebook New Orleans jazz research page for material in this footnote. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. I think the point is best made by saying that Kid Thomas’s speciality is his improvisations with time. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Interrelations between the ‘routinised’ and the ‘ritualised’ are complex. Both lead to a lack of spontaneity. When a jazz band plays for a regular dancing crowd, the dancers want a mixture of the familiar and the new. Kid Thomas made sure he played all the new numbers his dancers wanted to hear. He played a wide variety of different dance rhythms. At a concert, however, there will normally be a different audience every night. The tendency is to play the same thing every night – same limited set of tunes, same order of solos, restricted range of rhythms, and so on. In addition, traditional jazz concert audiences like and expect to hear many fast numbers, and certain concert ‘war horses’, such as ‘When the Saints Go Marching In’. Such performances often become ritualised (e.g., a finale ‘Saints’ with band marching round the auditorium) as well as routinised (lack of spontaneity). Indeed, ‘Basin Street Blues’, itself, became something of a traditional jazz concert ‘war horse’, which, in all probability, is why Kid Thomas played it in all the concerts of his 1971 world tour. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. The essence of the ‘old style’, ‘down home’ approach to New Orleans music is ‘simply “a way of playing melody with a beat”’ (Russell, 1994: 8), with the emphasis on variation on the melody as opposed to improvisation on the chords. ‘Variates’ was a term favoured by Bill Russell. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. ‘DeDe’ was the nickname given to Joseph La Croix Pierce by a young cousin he grew up with and the name stuck. It is spelt variously as ‘DeDe, ‘De De’, or ‘Dee Dee’. By the 1960s, the Pierce’s business card was stating ‘Billie and DeDe Pierce. The same ‘DeDe’ was adopted in the Membership Directory of the American Federation of Musicians in the 1960s and since. Musicians in the 1960s and since. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Recall, too, Russell (1994: 8): ‘In New Orleans style the melody is always clearly to be heard. The melody is never disguised but is sung by the various instruments with a beautiful vocal-like warmth.’ [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. See footnote 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. I am mindful of the fact that a Google search for ‘Sociological Musicology’ produces no direct hits. However, I prefer the term to potentially cognate terms such as Sociomusicology or the Sociology of Music. Sociomusicology ‘encompasses the broader field of social science research in music (including psychological, sociological, and anthropological studies)’ <<http://sociomusicology.blogspot.co.uk/2007/09/why-sociomusicology.html>> whereas this study is specifically sociological (Parncutt, 2007). On the other hand, this article is more musicological than the appellation ‘Sociology of Music’ might suggest.

    [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Blesh (1943, 1949) was probably the most influential of the declension narratives in jazz history for the first generations of New Orleans jazz enthusiasts. On declension and evolutionary narratives in jazz, see, Gennan (2006). [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. In the main body of the discussion I failed to follow up on my idea of ‘the more grain, the more authenticity.’ The relevant comments suggest to me that the declensionists would support the idea, but the evolutionists might not. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. A reference to Margaret Thatcher, Prime Minister of the UK from 1979-1990, who in her speech to the Conservative Party Conference on 10 October 1980 famously said: ‘You turn if you want to. The lady’s not for turning!’ [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. The key discussants listed all contributed to my Facebook ‘Kid Thomas and Authenticity’ thread. The additional two key informants are part of an ‘Early Jazz and New Orleans Jazz Revivalism’ discussion group that has been meeting at the Porcupine, Leicester Square, London, every six weeks, since 2011. This group has its origins in earlier meetings at the Porcupine that began in 2009. With one exception, I have attended every meeting. The venue was the meeting place of the Bunk Johnson Appreciation Society (subsequently, the re-named New Orleans Jazz Appreciation Society) in the 1950s and 1960s. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)